

Analysis of Arab Coalition Cooperation in Yemen Conflict Settlement

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ABSTRACT

The Yemen crisis is a conflict that has been ongoing for the past dozen years and has not yet subsided. This crisis began with the political instability that existed in the Government of the Republic of Yemen. The formation of the Republic of Yemen in 1990 resulted from the unification of the regions of North Yemen and South Yemen. The two regions agreed to unite because they have similarities in culture, nation, and social conditions. Over time, the Yemeni government has drawn protests from the public because it has not been able to tackle corruption, collusion, nepotism and has also not brought prosperity to its people. This later became a strong reason for the emergence of a separatist movement in Yemen, namely the Houthi Group. The situation was then exacerbated by the Arab Spring phenomenon in 2011 which resulted in an increasing wave of attacks by Houthi. At its peak in 2015 the Houthis then succeeded in taking over the capital Sana'a and besieging the state palace. The president at the time, Mansyur Hadi, then went to Saudi Arabia and asked for help to crush the Houthi rebel group. Saudi Arabia's involvement in the Yemen Crisis began, Saudi Arabia formed an Arab Coalition consisting of Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, and Sudan. This Arab coalition then carried out military operations, namely Operation Decisive Storm and Operation Renewal of Hope. Military forces were sent to the border areas of Yemen and Saudi Arabia which are the epicenter of the Houthis' attacks. It has been seven years since the intervention of the Arab Coalition in the Yemen Crisis, but the situation is getting worse. The crisis that was previously an internal problem in Yemen has now turned into a problem in the Middle East region.

Keywords: *Yemen Conflict, Arab Coalition, Cooperation*

1. INTRODUCTION

The instability in the Yemeni government has been going on for a long time. The escalation of the conflict for power in the government has started since the formation of Yemen. The Republic of Yemen was founded after the merging of North Yemen and South Yemen, those two regions have different backgrounds. North Yemen is inhabited by a predominantly Shia population, while South Yemen is inhabited by a majority Sunni population. This difference creates a gap that is felt by the community living in North Yemen. Hence the first President of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, is a follower of the Sunni sect and originated from the South Yemen region.

The Arab Spring that hit the Middle East in 2011 triggered massive demonstrations in various countries in the Middle East region. The people of the Middle East are inspired by the success of the Tunisian in overthrowing the regime of government that has lasted for decades. The Yemeni people are one of them, they carry out the same movement in hope that the ruling government can be overthrown and replaced with a better one. The movement demanded the government to reform and move to a more democratic direction.

In Yemen, President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who ruled for 30 years, has been dishonoured by demonstrations. The decline

of President Ali Abdullah Saleh is not unfounded, people think that Saleh's government has failed in eradicating corruption and has not brought prosperity to the community, especially groups in the North Yemen region who feel increasingly marginalized from development. This can be seen from the difference in development programs that are more centred on the capital city of Sana'a, while other cities are still not developing.

But Yemen did not produce a success story like Tunisia. Demonstrations at that time did not go as expected and became one of the causes that resulted in the Yemen Crisis, which continues to this day. President Saleh was successfully demoted and replaced by his vice president, namely Mansyur Hadi who later became the next President. The change of president does not mean to suppress the demonstrations and rebellions that occurred. The era of Mansyur Hadi's leadership was immediately faced with resistance from separatist groups supporting President Saleh and other separatist groups who wanted to take over the government, namely the Houthi group. Initially, the two of them had their own goals and fought each other until in the end they both decided to work together to become the government's opposition. The cooperation of the two groups can be said to be very vulnerable and flexibly change according to the

direction of the interests of each group. President Mansyur Hadi accused of being supported by the Saudi Arabian government, some speculation states that the resignation of President Saleh and being replaced by Mansyur Hadi is considered a form of event supported by Saudi Arabia.

