



## Analysis of Implementation 2018 Un-Led Stockholm Agreement in Yemen

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### **Abstract**

The prolonged war in Yemen has succeeded in putting Yemen on the list of countries with the worst humanitarian situation in the world. Various efforts to resolve the conflict have been carried out and continue to be deadlocked. Until the end of 2018, peace talks led directly by the United Nations succeeded in encouraging two key players in the conflict, namely the Yemeni government and the Houthis, to agree on an agreement known as the Stockholm Agreement. This agreement received positive attention because it was considered a breakthrough in building the parties' trust, which would subsequently become the foundation of the peace process in Yemen. However, it is unfortunate that the implementation process of the agreement was very slow and was even declared a failure at several points of commitment. The monitoring team continued to report violations, humanitarian aid was blocked, and the humanitarian situation was deemed not to be improving. This research then aims to explore the factors that hinder and cause the failure to implement the Stockholm agreement. Using the Spoiler approach, this research will examine the parties' behavior who intentionally damaged or thwarted the Stockholm agreement. The ultimate goal of this research will also show that political ambition is rooted in a strong religious belief that only those groups who deserve to be the successors of the government are behind the behaviour of destroying peace agreements.

**Keywords:** *Spoiler; 2018 UN-Stockholm Agreement; Peace; Agreement Conflict; Actors*

### **Introduction**

In 1990 the Republic of Yemen was formed in conjunction with an agreement to merge the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) and the Democratic People's Republic of Yemen (PDRY). Despite having different political orientations, where YAR stands as a capitalist while PDRY with its socialists, the two regions have the same characteristics that later made Yemen a nation (Feierstein, 2019). At that time, Ali Abdullah Saleh, previously the President of North Yemen since 1978, was elected to serve as President of the Republic of Yemen. The mission to unify the South and the North, which is considered an essential component of the Yemen evolution process, actually adds a layer of complexity to the problems that occur in the Yemeni government. Relations between the North and the South are still strained. The failure to create one of two states and the fact that North Yemen's political government seems harsh and corrupt is causing southerners to reconsider unification. This situation sparked a civil war in 1994 when President Saleh joined the armed forces (Alwazir, 2016).

Political turmoil continues, and the frustrated situation of the people due to political marginalization, disenfranchisement of economic rights, an extractive state, a corrupt government, and rentiers haunt the dynamics of Yemen. These systemic failures have resulted in a cycle of violence, political upheaval, and institutional collapse. Public unrest reached its peak when the popular Arab Spring 2011 protests spread to Yemen (Ghanem, n.d.). Under domestic and international pressure, President Ali Abdullah Saleh resigned from his post for more than thirty years. This rebellion was followed by a political agreement brokered by the United Nations and the Gulf Cooperation Council (M.-L. Clausen, 2017). President Saleh handed over his powers to vice president Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi in 2012 in exchange for immunity.

The agreement brokered by the United Nations and the GCC also monitors the political transition process by holding the Comprehensive National Dialogue Conference (Elayah et al., 2020). The conference aims to reach a broad national consensus on a new political order, a revised constitution, and the unity of the armed forces. However, from the outset, the GCC plan faced difficulties. The transition agreement, in practice, alienated other parties such as the Houthis, Hiraq, and the protesters. Meanwhile, President Hadi faces other challenges, including attacks from the Houthis and the southern opposition movement. The attack was followed by a movement to boycott the 2012 presidential election. The initiative of both the UN and the GCC was seen as a power-sharing agreement that only paid attention to Yemen's political elite and ignored historically marginalized groups (Burke, 2012). Meanwhile, the economic situation and political turmoil that occurred in the country did not bring any change. In June 2014, the political transition process began to fall apart. In September, the Houthi rebels succeeded in occupying the capital, Sana'a (Ghobari, 2014).

The capital takeover was followed by forcing President Hadi to resign from his position. The Houthis subsequently confined President Hadi for nearly a month in Sana'a. After briefly fleeing to Aden, the old capital of South Yemen, Hadi declared that the Houthi takeover was illegal (BBC, 2015). The escalation of the conflict resulted in forming a Saudi-led coalition in March 2015 to support President Hadi. Members of the coalition include Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Senegal, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. The coalition gets support from arms sales and intelligence sharing from countries such as the United States, Britain, and France. The Saudi-led coalition also carried out an effective air campaign, increasing the scale of the conflict (Parveen, 2019).

