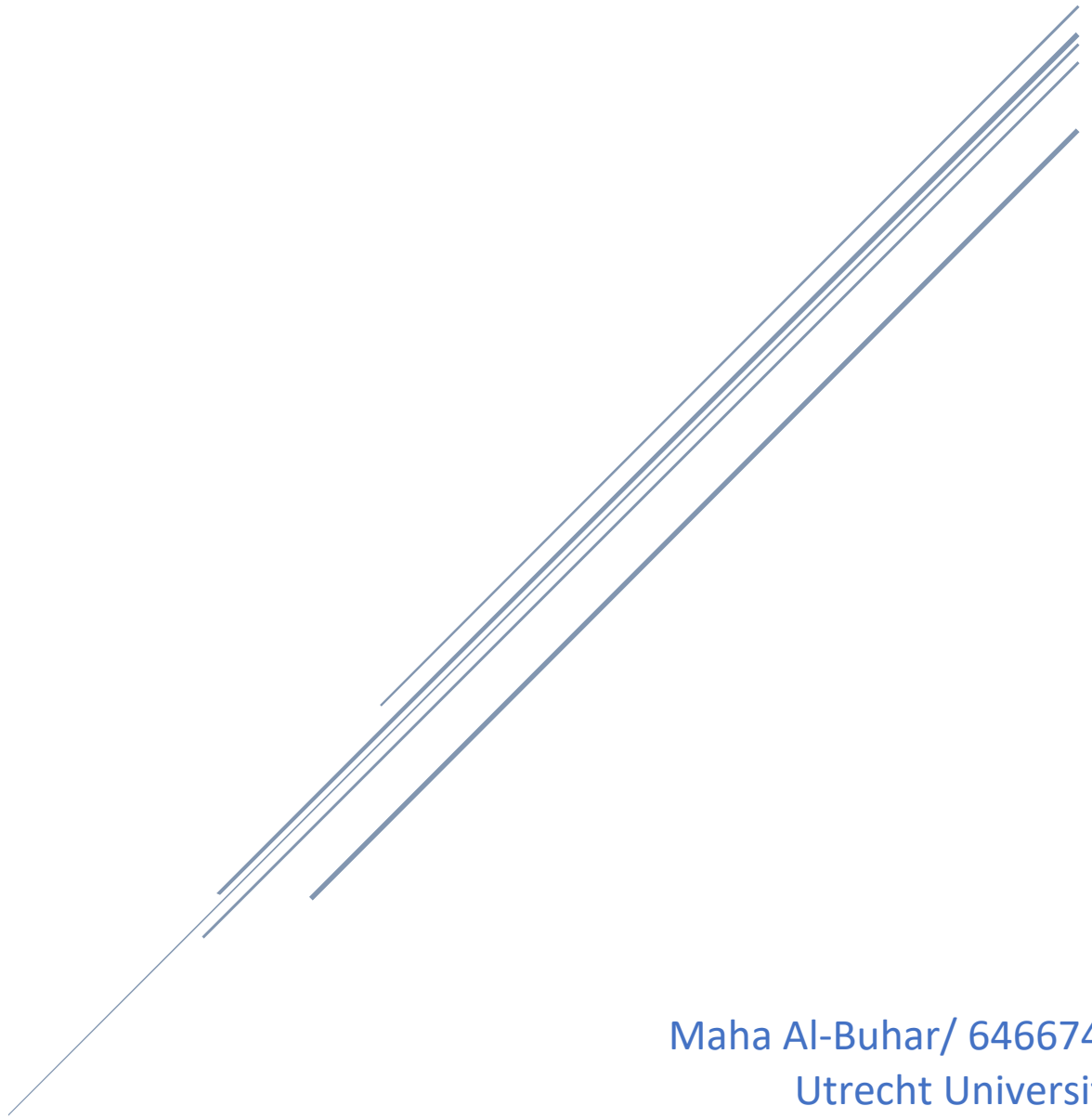# YEMEN: THE UNHEARD VOICES

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**A Thesis submitted to the Board of Examiners in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in Conflict Studies & Human Rights**

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26 July, 2021

Research & Thesis Writing (30 ECTS)

Word count: 24,261

# ABSTRACT

Since 2015, Yemen has been at civil war. In a major offensive against the Houthis, the Saudi-led Coalition have conducted their war in Yemen from afar, using airstrikes. Civilians have been at the receiving end of these attacks, some of which have caused civilian casualties among the local population, especially in Sana'a. The aim of this thesis is first to explore how non-Western countries such as the Saudi-led Coalition are following suit in using the same remote warfare practices and legitimising discourses as Western advanced militaries. Second, to understand how these legitimised airstrikes figure in the family victims' imaginations and how they interpret and contest them. Using the Critical Discourse Analytic lens, this thesis analyses the dynamics between discourse, power, and violence. Therein, it demonstrates the role of the Coalition discourse in the violent conflict used to legitimize an intervention and become dominant. This thesis then systematically reviews these types of discourses. Therefore, a theoretical framework built around the concept of framing with a particular focus on Benford and Snow's collective action frame through the prognostic, diagnostic and motivational lenses is used. This research demonstrates how the Coalition discourses are framed and have contributed to the construction of the organisation of power that has legitimised violent action at large. It shows what meaning is given to these types of intervention: who is to blame, what is the solution, and why a country is calling to arms, through the concepts and language they use to create their interpretation. It is explained by using three discourses supporting the Coalition's mission as an example of distant warfare and further justify and permit contesting interpretations: the precision discourse, the self/collective discourse, and the humanitarianism discourse. 14 interviews were conducted, alongside document analysis to collect data. Through insight into the civilian contestation in remote warfare, this thesis adds to our understanding of local interpretations of remote warfare and the power dynamics that determine what is considered true - what is legitimate in the setting of distant violence.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# ABBREVIATIONS

AQAP - Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

GCC - Gulf Cooperation Countries

NDC - National Dialogue Conference

SLC - Saudi-led Coalition

PDRY - People's Democratic Republic of Yemen

UN - United Nation

US – United States

UK – United Kingdom

YAR - Yemen Arab Republic

YDP - Yemen Data Project

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# INTRODUCTION

*"I will not forget the bombing of this residential building...*

*I could not see from the thick smoke, and the smell of gunpowder, the screaming of men, women, and children, my heart was aching.*

*We quickly evacuated people who were alive as we were afraid of a second air strike because the aeroplane was still hovering above us, then we went down to the basement to find the rest.*

*I heard a faint whining from under the rubble.*

*After hard work accompanied by many reassuring sentences of the source of that sound, we found a child covered with dirt after removing a large amount of rubble and dirt.*

*God protected her with his power.*

*Loudly she screamed: "Uncle, don't let me go, don't let me go "*

Fares recalled his story after an airstrike.[1]

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[1] Interview Fares, 23 April 2021, online.

Figure1: Fare's picture of the two targeted houses in Sana'a, 5 September 2015.

Fares lives in Sana'a, a city that has been barraged by airstrikes, a tactic characteristic of remote warfare. This remote war was launched by Saudi Arabia in Yemen against the Houthis who took over Sana'a and ousted the Yemeni president, Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi-hereafter, referred to as Hadi. The Saudi-led Coalition did not target the Houthis, as Fares and most of the participants say, but targeted civilians, residential places, and Yemen infrastructure. Although the Houthis and the Saudi-led Coalition air campaign have been given a lot of attention in the region and Western news, the airstrikes impact on the civilians is rarely mentioned. This incident experienced then reported by Fares is one of 90 unlawful airstrikes that have been conducted by the Saudi-led Coalition supported by the US intelligence and logistics.[2] Since 2015, more than 17500 civilians

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[2] 'World Report 2020: Rights Trends in Yemen', Human Rights Watch, 12 December 2019, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/yemen.

have been killed and injured.[3] A quarter of all civilians killed in airstrikes are women and children. In addition, the airstrikes have targeted and destroyed hospitals, schools, markets, mosques, roads, and the Houthis Detention Centre. It resulted in a vast catastrophic humanitarian crisis. So, what is the Saudi-led Coalition, and when did it start and why?

On the 26th of March 2015, a coalition of nine countries from North Africa and West Asia was formed under Saudi Arabia, and hereafter referred to as the Saudi-led Coalition or the Coalition. This formation was a response to the Hadi plea against the Houthis coup. This intervention consisted of air campaigns on the Houthis, naval and air blockade, and deployment of ground forces. The alleged objective of the air campaign was to defeat the Houthis and safeguard the Yemen people and its legitimate government from the Houthis. Thus, the Saudi-led Coalition heavily relied on the airstrikes in its operations against the Houthis.[4] This new war configuration resembles the current new trend of war, now frequently referred to as remote warfare. Remote warfare is characterised by the shifting away from "boots on the ground" positioning to the light footprint.[5] It mostly depends on the air campaign, which employs sophisticated weaponry that is described as 'precise' with a low civilian casualty, and partnerships with local troops or private military corporations.[6] In other words, It has been noticed that, while fighting a war, Western powers, and in our case non-Western powers, have progressively been distancing themselves from the front lines and only rely on 'armchair fighting'.

Saudi officials have consistently represented their war against the Houthis as a "[legitimate] and precise war".[7] Further, this military intervention has been supported by the UN resolution under the self-defence principle in article 51. While not a member of the coalition, the United Kingdom has shown its support by selling weapons to Saudi Arabia and other countries along with logistical support from the United States. Yet accounts like Fares have strongly contested the accuracy and legitimacy representation. The accounts interpretations of the Saudi-led Coalition, based on their loss experience and the amount of civilian death witnessed, is rather contrary. Like many other Yemenis, Fares sees the Saudi-led Coalition as the only one responsible for the civilian casualties and the destruction of the city and the country's infrastructure. "They [SLC] destroyed the two buildings completely and many people died that day" Fares stated.[8] Figure 1 shows the aftermath of two buildings hit by the Coalition airstrikes. The degree of civilian death and the devastation as a consequence of the Saudi-led Coalition attacks is much higher than the Saudi official story admits, according to reports and studies by organisations like Airwars and Amnesty International. Although the coalitions claim that they have used a large quantity of precision-guided bombs, Amnesty International reports indicate that there have been bombs and cluster munitions used within urban areas to strike unoccupied houses, causing civilian casualties. Since 2015, over 17500 civilians have been killed and injured, and women and children are accounting for a quarter of all killed by airstrikes. This shows that there is a deadly consequence on the Yemeni population.

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[3] 'World Report 2020'.

[4] Helen Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis: Road to War* (Verso Books, 2019), ?1.

[5] 'Biegon and Watts - Remote Warfare and the Retooling of American Prima.Pdf', n.d., 19.

[6] Tom Watts and Rubrick Biegon, 'Conceptualising Remote Warfare: The Past, Present, and Future', 22 May 2019, 2.

[7] Eric Bonds, 'Humanitized Violence: Targeted Killings and Civilian Deaths in the US War against the Islamic State', *Current Sociology* 67, no. 3 (1 May 2019): 439, https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392118807527.

[8] Interview Fares, 23 April 2021, online.

Surprisingly, It seldom has been heard about the conflict's realities for the communities subjected to the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes. This thesis is therefore concerned with those who receive such violence and their interpretations and contestation of the new war: "remote warfare". As Brass eloquently describes it: "a struggle over the meaning of violence".[9] Using the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes against the Houthis in Yemen as a case study, it aims to also study these interpretations in relation to the dominant rhetoric of the Saudi Arabia officials. By doing so, I intend to give voice to the victim families who live under the coalition violence in Sana'a. They also take part in participating in the debate on the struggle over the meaning of the violence and on the struggle to make their voices heard. Therefore, in this thesis, I present the "the unheard voices" of the victims' families' interpretations as a contest to the dominant rhetoric of precision and the urgency needed to defeat the Houthis.

In order to study and uncover the dynamics between power, discourse and violent practices, this research takes a Critical Discourse Analysis approach. By using such an approach, I demonstrate the dynamics of power in the meaning of a single act of violence and the wider discourses in which these interpretations are situated while using the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes as an example of modern remote warfare. These dominant discourses are used to legitimise intervention and become dominant, however, at the same time, they can be contested by those at the receiving end of such violence. To explore this complication, I apply Benford and Snow's "collective action frames", to explore the following research puzzle.

***What collective action frames do victims' families use to contest the legitimisation of Saudi-led remote airstrikes in Sana'a between 2015-2017?***

This research fills a gap in the academic literature on remote warfare since it examines how individuals at the receiving end of violence perceive remote violence. It also examines how the non-Western and non-democracies follow suit in using the same remote warfare practices and legitimising discourse. The study of the actual impacts of remote warfare is often overlooked in the research on modern forms of war, which generally restrict itself to critique the nature and character of a distant war. Thus, rather than recreating the remoteness of current conflicts in academia by examining their dynamics from a distance, this research gives an inside look at the impact of remote warfare violence. This research is socially significant too. From a social standpoint, this research sheds light on the current modes of violence. Subsequently offering insight on the use of distanced violence and its constant reproduction and giving voice to the people who have been victims of the remote violence.

Here I can use the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen as a case of remote warfare. Thus, after outlining the empirical observation and its complication, the question hereafter comes: what is remote warfare and how is it legitimised? And then, what impact does it have? To begin answering this question, I will review the academic debate.

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[9] Paul R. Brass, *Riots and Pogroms* (Springer, 2016), 45.

**REMOTE WARFARE**

Remote warfare, spearheaded by advanced Western militaries, is characterized by a shift away from "boots on the ground" positioning to light-footprint military intervention.[10] It includes using airstrikes and drones, intelligence operatives, special forces, private contractors, and training teams assisting local forces in fighting and dying on the ground.[11] Violence, therefore, has been exercised without the exposure of the military personnel to opponents in a war zone under the mutual risk condition. As a result, states are able to address global dangers and concerns without having to engage in economic and human costs. I believe the focus on separating oneself from the conflict through geographical and human distant tactics is the most significant in terms of its consequences.

How is it legitimised?

Remote warfare operations have been portrayed as "precision" and "surgical".[12] Many scholars and specialists have labelled this new war with so many terms; "globalised war"[13], "coalition proxy warfare"[14], "surrogate warfare"[15], "vicarious warfare"[16], "liquid warfare"[17] or, simply "remote warfare"[18]. However, by looking beyond these terms, It can be seen how authors have relied on three categories-will be illustrated down here- to explain the shift to what is considered a legitimate war: democratic risk-aversion, technology and networking.

In the context of post 9/11, remote warfare weapons have been presented as an essential technology to be used in the struggle against a new enemy "terrorist" who doesn't fight on the battlefield but is rather beyond the reach of the military, such as fighters who seek refuge in remote areas in tribal regions - hiding in caves and training in deserts and rugged mountains. Therefore, a new strategy is needed to overcome this new enemy.[19] Gusterson explains that due to this new enemy and strategy, these new remote technologies are more efficient as they can help in mapping insurgent's location, networks and life patterns.[20] He further elaborates that this new technology

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[10] Jolle Demmers and Lauren Gould, 'An Assemblage Approach to Liquid Warfare: AFRICOM and the "Hunt" for Joseph Kony', *Security Dialogue* 49, no. 5 (1 October 2018): 364–81, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010618777890; Demmers and Gould, 365; Rubrick Biegon and Tom F A Watts, 'Remote Warfare and the Retooling of American Primacy', n.d., 1.

