Dose the Houthi Movement Will Lead to Emerge New Middle East?

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Abstract

After Yemeni revolution in 2011, the Houthi movement emerged to the forefront of the political scene in Yemen. By force, it has been able to impose itself as a political partner in the national dialogue and the process of peaceful transition of power. To support its political position, the Houthi movement depends on arms to extend various regions of Yemen. It takes advantage of the political and constitutional vacuum in Yemen and by the time it was able to overthrow the legitimate government and occupies the capital easily. After that, Houthi movement has become a key engine of the political scene in Yemen that of course will affect on the political scene in the ME, those effects made some changes in international relationship in the ME. So, this article will try to monitor these changes, which may lead to the emergence of new alliances in the ME. Also it tries to answer this question whether we are at the edge of a new Middle East or not.

Keywords: The Houthi Movement, the Conflict in Yemen, International Relationship, the Middle East, Iran, the US, the Gulf States, Realism theory.

1. Introduction

The ME considered one of the most conflict areas in the world because of the cultural and ethnic diversity. The multiplicity of conflict parties plays a major role in increasing conflict in the ME.

In Yemen situation, there are a lot of problems, Poverty and the deterioration of the political situation which affected on economic and security situation. Despite the Houthi movement increased the deterioration of that situation, the international community still deal with it as legal party. In fact, the international community give the security side priority because they afraid of extreme activities in Yemen.

This paper tries to clarify the view of current conflict in Yemen, and shows that how this conflict affects on the international relations at the regional and international levels. Actually, the current conflict started as an internal conflict, but in 2015 it became as a regional war after the military alliance. This military alliance led by Saudi Arabia and started its military campaign on 26 Mars 2015. Gulf Countries by this alliance tried to defend themselves from Iranian threats. In fact, the current conflict in Yemen linked to Social injustices that happened to the Zaidi community after the Yemeni revolution in 1962. Zaidys tried to stop those Social injustices through peaceful protests which led by (believing youth) movement. The (believing youth) movement founded to stop the threat of Salafi activity in Dammaj in Saada province. The Zaidi community considered the Salafi activities as a real threat because the difference between the two Salafi and Zaidi doctrines. (Aldagshi, 2010)

The Yemeni government did not respond to demands and complaints of Zaidi community, so they turned from peaceful protest to armed conflict against the government. In fact, the conflict started after the changes that happened in the goals of (believing youth) movement by Hussin Alhouthi. He changed the goals of this movement from religious education side to army side, so the Houthi movement started first round of conflict in 2004. The conflict between government and the Houthi movement took six rounds from 2004 until 2010. (Anouti, 2011)

During these conflicts, the Houthi movement has gained the sympathy of the masses while Yemeni government has lost the people's trust because there was not anything clear about that internal conflict. Some political analysts indicate that the previous President Ali Saleh used that conflict to get rid of political and military rivals.

Through the participation of the Houthi movement in the revolution, which happened in 2011, it was able to participate in national dialogue, but before the achievement of the outcome of national dialogue the Houthi movement turned against the interim government, so the war started in Yemen. (Aljazeera, 2016)

2. Theoretical Framework

The international system depends on power and international relationship between different states, but it is little difficult to understand international relations. However, there are different ways to understand it; the prominent one is political theories.

Political theories appeared to help us to understand the political process in the world, to get more understanding of nature of international conflicts, and to know the main causes of wars. Those theories did not appear suddenly, but in fact they linked with historical efforts which tried to give the answer of the questions about power and safe of states.

Although the worthy of the different political theories still cannot explain different aspects of

international political process, but some of them could be linked with reality, and give some pursuit answers of important international events by suggesting some principles and norms which make international political scent more clear, one of the most famous is the realism theory.