The protracted escalation of the conflict has killed at least 10,000 Yemenis in fighting, with more than 40,000 casualties overall in 2018. Save The Children even estimates that at least 50,000 children died in 2017. Airstrikes carried out by the Saudi-led coalition have caused nearly two-thirds of Civilian deaths. UNOCHA also estimates that more than 3 million Yemenis have fled their homes to other parts of the country. Two hundred eighty thousand people have sought asylum in other countries such as Somalia and Djibouti. In addition to the lack of food and shelter, hundreds of thousands of Yemenis have difficulties meeting access to health care. The humanitarian crisis in Yemen is recorded as one of the worst in the world. The UN also indicated that the Houthis and Hadi coalition forces had violated international humanitarian law by regularly attacking civilians (OCHA, 2021).

In response to the political and economic turmoil and the protracted humanitarian crisis, consultations and dialogue efforts between the conflicting parties were carried out. In April 2015, the United Nations appointed Islamic Ould Cheikh Ahmed to lead in facilitating the completion of United Nations Resolution 2216. This resolution requires the parties to the conflict to continue the political process, calls for the Houthis to withdraw from the legitimate government unconditionally, and establishes an arms embargo against the Houthis. And Saleh loyalists. Unfortunately, four separate rounds of negotiations run from 2015 to 2016 have yielded no tangible results. Peaking in 2018, peace talks between the Yemeni government and the rebels reached an agreement in Sweden. The peace talks were attended by representatives of the internationally recognized government backed by the Saudi military coalition and the Iran-backed Houthis. The conversation is informal in a working group mode. The talks

led and supported directly by the United Nations aimed to end the civil war that lasted for four years in Yemen (Seche, 2019).

After going on for approximately one week, peace talks resulted in the Stockholm Agreement, which was legally agreed upon by the two parties to the conflict in December 2018. There are at least three crucial points in the Stockholm agreement. First, *ceasefire and redeployment of Forces, Facilitating the Movement of Humanitarian Aid and Prisoner Swap* (UN, 2017).

The Stockholm Agreement is the first opportunity by the parties to the conflict in Yemen. This is a significant breakthrough in building the parties' trust to further the foundation of the peace process in Yemen (Al-Kahwati, 2019, hal. 4). The Stockholm agreement has been able to help the Yemeni government and the Houthi rebels to agree on terms relating to protecting human rights points. Another positive achievement came when the ceasefire in Hodeida managed to stop for almost a year. However, the overall evaluation results say that the achievement of the Stockholm agreement is minimal. The ceasefire violations continue, and all reports of the Secretary-General note that the overall humanitarian situation has not improved. In early 2020 the monitoring mission officially became disabled. Actions against each other are still happening; it is known that 116 victims fell in 2020 due to missile attacks suspected of being carried out by the Houthis (Jalal, 2020).

Several studies reported that the Stockholm agreement could not bring overall peace to Yemen. The ineffectiveness of the monitoring carried out by the United Nations, the significance of the contents of the agreement, and the dynamics created by the intervention of outsiders are assumed to be factors that caused the Stockholm agreement to run slowly and even fail. In addition to the points previously mentioned, the fragile commitment of the parties to implementing the agreement and the existence of parties who deliberately reneged on the agreement's commitments became other vital topics that were widely discussed in the agreement's failure. Therefore, through the following research the author will explore the research statement of why the 2018 UN-Led Stockholm Agreement in Yemen was complex or even failed to be implemented. The analysis in the following research will then focus on the rhetoric of the behavior of the parties who deliberately undermine the commitment of the agreement.

## **Literature Review**

Several studies discuss the dynamics of the prolonged conflict in Yemen. The first article, entitled *Political gaining and violent conflict: shifting elite alliances as the decisive factor in Yemen's transformation* by Maraëike Transfeld (2016) examines the actors involved in Yemen's transformation and the dynamics that develop between these actors in influencing the political order. The turbulence of the conflict is further exacerbated when regional and international elites pursue mutual interests in the country by providing or withholding financial cycles and other types of support. Next, a study entitled *From Fragile to Collapsed Statehood: The Case of the Republic of Yemen* by Jörg Michael Dostal (2021) describes how local, regional, and global factors overwhelm Yemeni actors. Dostal also emphasized that foreign intervention has exacerbated the pre-existing national crisis.

After getting an overview of the dynamics of the conflict, the following articles will provide an overview of the prospects and peace efforts that have been and are currently being carried out by Yemen, especially regarding the 2018 UN-Led Stockholm Agreement. It begins with an analysis by Júlia Palik entitled *Watchdogs of Pause: The Challenges of Ceasefire Monitoring in Yemen* (2021). In her study, Palik provides an understanding of the UN monitoring mission and highlights the obstacles faced in assisting the implementation of the ceasefire, one of the points of the 2018 UN-Led Stockholm Agreement. In her writings, Julia Palik said that the parties' involvement in the conflict was one of the most important factors influencing the possibility of implementing the ceasefire agreement in Yemen. So

that not only failed in continuing the ceasefire mission but based on the observations, this paper also illustrates that The UN-Led Stockholm Agreement has been running very slowly.