The Houthi group, the Yemeni military forces that are pro-Hadi government, and the STC (Southern Transitional Council) are the three major actors in the crisis in Yemen. The three of them have different goals, and they can work together and betray each other. The three actors are fighting for control of the government in Yemen. The uprising led by the Houthis and supporters of President Saleh in 2014 seized control of the capital Sana'a and a year later declared the government's takeover, repelling President Hadi from asking neighbouring Saudi Arabia for help. As a response to President Hadi's request for assistance, Saudi Arabia then deployed its troops in the Yemen border area, which is the centre of the ceasefire. Saudi Arabia's participation in the Yemen crisis made this event not only become an internal problem in Yemen but has spread to become a problem in the Middle East region. Along with that, the Houthi group targeted several military bases and oil mines owned by Saudi Arabia. After the decline in troops, Saudi Arabia then formed an Arab Coalition consisting of Bahrain, Qatar (out in 2017), United Arab Emirates, Sudan, Jordan, and Morocco. The Arab Coalition also received support from countries such as the United States, Britain, Germany, and France. The supporting countries provided the coalition with artillery, scientists, and food supplies.

The Arab Coalition was formed with the aim of returning government power to the official President, namely Abdurra Mansyur Hadi and eradicating rebel groups. The Yemen crisis is getting worse when this goal is seen as being infiltrated by the interests of countries within the Arab Coalition who are trying to take advantage of the conditions of the Yemen Crisis. The current crisis is estimated to be difficult to find a solution to in the next few years.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Author uses the theory of hegemony in observing the problems raised in this paper. The theory of hegemony was initiated by Antonio Gramsci in which this theory is a form of criticism and a shortcut to other theories of social change that refer to traditional Marxism. The definition of the theory of hegemony was well known to other Marxist figures before Gramsci, such as Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud and Sigmund Simmel. Gramsci's version of Hegemony theory has a broader focus on the magnitude of the power of one group over other groups and Gramsci's Hegemony is defined as an influence that is culturally generated [Femia, 1983]. The theory of hegemony is formed based on the importance of ideas and the limitations of physical power in social politics. In hegemony, so that the ruled obey the ruler, the ruled must not only feel they have and internalize the values and norms of the ruler, they must also give approval to their subordination. Gramsci contrasts hegemony, as a form of supremacy of one group or

several groups over another, with another form of supremacy which he calls "domination" namely power that is supported by physical strength [Sugiono, 1999:31].

The hegemony pioneered by Gramsci argued that the ruler must have a coercive nature, dare to act, and have binding laws. In the sense that groups that want to be in power must have stable legal, defence, military, and judicial institutions. Then the ruler also can make society and institutions submit to the ruler through religious life, education, art, and family [Heryanto, 1997]. Both will have an impact on how long the group is in control. These two levels on the one hand are related to the function of hegemony in which the dominant group handles the whole society and on the other hand is related to direct domination or orders that are carried out throughout the state and juridical government [Gramsci, 1971].

Gramsci also defines what is meant by an integral state as a complex combination of dictatorship and hegemony or the whole complex of practical and theoretical activities in which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but also seeks to win the active consent of those ruled. This definition avoids Gramsci from the instrumentalist view of the state, viewing the state as a mere political system of government in liberal political theory or other theories such as the coercive institution of the ruling class in classical Marxist political theory. The advantage of Gramsci's conception of an integral state is that it allows him to view hegemony within dialectical boundaries which include civil society or political society [Sugiono, 1999].

Gramsci also argues that power is achieved by relying on coercive power, the real result that has been achieved is called domination. Stability and security were indeed achieved, while the turmoil of resistance was not visible because the people were indeed powerless. However, this cannot be done continuously, so the rulers who have ambitions to maintain their power realize that this situation will complement their domination with a second set of work tools (communities, NGOs, and non-governmental organizations) that produce hegemony. Thus, the supremacy of the group (ruler) or social class appears in two ways, namely domination or oppression and intellectual and moral leadership. This last type of leadership is hegemony [Hendarto, 1993:74].