[11] Jolle Demmers and Lauren Gould, 'An Assemblage Approach to Liquid Warfare: AFRICOM and the "Hunt" for Joseph Kony', *Security Dialogue* 49, no. 5 (1 October 2018): 1, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010618777890.

[12] Marina Espinoza, 'State Terrorism: Orientalism and the Drone Programme', *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 11, no. 2 (4 May 2018): 4, https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2018.1456725.

[13] Zygmunt Bauman, 'Wars of the Globalization Era', *European Journal of Social Theory* 4, no. 1 (1 February 2001): 11–28, https://doi.org/10.1177/13684310122224966.

[14] Andrew Mumford, 'Proxy Warfare and the Future of Conflict', *The RUSI Journal* 158, no. 2 (April 2013): 40–46, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2013.787733.

[15] Andreas Krieg, 'Externalizing the Burden of War: The Obama Doctrine and US Foreign Policy in the Middle East', *International Affairs*, 2016, 19.

[16] Thomas Waldman, 'Vicarious Warfare: The Counterproductive Consequences of Modern American Military Practice', *Contemporary Security Policy* 39, no. 2 (3 April 2018): 26, https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2017.1393201.

[17] Demmers and Gould, 'An Assemblage Approach to Liquid Warfare', 364.

[18] Biegon and Watts, 'Remote Warfare and the Retooling of American Primacy', 1.

[19] Hugh Gusterson, *Drone: Remote Control Warfare* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2016), 19–20.

[20] Gusterson, 28.

is cheaper and capable of making a traditional military attack.[21] These technologies are only for military purposes, and whether or not they are lawful, it depends on how they have been inconsistent with the war law.[22] Thus, according to Gusterson, this technology is precise if used properly and can be consistent with human rights and humanitarian law than any other alternatives. He further claimed that it is highly effective at targeted killings that avoid civilian casualties.[23] As Espinoza puts it, the precision discourse is a picture of remote forms of warfare in which advanced technology that creates modern weaponry is not only portrayed as unproblematic for civilians but as advantageous by decreasing "collateral damage".[24] Airstrikes are, therefore, characterised as "surgical" and "humane" because of their perceived ability to almost solely target the adversary while minimising the chance of civilian casualties. [25]

Fourie and Knowles, and Walson elaborate that western countries have adapted their security and defence strategies with the aim to minimise physical and political risk. Using the "inherent" right to self-defence discourse, the United States legitimised its global war on terror under Article 2(4) of the UN Charter and adopted its policy accordingly. The presence of troops will be less, and the militaries will be more specialised and efficient in their operation.[26] Remote warfare allows for a "light footprint *that* is needed to do so-less", and only specialised groups will be present in the country of conflict.

Waldman uses the term 'vicarious warfare' to help understand the coalition intervention and conceptualise the recent trends of these types of warfare that are intensely debated and criticised regarding its effectiveness and long-term consequences. To him, vicarious warfare is a delegation by shifting the burden of risk with others, danger proofing by relying heavily on different types and forms of airpower and weapons, darkness by having a hidden special forces operation and collaboration.[27] Therefore, Western powers have heavily relied on collaborating with fighting forces such as the Iraqi National Army, the Kurdish Peshmerga, and the Saudi Air Force. They have given support in the frontline fight in contemporary war such as Yemen.[28] However, Fourie demonstrates that these great powers are the ones responsible and should be held accountable for the consequences of their actions if they intentionally caused them.

What is the impact?

To Westerners accustomed to modern remote warfare rhetoric that it minimises the civilian's deaths, the level of the collateral damage in the coalition's air campaign is staggering. Many NGOs, like Airways and Amnesty International, have conducted necessary research on the impact.

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[21] Gusterson, 29.

[22] Gusterson, 72–82.

[23] Gusterson, 72–75.

[24] Marina Espinoza, 'State Terrorism: Orientalism and the Drone Programme', *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 11, no. 2 (4 May 2018): 378, https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2018.1456725.

[25] Espinoza, 378.

[26] 'Lawful But Awful? Legal and Political Challenges of Remote Warfare and Working with Partners', Oxford Research Group, accessed 30 January 2021, https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/awful-but-lawful-legal-and-political-challenges-of-remote-warfare-and-working-with-partners.

[27] Thomas Waldman, 'Vicarious Warfare', 9,12,15.

[28] 'Lawful But Awful?'

Airwars states in its 2019 annual report that 2,214 civilians were killed by international military interventions in Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Somalia.[29] Although the Coalitions claim that they have used a significant number of precision-guided munitions, Amnesty International reports indicate that there have been bombs and cluster munitions used within urban areas to strike unoccupied houses, causing civilian casualties. Knights demonstrates that there might be some targeting choices that are legitimate efforts, such as targeting *military units*. Yet, collective punishment of civilians also seems to be an intentional focus of the Coalition especially following the border attacks.[30] This lethal targeting of civilians might not be an international action, but it is the result of using an excessive huge number of munitions or discriminatory weapons in densely populated areas. The air campaign strategy should be selective and tied to the overall aim and not tit-for-tat retaliation.[31]

However, these NGOs have limited themselves to counting civilians' casualties and some research on the associated impact. Scholars, including Eric Bonds, argue that NGOs have limited their focus to just body counts, and should instead use these numbers to show the real need for more precise warfare. They need to question the fundamental logic of these types of war: what is the source of the violence? Is it going to lead to more violence in the course of time? Instead of debating the number of civilian's casualties and whether airstrikes achieved their goal in "proportionality".[32] Bonds, through his term "humanitized violence" demonstrates that the practice with so-called humanitized violence and its precision weaponry, and the ability to make adjustment and calculation as well as minimise civilian death "is one means by which state killing is again made to seem moral".[33] NGOs have been confined within these discussion parameters in ensuring violence is "humanitized" and judged on a technical rather than political premise by defining distant warfare in legal terms and touting its accuracy. In other words, humanitized violence is a practice that needs new precision-killing technologies and also a legitimating discourse. Yet, it has been reinforced and not opposed by human rights and NGOs.[34] As a result, by emphasising precision and, to some extent, care, the "humanitizing discourse" played in normalising violence. A nonmilitary citizen is, therefore, protected from the airstrikes, yet "the humanization of violence in no way" assures the protection of vulnerable nonmilitary citizen.[35] Furthermore, airstrikes are termed "surgical" and "humane" since they are thought to target the opposition almost entirely while reducing civilian deaths.[36]

Therefore, it can be observed how powerful and dominant discourses play a role in portraying distant warfare as a legitimate style of contemporary interventional warfare by emphasising its dependence on precision airstrikes, self/collective defence, and humanitarianism. It seems the development of new modern technologies, such as "smart bombs" and massive drone surveillance,

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[29] 'Airwars Annual Report: Over 2,200 Civilians Claimed Killed in 2019', accessed 24 June 2021, https://airwars.org/news-and-investigations/airwars-annual-report-2019/.

[30] Knights and Almeida, 2.

[31] Knights and Almeida, 2.

[32] Bonds, 'Humanitized Violence', 3.

[33] Bonds, 442.

[34] Bonds, 450.

[35] Bonds, 441.

[36] Espinoza, 'State Terrorism', 378.

have been rendering the civilians as the growing victim in this modern conflict.[37] The risk trade-off indicates that minimising the risk to solely targeting the enemy raises the hazard to civilians.[38] However, this is hidden by depicting modern Western wars as "humanitarian," that is, as an intervention for human protection interest.[39]

Furthermore, Westerners are described and demonstrated as liberating the globe from its enemy, especially under the War on Terror context. This independence and emancipation are regarded as a present that further helped in legitimising Western interventionism.[40] In contrast to terrorists violent spectacle of suicide bombings and killings, Westerners are thus viewed as fighting a respectable war in a "humane" and "humanitarian" way, utilising surgical airstrikes. With this, a clear line has been drawn and presented between the "good" and the "evil".

As a result, Western countries use of violence is legitimised and further defended through the use of the discourses of precision, collective/self-defence, and humanitarianism, which define precision, risk-free, and humanitarianism. Consequently, it is depicted as the new modern warfare's moral nature. Moreover, it has opened the door for other interventionists to justify the war as the "least of all possible evils" mode of warfare.[41] The distancing of any cost-effectiveness of such war has led to the ease of upholding such discourses by Western countries.

Therefore, it can be seen that most academics have focused on the turn to/contestation of the turn to remote warfare by Western democracies. None have studied the non-Western and non-democracies who follow suit using the same remote warfare practices and legitimising discourses. Also, very few scholars have researched the impact of remote warfare intervention such as Baraa Shiban and Camilla Molyneux in their chapter about the human cost of remote warfare in Yemen in the book *remote warfare interdisciplinary perspectives*.[42] When they do so, they have not done systematic research on the way that these types of interventions are interpreted and contested by the local population. Therefore, the aim of this research is to understand first how non-Western and non-democracies are following suit in using the same remote warfare practices and legitimising discourse and second, how it has been interpreted and contested by the victims' families. My aim here is to contribute to our understanding of the intimacy of remote warfare and gain more knowledge of this new intervention model.

This thesis is structured as follows: chapter one discusses and justifies the choice of the analytical frames "collective action frames" and "discursive approach". Chapter two contains the methodology used to investigate the research puzzle. Chapter three provides background information on Yemen's context in relation to violence and its effect on today's current conflict. Chapter four first describes the context of the Saudi-led Coalition's formation then proceeds to

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[37] Helen Dexter, 'New War, Good War and the War on Terror: Explaining, Excusing and Creating Western Neo-Interventionism', *Development and Change* 38, no. 6 (2007): 1064–66, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2007.00446.x.

[38] Eyal Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza* (Verso Books, 2011), 14.

[39] Dexter, 'New War, Good War and the War on Terror', 1055.

[40] Emily Gilbert, 'The Gift of War: Cash, Counterinsurgency, and "Collateral Damage"', *Security Dialogue* 46, no. 5 (1 October 2015): 414, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010615592111.

[41] Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils*.

[42] Alasdair McKay, Abigail Watson, and Megan Karlshøj-Pedersen, *Remote Warfare: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 2021, 110–31, https://www.e-ir.info/publication/remote-warfare-interdisciplinary-perspectives/.

outline the discourses used to legitimize its practices by the Saudi Officials. Chapter five subsequently analyses the interpretations of the Saudi-led Coalition violence as expressed by the victims' families who live in Sana under the coalition strikes. Lastly, in the concluding chapter, I summarise the research findings and answer the research puzzle.

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*"War as a social phenomenon involves individuals, communities and states and any attempt to uncover its genesis must incorporate the discursive and institutional continuities which render violent conflict a legitimate and widely accepted mode of human conduct".*[43]

This thesis explores those at the receiving end of remote violence interpretation and the struggle over capturing the meaning of violence. This study follows a discursive analytic approach to violence, focusing on the interpretations and meaning given to such violence and, therefore, discursive dynamics of violence. The critical discursive approach is a framework that offers a basis for investigating how violence is perceived and how it is assigned meaning, allowing it to be replicated.

As Vivienne Jabri, the founder of the discursive approach in the quote above, explains how discourse is playing an important role in legitimising as well as rendering violence as human conduct and broadly accepted mode. In other words, it normalises violence and war. She further points out that "discursive and institutional continuities" should be taken into account when studying war, for which it allows for the perpetuation of violence in the first place and the reproduction of violence. In the following, I explain what discourse analysis is and how discourse and power are related and are able to reproduce violence through discourses.

## DISCURSIVE APPROACH TO LEGITIMISING VIOLENCE

Demmers defines discourses as "stories about social reality".[44] They, according to Jabri, are: "social relations represented in texts where the language contained within these texts is used to construct meaning and representation".[45] Discourse is more than a description of objects; it is an ongoing mechanism that creates a version of the things it represents and designs and constructs a context, meaning or truth. They are concerned with everyday language. Discourses are able to do something and can have a consequence on a social and political level.[46] They are able to construct meaning and reproduce violence. Fairclough explains and elaborates that "nobody who has an interest in modern society, and certainly nobody who has an interest in relations of power in modern society, can afford to ignore language" due to the essential effect discourses have on building society.[47] In terms of my interest, discourse has the ability to create meaning and therefore reproduce war and violence. Thus, discourse analysis is based on social constructivist notions of reality that views our world as being built within the interactions of groups of people and people.

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[43] Vivienne Jabri, *Discourses on Violence: Conflict Analysis Reconsidered* (Manchester University Press, 1996), 1.

[44] Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 133.

[45] Jabri, *Discourses on Violence*, 94.

[46] Jabri, 95.

[47] Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (Psychology Press, 2003), 47.

The ontological basis of the discursive approach is somewhere between structuralism and agency, which builds on Giddens' notion of "structuration".[48] In the agency-based theory, humans are capable of making their action-taking individually, whilst in the structuralist theory, social relations are the ones that structure human behaviour. Like Giddens' notion of structure duality, a discursive approach avoids preferring a single point of departure but is in favour of seeing them as complementary.[49] Thus, the structuration theory considers both agency and structure to reproduce our social world.[50] This approach sees individuals as purposeful performers, but only within the limits of the social structure, they live in. According to Demmer, we create the systems we live in, but we are also shaped by them.[51]

## DISCOURSE, VIOLENCE AND POWER: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANAYLSIS

In the context of discourses on violence, many scholars have focused on the importance of language and discourse to mobilise violent conflict by describing the dynamics of discourse before the violence. However, the focus of this thesis is also to study both how it is legitimized before the violence act and how it is interpreted after. In line with Brass' study on how different acts of violence are subjected to a "struggle over the meaning of violence" after violence takes place. He argues that we need "to view the contest for gaining control over the interpretation of violence as at least as important and probably more important than the outcome of specific violence struggles themselves".[52] Interpretation is, thus, a form of discourse and is subjected to power. It is related to remote warfare as a means of intervention since the restoration to violence has to be addressed as necessary by a state to the public. According to Jabri, war is a manmade product and a choice made within a set of rules defined by society. This set of rules must be adhered to by states when telling stories. These states are a combination of individuals and communities whose government seeks support for the war to be perceived as legitimate.[53] In order to do so, the narrative must explain why governments must go to war.[54]

Here, I am interested in a branch of discourse analysis study known as Critical Discourse Analysis which its aim, based on Foucault's interpretations of the construction of knowledge and its relationship to power, is to "disentangle the giant milling mass of discourse, to chart what is said and can be said in a given society".[55] It is concerned with the context in which discourses occur, especially the relationship between language and power.[56] According to Foucault, the most scholar associated with thinking about discourse and power, power within the Critical Discourse Analysis refers to "a whole series of particular mechanisms, definable and defined, that seem

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[48] Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (University of California Press, 1984), 25.