The studies above show that several factors hinder the peace process in Yemen, one of which is the Houthis and other external actors (regional and international). Some of the literature above has succeeded in providing a detailed description of the dynamics of the Yemen conflict and the causal factors of the actors involved in the conflict. Several articles have also provided directions regarding the ongoing peace process and efforts, such as the 2018 UN-Led Stockholm Agreement. However, unfortunately, none of these studies have specifically analyzed the factors that hinder the peace process in Yemen, especially from the perspective of the parties involved. So that the following research will conduct an in-depth exploration of the parties involved in the conflict and the peace process in Yemen; furthermore, the following article will explore whether these parties can be indicated as obstacles or even destroyers of the peace process in Yemen. By using a spoiler approach, this paper will also specifically observe the behavior of these parties and their background interests.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

The peace process is a more intensive peace initiative involving the main parties in a prolonged conflict. The Peace Process is usually considered far more important than isolated peace initiatives. The resulting quality is usually much more systemic, allowing it to withstand some stresses. The peace process usually begins with a public announcement of a ceasefire. Once started, experienced negotiators determine the rules and order of further negotiations. Unfortunately, the peace process is often faced with strategic deception from committed parties. Other threats are also present from loot and hostile neighbors that pose new threats to the presence of spoilers (Darby & Mac Ginty, 2003).

Talking about spoilers, this term will usually appear when a peace process or peace agreement collapses. Practitioners will usually suspect that spoilers are destroying the peace process. As one of the foremost observers of the concept of spoilers, Stephen Stedman explains that spoilers are leaders and parties who believe that the peace that emerges from negotiations threatens their strengths, worldviews, and interests. The party uses violence to undermine efforts to achieve its interests. Spoiler motives vary widely, including politics, economics, social culture to security. In his research, Stedman explains that the peace process creates spoilers (Stedman, 1997).

Stedman then explained that spoilers could be inside or outside the peace process. Spoilers in the peace process are those who tend to use stealth strategies. Meanwhile, spoilers that are outside the peace process often use violent strategies. In one case, the presence of spoilers can usually be more than one party.

However, Stedman's views on the definition and concept of spoilers have received criticism and have developed from several other peace observers. First, the criticism comes from the point of view of the definition and scope of the party, which can be stated as a spoiler. In this case, Newman and Richmond are here to offer a broader perspective on those labeled as spoilers. The definition they provide explains that spoilers are groups that actively seek to hinder, delay or undermine conflict resolution for various reasons. Newman and Richmond also include actors who are geographically outside the conflict but are interested in influencing the peace process by supporting spoilers in it (Newman & Richmond, 2008, hal. 1-7).

Second, criticism comes from Stedman's view that a party can be considered a spoiler if they use violence. Although in his research, Stedman later classified the position of spoilers in the peace process and said that spoilers could use a tacit strategy, this perspective is considered ambiguous by some experts. Zahar then gives a different perspective by stating that violence is only one of several tactics used by

spoilers (Zahar, 2003). This criticism is made clear by the statements of Newton and Richmond, who explain that spoilers can also use non-violent methods to stop or delay the peace process.

The explanation regarding the concept of spoilers then develops in the context of whether spoilers exist to oppose peace in general or only to certain peace that they feel can threaten their existence. This was later answered by Fendius Elman, who said that in most cases of armed conflict, the preferred outcome of the warring parties is not only the reconciliation of what was negotiated but also the imposition of their terms in the final agreement. What should then be emphasized is that the presence of spoilers is not always against the peace. Spoiler parties may want peace in another form where their interests are better represented (Stedman, 2000).

## **Method**

In this study, qualitative research methods will be used. Qualitative research aims to describe and analyze a person's perceptions and thoughts individually or in groups. Through several descriptions, the aim is to find an explanation that will lead to a conclusion (Hamdi, 2014, hal. 18). In researching why the 2018 UN-Led Stockholm Agreement was challenging to implement or even failed to achieve the agreement's contents, the data collection technique used was to conduct a literature study. Through this technique, research data is obtained through literature in books, academic journals, online bulletins and articles on the internet that can be accounted for academically.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Parties Involved in the Yemen Conflict**

The parties involved in the Yemen conflict are an exciting aspect to be explored as a turning point in this research. Not much literature says that the Yemen conflict is a multipolar conflict when viewed from the involvement of the parties' components in it. At least, in the case of Yemen, an explanation of the actors involved can start from the key players that significantly influence the dynamics of the Yemen conflict, as briefly described below;