The realism theory imposes that the nature of states is aggressive because they want to survive as Waltz stated. The nature of international system is anarchy that creates different threat for countries, which are always worried about the threats that endanger their safety. (Waltz,1997, p.102)

The anarchy in the world creates a lot of problems and threats to different states because there is no dominant state that manages the relations between states, moreover to prevent an attack against each other. That makes state concerned about its security and interest, so this theory justifies aggressive behavior by States in an effort to maintain its security and survival.

This theory can explain the position of different parties in Yemen scene. According to the realism theory, the states are both offensive oriented and defensive oriented because all states try to balance between interested and threats when they deal with each other. (Mearshemer,1994)

If we linked between the principles of realism theory and the position of different parties in Yemen scene, it would be clear that the position of Iran toward Yemen linked to offensive side because Iran want to support its position in ME. While the position of Gulf Countries toward conflict in Yemen linked to defensive side because they depend on USA military since the Iraq invasion. The changes that happened in Yemen scene threaten the security of Gulf Countries, so they enter to war directly to defend themselves against the Iranian threat.

3. The Influence of the Houthi Movement on Local Level

The Houthi movement was a religious education group, but it turned to army activities since 2004. That happened because the Yemeni government did not respond to demands and complaints of Zaidi community. The protests and complaints called for the provision of basic services to the province of Saada, such as schools, hospitals and infrastructure. Also, they continue complaint from the increasing of Salafi activities in Dammaj. The Zaidi community considered that activities as a threat to Zaidi doctrine from Saudi Arabia.

In the revolution of 2011, a lot of minorities and marginalized groups have been able to appear in the political scene through revolutionary activities. The Houthi movement also has been able to participate in the revolution and share in political scene, especially, after it won the sympathy of the people.

During the revolution, the political situation has become bad and the violence spread. The Gulf Countries tried to stop this violence by the Gulf initiative which proposed the formation of a transitional government that composed of former system and opposition parties. Various political parties signed this Convention while the Houthi movement rejected it because it gives previous system immunity and ignore the rights of the yemeni people. So the Houthi movement earned popular support and has become socially acceptable.

Despite the Houthi movement refused the Gulf initiative, it participated in national dialogue which was one of the Gulf initiative's conditions. Through participation in national dialogue, the Houthi movement could participate in political decision although it is not political party. (The source, 2016)

After the national dialogue finished, the Houthi movement prevented the transitional government from applying the outcome of the national dialogue that made bad influence on the political procession. After that, the Houthi movement turned against the interim government and announced to a peace and partnership Convention, which signed by all Yemeni parties, also, it was under the supervision of UN. Although the Houthi movement is called to peace and partnership Convention, it was the first of the capsized on that convention. (Aljazeera, 2016)

The Houthis imposed the house arrest on the interim President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi and Prime Minister Khaled Bahah. After that, they intervened in decisions of the interim president who announced his resignation and the Prime Minister. Then they fled to Aden, so Yemen entered to Constitutional vacuum that has occurred due to the resignation of the interim president. The Houthi movement announced the Revolutionary Committee to take the Political tasks on behalf of the transitional government. (BBC, 2016)

The internal conflicts started when the Houthi movement announced the war against the transitional government and tried to arrest and kill the interim president who demanded the help from the neighbor countries.

The Gulf Countries responded to the interim president demand and they announced the formation of a military alliance, which included ten Arab and Muslim countries, included Gulf States except Oman. The coalition announced the first military operation in Yemen on March 26, 2015 that operation named a storm packets.(Aljazeera 2016)

Through this alliance, Gulf states tried to stop the Iranian threat because the Houthi movement is an extension of Iran which threaten the Sunni presence in the region. In Yemen scene, the conflict became worse because the sectarian conflict will affect on the social peace in Yemen during the coming period. In addition, this kind of sectarian conflict threatens the security of the region as a whole because its impacts will not be limited on the social side, but it will affect the political and security side as well.

4. The Influence of the Houthi Movement on Regional and International Level

The Yemen scene links to the regional and international parties. The regional side presented through the conflict between Iran and Gulf Countries, while the international side links to international community and the position of the USA toward Yemen.