[49] Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 40.

[50] Jabri, *Discourses on Violence*, 76.

[51] Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 127.

[52] Paul R. Brass, *Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective Violence* (Princeton University Press, 1997), 45.

[53] James Strong, 'Why Parliament Now Decides on War: Tracing the Growth of the Parliamentary Prerogative through Syria, Libya and Iraq', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 17, no. 4 (1 November 2015): 605, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-856X.12055; Jabri, *Discourses on Violence*, 1.

[54] Strong, 'Why Parliament Now Decides on War', 605.

[55] Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis* (SAGE, 2009), 36.

[56] Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*; Teun A van Dijk, 'Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis', n.d., 36.

capable of inducing behaviours or discourses".[57] Through language, the reality is presented, yet language is always determined by a culture that governs languages or discourse. The crucial feature of discourse is "meaning-making as an element of the social process". [58] Discourses can present some aspects of the world that can be "physical, mental or social".[59] Each discourse is usually associated with a different perspective or position [60], which means that violence, for instance, can be portrayed in a variety of ways depending on the discourses that are linked with it.

However, certain discourses are more powerful and, as a result, more socially accepted than others. Foucault refers to these discourses as "regimes of truth", which refers to discourses that society recognises as essentially accurate.[61]  He further elaborates saying that "each society has its regime of truth", which is a type of discourse "accepts and makes function as true; the mechanics and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true". Truths means discourses that can determine what "false bad" is and what is "true good".[62] Yet, the truth is not a straightforward concept but rather something that has been produced in discourses.[63] Similarly, truth is never found outside of power but is constructed by those in power.[64] The relationship between discourse, knowledge, and power is thus one in which power can only be exercised via domains of knowledge which are, in Foucault's words, "regimes of truth" made up of discourses.[65] Power is productive and can make things happen, and has a significant effect; not only by external use of coercive force or repression but also internally through a social process, discourse is subject to social power relations.

Scholars researching conflict agree that power is inextricably linked to what we commonly believe to be true – as it is rooted in our discourses. In her book, D*iscourse on violence*, Jabri explains the dominant discourse dynamics on violence. Dominant forces in society use the knowledge discursively and contact the general public to promote their own goals.[66] This domination is not only visible in strategic behaviour; it also manifests itself in more nuanced ways, such as the representation of a particular section's interests as general interests, the denial of contradictory discourses, and the presentation of existing social orders as normal.[67] As a product of power distributions in a given culture, It can be seen that certain discourses are more present and embraced than others in the creation of discourses. Therefore, violence can be legitimised and supported by the public.

After explaining how language and discourse can be used to mobilise violent conflict and legitimising violence by a dominant group and seen it as true, I would like to know how the

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[57] Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis* (SAGE, 2009), 35.

[58] Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, 230.

[59] Fairclough, 230.

[60] Fairclough, 232.

[61] Foucault, M, *Truth and Power*. In J. D. Faubion (Ed.), Michel Foucault. Power: 131. London: Penguin Books 1977.

[62] Foucault, M. *Truth and Power,* 158.

[63] Foucault, 158.

[64] Foucault, 131.

[65] Foucault, 157.

[66] Jabri, *Discourses on Violence*, 96.

[67] Jabri, 7–97.

interpretations, which is a form of discourse and subjected to power, can also be contested. On the other hand, contesting interpretations seek to contradict dominant understandings of aggression and violence, as shown by my data on the Saudi-led Coalition's various interpretations. An "official" specific violent action story can also be subjected to an alternative interpretation.[68] By doing this, it can create a debate between the dominant and the contesting groups' interpretations that will uncover the "relations of power/knowledge which establish or fail to establish a consensus within a regime of truth about violence and riots".[69] However, public staging of these contesting interpretations is not always possible.

Building on James Scott's notion of the "Hidden transcripts" in his book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, they can be defined as discourses that take place "beyond direct observation by powerholders".[70] Scholars have paid so much attention to what he calls the "public transcript"; rituals, forms and discourses. In other words, they pay attention to the power-holders' representations to the public view and to the subordinates' respectful response when they are around and in the presence of these power-holders. These models of hegemony never go beyond these forms and expressions of the public in order to "examine the appearance of consent".[71] "Subordinates" are thus caught up in power structures that compel them to talk and act in specific ways in the presence of power-holders while communicating in other ways when these power-holders are not present. He goes on to say that if we could follow these people into these protected heavens and listen to their private voice, we would discover a far more subversive and rebellious culture—one that allows people to be socially defiant when exploring private, small-scale, and defensible modes of rebellion- which Scott calls the "Infrapolitics".[72] Despite Scott's interesting insight on power resistance discourses, his conclusions are conflicting with the case I am interested in. In reality, my data shows that the victims' families in Sana'a do not only express their contest interpretations off-stage, but also actively and openly challenge them by contesting the official discourses, without actually provoking a coup or a dramatic moment of rebellion.

To conclude, discourse analysis studies the formation of violent imaginaries (images, narrative, performances) and discourse communities in specific cases. Discourse analysis is interested not only in the form: the contested 'naming' of parties in war and the 'portrayal' of episodes of violence but also importantly aims to gain insight into discourse functions. Discursive representations are seen to fulfil at least two purposes: 1) to recruit supporters by propagating a concrete us/them division, 2) to legitimise violent action and thus to gain or sustain power.

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[68] Michael V Bhatia, 'Fighting Words: Naming Terrorists, Bandits, Rebels and Other Violent Actors', *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (1 January 2005): 1, https://doi.org/10.1080/0143659042000322874.

[69] Brass, *Riots and Pogroms*, 45.

[70] 'Domination and the Arts of Resistance : Hidden Transcripts', 4, accessed 9 July 2021, http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzUzMDYxX19BTg2?sid=7570c3d5-3bfb-4c9e-a637-44b4e66f5584@sdc-v-sessmgr01&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1.

[71] 'Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts', 4.

[72] 'Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts', 183.

## FRAME ANALYSIS

There are, as explained above, discourses used to legitimise intervention and become dominant, and that describes how discourse and power are inextricably linked. However, and at the same time, there is always room for contestations. To study both, Benford and Snow framing analysis is the primary analytical lens used to help us to understand how people mobilise and interpret conflict.

Framing analysis is "a focused sub-variant of discourse analysis".[73] Discourse and frame analysis are both interpretive, drawing inspiration from hermeneutics and phenomenology, and "both cast an interpretive perspective on social interaction, which constitutes social movement activity".[74] These two approaches are interested in perception, interpretation, and meaning-making in politics and social movement communication. The general aim, using Snow and Benford term, is to draw the attention to the movement actors as "signifying agents" who actively interpret complaints and grievances and define objectives, rather than as passive carriers of ideologies and ideas.[75]

Benford and Snow offer a rich explanation of linkages between framing concepts and other conceptual formulations in relation to the social movement, such as ideologies and schemas. Social movement scholars conceptualise the work or the meaning constructed by employing the verb "framing". Frames are "schemata of interpretation" that enable people to "locate, perceive, identify and liable" events within their life and the world around them.[76] Framing analysis understands the social movements as a signifying actor that engage in signifying work: "framing assigns meaning to and interprets relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilise potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystanders support, and to demobilise antagonists".[77] In the same line, as Benford and Snow, is Entman. To him, frames indicate problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and propose solutions in a particular social context.[78] Entman further elaborates that to frame means to select some aspect of perceived reality and make them more salient in text in order to promote a specific issue statement, casual interpretations, then present an evaluation and conclude with recommendations and or solutions. Therefore, according to Benford and Snow, frames are collective action frames that are "action-oriented" groups of meanings and beliefs that can motivate and legitimise the activities of an organisation.[79] There are three core framing tasks that are constructed to develop consensus: 1) diagnostic framing to identify and define a problem, 2) prognostic framing to propose a solution for an issue, and 3) motivational framing to mobilise people into action.[80]

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[73] Donatella della Porta, *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research* (OUP Oxford, 2014), 197.

[74] Donatella della Porta, *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research* (OUP Oxford, 2014), 196.

[75] Porta, 196.

[76] Benford and Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment', *Annual Review of Sociology* 2 (2000): 614.

[77] Benford and Snow, 614.

[78] Robert M. Entman, 'Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm', *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1 December 1993): 52, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x.

[79] Benford and Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment', 614.

[80] Benford and Snow, 616.

The goal of diagnostic framing is to figure out what is wrong and who is to blame. It entails establishing boundaries between good and wrong, as well as determining who is the protagonist and who is the antagonist. It is referred to as an "adversarial frame" by Benford and Snow, in which an opponent (enemy) is given specific characteristics.[81] Gamson calls them "injustice frames" as they identify the victim and then amplify their persecution.[82] These injustice frames are an interpretation of collective action such as protest and rebellion produced or adopted by those who see the authority actions as unjust. Benford and Snow elaborate that these frames have been used for advocating for economic and political change.[83] After identifying the problem, it is needed to look for a solution, and that is where the second framing task, prognostic framing, is helpful. It is not only finding a solution but also counter framing what the hegemonic have presented. It tackles the challenge of action mobilization and consensus as well as the question of what should be done. Motivational framing is the final core task. It provides a "call to arms" and/or rationality for engaging in actions, including the discourse to support the call for action. It also constructs an appropriate vocabulary of motive, such as a precision vocabulary. Gamson refers to this frame as the "agency" in the collective action frames.[84]

Benford and Snow have shown the significance of framing as an analytical frame. Many researchers have contributed to our understanding of how various types of frames function. However, my goal here is different. But I don't want to contribute to the framing of literature in the traditional sense. Instead, I use the concepts of 'diagnostic', 'prognostic' and 'motivational' framing as a methodological heuristic devises for separating the various discourses surrounding the Saudi-led Coalition's actions. There, I define framing as the way a particular event or series of events is perceived and interpreted. In return, these framings, or interpretations, are embedded in larger social life discourses.[85] Thus, throughout the following, I will use the term "framing" to refer to the Saudi-led Coalition's interpretations of particular cases and the victims' interpretations of the same case. And "discourse" to refer to the wider body of thought that these framings are rooted in.

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[81] Benford and Snow, 616.

[82] Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment', *Annual Review of Sociology* 26, no. 1 (August 2000): 90, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.611.

[83] Benford and Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements', 616.

[84] Benford and Snow, 616.

[85] Brass, *Theft of an Idol*, 15.

# METHODOLOGY

This study is based on qualitative data collected from Sana'a, Yemen, between 2015 to 2017 in order to answer the research question. The analysis of the data collected using a social science methodology mainly includes a "dialogue between ideas and facts". The analytical frame that is derived from concepts or theory, and the patterns emerged and developed from the data and evidence, are composited and combined with the aim to make sense of the data collected. This composition and combination produce a description of social life that is relevant to the research project. Before I delve deeper into the conversation between the data (evidence) and the theoretical method (ideas), I will explain how I gathered the empirical evidence through document analysis and systematic questioning, which allowed me to discover trends and patterns. This chapter describes and explains the research design, research method, data collection techniques, methods, ethical consideration, and limitations.

## RESEARCH PUZZLE AND SUB-QUESTIONS

As mentioned in the introduction, the research puzzle with which this study is concerned is as follows:

*What collective action frames do victims' families use to contest the legitimisation of Saudi-led remote airstrikes in Sana'a between 2015-2017?*

In order to design a suitable methodology to answer the research puzzle, I broke the question down into two sub-questions. The first focuses on the way in which the Saudi-led Coalition officially frames the coalition's airstrikes, and the second focuses on how the interpretations of victims' families who live in Sana'a are framed to contest the Saudi-led Coalition interpretation. Both questions include a series of sub-questions:

**Sub-question 1: The Saudi-led Coalition Frames**
How are the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes conducted between 2015 and 2017 interpreted in its official statements?

- **Diagnostic Framing:** How does the Saudi-led Coalition negotiate a shared understanding of the Yemen situation as in need of change for being problematic?
  o What or who does Saudi-led Coalition blame for the problematic situation?
  o What has been identified as the source of a problem?
  o Who is the culpable agent?

- **Prognostic Framing:** What are the alternative sets of arrangements proposed as a solution to the problem by the Saudi-led Coalition?
  o What are Saudi-led Coalition strategies to tackle the problem and carry out the plan?
  o How does the Saudi-led Coalition introduce their carrying out of the plan?

- **Motivational Framing:** How does the Saudi-led Coalition provide a 'call to arms' for engaging in 'ameliorative' collective action in the Yemen situation?
  o Whom does the Saudi-led Coalition call to arms? How And why?


**Sub-question 2: The victims' families contesting Frames**
How do the interpretations of victims' families who live in Sana'a contest the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes interpretation between 2015 and 2017?

- **Diagnostic Framing:** How do the victims' families who live in Sana'a try to refute, discredit, or neutralize the Saudi-led Coalition's remote airstrikes framing?

How do the victims' families who live in Sana'a individually contest the diagnostic framing of the Saudi-led Coalition?
  o What or who do the victims' families blame for the problematic situation?
  o What has been identified as the source of a problem?
  o Who is the culpable agent?

- **Prognostic Framing:** How do the victims' families who live in Sana'a contest the prognostic framing of the Saudi-led Coalition?

What are the alternative sets of arrangements proposed as a solution to the problem by the victims' families?
  o What are the victims' families' strategies to tackle the problem and carry out the plan?
  o How does the victims' families introduce their carrying out of the plan?

- **Motivational Framing:** How do the victims' families who live in Sana'a provide a 'call to arms' for engaging in ameliorative collective action?
  o Whom do the victims' families who live in Sana'a call for engaging in ameliorative collective action? How and why?

# RESEARCH DESIGN

*"Without detailed analysis, one cannot really show that language is doing the work one may theoretically ascribe to it".*[86]

A plan for gathering and analysing data should be sensibly designed in what Ragin refers to as a "research design" in order to answer the research questions.[87] The sampling process, data collection techniques, and interpretation methods are all part of a research plan. To put it another way, it illustrates how a researcher arrived at the conclusions they present. To answer the research question, a research design to analyse evidence must be constructed systematically. As Fairclough says: "without detailed analysis, one cannot really show that language is doing the work one may theoretically ascribe to it". Since this is a case study of how the Saudi-led Coalition interprets/legitimises their airstrikes campaign and how the victims' families interpret/contest this airstrikes campaign, the ontological nature of this research is about understandings, interpretations, discourses and images. Thus, it is subjective as it is about how meaning is constructed and calls for a more interpretivist epistemology. Interpretivist "emphasises the sense people make of their own lives and experiences-researcher seeks out and interprets people' meanings and interpretations". [88]

This study is qualitative in keeping with the ontological and epistemological stances. Therefore, qualitative techniques are the most appropriate as they "offer the opportunity for participants to describe the subject of study in their own words".[89] In addition to that, part of the understudy subject of the research topic is sensitive, contains people's experiences and feelings, and how they have been assigned meaning, which are crucial for both discourses and frames. Furthermore, the subject under investigation is an exceptional situation. Therefore, qualitative analysis is, in particular, well-matched for researching such topics, rendering this form of research compatible with the theoretical frame's ontological stance, according to Boeije.[90]

The analysis units are documents and persons that were intentionally and carefully sampled. They are "intentionally selected according to the needs of the study".[91] Firstly, official statements and publication by the Saudi officials on the Saudi-led Coalition military intervention (airstrikes) in Sana'a were sampled to study the coalition framing of the airstrikes. When data saturation was achieved, however, sampling was halted, meaning no new patterns in additional data were being discovered.