**Table 1. Key Players of the Yemen Conflict**

<b>Actor</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Threats/Fears</b>	<b>Method</b>
<b>Government of the Republic of Yemen</b>	Broken authority, failure of national dialogue, Houthi insurgency, and overthrow of power	Implementation of National Dialogue, Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2201 & 2204, Yemeni territorial integrity.	Preserving the Status Quo	Request military assistance and support local tribes and militias
<b>Houthi</b>	Political marginalization, 2011 Gulf Cooperation Council Framework	Preserving Status Quo, Stronger Position in negotiations	Position in the International, lack of legitimacy and loss of territory.	Form a Supreme Political Court, Build tactical alliances, expand recruitment network, merge Sunni groups

				and crack down on all enemies.
<b>Southern Movement</b>	Southern marginalization, land grabbing, corruption, economic mismanagement, division of leadership	Power sharing between North and South Yemen, calls for equality under the law	Continued marginalization, rejected demands	Established the Southern Transitional Council (STC), Empowered elite forces in the South, improved relations with regional and international powers.
<b>AQAP</b>	US Counterterrorism campaign, Houthi war against Sunni tribes	Ideology and Jihad	Expansion of counterterrorism campaign, loss of territory	Calls for Sunni unity, exploitation of the Houthi resistance against Sunnis, and exploitation of the power vacuum.

*Note.* Foreign Actors in Yemen: The History, the Politics and the Future (Sanaa Center, 2021)

The table above briefly summarizes the four actors indicated to be key players in the Yemen conflict. Although the previous literature agrees that the Yemen conflict was entirely played by the Hadi and the Houthis, during the conflict, it is undeniable that external parties began to get involved and have significant influence. Not many observers also describe the war in Yemen as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Saudi Arabia's involvement in Yemen has been going on for a long time. Saudi Arabia's general focus is on ensuring the security of its southern border and preventing instability in Yemen from interfering with Saudi interests (Brehony, 2020).

As for Iran, the consistency of its influence is considered relatively low compared to Saudi Arabia. However, Iran still considers that its limited investment in Yemen brings exciting results. The rhetoric of Iran's involvement in Yemen can be seen in their intervention with the Houthis (Ramadhan, 2020). Both Iran and the Houthis share anti-status quo interests. The Houthis' anger towards the political order and the alliance of Saudi Arabia and the United States involved in Yemen was welcomed by Iran, which explicitly rejected the two countries' domination in the Middle East order (Juneau, 1944).

Furthermore, the involvement of external actors in the Yemen conflict can also be seen in the intervention carried out by the UAE and the United States. The UAE played an essential role in providing military assistance, donating around ten thousand ground troops (Dogan-Akkas, 2020). Unlike the UAE, the United States' presence in Yemen is generally part of the US relationship with Saudi Arabia. This is closely related to the rise of AQAP in the Arabian Peninsula. The US and Saudi Arabia also work together to establish a military assistance mission for the Yemeni government (Robinson, 2021).

## Peace Process in Yemen: Un Led Stockholm Agreement

### The UN-Led Stockholm Agreement 2018

To continue efforts to respond and prevent the escalation of the protracted conflict between the Yemeni government and the Houthi rebels, the United Nations in 2018 again started seeking peace talks meeting for the parties to the conflict in Yemen. During this period Martin Griffiths was appointed as Special Envoy of the UN Security Council to direct all peace talks for Yemen (Dashela A. , 2021).

Peace talks began by bringing the Yemeni government and the Houthi rebels to meet in Rimbo City, Stockholm (Seche, 2019). In short, after going through a negotiation process for approximately ten days, on December 13, 2018, the peace talks meeting succeeded in encouraging the Yemeni government and the Houthis to sign an agreement. The agreement, known as the Stockholm agreement, was agreed upon in Sweden and ratified by the UN Security Council under resolution 2451 (Crisis Group, 2019).

There are three main components of the Stockholm agreement. First is the agreement regarding ceasefires in Hodeida, Salif, and Ras Issa. In this regard, the parties are also committed to establishing a Coordination Committee for the Redeployment of Troops led by the United Nations. The parties are also committed to removing fortifications and stopping military aid, de-mining Hodeida Harbor, and most importantly, strengthening the UN presence in the cities of Hodeida, Salif, and Ras Issa. This strengthening of the UN's position was further realized by establishing a UN Mission to support the Hodeida agreement, namely UNMHA, through Security Council resolution 2452 (Fakirah, 2020, hal 271).

