

# THE DIAGNOSING THE PATHOLOGY OF INTER-PARTY POLITICS IN TIMOR LESTE IN HONNETH'S POLITICS OF RECOGNITION

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper presents a philosophical analysis of inter-party conflict through the lens of Axel Honneth's theory of recognition. The analysis reveals that the root cause of conflict is not merely linguistic or communicative failure (as per Habermas' theory), but a lack of mutual recognition among conflicting parties. The article offers a deeper understanding of political pathology, highlighting the root causes of political conflict. Specifically, the article proposes that the conflict between parties in Timor Leste during the struggle period can be said to be a communal political conflict, which occurred due to the absence of interparty recognition as the people of Timor leste who were struggling against imperialism and colonialism. This would allow for a broader understanding of the ways in which the recognition theory can be adapted to various cultural and political contexts, identifying best practices for conflict resolution and sustainable peace-building efforts in other nations with similar historical struggles.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Timor Leste's history is marked by prolonged colonialism and conflict. After 450 years of Portuguese rule, the decolonization process in 1974-1975 saw the emergence of political parties like the Eastern Democratic Party (UDT), Fretelin (Frente Rrevolutiononara do Timor Leste Independente), and Apodeti (Popular Democratic Association of Timor) (Hill, 2000; Taylor, 1998). These parties arose in response to Portugal's recognition of East Timor's right to self-determination, offering three political options: full independence, integration with another country, or remaining with Portugal (Coelho, 2012). Smaller parties like the KOTA and Adilta parties briefly appeared but failed to sustain political influence (Taylor, 1998). Ultimately, Fretelin won the 1975 election, declared independence, and established the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste under Francisco Xavier do Amaral.

Post-election tensions between UDT, Apodeti, and Fretelin led to violent conflict, compounded by Indonesia's invasion and occupation of Timor Leste. This bloody struggle, driven by socio-political factors, reflects a deeper political pathology that undermined the shared goal of independence. Philosophically, the conflict has been analyzed through communicative and dialectical theories. Habermas' communicative theory, which emphasizes dialogue as a conflict resolution tool, has been critiqued by his student Axel Honneth. Honneth argued that Habermas' theory fails to address the fundamental issue of recognition, which goes beyond mere linguistic discourse and touches the core of unresolved tensions (Honneth, 1996). According to Honneth (1996), the recognition stage must precede communication so that intersubjectivity in the realm of communication can be achieved. And the detailed aspect that must be done is to analyze the root of the pathology that occurs with a pathological diagnosis concept. Pathological diagnosis is a detailed thing that must be done in the theory of recognition.

Departing from a pathological diagnosis, Honneth, in his theory of recognition, explained that, in general, conflicts in society are the result of the absence of recognition. There are three disrespects as a

result of the absence of recognition put forward by Honneth, namely physical humiliation, denial of social rights and destruction of specific values. In addition, in the theory of Honneth's recognition, there are three areas of recognition, namely love, legal rights, and solidarity. According to Honneth, these three recognition areas are a way to get a harmony in a society experiencing conflict.

Based on the understanding of Honneth's theory of recognition, this theory is considered relevant and able to see the basis of the internal conflict between parties that occurred in 1974-1975. Therefore, this article examined the basis of inter-party conflict or political pathology philosophically with the politics of Axel Honneth's confession. The research contribution of this article lies in its philosophical analysis of inter-party conflict, specifically through the lens of Axel Honneth's theory of recognition. By applying Honneth's concepts, the article offers a deeper understanding of political pathology, suggesting that the root cause of conflict is not merely linguistic or communicative failure (as per Habermas' theory) but a lack of mutual recognition among conflicting parties. This contribution enhances the discourse on conflict resolution by introducing a recognition-based framework to analyze and potentially address political disputes, offering a novel perspective within the context of political philosophy.

