



# Cyberspace: A Space for Conflicts

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**Abstract.** Cyberspace is a duplication of real life in the form of a virtual space, where social interactions can occur like a 'real' world. Cyberspace is needed in everyday life in the era of information technology, but this space that is open, free and less authorized may contribute to a new arena of conflicts in modern society. Conflicts that occur in cyberspace are divided into three types, and the first is conflicts that occur only in cyberspace. The second is conflicts that occur in real life and are carried into cyberspace to spread influence, to lead public opinion and to justify certain actions. The third is conflicts that occur in real life, are carried in cyberspace and then are leading to new conflicts. Conflicts that previously occurred both in cyberspace and in real life then develop and even extend to new issues. At this point, a new conflict as a derivative of the main conflict will emerge due to the influence of the expanding cyberspace and the number of actors involved.

**Keywords:** Cyberspace · Conflict · Behavior Change

## 1 Introduction

The current modern society is an information society where cyberspace is extremely close in everyday life. The cyberspace has become a connecting space between individuals and wider societies. Unlimited flexibility in carrying out activities is a stunning attraction as Jeff Zaleski (1999) illustrates that cyberspace is like trying to tie up a squid that it is always hard to control. In fact, the use of cyberspace in every aspect of life has broadened the view, has enriched the vision and has led to an unlimited space of expression, but it also has negative effects. Yasraf Amir Piliang (2012) [1] explains that the term 'cyber' has experienced 'terminological migration' as it becomes a prefix to all areas of real life that have been transformed in cyberspace, such as cyber-society, cyber-community, cyber-economy, cyber-politics, cyber-culture, cyber- spirituality and cyber sexuality.

The trend of cyberspace in forms of social media and other internet-based media is increasing. Suara.com reported research results from DataReportal indicating that the number of social media users in Indonesia in January 2022 reached 191.4 million, or there is an increase of 21 million or 12.6 percent from the previous year, 2021 [2]. Social interactions are migrating from real meetings to virtual meetings through available applications. With a large number of users, it becomes a massive opportunity for utilizing cyberspace in economic, political and cultural activities as well as a space for new conflicts.

Conflicts that occur in the cyberspace are triggered by various factors, such as conflicts from the real world brought into the cyberspace, conflicts due to reciprocal comments, conflicts due to misperceptions, conflicts due to hoaxes and hate speech and various other triggers. This leads to social change, behavior changes, and ways of communicating. Yasraf (2012) argues that cyberspace has affected social life on various levels. The presence of cyberspace creates not only basic social changes but also extreme conditions, namely 'social death' in the society.

## 2 Method

This study is a literature review analysis with a qualitative approach that refers to Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) by studying obtained data and analyzing the conflicts that occur in cyberspace. Its data was collected through literature searches on journal articles and documents in both online media and books related to the topic of this study. Its object was a case study that occurred in Indonesian society, so the elaborated data could be used as a reference in viewing the cyberspace and conflicts in society. Finally, after the process of data collection and data analysis, the researcher concluded the results of this study.

## 3 Result and Discussion

Cyberspace appears through the imagination of a science fiction writer, William Gibson, included in his novel entitled *Necromancer*. In the novel, Gibson imagines a virtual space in a computer network that simulates real everyday life. The virtual space is called a matrix, a space that is built from computer bits [3]. Then the virtual space created by Gibson's imagination produces an abstract space called cyberspace (Yasraf Amir Piliang: 2011).

The term 'cyberspace' originates from a word 'cybernetic' which means a theoretical study of controlling processes in electronic, mechanical or biological systems, especially the flow of information within the systems (Fayakhun Andriadi: 2016). Timothy Leary defines cybernetic as self-control, referring to the Greek *kubernetes*. Therefore, cyberspace can be defined as a space formed by a control system of information and data, in which everyone navigates himself in the virtual reality (Yasraf Amir Piliang: 2011).

The migration of people's interactions from the real world to the virtual world creates some changes in their behavior to be a virtual society. This also encourages conflicts that occur in the real world to be carried over and finally created in cyberspace. In its development, real social space can be substituted in the digital space in the form of artificial social simulations. Social change in native digital society according to Yasraf (2012) creates three levels of change, and the first is at the individual level as cyberspace affects the meaning of self-identity.