Second is the agreement regarding the executive mechanism to activate the prisoner exchange agreement (OSESGY, 2018). Under this commitment, the parties agreed to provide the ICRC with a final list of detainees, unilaterally detained people, and those arrested in connection with the attack. The third is the agreement regarding the Taiz understanding. At this point of commitment, the parties agreed to form a Joint committee to deal with the situation in Taiz, including direct supervision of representatives of the conflict parties and civil society in the region. In addition to the three critical points above, both the Yemeni government and the Houthi rebels agreed to establish a humanitarian corridor and meet again under the auspices of the United Nations in January 2019 to discuss the siege of Taiz in future negotiations with representatives of Yemeni civil society.

Exactly one year later, OSESGY (Office of The Special Envoy of The Secretary-General for Yemen) issued a report regarding the implementation of the Stockholm agreement (OSESGY, 2019). The report points out that at some points, the Stockholm agreement was successful in preventing attacks that could potentially turn into large-scale conflicts. But unfortunately, some of the areas that are important points of discussion in Stockholm, such as Hodeida and Taiz, describe that these two areas are still the deadliest centers for children in Yemen due to the ongoing fighting. The Save the Children report even regretted that the Stockholm agreement failed to bring stability to the region (Jassar, 2019). This situation has made critics speculate that the Stockholm agreement has divided the Yemen peace process by focusing on one line and has neglected many vital aspects, including the existence of spoilers originating from within the agreement process or even those arising from outside the agreement process. The provisions and analysis of these spoilers will be analyzed in detail in the next section.

## **The 2018 Stockholm Agreement Implementation Challenges: Analysis of the Spoiler Problems Approach**

### **Identification of Spoilers in The Stockholm Yemen Deal**

The first part of this research has provided an overview of the concept of spoilers in a peace process. It can be seen that it is challenging to find a single concept regarding the definition of a spoiler. Several definitions and understandings of parties can be regarded as spoilers in a peace process or agreement. However, this study agrees that spoilers or spoiling are groups or parties that actively use various tactics to hinder, delay or simply weaken the conflict resolution process for various reasons. In the case that occurred in Yemen, where there are many parties involved either in the conflict or the peace process, if identified using a definitional point of view or indicators characterized by the concept of spoilers, there will be several parties who can be designated as spoilers.

Regarding this point of view, some observers even said that all parties to the conflict could be categorized as spoilers. But only those that are strong and tend to be real threats can be said to be spoilers. So related to the case in the Stockholm agreement, the main party who will be identified as a spoiler is the Houthi rebels. Several matching indicators encourage justification for the hypothesis that the Houthis are spoilers who caused the Stockholm agreement in Yemen to be implemented slowly or even failed in some commitments.

Where right on December 13, 2018, after going through a consultation process under the auspices of the United Nations, the Yemeni government and the Houthis officially agreed on an agreement. The first identification of the Houthis as spoilers, in this case, can be started by looking at the position of the Houthis based on the concept of spoilers. Based on Stedman's explanation, the identification of spoiler positions depends on whether a group is part of the peace negotiations (inside) or not included in the peace negotiation process (outside). In this case, the Houthis can be categorized as inside spoilers because they are a natural part of the conflict process and the Stockholm agreement. Since Martin Griffiths, the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, announced that peace talks would be held in Sweden at the end of 2018, besides the Yemeni government, the Houthis are the other main party who will contribute to every consultation process until an agreement is reached. Furthermore, the Houthis are also a party to be considered and those responsible for all commitments resulting from the peace talks. After identifying the position of spoilers, the next step is to identify those related to the motives or goals, which then encourage the party to become or have the potential to become spoilers in a peace process. This identification is then followed by observations regarding the strategies used by the spoilers and the impact of the spoilers' behavior on the peace process.

### **The Motivations and Goals of the Houthis as Spoilers**

In terms of motivation and objectives, the following section will also explain why certain parties oppose a peace process. Referring to the results of Stedman's analysis, one of the fundamental reasons parties can become spoilers is because the agreement or peace process threatens their existence and interests. Newman and Richmond later clarified this, who said that the main reason the group used the spoiler strategy was that the spoiler concept often worked. These actions can achieve tangible results and cause a peace process or agreement to be reviewed. In line with the development of spoilers in the peace process, many hypotheses describe the reasons for a party to become spoilers. However, looking at the phenomenon that occurred to the Houthis in the Yemen peace process, it is agreed that at least two factors encourage the parties in a peace process to become spoilers. It has to do with ideology and fear.