## **METHODS**

This research is a qualitative literature research, so the method used is a qualitative method. The materials and materials for this research were obtained from literature studies on conflicts between parties during the independence struggle of Timor Leste, by utilizing the research results of others from various sciences. In addition, materials and materials are also obtained from Axel Honneth's books that discuss the theory of recognition.

## **RESULTS**

### **Pathological Diagnosis**

Honneth in his discussion which focuses on socio-political issues and moral philosophy, especially about the relationship between power, recognition and respect, said that modernity is characterized by the growth of social pathologies. The growth of this social pathology wants to show that social relations in society are distorted in their development caused by the dominance of instrumental rationality. In response to this, Honneth revived the idea of rational praxis by reviving an intersubjective paradigm based on recognition (Runesi, 2015).

In the history of thought, various analyses have been found on the causes of social pathologies, such as Rousseau who said that pathology occurs because humans are fundamentally unequal, Hegel about the deviation in the modern era related to subjective freedom caused by modern formal law and the economy of civil society, Marx about the alienation of the workers caused by the capitalist model of production, Nietzsche on the concept of nihilism, which is a skeptical attitude towards all values due to cultural decline, and Hannah Arendt who discusses destructive conditions in the public sphere that result in the inhibition of the actualization of individual freedom in communication and practice due to the social formation of totalitarians (Zurn & Honneth, 2015).

The formulation of social theory depends on how to diagnose pathologies rooted in specific rules, structures, practices in society and paying attention to the historical dimension of a development. By following these principles, Honneth called one of the social pathologies instrumental rationality. Instrumental ratios are a technocratic way of thinking that is based on modern economic and technological advances. To diagnose social pathology, other disciplines are needed such as symptomatology (the science that examines the symptoms of changes, especially destructive symptoms) and etiology (the study of the causes of a disease). By exposing these destructive events, it is possible to criticize the various social shortcomings that occur in society (Beck, 1992; Dafermos, 2024; Flett et al., 2022; Kasperson & Pijawka, 2022; Marino & Faas, 2020).

### **Pathology of Rationality**

In the history of thought, the form of criticism has always used normative criteria to identify social injustices that have not been effective in exposing and dismantling social depravity (Cech, 2013; Sullivan, 2020; Tinker & Gray, 2003; Valencia, 2010; Watts & Hodgson, 2019). The reason is because it turns out that injustice is embedded in every particular frame of society. In contrast to that, critical theory thinkers have their own position, namely by maintaining the relationship between theory and history in the horizon of rationality (Delanty & Harris, 2021; McGuirk, 2021; Renault, 2020; Strydom,

2023; Vogelmann, 2021). For Honneth, we are able to understand history through praxis and conceptual opposition between the effectiveness and deficit of the working ratio between the pathological and the non-pathological.

They maintain an internal connection between pathological relationships and the condition of social rationality, which explains their interest in the historical process of the actualization of reason. First, I detail the ethical core contained in Critical Theory's idea of a socially deficient rationality. Second, I outline how capitalism can be understood as a cause of such a deformation of social rationality. Third and last, I establish the connection of practice to the goal of overcoming the social suffering caused by deficient rationality (Honneth, 1996).

Critical theory thinkers point out that the problems that are increasingly transparent in society are due to the influence of the rationality deficit. The pathology of rationality means the reduction of conditions for a good social life or conditions that allow each subject to not be able to develop themselves according to their ideals (Runesi, 2014: 5). For Honneth, the pathology has been embedded in society so there is a need for rationality reform in that society. And to end the suffering due to the rationality deficit, a universal ratio is needed that is always helped by adequate scientific insight to create a meaningful life. Universal ratios provide an ethical principle that must be possessed collectively, as a benchmark for each subject's actions in developing themselves (Honneth, 1996).