Secondly, in order to research the victim's families, who were affected by the coalition airstrike, interpretation and contestation of the coalition airstrikes, I interviewed 14 in total from Sana'a people living there within the time frame of this research 2015 to 2017. These participants

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[86] Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 137.

[87] Charles C. Ragin and Lisa M. Amoroso, *Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method* (Pine Forge Press, 2011), 26.

[88] Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 2nd ed (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2002), 8.

[89] 'Boeije 6 - Doing Qualitative Analysis.Pdf', n.d., 38.

[90] 'Boeije 6 - Doing Qualitative Analysis.Pdf', 32,33.

[91] 'Boeije 6 - Doing Qualitative Analysis.Pdf', 35.

were selected purposely to be sampled. However, when data saturation was achieved, the sampling was also stopped.

The Saudi-led Coalition's air campaign began in 2015 and is still ongoing. However, the research looks at 2015-2017 as a timeframe. March has been chosen as a starting point as it was the beginning of the airstrike campaign in Sana'a and included the documented data and the accounts interpretations used to address the coalition airstrikes operations. December 2017 has been selected as the end due to significantly more strikes on civilian targets until this point. After 2017 strikes continued but they mostly targeted non civilian targets.


## RESEARCH METHOD

### 1. *The Saudi-led Coalition's official 'truth'*

This first part is guided by sub-question number one. It is designed to study the Saudi-led Coalition interpretations with the aim to analyse how the coalition's discourses are formally framed. The data collected during this phase offered insight into the Saudi-led Coalition's prognostic, diagnostic and motivational framing of the coalition airstrikes in Sana'a, Yemen.

The data collected in this part were official textual statements through online publications by the Saudi government regarding the coalition airstrikes operations in Sana'a between March 2015 and October 2017. Since the official Saudi Arabia press website and the Saudi Arabia embassy in the United States are mainly responsible for addressing the audience of the national and regional countries and Western on the coalition airstrikes in Sana'a, publications and official statements were selected and gathered. The official Saudi press website is almost weekly reporting on the coalition operations in Yemen.[92] In addition, the Saudi embassy has the Saudi Arabia spokesperson represented by its ambassador Adel Al Jubeir towards the global north when updating the Westerners about the coalition's operation in Yemen.[93] Thus, these two were carefully chosen to extract data from.

After the data sources were identified and selected, the next step in the research was to classify the data for further analysis. Coding is a method used in qualitative research analysis, which "goes beyond merely counting words to examining language intensely for the purpose of classifying large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories that represent similar meanings".[94] It enables rapid and easy recognition and identification of the key concepts in each text that serve as the foundation for this analysis, as well as demonstrating how these concepts were used in the framing processes of each text. Thus, I used Altheide's notion of qualitative content analysis. When studying public documents systematically, Altheide proposes coding them by looking at frames, which remind us of a wider discourse.[95] Then, I used Benford and Snow's

[92] 'وكالة الأنباء السعودية', accessed 8 July 2021, https://www.spa.gov.sa/.

[93] 'The Embassy | The Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia', accessed 8 July 2021, https://www.saudiembassy.net/embassy.

[94] Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, 'Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis', *Qualitative Health Research* 15, no. 9 (November 2005): 1278, https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687.

[95] David L. Altheide, 'Tracking Discourse and Qualitative Document Analysis', *Poetics* 27, no. 4 (May 2000): 291, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0304-422X(00)00005-X.

concepts of "diagnostic frames", "prognostic frames", and "motivational frames" to analyse structurally the Saudi official interpretation. Then, I used their understanding of frames as a means to uncover the discourse. I coded the Saudi Arabia officials' statements and reports in the quantitative data analytic tool, NVivo 12. This helped to identify and then extract the frames systematically. Starting with building codes originating from the literature and gradually adding in " NVivo 12 " codes.[96]

## B. Collecting interpretations/contestations

The second part is guided by sub-question number two. It was the collection of the empirical evidence: the people's interpretations of the Saudi-led Coalition as articulated by Sana'a people who have been living in Sana'a since 2015 (N=14). They, therefore, offered an insight into whether the Saudi-led Coalition frame is contested and why. I used semi-structured interviews as data collection techniques, which enabled me to investigate people's experience and views on social life.[97] To maintain continuity between interviews, I used an interview guidance of question- see aappendix 2. As this research was conducted remotely, other data collecting methods such as participant observation were impossible.

The interview guide was structured as follows: the first set of questions is general ones about understanding the war in Yemen in terms of causation and solution through their eyes. Then, as the research study focused on the victim families' interpretations, questions were followed about the interviewee's personal experience of the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes. These questions were followed by direct structural questions based on Benford and Snow's conceptualisation of "diagnostic frames", "prognostic frames", and "Motivational frames" to have in detail the interviewees interpretations and framing of the war. Moreover, to contest the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes. The interview then was concluded by questions about the general topic of remote warfare and non-democratic state following suits. Through the combination of the general and direct questions, it was possible to gain insight into whether or not the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes frame of war is contested. Further, it allowed for interpretations gathered that could be used as counternarratives.

The people I interviewed were chosen based on their geographical origins. Since this was where the Houthis dominated areas of the country and the Saudi-led Coalition was active, I restricted my study group to people from Sana'a. All the interviewees lived in Sana'a during the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes, and all of them except one are still living in Sana'a till today. I found the research study participants through using the "snowball sampling" technique. Following an interview, I asked respondents to put me to refer me to their acquaintances. This enabled finding participants willing to talk and share their experience of sensitive political topics a lot easier.[98]

The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using theme coding in a systematic manner, which is an approach to excerpt "the social distribution of perspectives on a

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[96] 'Boeije 7 - Integrative Procedures.Pdf', n.d., 101.

[97] 'Boeije 6 - Doing Qualitative Analysis.Pdf', 62.

[98] 'Boeije 6 - Doing Qualitative Analysis.Pdf', 75.

phenomenon".[99] For this, I used NVivo 12 to code them. The first is generic coding, which is concerned with representing data and phenomena as concepts.[100] I used Benford and Snow's notion of "diagnostic framing", "prognostic framing", and "Motivational Framing" as concepts to interpret interviews. Doing so allowed me to find patterns or "images" of my data that I later engaged in a dialogue form with the theory. It allowed me to construct and build my argumentation. I address the findings by quotes and vignettes that may seem anecdotal, but I carefully chose to reflect a group of voices that emerged in my interviews. These were supported by pictures taken by the participants as they were sent to me after the interviews as evidence. I give the people a voice in the beginning of the fifth chapter. I have chosen to do this because I want to give a voice and context and bring life to the numbers.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In every research study, the protection of human subjects by the implementation of relevant ethical standards is critical.[101] Because of the in-depth aspect of the analysis method, ethical issues have a particular resonance in qualitative research. When undertaking one-to-one interviews with a vulnerable group of people, ethical concerns become even more critical. They can become stressed when voicing their emotions during the interview.[102] Social researchers, therefore, should reflect upon these ethical values of the research when interacting with participants. It is especially true when researching critical subjects in fields like Conflict Studies. Informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality are three critical measurements of ethical considerations in social science that must be considered when researching in order to reduce the "unnecessary harm, risk or wrong" to the participants.[103]

Firstly, regarding the informed consent, I informed the interviewees about my research goal and the structure of the interview before starting the discussion. I also informed them about their right to withdrawal from the interview. Then I asked for their permission to record the interviews. Second, the participants' privacy, I conducted each interview individually in a private and quiet chat room without access by outsiders. I'm the only one who can match the identity of the participants and their voice recording. As I did the introduction off the record. Also, during the interview, I didn't address them with their real names. This then takes us to the third standard, which is confidentiality.

I anonymised each person I mentioned in this study to safeguard the safety of the participants. Some participants gave their consent to use their full names. However, I opted to anonymise all participants because this study deals with a sensitive subject. The participant's anonymity and confidentiality were preserved by not revealing their names in the data collection and analysis and reporting in my study findings. I instead gave them fake names in order to provide it with a realistic picture when referring to participants, especially when quoting and vignetting their stories, as I mentioned earlier.

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[99] Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (SAGE, 2018), 318.

[100] Flick, 307.

[101] Siti Roshaidai Mohd Arifin, 'Ethical Considerations in Qualitative Study' 16, no. 1 (2017): 31.

[102] Arifin, 31,32.

[103] 'Boeije 6 - Doing Qualitative Analysis.Pdf', 45.

## LIMITATIONS

In any research study, limitations are important to acknowledge. On this note, I was limited in many ways. Firstly, as the research study concerns the victims' families who were affected by the airstrikes, it was challenging to find participants willing to talk and share their experience as these experiences were tragic and even traumatic. However, I managed to largely overcome this by writing a post on the need for participants, who are willing to share their stories, on a Facebook group that I'm a member of. The group is marking all the airstrikes and bombs in Yemen. While advertising publicly, I asked interested candidates to send me a private message to ensure their interest was not publicly announced. As it is an open channel and everyone is free to share their experiences, I managed to find participants from that page willing to talk and share openly. Yet, the number of participants was very limited due to the topic's sensitivity. Also, the participants I spoke with all had access to the internet, which in Sana'a today is a luxury. This means my findings cannot be generalised to include all civilian interpretations in Sana'a.

Another limitation was conducting the interviews virtually. Due to the ongoing war for almost six years and the poor infrastructures in Yemen, it was challenging to have a stable internet line. It had to try many applications, which resulted in time-intensive interviews and causing frustration to the participants. I had to cancel two interviews due to the bad connections. However, I identified Google Meets as a solution. The application worked well with poor connection and was not restricted by the country's national security as the participants told me.

Further, I had to conduct the interviews only with voice and no camera, and this was a bit limiting the flow of the conversion and ended up being more of a question-and-answer style than a conversation. Therefore, participants were restricted to my questions rather than exploring topics that had not been asked about. Yet, 10 out of the 14 interviews did indeed run smoothly and maintained a nice flow whenever the internet was working fine. Also, participants were very helpful and permitted me to reach out to them to cross-check any information or ask for more information when needed.

The final limitation is my positionality as a researcher. I am a Yemeni woman, and while this has given me the advantage of speaking the language of the people and understanding the cultural codes to communicate and build trust effortlessly, there are other limitations as an outcome. While I am fortunate to have access to a network of friends and families' members who live in Sana'a and helped connect me with the participants. On the other hand, I find myself in a biased position. And that it is when a study topic's goal is to "give voice", one must "unlearn" one's own thinking in order to fully reflect the participants' voice.[104] I, therefore, managed to do that by not responding normatively to what the participants said. Also, I challenged myself to remain neutral and making myself aware of my emotional investment and assumptions with regards to my own understanding of the Coalition. However, my position as a Yemeni woman has given me positive credit with the participants as they felt safe and comfortable when talking to me.

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[104] Ragin and Amoroso, *Constructing Social Research*, 44.

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

*"The situation in Yemen remains extremely grave. The intensity of the conflict increases day after day ... The humanitarian situation is appalling ... The country is not suffering from a single emergency but a number of complex emergencies, which have affected more than 20 million people and whose scale and effect will be felt long after the end of the war. Fourteen million people are food insecure, of whom almost 7 million are at risk of famine".*[105]

This chapter provides background information that will help in giving an overview of Yemen's violent history to contextualize the analyses performed in this study. As it can be seen in the Special Envoy of the secretary-general of the United Nations when talking to the security council quote, the situation in Yemen is staggering. Thus, it is helpful to reflect on the country's past to situate the conflict. I will begin with a brief profile of Yemen. Then proceed by outlining Yemen's violent history starting from its unification to the outbreak of the present crisis. This background knowledge is especially important because the Yemeni war is both complex and unknown and only little contemporary research has been done on the topic such as Helen Lackner in her book *Yemen in Crisis*.

## THE COUNTRY PROFILE

Yemen is a stunning nation with breathtaking mountains, deserts, and coastal scenery. It also boasts a diverse cultural legacy, including a distinct architectural heritage as well as prehistoric archaeological and cultural sites that are significant in the history of the Arabian Peninsula and the wider Middle East.[106] The cause for worldwide interest is commonly cited as geopolitics. Yemen should, in principle, receive a lot of attention in this regard, because it controls the strategically important Bab al-Mandab Strait, which leads to the Red Sea and is still a significant conduit for international marine commerce.[107]

Yemen is, at the same time, the poorest country in the Middle East, with living conditions comparable to those of several African countries prior to the conflict. Yemen is ranked 160th out of 188 nations in the UN's human development category, which means it is within the 'poor' human development category,.[108] Yemen's population is estimated to be 26 million people, with 99.1% of the population being Muslim. Sunni Muslims make up 65 per cent of the Muslim population, while Shia Muslims make up the remaining 35 per cent.[109]  The present violence has exacerbated the country's economic problems, with an estimated 82 percent of the population in need of humanitarian aid.[110] It is the poorest country in the Arab world,[111] with more than half of

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[105] Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis*, 39.

[106] Lackner, 45.

[107] Lackner, 42.

[108] Lackner, 43.

[109] 'UNHCR | Refworld | Yemen: The Conflict in Saada Governorate - Analysis', 20 November 2012, https://web.archive.org/web/20121120171316/http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/topic,45a5199f2,45a5f8b22,488f180d1e,0.html.

[110] Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis*, 534.

[111] 'Yemen', accessed 30 June 2021, https://interactive.unocha.org/publication/humanitarian-access/yemen.html.

the people living in poverty.[112] A peek into Yemen's violent history will help us understand how such a country with a strategic location and rich resources has become under the poverty line and in a constant war.

## THE COUNTRY VIOLENCE HISTORY

Yemen is the poorest country in the Arab world according to the UN.[113] The history of Yemen is littered with insecurity and instability and that is due to failed institutions and weak national identity that have fuelled local conflicts, civil strife and power struggle.[114] Zaydi Shia imams gained control over the north of Yemen's territory when Islam arrived in the 6th century AD. Yemen's south and East regions prospered as a result of the increasing trade that passed through Sana'a and Aden's port, which later in the late 1950s was recognised as the world's second-largest port.[115]

Yemen's strategic and geopolitical importance in the area by the 19th century, coupled with its dominance over trading routes and proximity to Mecca and Medina, prompted world powers to gain control of the country. In the 1500s, the Ottoman Empire seized control of Yemen and in 1839, the British sought to establish dominance in the area and conquered Aden, forcing the Ottomans to flee. The Ottomans and British conflict had resulted in dividing the country into south and north and was recorded as the birth date of the formal division of Yemen.[116] However, in order to retain their dominance in the area, the Ottomans took control of the north and declared Sana'a as the capital, while the British kept control of Aden and the south.