First an ideology based on actions to combat the enemy. Usually, a group leader based on an ideology such as the following will not tolerate the peace process even though it may benefit them. Groups like this usually also think that joining a peace process is the same as committing suicide or



damaging the political image of their group. In the case of the Houthis, ideology is one of the factors that influence their actions and attitudes while maintaining their group's existence in both conflict and peace processes. This movement emerged from the Zaydi Shia revivalist group led by Hussein al-Houthi in the 1990s. The Houthis' political ambitions are rooted in a strong religious belief that only Ahl al-Bayt, a religious term referring to the lineage of the Prophet Muhammad, has the right to rule. Muslims (Albloshi, 2016). The Yemeni term for Ahl al-Bayt is Hashemites or Sadah, and the Houthi leaders belong to that caste. In that context, the Houthis were motivated by a desire to restore the Imamate, a theocracy in which the Hashim ruled northern Yemen for hundreds of years until it was overthrown in 1962 (Al-Hamdani & Lackner, n.d.).

The Houthis' vision for Yemen is closely linked to their theological understanding of Islam and the extreme interpretation of a particular branch within the Zaydi sect. Referring to the beliefs and jurisprudence of the Zaydi understanding that the Houthis have, this group views themselves as the only legitimate authority to represent Yemen. This understanding expressly rejects democracy and the peaceful exchange of power through elections. In the political thought of the Houthi movement, democracy is not needed in Yemen, which is then considered to be one of the root causes of the current problem. Hussein al-Houthi also rejects pluralism in any sense.

(Dashela & Alakhali, 2021).

Several Houthi supporters stressed that their anger against the U.S. and Israel was directed at the American and Israeli governments. This, widely known as the Ansar Allah movement, does not see itself as a political party and tries to avoid the negative connotations of hizbiyya (partisanship). The Houthis also have the group's slogan, which reads, "God is great death to the U.S., death to Israel, curse the Jews, and victory for Islam." For the Houthis, the slogan does not directly imply that they want anyone's death. However, this slogan is more interpreted as opposing the intervention of the U.S. government or Israel (Heistein & Stoin, 2021).

This basis of understanding and ideology has led the Houthis to claim that they are more entitled to knowledge and religious, political, and social positions in Yemen. The entire population of Yemen is ordered to serve and submit to their understanding. This basic understanding also prompted the Houthis to devote all their capabilities to take over the Yemeni Government by force and practice various forms of abuse. For the Houthis, the state of war has become commonplace in the group dynamics and their movements. This group even sees decades of conflict as a blessing (Alziady, n.d.). The Houthis are expected to continue recruiting warfighters, including taking advantage of the existence of child groups. The ideology that drives this revolutionary mentality is thought to have triggered the group's military campaign. The Houthis are also not expected to stop fighting until they have at least taken control of Marib, Hodeidah, and Taiz. This group also thinks that the peace agreement that has been pursued so far does not recognize the absolute right of the Houthis to rule Yemen or at least give them special status in the country's political future. Therefore, the Houthis always act to ignore all peace efforts or peace consultation efforts if the peace efforts are not in favor of their status quo proposal (Albloshi, 2016).

Second, it relates to the fear factor, which is also considered the main reason an actor in a peace process becomes a spoiler. Stedman, Newman, and Richmond categorize this fear as the fear of losing influence in war. This fear can also be related to insecurity. This is because some groups or actors are usually afraid that the peace agreement will not accommodate their interests and benefit the other party. In the case of the Houthis, apart from ideological factors, the Houthis' attitudes and actions in the peace process are also motivated by an obsession to protect the group's interests.

The interests of the Houthi movement are not only limited to the ambition to maintain the Zaydi tradition, the political role of the Hashemite elite, or merely fighting injustice and rejecting foreign interference in Yemen. Along with the growing existence of the Houthi movement, the interests of this

group also began to focus on the ambition to maintain and expand territorial and economic power. While the rhetoric of the early Houthi movement legitimized their focus on the north, it is now certain that their goal is Yemen as a whole. For the Houthis, controlling Yemen's population center alone is not enough to enable them to establish their power. Therefore they also need to control strategic centers of natural resources such as oil and gas fields in Yemen. It is this economic reality that has contributed to many of the Houthi battlefield decisions over the past few years. At least the ambitions of the Houthis are obvious as the vital point of Yemen's wealth, which has caused significant tensions with the Yemeni Government, including Marib, Hodeidah, and Taiz (Johnsen, 2021, p. 16).

This interest in controlling the territorial area and protecting financial resources is then considered to be one of the factors driving the Houthis' spoiler action in the peace effort in Yemen. The repeated peace talks in Yemen are seen as weakening the group's position in vital areas that have been the focus of the Houthis. Even in the Stockholm agreement, the Houthis were indirectly directed to transfer control to the United Nations. The situation was then deemed to be contrary to the motivations and fundamental goals of the Houthis. So to protect their interests and existence, the Houthis need to fight to maintain their existence in the conflict.