The second is at the inter-individual level as the cyberspace creates virtual communities with social relations that occur in the virtual space such as virtual shopping, virtual conference and others. The third is at the community level as the cyberspace creates a democratic and open communication model in the form of an imaginary community.

The term 'conflict' is from the Greek '*configure or conflictum*' which means collision. The term also refers to all forms of clash, incompatibility, conflict, fight and opposition, and it is also defined as a form of conflict expressed between two parties [4]. According to Soerjono Soekanto (1992) social conflict is divided into five types as in the following [5].

1. Individual or personal conflicts that occur due to differences in views between individuals.
2. Racial conflicts that arise because of racial differences.
3. Conflicts between social classes that happen due to differences in interests between social classes.
4. Political conflicts that occur because of the interests and goals of a person or group.
5. International conflicts that occur because of differences in interests and affect the sovereignty of a country.

The nature of cyberspace is a duplication or an imaginary world of the real world, that all social activities also can occur. Thus, this may create at least a sensation that can be felt and utilized by cyberspace users. Yasraf (2011) demonstrates that there are five sensations that are similar to the real world as discussed in the following paragraph.

The first is a sense of space as the users feel like in a real space in cyberspace. The second is a sense of the real as the users feel that the cyberspace is real even though it is artificial, for example being in nature, flying and others. The third is a sense of the self as one of the places in cyberspace called Multi User Dungeon (MUD) allows the users to play their own role in a collective drama, or today it is known by the term 'metavers'. The fourth is a sense of community as cyberspace creates a community, or called a virtual community by Howard Rheingold [6]. The fifth is a sense of power as cyber space allows individuals to fully express themselves that minimizes restrictions (Fayakhun, 122: 2016) [7].

From the sensations that can be felt by the users, the role of cyberspace for a conflict can occur. For example, in the sense of power they will be able to act that can trigger conflicts such creating and spreading hate speech, hoaxes, bullying and crimes in cyberspace.

The police reported that there were 26 conflicts until June 2019 and 29 social conflicts in 2018, caused by social media. This report was delivered by the Head of the National Police Security Maintenance Agency, Inspector General Agus Andrianto in 2019 (Alinea.id.) [8]. The conflicts occurred along with local elections in 2020. According to Coordinating Minister for Human Development and Culture (PMK) Muhadjir Effendy, referring to UNICEF data, cyber bullying occurred in 45 percent of children in Indonesia throughout 2020.

*Research Findings*

Based on the results of data of issues, events and media related to conflicts in cyberspace, the researcher found three types of conflicts that occurred in cyberspace as in the following:

- a. Conflicts only occurred in the cyberspace  
This conflict refers to incidents where the conflicts only occur in cyberspace. Issues or events related to the conflicts occur only in the cyberspace. For example, the users are reciprocating or cursing each other in the comments and the contents, blocking each other's accounts, bullying, creating fake news or false information and so on.
- b. Conflicts occurred in the real world and carried into the cyberspace  
The sense of space felt by the users results in the carrying of events in the real world to cyberspace. Conflicts that occur in the real world are substituted into the cyberspace with a larger scale and more actors. The conflicts are, for example, incitement, spreading agitation or campaigning for conflict in the real world; this usually aims to spread influence, to drive public opinion and to justify actions.
- c. Conflicts occurred in the real world, carried to the cyberspace and then contributing to new conflicts  
The third conflict is a combination of two conflicts that occurred in the previous cyberspace as conflicts that occur in the real world are brought into the cyberspace or vice versa, thereby causing new conflicts. Conflicts that previously occurred both in the cyberspace and the real space develop and extend other issues. At this point a new conflict as a derivative of the main conflict will emerge due to the influence of the expanding cyberspace and the number of actors involved.

## 4 Conclusion

Conflicts that occur in cyberspace are a duplication of real life that becomes problems. Cyberspace ultimately becomes the axis of conflicts that occur at the individual, group or inter-group levels. The cyberspace with various advantages and benefits may create a new space for collisions. Appropriate use of this new space is the responsibility of individuals who have authority over their 'fingers,' to maximize the cyberspace for any appropriate purpose.

Conflicts that occur in the cyberspace, whether created intentionally for certain purposes or occur naturally as a result of changes in the behavior of the users, encourage each user to use it wisely. The cyberspace creates an open society, or a global open society based on the principles of individualism, liberalism and openness as stated by George Soros [9].

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