In the North, Othmans faced difficulties controlling the area where the Zaydi tribes had long bloomed. Othmans, therefore, failed to build a centralized government and, after many revolutions in 1904 and 1911, Ottomans had to hand over the sovereignty of the northern mountainous land to the Zaydi Imamate. As the Ottoman influence in the Middle East came to an end after World War I, Imam Yahya Hamid, the leader of the northern tribes, became the recognized leader.[117] Until his death in 1948, Imam Yahya was the leader of the Zaydi Imamate, which included most of Yemen modern-day. The Zaydis are Shi'ites; however, their type of Shiism differs from that of Iran and is more akin to Sunnism in ideology.[118] The Zaydi Imam's militaries engaged in a war against both the British, who had settled in the south of Yemen, and against Saudi Arabia which was growing in the North. The Houthi opposition today is largely made up of their descendants.[119]

In 1962, the country was swept with civil war after the death of Imam Yahya's successor, his son Ahmad, who was very conservative like his father and rejected most of all modes of

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[112] Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis*, 534.

[113] 'The United Nations in Yemen | United Nations in Yemen', accessed 22 July 2021, https://yemen.un.org/en/about/about-the-un.

[114] Daniel Byman, 'Yemen's Disastrous War', *Survival* 60, no. 5 (3 September 2018): 142, https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2018.1518376.

[115] Noel Brehony, *Yemen Divided* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), 31.

[116] Brehony, 45–48.

[117] Byman, 'Yemen's Disastrous War', 3 September 2018, 142.

[118] Byman, 142.

[119] Byman, 142.

modernisation. Egypt offered support and sent thousands and thousands of troops to back the Arab-nationalist military, whereas the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan supported the royalists. In an attempt to undermine Egypt, Israel also supported the royalists.[120] The invasion fuelled the war and left the outside forces and power drained and exhausted, leading them to eventually curtailing or suspending their activities and interventions.[121]

After the imam's death in 1962 and the following civil war, the war had come to an end with the establishment of the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) in the north by the nationalist forces.[122] The Imamate group, however, obtained some influential posts and a portion of the benefaction as part of a negotiated settlement. This deal among the political leaders could characterise Yemeni politics in the coming years.[123] Meanwhile, the British lost power on Aden in 1962 in the south and radical socialists with links to the soviet union got power resulting in establishing the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY).[124]

The YAR and the DRY states' independence only lasted for a short time, but their legacy continues to exacerbate Yemen's internal tensions. In 1972 and 1979, South and North Yemen waged battles, and in 1986, Yemen's south experienced a civil war of its own.[125] In 1990, the two were reunited under the leadership of the north and formed the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR).[126] Civil war, however, erupted again in 1994, when southerners attempted unsuccessfully to break away from the domination of the north.[127] The Republic of Yemen remained a model of pluralism, with a large traditional civil society made up of different tribal and religious communities preventing the new government from monopolising authority throughout the country, and state-society relations were seldom stable.[128]

The reunion has been seen as a need for general agreement and consensus on the extraction of newly discovered oil resources, as well as the PDRY growing crisis of its legitimacy and authority following the civil war in 1886. The reunion took place with the YAR members in control, especially President Ali Abdallah Saleh, who strengthened his power – 'dancing on the heads of snakes', he called it by taking over the presidency of the Republic of Yemen in 1990.[129] The inability to merge and integrate the YAR and the PDRY military forces, the centralisation of the government institutions in Sana'a, and the lack of new and strong institutions to bringing in democratic reforms and clear reunion, disadvantaged the PDRY's government members and elite

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[120] Byman, 143.

[121] Byman, 143.

[122] Brehony, *Yemen Divided*, 61.

[123] Byman, 'Yemen's Disastrous War', 3 September 2018, 143.

[124] Brehony, *Yemen Divided*, 81–85.

[125] Byman, 'Yemen's Disastrous War', 3 September 2018, 143.

[126] Brehony, *Yemen Divided*, 37.

[127] Byman, 'Yemen's Disastrous War', 3 September 2018, 143.

[128] Laurent Bonnefoy, 'Violence in Contemporary Yemen: State, Society and Salafis: Violence in Contemporary Yemen', *The Muslim World* 101, no. 2 (April 2011): 326, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.2011.01359.x.

[129] Byman, 'Yemen's Disastrous War', 3 September 2018, 144.

on one hand and gave more power, position and great wealth to YAR members and elites on the other.[130]

The South, therefore, never wholly incorporated and the country was poor, and anger and hatred against Saleh simmered. This unrest between the North and the South along with the lack of a true reunion provoked a civil war in 1994.[131] The North won and was expected to further unify the country by putting down the opposition in the South. However, civil society dissent was increasingly oppressed, and the South was repressed by northern leaders.[132]

The start of the current conflict can be traced back to 2003 when the violence ignited between the country's north and south, including Saleh's government oppression of the so-called The Believing Youth, part of those who are members of the Zaydi minority and later became known as the Houthis.[133] Husayn al Houthi, their leader, eluded capture, and the following government crackdown resulted in further conflict between government troops and his supporters in the Sada'a area until his death in 2004.[134] After al Houthi's death, the government's pursuit of his followers is expected to have bolstered sympathy for the Houthis, who had established a more united guerrilla unit and proceeded to commit acts of violence in Sada'a, despite the government's strengthened military response to the uprising. As the origin of the first Yemeni imamate, Sada'a area has been the epicentre of violence and turmoil in Yemen. While the region's political influence had dwindled, it continued to be relevant for the study of Zaydism, the Shia Islamist branch from which the Houthis descend. [135]

This resulted in the government having a weak presence, especially in 2004 clashes.[136] All the designated governors were unable to maintain power over the region and maintain a balance among the different factions. In 2006, the government attempted to strengthen ties with the Houthis by appointing a new provincial governor, which resulted in a year of relative stability. Following 2007, a series of severe military battles between the two sides, violence escalated, interspersed by periods of fragile peace negotiated by Qatar and exacerbated by Saudi Arabia's intervention in Yemen in 2009 against the Houthi location near their border with Yemen.[137]

This wasn't the first Saudi intervention in Yemen. Saudi Arabia battled over the border with Yemen in 1934, resulting in Yemen losing some of its land, which is now known as Asir province in Saudi Arabia. These conflicts at the border lasted until the mid-1990s, with the border finally

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[130] Sophia Dingli, 'Is the Failed State Thesis Analytically Useful? The Case of Yemen', *Politics* 33, no. 2 (June 2013): 94, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9256.2012.01453.x.

[131] Dingli, 94.

[132] Alexandra Lewis, 'Violence in Yemen: Thinking About Violence in Fragile States Beyond the Confines of Conflict and Terrorism', *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2, no. 1 (14 May 2013): 4, https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.az.

[133] Lucas Winter, 'Conflict in Yemen: Simple People, Complicated Circumstances', *Middle East Policy* 18, no. 1 (March 2011): 103, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4967.2011.00476.x.

[134] Winter, 102.

[135] Winter, 103–4.

[136] Winter, 104.

[137] Winter, 104.

being completed and agreed upon in 2000.[138] Saudi Arabia has sought to bribe local elites, halt AQAP-linked jihadists, disrupt Marxist movements in the south, and weaken the government in Sana'a once it went against Saudi's objectives, in addition to the military battles and confrontations. Saudi Arabia helped Salafism's expansion in Yemen, financing mosques and lecturers to preach their rigid and anti-Shia version of Islam.[139] Despite, Saudi Arabia winning over a particular leader or stopping or killing a terrorist, yet most of the Yemenis continued strongly to be nationalistic and always doubtful of Saudi Arabia. They frequently fell short of Saudi Arabia's ambitions and objectives in Yemen.[140]

Simultaneously, the US has contributed to the conflict in fighting a separate war in Yemen, attempting to apprehend al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. The first unsuccessful assault recorded on a US target by Al-Qaeda was in 1992 when they bombed hotels in Aden hosting US marines transiting the country on the way to their peacekeeping duty in Somalia.[141] The second assault was in 2001 when Al-Qaeda blew up the USS Cole while refuelling in Aden harbour, killing 17 soldiers. [142]

Later in the 1990s, Yemen was home to a variety of jihadist organizations with opposing ideologies, but after 9/11, al-Qaeda emerged as the main jihadist organization, with many members of other sects flocking to it. The jihadist presence grew as a result of a combination of outrage over the US Iraq invasion and a fragile Yemeni regime policy against the jihadists. Yemen was a big source of volunteers for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, where they fought against the US. AQAP proclaimed its presence in Yemen in 2009, and it would go on to become one of the group's most prominent affiliates.[143]

Following 9/11, the US went on the offensive, killing al-Qaeda militant Qaed Salim Sinan al-Harethi, a Yemeni resident, in the first drone attack outside of a declared war zone in 2002.[144] In the years that followed, US efforts remained effective, with the Bush administration seeing Yemen's terrorism issue as largely contained. When AQAP attempted and almost succeeded in bombing a plane over Detroit in 2009, the Obama administration decided to step up operations. Anwar al-Awlaki, a US resident operating out of Yemen, was killed in the first, and thus far, only, drone attack carried out by the US in 2011.[145] Awlaki had founded Inspire magazine, the first major jihadist outlet for people who speak English, and had reported several online speeches to encourage Western people to carry out attacks. Many jihadists continued to use his speeches to justify their acts even after he died.

Due to the State's weakness, Saleh and the jihadists formed tactical partnerships. During the civil war in 1994, the government employed jihadists to combat in the south, emphasising the opponent's communalist legacy. Even after 9/11, when the government took a more serious stance

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[138] Byman, 'Yemen's Disastrous War', 3 September 2018, 143.

[139] Byman, 143.

[140] Byman, 144.

[141] Byman, 144.

[142] Daniel Byman, 'Yemen's Disastrous War', *Survival* 60, no. 5 (3 September 2018): 144, https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2018.1518376; Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis*, 39.

[143] Byman, 'Yemen's Disastrous War', 3 September 2018, 144.

[144] Byman, 'Yemen's Disastrous War', 3 September 2018, 145.

[145] Byman, 'Yemen's Disastrous War', 3 September 2018, 145.

against jihadists, it did not get bothered after many of them moved to Iraq to fight the US. They have never been the number one government's enemy.

In 2000, Houthis started to protest and caused troubles as time went on. As Zaydis, they despised Saudi-sponsored Salafist preaching, which preached a strong anti-Shia message, and the corruption in the Yemeni regime. They believed they were not receiving their fair share of government aid and political acceptance. Since then, they have been fighting for their inclusivity in the Yemeni political system rather than stepping away. [146]

## THE ARAB SPRING IN YEMEN

As violence erupted through the Arab world in 2011, youth-led protests in Yemen questioned Saleh's rule and drew widespread support. Soon after, key members of the government joined the demonstrators. In the middle of 2011, the conflict turned increasingly violent with street fights erupting in the capital city Sana'a and elsewhere. In November of the same year, Saleh accepted a transition plan in which he would be granted amnesty in exchange for his departure.[147] Beginning of 2012, presidential elections were held and the former vice president Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi was the only contender.

As a result, Yemen has convened a National Dialogue Conference (NDC) with the aim to design and introduce new constitutional amendments prior to the new elections. The NDC was seen as weak and multinational, and the underlying conflict between the government and the Houthis persisted throughout the process and after it ended.[148] Furthermore, people in positions of power maintained their efforts on all fronts, participating in the process of government transformation while also engaging in civil protest and even violence, making the NDC's policies hard to implement.[149] The NDC ended without a conclusion and this led to extending President Hadi's tenure for another year by the participants.[150]

Saleh, on the other hand, was playing a power game from behind the scenes, weakening and undermining Hadi while maintaining as well as retaining the loyalty and support of several military units.[151]AQAP, separatist sentiment movement in the south, on the other hand, continued the violence and attacks in the south of Yemen. The collapse of the economy as well as corruption, unemployment, and food insecurity and many other maladies have kept the Hadi government weakening despite the international goodwill. As president, Hadi struggled to deal with many problems. Unable to improve conditions and maintain stability, however, Hadi's government faced military conflict and insurrection, which devolved into civil war.[152]

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[146] Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis*, 303; Byman, 'Yemen's Disastrous War', 3 September 2018, 145.

[147] Marcel Serr, 'Understanding the War in Yemen', *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 11, no. 3 (2 September 2017): 2, https://doi.org/10.1080/23739770.2017.1419405.

[148] Erica Gaston, 'Process Lessons Learned in Yemen's National Dialogue', n.d., 3–5.

[149] Erica Gaston, 'Process Lessons Learned in Yemen's National Dialogue', n.d., 5.

[150] Serr, 'Understanding the War in Yemen', 2.

[151] Serr, 2.

[152] Serr, 2.

Another wave of Houthi protests hit Yemen in February 2014, prompting President Hadi to escape first to Aden and then to Saudi Arabia.[153] This rebellion, in which the Houthis rejected the draft constitution and the NDC's proposals while appointing a presidential council to take over from Hadi, has led in the Houthis' most widespread assault to seize power in Yemen. The Houthis took benefit of the disorder and the vulnerability of the Hadi government.[154] They waged a military operation against Hadi within weeks after the close of NDC's discussions, taking control of Sana'a and some additional parts of the country's west and north with the support of pro-Saleh security assistants.[155] The Houthis stormed the presidential palace in 2015, forming a shadow government and strengthening their hold on Sana'a by placing Hadi and his government under home detention. They concluded and completed their coup d'état a few weeks later by forming a "revolutionary committee" and other related governing groups from North Sunni areas. Hadi retreated to the south of Yemen and stayed in Aden, condemning the coup of the Houthis and claiming his own power as the country's globally recognised leader. Hadi quickly formed an anti-Houthi/Saleh alliance including members of the separatist movement from the south, Islamists, and tribesmen mainly from the south and northern Sunni regions.[156]

As the Houthis were preparing themselves to take Aden in March 2015, Hadi fled to Saudi Arabia. This has raised Saudi Arabia concerns and upon Hadi request for military intervention, immediately formed a coalition of mainly Sunni Arab nations. They launched airstrikes against Houthis targets in late March 2015, alarmed by the emergence of the Houthis, whom they believed to be backed by Iran. The operation's stated goals were to defeat the Houthis and restore Hadi's government legitimacy.[157]

This conflict is still ongoing and has exacerbated Yemen's desperate suffering by the civil war, bringing the country ever closer to ruin. Exact, or even approximate, figures are difficult to come by, but approximately 50,000 people have died as a direct result of military activity in the conflict, roughly half of which are civilians. Between March 26, 2015, and March 25, 2018, the Yemen Data Project (YDP) recorded 16,749 Coalition airstrikes in Yemen.[158] The figures from YDP demonstrate the Coalition's intentional assault on all elements of life in Yemen. 6121 (36.5 percent) of the 16,749 bombings reported targeted proven military targets, 5168 (31 percent) non-military targets, and 5460 (32.5 percent) unknown targets of which 2072 attacked civilian targets. This includes residential locations (1543), marketplaces (195), vehicles/buses (293), mosques (45), social events (16), boats (30), and internally displaced person camps are among the civilian targets hit (4). 1222 times, Yemen's infrastructure has been attacked. And the ball of hitting is still rolling till today.[159] Yemen's humanitarian catastrophe has worsened as a result of the fighting, with widespread starvation on the horizon. Despite the fact that the Saudi alliance has retaken some

[153] 'Yemen Crisis: Why Is There a War?', *BBC News*, 19 June 2020, sec. Middle East, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423.