### **Identity Pathology**

Integrity is a form of individual and social self-depiction. In the moral category, the integrity of the human self sometimes experiences obstacles in its realization (Meyer, 2018). This is due to the form of disrespect that dominates human social relations. Disrespect becomes a negative fact that fades intersubjective relations and kills the dimension of recognition (Honneth, 1996). Honneth emphatically states that "*insult*" in its various forms is an act of denial of recognition. Furthermore, disrespect is a form of injustice because it hinders freedom with destructive potential. An act that hurts human dignity. In this sense, identity identity contains an irrevocable relational empirical indication between self-integrity and recognition of others.

Identity pathology directly slows down the pace of the building of recognition relationships. The pathology is categorized into three forms or types, namely physical humiliation, denial of the subject's legal rights and destruction of the specific values of social groups which also have an impact on the degradation of dignity (Honneth, 1996).

### **Honneth's Philosophy of Confession**

Honneth was a philosopher who is often referred to as the successor of the Frankfurt School or the third generation of critical theory. The major themes of his writing projects are talking about power, recognition and respect, and what is the core or main point in his writing is intersubjectual recognition and recognition in social relations (Aziz, 2016).

Recognition is one thing that is important to know. In the life of society as well as the nation and state, people will struggle to be recognized as they are. The struggle is carried out as individuals and groups. According to Axel Honneth, to overcome or solve socio-political problems and so on in community life, the important thing that must exist is recognition. Therefore, recognition became a very important thing in Honneth's thinking.

Honneth's theory of recognition or recognition actually criticizes Habermas' communicative theory which prioritizes communication in solving problems or problems. According to Honneth, Habermas's critical project with his theory of communicative action limits human beings only to the dimension of their rationality and forgets other dimensions of the human being, especially the aspect of recognition. To that end, Honneth takes a different direction that Kompridis calls an "ethical turn" in critical theory (Runesi, 2015).

The theory of recognition developed by Honneth was influenced by Hegel. Honneth reconstituted three forms of recognition that determine the subject's self-development, namely love as a foundation for the growth of self-confidence, legal/legal rights that aim to support respect for oneself and others, and solidarity that supports individual confidence in society (Honneth, 1996).

Honneth places love or the subjective realm as the first stage in reciprocal recognition, because for Honneth through love each individual or subject seeks to achieve his or her own needs, namely there is an interdependence of one subject with another. In a social context, love can create or build a

harmonious social life, without discrimination. According to Honneth, love is the first step that must be experienced by the subject before pursuing rights and solidarity.

The objective realm or right has the purpose of recognizing that every individual or *sujeek* who lives in a certain community has the right and obligation to be recognized as the same person as the others. Implicitly, Honneth wants to explain the freedom and equality of each individual. Furthermore, the social realm or solidarity presupposes an attitude of mutual recognition between individuals or groups from the same or different backgrounds. Honneth explained that each individual deserves to be valued based on concrete characteristics or their traits and abilities (Aziz, 2016).

According to Honneth, recognition is one thing that must exist in every individual or group in order to get a harmony in the life of society and the state by overcoming various challenges or obstacles in achieving recognition or recognition. According to Honneth, identity pathology is an obstacle to the rate of recognition which is categorized into three types, namely physical humiliation, denial of the subject's legal rights, and destruction of the specific values of social groups which also have an impact on the degradation of dignity (Honneth, 1996).

Getting recognition is not an easy thing. There needs to be a struggle, namely a struggle for recognition in the individual and social realms, and certainly in the international realm as a legally recognized country. Recognition in the individual and social realm occurs when the three stages of recognition, which Honneth calls love, rights and solidarity, are passed. For Honneth, recognition of the individual realm occurs when the individual receives positively recognition from others of character, the ability in his position to eat the individual can practice in the same way to construct the correct understanding of the self. Mutual recognition characterizes the entire distance of intersubjective relations between parents and children, youth and women, men and women, consumers and producers, between workers, between individuals of different races and tribes and between individuals in civil society. Recognition of the social realm as a reciprocal movement out, touches the social sphere and has a gradation in the order such as the family, social groups and the state (Honneth, 1996).