### **Identify the Houthi Strategy as a Spoiler and Its Impact**

One of Stedman's views on the concept of spoilers that has received a lot of criticism is his understanding of the use of violence as the only method used by spoilers in carrying out their mission to undermine or at least hinder the peace process. Although it was time to correct this view, several researchers later gave a different perspective by stating that there is also a non-violent method that spoilers usually apply to achieve its mission and interests. The non-violent method is not only limited to how the actor avoids meetings or negotiations but also includes the game of disseminating and sometimes providing confidential information to parties directly or indirectly involved in the conflict.

In the peace process in Yemen, especially in the case of the Stockholm agreement, the tactics used by the Houthis in hindering or undermining the peace process were not only limited to non-violent actions such as avoiding the negotiation or reneging on agreement commitments, as mentioned earlier. The strategies used by the Houthis are pretty diverse. Some studies even explain that the Houthis are known to use lethal tactics to at least prevent monitoring the Stockholm commitment (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 2021).

The strategy used by the Houthis can be seen in several behaviors, especially related to their interactions in blocking the running of various monitoring missions in the agreement area. Regarding the strategy to deal with the monitoring team, reports on the ground state that the parties to the conflict, especially the Houthis, have systematically hampered the work of monitoring teams such as UNMHA since their arrival. The Houthis had prepared a monitoring team deployment strategy long before the team arrived at the surveillance site. The Houthis are known to have prepared 43 checkpoints along the way to Hodeida (Palik, 2021). In addition to blocking the arrival of the monitoring team in the area agreed upon in the Stockholm agreement, the Houthis are assumed to be actively undermining the surveillance process by refusing the entire inspection and interrogation process, both regarding the intensity of the use of weapons and the spread of mines. The Houthis also avoid all interrogations regarding light fire in surveillance areas that occur periodically. In January 2019, the Houthis were reported to have fired on one of the surveillance members (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 2021).

In the case of a ceasefire commitment, there is no public report released directly by UNMHA. However, the results of an interview with a mission member were successfully released and provided a bleak picture of the Houthis' compliance with the ceasefire commitment. One mission member estimated that between March and April 2019, there were approximately 180 ceasefire violations. From August

2019 onwards, the Houthis stepped up their military operation, the so-called "victory from God," on the Kitaf wa Al-Boqe'e axis in Sa'ada Governorate, where they held several positions.

The Yemeni government, backed by modern surveillance drones, has provided the United Nations with precise coordinates, times, and other details regarding various violations of the ceasefire by the Houthis. Under UN resolutions, the Houthis must evacuate Hodeida, al-Salif, and Ras Isa ports. However, the video described by the surveillance team shows that some of the Houthi forces remained in the stated area even though some of them were disguised as coast guard officers. Overall, the coalition accuses the insurgency of carrying out 313 attacks between 18 December and 2 January. The attack left 25 dead and 197 troops injured. Yemeni government forces reported that they had been hit with 120 mm mortar rounds 95 times on 2 January, along with 21 Katyusha rocket attacks and 4 Howitzer strikes (Rabih, 2021). This action contravenes the terms of the Stockholm agreement and Resolution 2451(Williams, 2020).

The previous discussion has succeeded in explaining that the Houthis have hampered and even damaged the implementation process of the Stockholm agreement. The Houthis not only obstructed the monitoring of the Stockholm commitments but also directly used violence and threats to thwart all processes of monitoring the commitments to the agreement. The behavior of the Houthis has not only damaged the agreement's existence but has also exacerbated the humanitarian situation in Yemen. On the other hand, this has significantly impacted the condition of Yemen as a whole.

First, the fact to note is that the Houthis have succeeded in thwarting the original goal of holding the historic meeting in Sweden to improve the alarming humanitarian situation in Yemen. The Houthis are known to have blocked half of the United Nations' aid delivery program and cut billions of dollars in foreign aid. The Houthis withhold visas and permits for supplies for UN humanitarian aid missions to move through rebel-held areas. This resulted in a long delay in the entry of humanitarian aid to needy areas. Nearly 300,000 pregnant and lactating mothers and children under five have not received nutritional supplements for more than six months because of the Houthis. In another example, the Houthi authorities, for months, delayed permits to distribute 2,000 tonnes of food estimated to be enough to feed 160,000 people in the Aslam district. The reality on the ground has succeeded in showing that the Stockholm agreement failed to bring Yemen out of the situation as a country with the worst humanitarian conditions in the world. Ten million people in Yemen are on the brink of starvation, and 80% of the 29 million population is said to be in dire need of assistance. More than 3 million people have been displaced following a cholera epidemic that killed hundreds of people. In addition, at least 2.2 million children under five years are still suffering from severe malnutrition (Michael, 2020).