[154] 'Yemen Crisis'.

[155] Serr, 'Understanding the War in Yemen', 2.

[156] Serr, 2,3.

[157] Serr, 3.

[158] 'A "Synchronised Attack" on Life: The Saudi-led Coalition's "Hidden and Holistic" Genocide in Yemen and the Shared Responsibility of the US and UK', 3, accessed 28 June 2021, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epub/10.1080/01436597.2018.1539910?needAccess=true.

[159] 'A "Synchronised Attack" on Life', 3.

territory from the Houthis the fight is far from over. The UN-mediated peace talks in Kuwait, which were backed by an insecure ceasefire deal, have failed to make any headway in ending the war between the Houthis and the government, and Saudi coalition airstrikes have continued.[160]

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[160] Reuters Staff, 'U.N.-Backed Yemen Peace Talks Adjourn until July 15: Envoy', *Reuters*, 29 June 2016, sec. World News, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-talks-idUSKCN0ZF1LG.

# THE SAUDI ARABIA FRAMING OF THE SAUDI-LED COALITION AIRSTRIKES

## PRECISION, SELF-DEFENCE, AND HUMANITARIANISM

*"Saudi Arabia has launched military operations in Yemen, as part of a coalition of over ten countries in response to a direct request from the legitimate government of Yemen. The operation will be limited in nature, and designed to protect the people of Yemen and its legitimate government from a takeover by the Houthis..... In spite of repeated efforts by the GCC, G10 countries and the Special Representative of the U.N. Secretary General to seek a peaceful way to implement the GCC initiatives and the outcomes of the national dialogue that define the political transition in Yemen, the Houthis have reneged on every single agreement they have made and continue their quest to take over the country by violent means.....they seized the security services and they continue to expand their occupation of the country".* [161]

In the quote above, of the Saudi Ambassador to the United States Adel Bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir's statement after hosting a press conference at the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, It can be seen an example of how the Saudi government represented by its US Ambassador in this case, officially interprets the Saudi-led Coalition remote airstrikes. This quote stands for the general official interpretations of the Saudi government. This interpretation of "limited in nature" that is designed to provide protection for the civilians and its legitimate government are critical to Yemen security and the region at large.

As the aim of this study is to know how the Saudi-led Coalition violence is contested by the victim families who are at the receiving end of such violence, I need first to investigate how this violence was officially interpreted and framed. Thus, in this chapter, I study the Saudi-led Coalition official frames as articulated by their official representatives. These frames are embedded in three broader discourses: precision discourse, collective/self-defence discourse, and humanitarian discourse.

In this chapter, the analysis focuses on the Saudi official statements and press releases with the aim to give a general understanding of the Saudi-led Coalition violence interpretations. But before I delve into the analysis, I will first outline the essential context to the Saudi-led Coalition formation. This will contextualize the analysis undertaken in this chapter and the research at large.

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[161] 'Statement by Saudi Ambassador Al-Jubeir...Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.Pdf', n.d.

## THE SAUDI-LED COALITION FORMATION AGAINST HOUTHIS

After Hadi fled to Aden in South Yemen in February 2015, he withdrew his resignation and said that Houthis actions had mounted a "coup" against him. He then declared Aden as the temporary capital of Yemen. Houthis marched towards Aden and during the Houthis southern offensive, Saudi Arabia launched a military operation on its frontier with Yemen.[162] In response, a Houthi leader boasted that his forces would counterattack any Saudi provocation and would not stop until Riyadh, Saudi Arabia's capital, was captured.[163] After a furious fight in Aden, Yemen president Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi then fled to Saudi Arabia. On the 7th of March 2015, Hadi wrote a letter requesting military assistance from the Arab nations.[164] Due to the length of the letter, it has been included as an appendix. I include here some of the letter content that best summarises the situation:

> *"Dear brothers...*
>
> *the ongoing aggressive actions and the continuing violence against the sovereignty of Yemen that the Houthi coup orchestrators are undertaking ... with the intention to disintegrate Yemen and to strike its security and stability.*
>
> *We have exerted all possible efforts to end these Houthi criminal sinful aggressions against our people ...*
>
> *We sought with all our power to reach a peaceful solution to get Yemen out from a dark tunnel that the coup Houthi orchestrators put the country in ...*
>
> *But all our peaceful efforts and our continuous determination faced a categorical refusal by the Houthi coup orchestrators who are continuing their transgressions ...*
>
> *This sinful aggression executed by internal Militias supported by forces from within ... and also supported by regional powers, whose objective is to dominate this country and to make it a base for their dominance in the region. This threat is not only menacing the security of Yemen only, but also the security of the entire region as well as the world peace and security….*
>
> *I appeal to you my brothers and your sisterly nations to stand - as you have accustomed us always- by the Yemeni people for the protection of Yemen, and I ask you, based on the principle of self-defense in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, and on the basis of the Charter of the Arab League and the treaty of joint Arab defense, to provide instant support by all necessary means, including military intervention to protect Yemen and its people from continuous Houthi aggression... and to help Yemen".*[165]

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[162] 'Yemen's Hadi Withdraws Resignation, as UN Pushes for Dialogue', Middle East Eye, accessed 26 June 2021, http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/yemens-hadi-withdraws-resignation-un-pushes-dialogue.

[163] Hakim Almasmari in San'a Dubai Yemen, and Asa Fitch in, 'Yemen's Houthi Militants Extend Push Southward', *Wall Street Journal*, 24 March 2015, sec. World, https://www.wsj.com/articles/yemen-protests-against-militants-leave-one-dead-17-injured-1427193838.

[164] 'Yemen's Hadi Withdraws Resignation, as UN Pushes for Dialogue'.

[165] 'GCC Issues Statement on Yemen _ The Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia', n.d., 4.

In response to this letter, on the 26th of March, 2015, a meeting was held by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The GCC is a regional, economic, and intergovernmental political union, made up of Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia and based in Riyadh. In this meeting, GCC expressed their concern and the radical developments in Yemen, which they considered as a threat to the security and safety of Yemen, the region and the globe at large :" Also, has become a major issue regarding the security and the stability of the region and a threat to world peace and security".[166] They proclaimed their responsibility in protecting the Yemeni people and helping to restore the safety and security of the country and the region. To them as the attack has spread to Saudi Arabia's land and other Arab countries, Arabs are now facing a persistent danger to their stability and security too.[167] Therefore, based on first Hadi's letter for intervention and second on the principle of self-defence embodied in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, as well as the Arab League Charter and the Treaty of Joint Arab Defence, GCC decided to establish a coalition combined military force led by Saudi Arabia under three lines of endeavour: 1) to support the Yemeni legitimacy, 2) open war against terrorism and piracy, 3) urgent arrangements to be made to handle the humanitarian crisis. [168]

Accordingly, on the 26th of March, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar air forces launched its first operation called "Decisive Storm Operation" in Yemen.[169] Approximately170 aircrafts participated including 100 from Saudi Arabia, 30 from the United of Emirates and 16 from Bahrain, 6 from Jordan and 6 from Morocco.[170] This was along with United States logistical support as mentioned earlier as well as the UK weapons selling. Since then, and still until the day I'm writing my thesis, the airstrikes are still occurring. In total, since this day, 16,749 Coalition air strikes in Yemen recorded by the Yemen Data Project. [171]

## THE SAUDI-LED OFFICIAL INTERPRETATION

In order to systematically study the Saudi-led Coalition interpretations, in other words, the official statements of how a scenario plays out and is accepted as a reality, it is best to study them through Benford and Snow frame analysis lenses on "diagnostic", "prognostic" and "motivational" framing. A study of interpretations of violence and the power dynamics that determine what is usually accepted as "true". Specifically, the study of the official statements that serve to interpret specific meaning.[172] This study is done by examining many official statements and press releases that are issued within a strict time frame between 2015-2017: from the start of the Saudi-led Coalition's airstrikes in 2015 till 2017. These statements and press releases demonstrate a discourse in order to take action and legitimise violence rather than an analysis of the violence that has already occurred. However, because these two are inextricably linked, the legitimising

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[166] 'GCC Issues Statement on Yemen _ The Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia', n.d., 4.

[167] 'GCC Issues Statement on Yemen _ The Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia'.

[168] 'GCC Issues Statement on Yemen _ The Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia'.

[169] Knights and Almeida, 'The Saudi-UAE War Effort in Yemen (Part 2): The Air Campaign', 1,2.

[170] Knights and Almeida, 1,2.

[171] 'A "Synchronised Attack" on Life: The Saudi-led Coalition's "Hidden and Holistic" Genocide in Yemen and the Shared Responsibility of the US and UK', 3, accessed 28 June 2021, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epub/10.1080/01436597.2018.1539910?needAccess=true.

[172] Brass, *Theft of an Idol*, 5.

discourse that explains the situation and the appropriate course of action also inform us about the situation's real interpretation.[173] Thus here, I analyse the Saudi officials' statements by highlighting the different framing lenses utilized to construct these discourses.

## DIAGNOSTIC FRAMING

### *The problem: Houthis*

According to Benford and Snow, diagnostic framing is to "negotiate a shared understanding of some *problematic situations or issues* they *are* defin*ed* as *in need for a direct action*, make *attributions and identification* regarding the *causality: who* or *what is to blame*" (italic added).[174] Thus, to Saudi officials, Houthi has been identified and diagnosed as the problem. Their coup, according to the Saudi officials, is portrayed as problematic in the Yemeni country and region.

As a problematic player in Yemen, Houthi are labelled by the Saudi officials, as Houthi "rebels", "militias", "insurgence" who have broken their promises and further escalated their military campaign thus making it necessary "legitimate" for the Saudi-led Coalition to respond. They have "insisted on meddling in Yemen, re-shuffling the cards, robbing the Yemeni will, waging a coup against the government's constitutional legitimacy, and rejecting all peaceful solutions," said Prince Saud. Through the first component of "adversarial framing" that points out the "good" which is Saudi Arabia in our case here -will be explained in detail in the next framings "prognostic and motivational"- and the "evil"-which I will refer to as the "bad"- of the Houthis, boundaries have been strictly set between the Houthis and the Arab nation represented by the Saudi-led Coalition and further legitimizes the Saudi-led Coalition intervention.

Throughout the Saudi officials' statements and press releases, Houthis are diagnosed as Houthi terrorist militias which pose a threat to the national security of Yemen and stability. They refused to comply with the cease-fire declarations made during peace discussions between Yemeni groups in Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations. In spite of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries' effort to support the Yemeni government transition peacefully and smoothly, Houthis have consistently thwarted the process by seizing terrains and the government-owned weaponry; "the Houthis have reneged on every single agreement they have made and continue their quest to take over the country by violent means".[175] Such framing of the Houthis by the Saudi Arabia officials as the "bad" guys and to be blamed for the ongoing war, has portrayed their deeds as unjust. This takes us to the second component of the "diagnostic frames", namely the "injustice frames".

According to Benford and Snow, injustice frames are "a plethora of studies call attention to the ways in which movements identify the "victims" of a given injustice and amplify their victimization".[176] The victims of the Houthis are the Yemenis who were identified as the civilians

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[173] Brass, 2.

[174] Benford and Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment', 615,616.

[175] 'Statement by Saudi Ambassador Al-Jubeir...Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.Pdf'.

[176] Benford and Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment', 616.

living in Yemen at large: "the Kingdom will continue to support our brothers in Yemen in confronting hunger and poverty, which have been caused by the Iranian backed Houthi militia".[177] Interestingly, the victims are not only the civilians who live under the Houthis in Yemen for instance, in Sana'a city, but the whole Yemeni people are addressed as Houthi's victims. Saudi officials, further, emphasize their blame on the Houthis involvement in exacerbating Yemen's humanitarian situation, and constantly reporting on how their activities have exacerbated the country's instability, which has fueled the humanitarian catastrophe as well as the terrorist problem.

In the same statements, the Saudi officials described the Houthis as "deliberately causing death through aggressive acts against Yemeni people and Saudi Arabia" and are backed by the Iranian regime.[178] Thus, Houthis are diagnosed as "terrorist militias who pose a threat to the national security of Yemen and its stability as well as the security of the kingdom, the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and the Arab Security".[179] By supporting, financing, and delivering quality weapons, ammunition, and ballistic missiles to those militias, the Iranian regime has caused death to the Yemeni people, which is a blatant violation of UN security council resolutions 2216 and 2231.[180] Furthermore, it has become a major issue for the region's security and stability, as well as a danger and a threat to global peace and security.[181] Thus, Houthis again are seen throughout the Saudi officials' statements as the "bad" who cause people harm and instability in the country and the region and the world at large.

Houthis and by extension Iran are described throughout the Saudi officials as the "bad" guys and behind the conflict in Yemen. All across their statements and press releases, Saudi officials repeatedly stressed the suspected relation between the Houthis and Iran, portraying Iran as a foreign entity seeking to interfere in Yemen in order to destabilize national unity and global stability, which is crucial to justifying the allotment of blame as "bad" guys. The Houthis are further diagnosed as violent, fanatical terrorist groups, insurgents, rebels, and war criminals, while Iran's involvement in Yemen is diagnosed as an expansionist project. And further, Saudi officials described that the disgraceful act of military aggression by the Iranian regime, which may be regarded as an act of war against Saudi Arabia, affirms the Kingdom's lawful right to protect its land and people under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter; under the self-defence principle. It can be seen how this frame borrows from many Western remote interventions that have been legally/politically justified when waging war in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria.

As a result, It has been witnessed a duality in victim identification: a local victim, which in our case is Yemen and a global victim, which includes Saudi Arabia. There, the official framework heavily borrows from the War on Terror narrative to justify their self-defence approach. And this could be interpreted as a powerful and enticing argument and as an appealing discourse that readily connects and resonates with a wider audience. Frames resonate, as Benford and Snow demonstrate, once they are not too intangible and compatible with how individuals perceive their daily lives.[182]

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[177] 'The Transcript of Ambassador Mohammed A...Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.Pdf', n.d., 2.

[178] 'The Transcript of Ambassador Mohammed A...Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.Pdf', 2.

[179] 'The Transcript of Ambassador Mohammed A...Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.Pdf', 2.