## **Analysis of the Roots of Political Pathology between Political Parties**

### ***The Plurality of Political Ideologies and Political Interests***

Plurality of views is an inevitable reality today. Various views color the political stage ranging from religious issues, ideology, ethnicity, and so on. All countries in this hemisphere, especially those that adhere to the concept of democracy, highly uphold the values of pluralism. Differences in views and ideologies are one thing that always colors the wheels of democratic government. In addition to the plurality of views and ideologies, the plurality of political interests also always exists in every group and individual in a country. In fact, this occupies the first position when juxtaposed with the plurality of views and ideologies, because political interests are often the trigger for the birth of differences in views and ideologies that can lead to conflicts, both internal and external. Moreover, the plurality of ideologies and political interests exists during the struggle to achieve freedom or independence to become a country.

In a country inhabited by various backgrounds, be it ethnicity, culture, language, ethnicity, interests, and so on, ideally it can give birth to harmony. This harmony is achieved through an attitude of mutual need and recognition as one nation and state that fights for and maintains national unity, but the reality is that something ideal is difficult to achieve. The main problem is when various differences in background and political interests are played to get recognition in the midst of social or state life. This can create conflict or chaos if not responded to with a critical attitude.

Conflict is a thing that often occurs in the life of society and the state, especially people who are in a period of struggle to achieve independence. In this context, the thing that triggers the conflict is the political struggle of interests and ideologies in the struggle echoed in the social relations of the community. Timor Leste is one example of a country experiencing conflicts like this, where there was a conflict between parties during the struggle for independence. This conflict between parties has become a history in the struggle of the people of Timor Leste that will not be forgotten.

Based on various sources and categorical analysis, the resolution of the inter-party conflict in East Timor in 1974-1975 can be said to be a conflict that took the violent path for resolution. This can be seen from forms of violence such as murder, destruction, expulsion, arson and so on. In Honneth's view, such violent events can give sufficient reason for the importance of recognition in political life. Recognition is a solution to conflict resolution between certain groups.



Conflict resolution by violence can be said to be an impasse in thinking because of egocentrism as in Machievelli and Hobbes' ideas about self-preservation (Honneth, 1996). According to Honneth, the idea of self-preservation is egocentrism, in the sense that social or political considerations are present after all forms of self-interest are met. Furthermore, the struggle for self-preservation makes it possible to provoke violence. On an individual level, Hobbes called it *homo homini lupus* (werewolf for his fellowmen), while on a social level it was called *bellum omnes contra omnia* (all against all). Based on Hobbes and Marchievelli's interpretation, the conflict between parties in East Timor can be said to be a struggle to maintain oneself and more than that, it is a struggle to gain recognition with the criteria of *competitio* or competition or competition, *defentio* or defense and *Gloria* or victory.

The events of the conflict between parties in East Timor during the struggle made clear Honneth's intention of the importance of recognition. The latent conflict that had been pent-up for a long time due to the politics of interest finally surfaced. Starting from political and ideological differences that stem from the absence of individual or community awareness of differences to a large-scale conflict that swallows many victims which is often referred to by many people as a civil war between the people of Timor Leste during the struggle. In the following, the author will look at several things that result in conflicts between parties in the plurality of political ideologies and political plurality of interests.

### ***Political Parties as 'Identity'***

The position of political parties and their ideologies in Timor Leste during the struggle was at the point of radicalism that led to conflict. This can be categorized as a social pathology, which takes the form of violence that costs many lives. As is known, political parties were born to realize an idea that the people are a factor that needs to be included in the political process. It is through this political party that the people participate in fighting and channeling their aspirations or interests (Budiharjo, 1985), not as a means of fighting by violent means to achieve a victory in fulfilling the political interests of a group.