Hegemony is basically an attempt to lead people to assess and view social problems within a defined framework [Gramsci, 1976:244]. In this context, Gramsci emphasizes more on the cultural (ideological) aspect. Through its products, hegemony becomes the only determinant of what is considered right, both morally and intellectually. Cultural hegemony does not only occur in relations between countries but can also occur in relations between various social classes that exist within a country. There are three levels proposed by Gramsci, namely total hegemony (integral), declining hegemony (*decadent*) and minimum hegemony [Femia, 1981]. In this context, it can be formulated that the concept of hegemony refers to the notion of the socio-political situation.

The concept of hegemony is related to three fields, namely the economy, the state, and the people [Bocock, 1986]. The economic space becomes basic but the political world which is the scope of hegemony also shows the moment of the highest development of the history of a class. In this respect, the attainment of state power, the consequences that have for the possibility of the full expansion and development of the hegemony having appeared partially, has a special significance. The state with all its aspects, which is extended to include the area of hegemony, gives to the class that founded it in a concrete form, resulting from the organic relationship between the state or political society and civil society.

The hegemony of one group over other groups in the Gramscian sense is not something that is forced. This hegemony must be achieved through political, cultural, and intellectual efforts to create a common world view for the whole society. Gramsci's political theory explains how ideas or ideologies become an instrument of domination that gives the ruling group the legitimacy to rule [Sugiono, 1999].

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper uses a descriptive analysis method that focuses on a literature review on the topic of Arab Coalition Cooperation in Yemen Conflict Resolution. Descriptive analysis method works in solving a problem by describing it, observing it, explaining it, and analysing a situation and condition of an object of study. The author takes references from various written works such as books, journals, articles, news, and videos that were made in the last five years so that the study is still fresh and more relevant to the situation that occurred in the field at the time of writing this paper. The data sources are included in the secondary data sources. This secondary data collection is done by reading and analysing written works that are accessed on the official news website pages and platforms that provide access to other data, both of which are spread freely on the internet. The data obtained were then processed by the author using a critical reading approach. This critical reading method aims to explain what is meant in the discussion of a text and then elaborate it into a new text with a mixture of the author's points of view. After successfully summarizing and analysing various reference sources and incorporating their point of view into this paper, the writer then draws a conclusion on the topic presented. As a final step, the author has also presented this paper in a formal forum before publication.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Cooperation of Arab Coalition in The Yemen Crisis

In the process, the Arab Coalition led by Saudi Arabia agreed to enter the conflict area by carrying out military operations. The first military operation, Operation Decisive

Storm, was carried out on March 26, 2015 by the Saudi Arabian Air Force under the approval of the Saudi Minister of Defence, Prince Muhammad Bin Salman. This military operation targets the Houthi group in Yemen. Egypt sent ships to help blockade a Yemeni-owned port as well as send aid to the Saudi air force. Other countries in the coalition such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates also sent aid such as Egypt but were reluctant to send troops to conflict areas in large numbers.

The military operation Decisive Storm did not go as expected. This is not surprising because the Saudi air force is still lacking in combat experience. Not only the army but the Saudi military have not been able to carry out the planned operations in the Yemen Crisis. As a result, the resistance that occurred with the Houthis failed and instead encountered difficulties. In addition, the Saudis seem not to be serious about carrying out this military operation, this is indicated by the decreasing number of troops sent to conflict areas even though the number of troops sent is small.

In the absence of other countries in the Arab Coalition that are serious about sending troops, the Saudis have turned their eyes to countries outside the Coalition, namely Pakistan. Saudi Arabia's approach to Pakistan is not without reason. In 1979 when the Cold War broke out, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia agreed to jointly defeat the Soviet Union, which was then occupying Afghanistan. As a form of the agreement, Pakistan agreed to send troops if at any time the Saudis needed it to fight the enemy and other problems. But in 2015 when the Saudis needed additional troops for their operations and hoped that Pakistan would repeat the cooperation that had occurred in the past, Pakistan rejected the Saudi request. This is surprising because Saudi Arabia has routinely provided economic assistance and oil free of charge to Pakistan. This refusal made Operation Decisive Storm even more messy, without the help of troops from Pakistan, the takeover of the capital Sana'a from the Houthis was a dream. Three years later Pakistan finally agreed to send aid in training Saudi soldiers in 2018.