[180] 'Statement of Saudi Arabia in the 70th S...Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.Pdf', n.d., 3.

[181] 'Statement of Saudi Arabia in the 70th S...Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.Pdf', 4.

[182] Benford and Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment', 621.

Portraying the Houthis as an Iranian-backed militia is strengthening and spreading the threat that Iran is already posing as having nuclear weapons to the whole region. This labels the Houthis as a large threat that has to be fought before it grows and becomes a powerful Iranian-backed actor in the region and especially to Saudi Arabia. The question now is what needs to be done next to solve this problem? And this is where prognostic frames fit in. So, what are the Saudi officials' solutions proposed to such a problem?

## PROGNOSTIC FRAMING

### *The solution: Air Striking the Houthis*

By using "prognostic framing", I will be able to propose a solution. In other words, what it is to be done.[183] To the Saudi-led Coalition, in order to defeat the Houthis, as part of a coalition of over ten countries, Saudi Arabia launched military operations in Yemen as a response to the Hadi legitimate government's direct request-the "letter".[184] The Saudi-led Coalition further claimed that the operation is going to be "limited in nature", and is designed to safeguard the Yemeni people and its legitimate government from the Houthis' aggression. The defeat of Houthis was characterized by the Saudi-led Coalition as requiring military (air) operation intervention as it was the last operation left for Saudi Arabia.[185] It emphasized the importance of collaborating with regional powers in order to defeat the Houthis and to eliminate its threat to the region and to Saudi Arabia.[186] Thus, Airstrikes were used by the Saudi-led Coalition, particularly "precision munitions" that were designed to kill specific targets.[187] However, since my focus here is only on the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes, therefore, my focus is on the framing of its use; justification and precision.

According to Brig. Gen. Ahmed Asiri, a consultant at the ministry of Saudi Arabia defence's office, the objective of phase the operations were achieved by air supremacy, noting the employment of state-of-the-art air aeroplanes and logistics to demolish Houthi air defences, destroy on-the-ground aircraft and ballistic missiles, and silence command and control centres. He further claimed that reports that the coalition attacked civilian areas were untrue.[188] According to him, Houthi militants destroyed these institutions to elicit sympathy for themselves and anger for coalition forces. "We have been very careful in how we use our military"[189], said Saudi foreign minister Al-Jubeir.[190] These claims were further supported by saying that the Saudi-led Coalition was adhering to the rules and under the international humanitarian law and human rights principles.

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[183] Benford and Snow, 616.

[184] 'Saudi Arabia Launches Military Operations in Support of Legitimate Yemeni Government | The Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia', accessed 26 June 2021, https://www.saudiembassy.net/news/saudi-arabia-launches-military-operations-support-legitimate-yemeni-government.

[185] 'Statement of Saudi Arabia in the 70th S...Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.Pdf', 2.

[186] 'Saudi Ambassador_ Operation Decisive St...Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.Pdf', n.d., 1.

[187] Bonds, 'Humanitized Violence', 441.

[188] 'Saudi Ambassador_ We Will Continue to S...Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.Pdf', n.d., 1.

[189] 'Saudi Foreign Minister_ Yemen Was A War...Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.Pdf', n.d., 1.

[190] 'Minister Al-Jubeir: Yemen Was a War of Necessity | The Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia', accessed 26 June 2021, https://www.saudiembassy.net/news/minister-al-jubeir-yemen-was-war-necessity.

The rules focus on identifying military targets at various phases. Moreover, throughout the Saudi officials' statements and reports, it repeatedly stated that the Saudi-led Coalition is regularly updating the forbidden targeted places list, especially those with civilian presence, culture sites, places of religion, government and non-government organisations.[191] Aiming at preventing civilian casualties, journalists, medical personnel, and relief organizations.

Saudi Officials in their diagnostic conceptualization stressed on the legitimacy and reason for the coalition's military action in Yemen. Therefore, as a prognostic frame, their recommended solution is the intervention's continuity as required to restore Yemen's legitimate government and restore unity and stability, as well as highlighting the importance of dialogue and negotiation. The latter stories, on the other hand, frequently focus on purported instances of the Houthis violating ceasefire agreements and hindering the smooth conduct of discussions, rather than on a real strategy for peace discussions. This shed the light of the "good" guys of Saudi Arabia and the "bad" of the Houthis which further legitimized the military intervention as the only solution. Moreover, the Houthis' attacks on the Saudi border have alleged Saudi to further legitimize their military intervention as a collective/self-defence.

In parallel, throughout the Saudi Officials statements, humanitarianism was one of the key concepts used. They emphasised the role Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations played in providing humanitarian assistance to alleviate the Yemen crisis.[192] The humanitarian situation in Yemen was at the forefront of Saudi officials' minds. The humanitarian crisis was exploited to serve multiple different ends in their narratives, just as the principles of precision and legitimacy were employed differently in the framing processes. To begin with, the devastating humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen was utilized as a metaphor to underline the severity of the situation in the nation. Frequent reports underlined the conflict's human costs, as well as extensive damage to livelihoods, food, infrastructure, healthcare, water, shelter, electricity, transportation, communications, education, and industry, based on both internal sources and statistics from international and relief groups. These were being used to justify swift response and spur additional action, such as humanitarian aid, intervention, and demands for dialogue and negotiation. This resulted in defining Saudi Arabia as a leader in the supply of humanitarian aid by placing their own country at the forefront of such demands for action: "everyone knows that the Yemeni people are going through dire humanitarian and economic conditions", with more than a third in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.[193]

With such claims, it can be seen that the warfare against Houthis is thereby legitimised by the Saudi-led Coalition and the Saudi officials as the coalition leader and interpreted as: a war of necessity to defeat the "bad" guys. And that is through using the most widely used remote techniques: airstrikes. Airstrike violence is portrayed as precise in reducing civilian harm and legitimate by abiding to the principles of international humanitarian law and human rights. It starts, firstly, with the "collective/self-defence discourse" legitimising the use of airstrikes. Secondly, with the "precise discourse", emphasising the use of precision weaponry and the utmost caution in combating the Houthis. Thirdly, it can be observed how this "prognostic framing" relies heavily

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[191] 'Coalition Command in Yemen: Statement on Operations The Official Saudi Press Agency', accessed 30 June 2021, https://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1504715.

[192] 'The Transcript of Ambassador Mohammed A...Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.Pdf', n.d.

[193] 'The Transcript of Ambassador Mohammed A...Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.Pdf', 1.

on the concept of "humanitarianism". It supports the dominance of democratic states to intervene to protect the people globally and here in our case a non-democratic state is following suit.

## MOTIVATIONAL FRAMING

*"This was not a war of choice. This was a war of necessity,"*.[194]

After studying the diagnostic and prognostic framings, it can be seen why there is a war and how it was diagnosed: who is to blame and why? and how to solve it. Therefore, it should be asked why, who and to whom gives a "call to arms or rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action", which includes the development of acceptable motivational languages. I will thus use the motivational lens. As mentioned earlier, Saudi Arabia is the coalition leader and through them the coalition was formed and deployed. Thus, Saudi officials had to show their motive and explain why they had to go for a war in Yemen and why the other Arab and non-Arab nations should join and why the US and UK should support?

As illustrated earlier, the Saudi-led Coalition airstrike was formed as a response to Hadi's letter. It "motivated" Saudi Arabia to take the lead and call for other Arab's nations help. On the 7th of March 2015, Hadi requested in a letter to King Salman bin Abdulaziz, the custodian of the two holy mosques, that he hosts a summit under the sponsorships of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Hadi requested that all Yemeni political forces desiring to maintain safety and stability in Yemen to be also invited.[195] However, the Houthis turned down the offer and continued their violent campaign in Yemen. In a letter dated 24th of March, 2015, Hadi asked for instant assistance – by whatever means necessary, including military intervention – to defend Yemen and its people from further Houthi violence and to help it in rebuilding.[196] Saudi Arabia built on Hadi's plea and proclaimed its obligation in safeguarding the Yemeni people and its right to defend. Saudi together with the GCC and non-GCC countries decided to launch a military operation as a response in Yemen.

Saudi officials, further, justified the intervention as a result of the Houthi militias' coup against Yemen's legitimate government. Adding that this coup poses a serious danger to the region's security and stability, as well as world peace and security. Through the collective/self-defence discourse, Saudi Arabia, successfully, called to arms and waged its two operations: decisive and hope storms, where nine members of the Arab nations responded to the call of the legitimate President of the Republic of Yemen Abdrabu Mansur Hadi with the aim to save Yemen and return the legitimacy. Saudi officials, further, called to arms the Arab nation along with the gulf countries who also agreed and supported their initiative. Saudi King Salman during his speech in the Arab League summit in Sharm El-sheikh called on the Arab nation to unite against what he called terrorism:

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[194] 'Minister Al-Jubeir: Yemen Was a War of Necessity | The Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia'.

[195] 'GCC Issues Statement on Yemen _ The Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia', n.d., 4.

[196] 'Saudi Arabia Launches Military Operations in Support of Legitimate Yemeni Government | The Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia', accessed 26 June 2021, https://www.saudiembassy.net/news/saudi-arabia-launches-military-operations-support-legitimate-yemeni-government.

*"The excruciating reality of terrorism, internal conflicts and bloodshed experienced by a number of Arab countries are only the inevitable result of an alliance between terrorism and sectarianism, which is led by regional powers whose blatant interventions in the Arab region have resulted in undermining security and stability in some of our countries.....In Yemen, the foreign intervention enabled the Houthi militias to overtake the legitimate authority, occupy Sana'a, and disrupt the implementation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative, which has sought to preserve Yemen's unity, stability and security.....Riyadh opens its doors to all Yemeni political parties committed to Yemen's security and stability, to meet under the umbrella of GCC and within the context of maintaining the legitimacy, rejection of any legitimacy breaching, ensuring the return of the State control over all Yemeni territory, returning to the State all weapons, and holding no threat the security of neighbouring States.....Operation Decisive Storm will continue until these objectives are achieved, so that the Yemeni people are able to enjoy security and stability".* [197]

Consequently, the Saudi-led Coalition gained widespread blessing and broad support from the Arab and Islamic people, as well as the rest of the world.[198] They claimed that this war is a war of necessity and will be limited in nature and won't stop till it achieves its objectives which is defeating the Houthis and returning the Yemeni government legitimacy. The legitimisation started by using Hadi's letter and is considered as an intervention by invitation. It has been used as a justification for the Saudi-led Coalition airstrike violence. Let me elaborate on this.

Remarkably, it can be seen how Saudi Arabia used the Yemeni legitimate government letter as an ultimate legitimate excuse for their military intervention in Yemen. Not only that, they also used the narratives used in the letter along with their discourses with the aim to justify the intervention as solely was to defend the country's sovereignty and legitimacy. This was shown in the data collected that the legitimacy concept was used consistently throughout the government's discourses particularly in reference to the Hadi's legitimate government. Furthermore, the description of the Houthis and the nature of the Yemen war mirrored the language and emotions of Hadi's letter, implying that the Saudi Arabian government was on the same page as Yemen's legitimate government.

However, on the other hand, Saudi Arabia did not only call to arms but also called for engaging in ameliorative collective action. Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners established a unified centre to coordinate relief efforts in Yemen. It would allow the United Nations to deliver $274 million in humanitarian aid donated by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz on the 17th of April, 2015, and in accordance with the framework of continuing and enhancing humanitarian relief efforts in Yemen. [199]

It, therefore, can be concluded that the Saudi-led Coalition violence as articulated by Saudi official diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing taps into three wider discourses that legitimise, justify, and interpret the actions taken. They are as follows: "precision discourse" in its representation of new modern war that aims to minimize the civilian harm; "collective/self-defence

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[197] 'King Salman: Yemen Military Campaign to Continue until Goals Are Achieved | The Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia', accessed 26 June 2021, https://www.saudiembassy.net/news/king-salman-yemen-military-campaign-continue-until-goals-are-achieved.

[198] 'Saudi Foreign Minister_ Saudi Arabia Co...Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.Pdf', n.d.

[199] 'Final Communique of the 15th Consultati...Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.Pdf', n.d., 2.

discourse" in which portrays a group as a terrorist group that poses a threat to the region and global at large; "humanitarianism discourse" in which aggregate the necessity to protect the peoples "humanity". Thus, what it can be seen is that these powerful dominant discourses resonate strongly and usually dismiss the subordinates' interpretations. Jabri summarised it nicely by saying that: "despite the proximity of contemporary war made manifest through the revolution in information technology, the effects of war are paradoxically sanitised through discourse". [200]

I can conclude, that the dominant discourse legitimising Western remote interventions has been reproduced by the Saudi led coalitions: this is a war of necessity and not a war of choice that will be limited in nature to protect the Yemeni people. Yet, this war wasn't limited in nature as proclaimed and it was a war of choice. It crossed the Yemeni people's protection red line as many civilians died in this war. However, these frames articulated by the Saudi officials are firmly contested by the often-neglected people who are at the receiving end of such violence. The respondents I spoke with proposed different interpretations of the realities on the ground experienced by themselves. Interpretations that reflect the reality of this war and its claim of its precise "limited in nature" from their perspective. So let us then hear the Sana'a victims' families' interpretations who have never been given the voice to interpret such violence and to contribute to the overall struggle over its meaning.

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[200] Jabri, *Discourses on Violence*, 109.

# THE REALITIES AT THE RECEIVING END CONTESTATIONS

## CIVILIAN CASUALTIES AND URBAN DESTRUCTION

*In the middle of Ramadan, around 12:20 am, I was drinking my special Yemeni "adeni "tea to keep me awake and focused as it was sleeping time for me while waiting for Osama to connect via google meet app. Preparing my note and my recorder for the interview. It was late but it was the only possible time for Osama, who kindly accepted to have an interview with me to tell me his story.*

*Osama: "Peace be upon you Maha".*

*I replied saying the same and asked him about his day*

*He responded: "good and thank God for everything."*

*We then talked about the war in Yemen and the Saudi-led Coalition which he called "the Saudi-led American coalition".*

*Then he took a very deep breath and released it heavily: "they killed two of my brothers and one sister. My mother is now a handicapped person…. She lost her leg forever. My other sister lost her two legs and has metal in both of her legs".*

*I stopped drinking my tea and I was overwhelmed with his pain. We both took deep breaths.*

*Then he continued: "My father and I work in Sana'a but my family lives in Tahma and it was close to the end of Ramadan and then Eid Al-Fitr[201]so we asked them to travel to Sana'a to buy them new clothes from here and then we all go back to Tahama and celebrate the Eid there with the rest of the family.*

*They came and it was the 15th Ramadan and after two days, on the 17th, I went to work and after a while, I got a call from my father saying: "they air strike the house." My life since then has turned 180 degrees.[202]*

*The 'they' that Osama speaks about, is what he calls the Saudi-led American Coalition.*

Osama is a 30-years-old, single man. He works as an IT engineer. He is the eldest of his three brothers and three sisters. He helps his father with the family living. They are originally from Mahweet, a city in Yemen, but he lives and works in Sana'a. He goes to Tahama every now and then to see his family and then back to Sana'a. It is already a difficult lifestyle for Osama and his father to be far from their family to look for a living but now it has become even harder as they have a handicapped  mother and sister in the house and on top of that they have mental health problems.