The violations committed by the Houthis, especially related to the ceasefire commitment, have also worsened the humanitarian condition in Yemen. A new wave of violence was declared to have occurred again in several vital points, especially the Hodeidah area, which became one of the particular concerns of the Stockholm agreement. Two years since the signing of the agreement, precisely in December 2020, data attach that more than a thousand people (1,249) have been maimed or killed by the armed conflict in Hodeidah. This figure continues to increase to 5,267, or the equivalent of 7 civilian casualties every day. In 2020, there was an increase of up to 40 percent in armed attacks that managed to damage public facilities such as health facilities, markets, and agricultural fields. The Stockholm Agreement, which initially became the real hope of civilians for the humanitarian condition of Yemen, has, in fact, not been able to bring about significant changes(Jassar, 2019).

In line with the explanation of the development of the concept of spoilers, it can then be seen whether the presence of the Houthis as spoilers in the Stockholm agreement was intended to oppose peace in general or only as a form of expansion to obtain peace in other forms where their interests are better represented. From several explanations related to the factors that caused the Houthis to be indicated as spoilers, both ideology and fear, and the strategy to the impact applied to the two objectives above, it can

be seen that the Houthis spoiler is more directed to the second goal. The presence of the Houthis as a spoiler is basically to continue the course of the war so that their group's vision and the program can be carried out successfully. This can be evidenced by how the Houthi leaders played up the offer of a meeting for peace talks and several times made an offer to end the blockade and the Arab coalition airstrikes against its forces as a precondition for agreeing to peace talks. All the strategies used by the Houthis can be seen as a step to protect the existence of their ideology and interests in Yemen.

The strategy of the Houthis to continue to focus large-scale attacks on strategic areas even after the Stockholm commitment was agreed upon is seen as not only destroying the local security infrastructure of the Yemeni government and triggering the fear of other factions in the conflict field. More than that, this is aimed at increasing the narrative of people's distrust of the government because they are considered unable to provide adequate protection during the conflict. The ongoing attacks also aim to increase the threat to their main faction in the Stockholm agreement, namely the Yemeni government and its supporters such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. All of these actions lead to their ultimate goal of maintaining the existence of the Houthis as the dominant actor who has a superior position in the conflict, peace negotiations, and Yemen as a whole.

This is evidenced by the recently released fact that the UN-led deal is being actively reconfigured to cater to the interests of the Houthis. The Houthis are considered successful in putting tremendous pressure on Martin Griffiths to accommodate the interests of the Houthis to protect the deal from absolute failure. Griffiths has made several unilateral concessions to the Houthis, notably by delaying the implementation timeline for a gradual troop withdrawal in Hodeidah and ignoring the Houthis' stubbornness on Taiz's understanding to keep Stockholm alive. The UN also ignored the advice of General Patrick Cammaert, appointed by the UN Security Council, to oversee the implementation of the ceasefire agreement. Cammaert, who was eventually replaced, criticized the Houthis for refusing to reopen the Hodeidah-Sana'a humanitarian corridor and carrying out a clumsy ruse in which the Houthis pretended to hand over control of the city to the Yemeni coast guard, who were later

## ***Conclusion***

The Stockholm agreement, which was optimistically predicted to be a significant breakthrough in building the parties' trust and the foundation of the Yemen peace process, has fallen into a stalemate and failed again. After some time of signing, several violations were reported. Sporadic fighting continues, and reports of violence in both the areas discussed in the commitments keep coming. Human conditions are considered not to improve. The following research has seen that the presence of spoilers that intentionally undermined the peace agreement was one of the factors in the failure of the Stockholm agreement.

Referring to the spoiler concept introduced by Stedman and his successors, the Houthis are the first to be assumed as spoilers in this study. Ideology and fear became the basis and motivation for the Houthis to take both violent and non-violent actions as a strategy to undermine or even thwart Stockholm's commitments. This study also sees that the existence of the Houthis as spoilers is not to oppose peace in general but to gain a bargaining position in another form where their interests are more represented. So they feel the need to continue to fight or fight until their position and mission are achieved. This study also illustrates that the Houthis' spoiler behavior has put tremendous pressure on the United Nations to accommodate their interests, one of which is by making several unilateral concessions to loosen the movement of the Houthis.

Overall, this research has illustrated that parties who intentionally undermine or renege on the agreement's commitments have contributed significantly to the failure of the implementation of the Stockholm agreement, especially in several aspects. The behavior of the parties who deliberately refuse or

act in disobedience to the agreement to protect the private interests of the group causes the cycle of conflict in Yemen to continue. Stockholm predicted as a significant breakthrough in the Yemen peace process is considered unable to improve the political, social, and humanitarian conditions in Yemen.

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