Despite the lack of cooperation and the failed first military operation, the Arab Coalition continued its military operations in Yemen with the next military operation dubbed Operation Renewal of Hope. They and the coalition of Houthi rebels and supporters of Ali Abdullah Saleh met in a balanced battle in several cities in Yemen and along the border between Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The Arab Coalition made some satisfactory achievements in capturing important territory. United Arab Emirates troops occupied the city of Aden and surrounding areas and succeeded in crushing rebel groups in South Yemen. Furthermore, on the other hand, Saudi Arabia controlled the Provinces of Hadramaut and al-Mahra. This gives Saudi Arabia access to the Indian Ocean. The Arab coalition also controlled the Soqatra, Perim and Bab al-Mandab Islands. Interestingly the Arab Coalition does not have stable control in the territory they control.

The Arab Coalition's cooperation is increasingly unclear, only Saudi and the UAE routinely send troops to conflict

areas. Saudi being the leader in this Coalition executed all plans with little to no help from other countries in the coalition. Internally, Saudi Arabia seems to have lost interest in participating in the Yemen Crisis after political actors in the country are busy dealing with the electability of domestic politics. The formulator of the military operation, Muhammad bin Salman, never even set foot in Yemen to know the conditions on the ground first-hand.

Yemen is hit by a severe crisis because of the Arab Coalition's perfunctory performance. Initially war victims received assistance from the Saudis, but the aid was cut off due to a blockade at the port. Not only aid from Saudi but international aid no longer goes to Yemen. Tens of millions of Yemenis are starving, and they are contracting diseases that arise from inadequate sanitation. Meanwhile, the mastermind behind all this is Saudi Arabia instead of improving the situation they have created, the Saudis are only focused on improving their image globally and are reluctant to talk about the sins they have committed in the Land of Yemen.

Furthermore, the Houthis continued to retaliate against the Saudi airstrikes by targeting their missiles and drones at oil installations and airports in cities in Saudi Arabia. The attacks carried out by the Houthi group are certainly detrimental to Saudi Arabia because it disrupts the supply of defence equipment to conflict areas and the foreign exchange of their country, which is largely dependent on oil. Not to mention the millions of dollars that have been disbursed by Saudi Arabia in military operations in Yemen. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, countries that are members of the coalition, as well as developed countries that are allies have suffered massive losses.

In 2019, the UAE, which is an active Saudi partner in the Arab Coalition, has increasingly relaxed their participation in the Yemen Crisis. UAE troops in northern Yemen have withdrawn from the front lines of fighting and reduced troops in southern Yemen. This of course resulted in the takeover of the territory of Aden by rebel forces. The UAE leadership sees participation in the Yemen crisis in a prolonged manner will result in financial and socio-political losses of the UAE.

The Arab Coalition that received support and assistance from developed countries outside the Middle East region, such as the UK, the United States, Germany, and France. But none of them are willing to go directly to send troops in Yemen.

Saudi Arabia fully dominates military policies and operations on behalf of the Arab Coalition in Yemen. The coalition is only a form of agreement from countries in the Middle East and North Africa region as well as developed country allies to intervene in the crisis in Yemen. The settlement and peace that they call for as the basis of their military operations are mere nonsense shrouded in the interests of each country.