The political battle between parties in East Timor that culminates in conflict can be interpreted as a mistake in understanding the meaning and function of a party correctly. The question is why is this happening? If we look at the development of political parties during the struggle period, party leaders play a politics of radicalism in socializing and making the party an identity that cannot be disturbed. Fretelin's party made itself a party with an identity fighting for independence with a democratic ideology with a Marxist spirit. The UDT Party is a conservative party that prioritizes religion and culture. When this kind of understanding is used as a handle, what happens is radicalism in the party. The party is made an inviolable identity. The effect is that all parties are fighting to defend their respective positions accompanied by politics of interests. When there is an ideological movement that is contrary to his party, it becomes an obstacle or resistance that must be fought.

The meaning of the role of the party as an identity factor is that the party belongs to a certain group. These ownership is believed to be able to provide social stability, status, outlook on life, way of thinking and certain ethos. Therefore, when the issue of communism was echoed by the Apodeti party, the conservative UDT party quickly took political action against Fretelin's party to eliminate communism in East Timor. Fretelin, who considered himself an independence struggle party, made the same resistance because he felt that his identity as an independence struggle party was insulted. The way of resistance was a ceasefire which ended up costing many lives. We can call the defense of identity and political interests between parties a social pathology which provides comfort and peace in community life by creating conflicts. If we reflect on Axel Honneth, the lack of recognition between parties is actually the cause of the conflict that cost many lives.

### ***Ideology and Politics of Interest as Legitimacy of Acts of Violence***

In the life of a pluralistic society, especially those in a period of struggle, political differences between parties are something normal. However, political differences can be positioned as social pathologies when ideologies and interests of groups and individuals are used as legitimacy to commit violence. Other people or groups outside the party with other ideologies are considered opponents who cannot be invited to cooperate or form a coalition.

The ideological nuances and political interests in Timor Leste during the struggle as the legitimacy of violence began to be seen when the Portugal government asked the coalition between the UDT and Fretelin parties to fight the pro-Indonesia Apodeti party. Various strategies and communication are carried out for the implementation of the coalition, but differences in ideology and political interests do

not allow the coalition to occur. However, the Portugal government's political strategy in facilitating the coalition succeeded in persuading UDT and Fretelin to form a coalition even though they were forced to. In a very short period of time, the coalition broke up. It can be said that the coalition seems to be used as a political satisfaction for the interests of the Portugal Government.

The UDT and Fretelin parties realized that it was not profitable to form a coalition with groups with different ideologies and political interests. The UDT, which has a conservative ideology of anti-communism, will not stand side by side with Fretelin who adheres to the ideology of Marxism in building democracy. Seeing Fretelin's rapid development with a lot of support from the community, UDT took action to carry out a coup against Fretelin with the aim of eliminating communist Marxist ideology in the land of Timor Leste. Violent attacks (ceasefire) as the best way to defeat Fretelin and finally Fretelin also counterattacked when his *status quo* was disturbed.

The events mentioned above illustrate the negative dimension of political ideology and the politics of interest that can ignite conflict and justify violence. At this point, ideology and political interests as the legitimacy of acts of violence or conflicts between parties are often referred to as civil wars. Legitimization occurs due to a lack of knowledge in understanding differences so that they quickly fall into issues that result in conflicts. Based on Honneth's thinking, the legitimization of violence can be referred to as the effect of a deficit of rationality that creates social pathologies that disturb the peace and comfort of society.

## CONCLUSION

Conflicts between political parties in Timor Leste, a region in East Timor, have been a persistent issue since the 1974-1975 struggle. These conflicts are driven by internal and external factors, including differences in party ideology and political interests, which can be used as a justification for violent acts. Externally, the involvement of other countries, such as Indonesia, in the politics of Timor Leste encourages conflict. The UDT party's coup against Fretelin, accused of being a communist, led to a violent conflict. The theory of recognition suggests that the conflict was a communal political conflict due to the absence of inter-party recognition among the people of Timor Leste, who were struggling against imperialism and colonialism. The theory of recognition offers a solution of love, rights, solidarity, and reconciliation to regain unity in society. Future research should focus on fostering long-term reconciliation and recognition among political factions in post-conflict societies, examining the role of dialogue, education, and legal frameworks in promoting love, rights, and solidarity.

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