The regional and international parties concern to conflict in Yemen because it will affect on different fields in ME. Especially, on security and geopolitical side.

The conflict between Gulf Countries and Iran does not just links to the doctrine difference, but also it links to the political competition. Also, there are historical factors that affected on that conflict, so the current conflict in Yemen return the old enemy between two sides.

In fact, the conflict in Yemen is considered as a chance to Iran to support its position in ME. Especially, after it could impose itself in other conflict in region such as conflict in Iraq.

Iran appears strongly in Lebanon through Hizb Allah, but in Yemen it still tries to support the Houthi movement which belongs to the same doctrine. So, when the Houthi movement coup the capital in Yemen, some Iranian politician considered that coup as a chance to spread the goals of Islamic revolution. (Marib Press, 2016)

Some political analysts stated that the conflict in Yemen is like proxy war between Gulf Countries and Iran. Although the Gulf Countries entered in Yemen conflict directly, Iran did not enter to war. In fact, Iran uses the conflict in Yemen as a paper to support its position in Syria.

Iran could benefit from the progress of the Houthi movement in Yemen scene to sign the nuclear agreement. So, the agreement considered as rapprochement between Iran and USA. This agreement will allow Iran to play great role in ME in coming period. (Aljazeera, 2016)

All this changes threaten the security of the Gulf Countries which depend on USA since Iraq invasion. Some political analysts stated that the rapprochement between USA and Iran pushed Gulf Countries to define themselves by formation the army alliances.

The international parties are dealing with the Yemeni file through focus on the security side and miss the rest of the aspects. Although the Houthi movement is not a legitimate party, the international Community deals with it as a legitimate party because they are afraid of the spread of terrorism.

Many political analysts point out that the international community does not take critical decisions in the Yemeni file for several reasons. The first reason is the weakness of the legitimate government which has been unable to protect itself from the Houthi movement and how it can stop the threat of terrorism?

The Second reason is the Weak of transitional government that weakened the political process in Yemen and this led to the spread of chaos and emptiness.

The third reason is the effectiveness of the Houthi movement. In fact, the previous conflicts that happened between the Houthi movement and Yemeni government support the army experience of the movement. So, it was able to withstand towards the coalition that led by Saudi Arabia.

All these factors have convinced the international community of effectively and the strength of the Houthi movement. So it can be relied on it to stop the threat of terrorism that coming from Yemen.

In fact, the position of the international community toward Yemen is playing main role to continue the conflict because its performance stopped on the level of issuing decisions without putting punitive conditions or sanctions for any party that is hampering progress of the transition process in Yemen.

5. Conclusion

The current conflict in Yemen will not stop easily because there are many parties participate in conflict. The regional conflict in Yemen is not just link to Iran and Gulf Countries it linked to other states which joined the army alliance. It became more dangerous especially after the war took sectarian dimension. Sunni states seeking to stop the threat of Shiite risk because Iran is meddling in the internal affairs of many neighbor countries in the region to strengthen its presence in the region.

If the international community did not take a serious step in the activation of the political tools to stop the conflict in Yemen, the war would spread more and it would affect worse in the Middle East and the world.

In order to answer the question of this paper about whether the Houthi movement will lead to emerge a new Middle East or not? some political analysts say that there are a lot of changes and factors that occurred in the region during the last five years, these changes will affect the nature of international relations in the region. The most important of these changes is the emergence of the Houthi movement as a main actor in the Yemeni political scene. Since the emergence of this movement there are a lot of changes happened such as the formation of a military alliance, which is the first military alliance that combines various Arab countries. The second change is the Iranian-American rapprochement that has occurred after the signing of the nuclear agreement.

All these changes will affect in the Middle East in the coming period, especially if Iran has been able to prove itself in the Syrian and Yemeni scene. Maybe if that happens the world will witness the emergence of a new Middle East, but this does not mean that wars and conflicts in the old Middle East will stop.

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