1.2. The Effectiveness of Arab Coalition Role in The Yemen Crisis Settlement

The Arab Coalition can be regarded as a failure both in achieving the national interests of the countries in it and as an effort to resolve the Yemen Crisis. Every country is not serious in jumping into solving the existing problems and so far, every country has also failed to achieve the interests they want. Saudi Arabia, which is the leader of this coalition has been branded badly internationally after doing its utmost to cover up the damage they have done in Yemen. The Saudi side forbids international journalists from covering and knowing the truth in conflict lands. The peak was when the case of the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi on October 2, 2018, at the Saudi consulate located in Istanbul, Turkey, by a team of executioners sent by the royal palace of Saudi Arabia. Khashoggi is a journalist for the Washington Post news agency, he has written articles containing a history of defending Saudi policies since the Afghanistan war in the 1980s. His writing takes the form of a reasoned and thoughtful critique of Muhammad bin Salman's mistakes. His last article was about the war in Yemen. He blamed the Crown Prince for the war crimes and massive human rights violations that took place in the Yemen Crisis. The intimidation campaign is not limited to Saudi or Arab, as leading journals in the West, including the Washington Post and Guardian, have been attacked electronically. Here Saudi Arabia suffers material losses and loses its good image in the international world.

The UAE, which is a close friend of Saudi Arabia in the Coalition, has also suffered heavy losses in terms of loss of troops, materials, and has the potential to get a bad image after its track record showing cooperation with Saudi forces in Yemen. Other countries in the Arab Coalition have the same impact but not as much as Saudi and UAE, which are active actors in this coalition. The UK, US, Germany, and France are also among those blamed by the international community for intervening in the Yemen Crisis.

Their cooperation is only a form of formality so that the world thinks they care about the crisis in Yemen. The execution of military operations is zero, there are several strategic areas that have been successfully occupied but they do not have full control over the area. Resistance with rebel and separatist groups only further prolongs the list of victims and material losses.

Therefore, the participation of the Arab Coalition and the resolution of the crisis in Yemen has only exacerbated the existing crisis. The Yemen region is a strategic place that becomes the distribution route for Middle East natural products and mines by sea. Formerly the port where oil ships transited was in Yemen, the welfare level of the Yemeni people was very high before it became a poor country as it is now. Therefore, since the Arab Spring, Yemen, which is unable to accept a change in government position, has experienced a rebellion that has not ended until now. This then made the Arab Coalition filled with countries in the Middle East and North Africa to join and take the opportunity to occupy strategic places in Yemen. The Saudis, for example, are targeting the Bab al Mandab to come under the control of

the Saudi Kingdom. The Mandab Strait is an important route for the entry and exit of oil carriers. Other countries that are members of the Arab Coalition are Saudi allies, so it is easy for the Saudis to recruit them into the coalition. Easy to recruit but not easy to cooperate.

The foundation that is not strong in the formation of this coalition is certainly in line with the results of their cooperation. After all, it is very clear that only Saudi Arabia is very enthusiastic about this coalition. Nothing can be expected from a coalition formed based on taking advantage in a conflict.

5. CONCLUSION

Efforts to resolve the Yemen conflict carried out by the Arab Coalition are very chaotic. Progress is not obtained, instead setbacks and losses are reaped. The two failed military operations were caused by inexperienced policymakers and coupled with far from serious participation by countries that are members of the coalition. As a result, the countries that are members of the coalition are increasingly withdrawing from conflict and are busy improving their image in the international arena. Saudi Arabia is still seen fighting in the border area since its important facilities were attacked by the Houthis. The Yemeni people are the most harmed by this incident. An irony indeed when political actors who are the masterminds of all things can negotiate and formulate policies in their comfortable rooms while the results of their actions must be felt by men, women, parents, and children living in Yemen. They all have no power over their own conditions. The disappointment and criticism of the international people towards the performance and intervention of the Arab Coalition and all those who support the coalition should make them aware. Until the time this paper was written, the Yemen Crisis was still trying to find a solution, the fighting still going on between coalition forces and rebel groups.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The initial idea of this paper was proposed by the second author and approved by the first author. The content and discussion of this paper was formulated by the second author and under the supervision and approval of the first author. The two authors gave each other input on the procedures and systems for writing this paper. Finally, thank you to all those who have helped in the success of writing this paper.

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