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[201] A special day for celebration after fasting, here in Netherland Muslim community call it sugar day.
[202] Interview Osama, 3 March 2021, online.

Osama's story is one of many of the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes victims. These stories have their own framing of the Saudi-led Coalition's violence which contest the Saudi officials' framing articulated by them and the Saudi-led Coalition at large. In this chapter, therefore, I examine how the Saudi officials' frames are contested by Yemeni people who live in Sana'a and experienced the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes.

This research project aims to uncover the difference in "truth" expressed by both the victims' families of Sana'a people and by Saudi officials. As illustrated above, one example of the victims' families' interpretations of the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes violence differs significantly from the official story portrayed by the Saudi officials. The participants interpreted the civilian casualties and urban destruction as the results of the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes. Their voices provide a glimpse into the intimacy of the new "remote" warfare.

Based on the analysis of 14 interviews conducted with residents either from or currently living in Sana'a, I investigate these contesting interpretations, using Benford and Snow's "diagnostic", "prognostic", and "motivational" framing.[203] The time frame is between 2015 to 2017. It is noteworthy that all participants except one live in Sana'a and experience the airstrikes till today. Before I delve deeper into the victims' frames, I will first give a brief introduction of the participants.

**INTRODUCTION OF PARTICIPANTS:**

In total, 14 interviews were conducted with people from and or living in Sana'a. The data gathered from these interviews are analysed and presented in this chapter. Witnesses, survivors and victims and their families were interviewed with the aim to provide a representation of the human cost of the intimacies of remote warfare by airstrike. Thus, I took good care to talk to men and women of different backgrounds and ages. Names have been changed to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees due to the sensitive nature of the subject. However, the background information about the respondents is given in order to fully understand the (personal) accounts discussed below and to humanize them. I want to go beyond what has been the norm in the current policies and reports, namely seeing them as a number. As beautifully said by Abu Saif who is not one of the Yemeni people but one of the war victims:

*"I do not want to be a number, a piece of news, a name on the tongue of a presenter ... a small number in a big one, a part of the data ... None of the killed or injured wanted it. And no one will ever ask to hear the stories behind these numbers either. Nobody will uncover the beauty of the lives they led, the beauty that vanishes with every attack, disappears behind this thick, ugly curtain of counting".*[204]

The first interview conducted was with Salma, 34 years old. She is originally from Aden but has lived in Sana'a for almost 12 years now. She works for a humanitarian organisation that is

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[203] Benford and Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment', *Annual Review of Sociology* 2 (2000): 611–39.

[204] Atef Abu Saif, 'The Terrifying Madness of Waking Up in Gaza', Slate Magazine, 23 July 2014, https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2014/07/atef-abu-saif-on-life-amid-the-bombing-of-gaza-israels-missiles-are-erasing-lives-in-an-instant.html.

active in and around Sana'a. She has experienced the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes herself. She didn't lose any family members but has lost friends. Her office also was partially damaged while she was there working. She now struggles with her mental health.

The second interview conducted was with Kareem, 42 years old. He works as a Human Resources Manager. He experienced the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes himself. His cousin's house was damaged badly and his cousin's first child lost his leg and now is mentally ill. And their second child, 4-months-old, had fragments in her neck and thighs.

The third interview conducted was with Laila, 39 years old. She works as an online seller. She has experienced the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes herself. She lost her brother-in-law in one of the airstrikes.

The fourth interview conducted was with Marwa, 29 years old. She has experienced the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes herself. At the beginning of this war, she was living in Aden and experienced the fight between the Houthis and the Saudi-led Coalition along with their allies. Then she escaped with her family to Taizz which is another city and after the second day of their arrival they again experienced the airstrikes and then they fled to Sana'a and there they experienced for the third time the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes. In all cases, Marwa's family home was damaged and they are now traumatised. Now they live outside of Yemen.

The fifth interview conducted was with Salem, 33 years old. He is originally from Taizz and moved to Sana'a in 2014. He has experienced the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes first in Taizz where his house was damaged and then experienced it again in Sana'a and his house again is damaged. His wife is now traumatised by the airstrike sounds. He also lost three friends.

The sixth interview conducted was with Abdulwahed, 31 years old. He is originally from Sana'a. He is a photographer. He has experienced the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes himself while he was reporting on one of the airstrikes on location. The location was hit again by airstrike and he got wounded and lost his cousin who was working as a reporter for Voice of America and the international humanitarian news network IRIN, The Telegraph and many others.

The seventh interview conducted was with Yaser, 40 years old. He is originally from Taizz but was born and lives in Sana'a. He experienced the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes himself and his wife who had some fragments in her legs while she was pregnant and had a trauma. His house was damaged as well.

The eighth interview conducted was with Yasin, 30 years old. He has experienced the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes himself. His neighbour lost all his family and neighbours visited them that day and in total 14 died.

The ninth interview conducted was with Zaymat, 42 years old. She is a supervisor in an educational centre. She is originally from AlBydha but moved to Sana'a in 2014. She has experienced the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes herself. Her house was damaged and her daughter is traumatized and mentally ill. Her neighbour lost her five children too.

The tenth interview conducted was with Sami, 32 years old. He is originally from Ibb and works as an accountant. Moved to Sana'a many years ago. He experienced the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes himself. He lost his leg and is now mentally sick.

The eleventh interview conducted was with Wael, 40 years. He witnessed and experienced the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes himself. He has been volunteering in helping people out whenever there is an airstrike. He witnessed many people die.

The twelfth interview conducted was with Abdullah, 52 years old. He is an artist. He experienced the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes himself. He had some fragments in his face and body as well as his 2 kids. His house and car were damaged too.

The thirteenth interview conducted was with Rana, 30 years old. She is working for a humanitarian organization. She is from Taizz but was born and lived her life in Sana'a. She has experienced the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes herself. She is now mentally sick and she lost 6 of her neighbours.

Lastly, the fourteenth interview was conducted with Osama, 30 years old. He is originally from Tehamah. He has lived in Sana'a since 2014. He works as an IT. He experienced the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes himself. He lost two brothers and one sister.

# LOCAL PEOPLE INTERPRETATIONS: CONTESTING THE OFFICIAL INTERPRETATION

## DIAGNOSTIC FRAMING

### *The problem: civilian casualties*

The problem, "the diagnostic frame", identified by all the interviewees with no exception was the Saudi-led Coalition, Houthis, politicians, Hadi. They all were seen as the source of the problem in Yemen and are the ones responsible for the Yemen crisis. However, and during the conversation, it became evident that the Saudi-led Coalition and sometimes referred to as Saudi Arabia or America coalition as the primary problem. According to all the interviewees, the "Saudi Arabia or America coalition" is the one who caused the civilians' death in Sana'a and Yemen at large. This is my main focus here.

The diagnostic frame, the "adversarial frame", sets clear boundaries between the good and the bad.[205] This was clearly reflected by the participants as they diagnosed the Saudi-led Coalition acts as unjust against the Sana'a civilians and Yemen at large. The Saudi-led Coalition is seen as a puppet that is controlled by a hidden power which is then referred to as "America" and sometimes "west". As Osama clearly stated: "I blame the American Saudi-led Coalition". [206] As explained earlier, the US violence history in Yemen and their recent support for the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes, is thus seen as responsible for this conflict and violence. Victims' families, I interviewed, acknowledged the individual member states for their contribution to the Saudi-led Coalition and see Saudi Arabia as the main responsible actor and is evident in the coalition name that is under the Saudi Arabia lead.

The Saudi-led Coalition was identified as the bad guys behind the Yemeni misery. This has excluded them from the "good" and affirm the adversarial framing by having two different extreme sides: the bad and the good. Therefore, in order to understand how the participants came to this conclusion of diagnosing the Saudi-led Coalition as bad, I will use the "injustice frames" lens as specified by them. Let me explain what this means.

According to Benford and Snow, "injustice frames" identify and magnify the victimhood of victims of specific injustices.[207] The "injustice frame", articulated by the victim families of Sana'a, is twofold: the civilian death and is my main focus here and the urban destruction. According to the participants, the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes are not targeting the Houthis or places related to the Houthis. As Rana stated calmly with an ironic laugh: "They are not really targeting the Houthis, they are targeting us; the Yemenis". [208]  It was repeatedly stated by the participants that the Saudi-led Coalition does not target the Houthis and only targets the civilians.

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[205] Benford and Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment'.

[206] Interview Osama,3 March 2021, online.

[207] Benford and Snow, 615.

[208] Interview Rana, 23 April 2021, online.

Salem, an economic empowerment manager who lived in Taiz and fled to Sana'a in 2015 after the airstrike destroyed his house and again in Sana'a his house was partially damaged because of the airstrikes, explained "It is a lie that they target the Houthis because it didn't happen" and asks if it were the case, then why are "the wounded and the victims are mostly civilians?". [209] In his analysis of the ineffectiveness of the Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes, Salem contests the way the Saudi-led Coalition presents itself as coming to fight the Houthis. Salem makes it evident how, rather than protecting civilians on the ground, he thinks the Coalition is really causing more harm.

This idea that targeting Houthis is a pretence made up by the Coalition was repeated many times by the other participants. Resulting in further disturbing people's lives and safety. People don't feel safe anymore. They wait to be targeted at any time in any place at any moment. Rana explained that she built up a mental disease that she feels that she will lose her family at any moment: "I have become afraid to the level I went to see a psychologist. Any airstrike I hear, I knew that anyone in this house would be targeted. Then it developed to the level I became afraid of anything. Now I am seeing a doctor".[210] All participants echoed Rana's problem.

It appeared that all participants questioned the precision of the Saudi-led Coalition. It is worth noting that participants did not mean that it would be fine if the Saudi-led Coalition be more precise and targets the Houthis. As Zaymat stated it clearly: "They (SLC) don't have the right to target the Houthis". [211]  She went further questioning the SLC claim of targeting the Houthis. To her, "this is not logical". To the participants, Houthis are in the end Yemenis and this war would have been better solved internally among the Yemenis themselves. Zaymat explained that the Houthi is a Yemeni and this is his "country, his freedom and his land" and wondered "What a mind thinks to get a Yemeni out of his country". She concluded that "They don't target the Houthis… They targeted Yemeni gains. They targeted our schools, targeted factories, targeted our houses and so killed many victims".[212]

It can be seen, the 'precision discourse,' which is relevant to the current conflict "remote warfare" and frequently promoted as beneficial to civilians on the ground,[213] is not perceived as such. On the contrary, remote airstrikes are considered as a contributing factor to the problem.

Participants continued to contest the Saudi-led Coalition collective/self-defence by arguing that Saudi Arabia air campaign was only for their own interest and not to protect the Yemenis as proclaimed. Marwa, 29 years old who studied political science, questioned what she called Saudi Arabia's excitement to go for war and described it as "not normal" and added that "inevitably, Saudi Arabia does have a greedy interest in Yemen ".[214] This idea of Saudi's greed has been repeatedly mentioned among the participants. Yaser also questioned the Coalition targets: not only civilians but also civilians' infrastructures and services: roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, airports. When I asked the participants about their opinion on the Saudi-led Coalition justification in

[209] Interview Salem, 17 April 2021, online.

[210] Interview Rana, 23 April 2021, online.

[211] Interview Zaymat, 19 April 2021, online.

[212] Interview Zaymat, 19 April 2021, online.

[213] Espinoza, 'State Terrorism'.

[214] Interview Marwa, 16 April 2021, online.

targeting the Houthis, they responded by describing the intervention as "aggression", "wrong", "unreasonable", "not normal", "lie" "weak" and ``unjust''. Abdullah, a middle-aged man, reflected on the coalition interpretation of the Iranian-backed Houthis when claimed collective/self-defence:

*"Targeting the Houthis is their [Saudi Arabia] international excuse and allegation that allowed them to do this [war] and seeking the government legitimacy as a peace supportive. What does seek government legitimacy mean? It means that they refuse the Houthis and this represents their disagreement with Iran as they both allied with each other and this is what allowed them to intervene".*[215]

Abdullah, in outlining the Saudi-led Coalition justification, along with the other participants' voices, contested the coalition objectives in protecting the Yemeni and themselves as they proclaimed.

As illustrated above, "diagnostic framing" reveals a disparity in framing between the Saudi-led Coalition's official statements and the participants. The Coalition framed the Houthis as the problem that needed to be tackled and defeated, while in the meantime, its actions were regarded to be more harmful to people on the ground than the Houthis. Thus, the Saudi-led Coalition is framed as one of the main problems by Sana'a people who live under its airstrikes till today in Yemen.

## PROGNOSTIC FRAMING

### *The solution: stop airstrike*

Prognostic framings articulate what needs to be done: propose a solution for a problem.[216] Tapping into the problem of the air campaign that is still ongoing until the day I write this thesis, several interviewees urged the need to stop the airstrike. Further, they acknowledge that the military solution has proved its failure. Till today, it has been almost 6 years of remote war and internal fighting and yet none won the battle or stopped the war. Control never fully accounted for 100 % of Yemen neither from the Abdurabo Mansoor Hadi group nor from the Houthis group. Thus, and interestingly, going for peace was the interviewees' goal regardless of their loss. Let me elaborate on this down here.

In order to solve the problem participants diagnosed in Yemen, they proposed the following solutions and steps to be taken: all parties should gather around the dialogue table; grant amnesty to the Houthis and the legitimate government; parties should compromise and commitment; build the society unity. These proposed solutions were followed by a modest strategy on how to implement them. However, and through the conversation with the interviewees, the actual need expressed repeatedly was the need to lift the siege on Yemen and stop the airstrikes.

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[215] Interview Abdullah, 24 April 2021, online.

[216] Benford and Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment', 616.

To begin, first, it can be observed that the majority of the participants stressed the importance of the dialogue in the four options they identified as "prognostic frames." Although, Fares was pessimistic about the dialogue and in a very frustrated tone said: "we had enough by sitting at the dialogue table and there is no benefit"[217] Rana also proposed that Houthis and Saudi Arabia fight each other far from the Yemenis, many other participants and Yaseen one of them proposed that the solution should be a dialogue among the Yemenis themselves.[218] They called for all parties to go back and gather around the dialogue table. From Kareem's point of view, dialogue is the best way forward, in order to solve this war and stop the blood-shedding:" solution is through dialogue as it is the best way out of this [war]".[219]

Second, to some of the participants, it is difficult to go to dialogue if there is no amnesty and acceptance from both parties. Marwa explained that in order to have a dialogue, there should be acceptance and called for Saudi Arabia and Hadi government to accept the Houthis saying:" Houthis impossible get vanished from Yemen and in the end there is no acceptable solution to kill them all or to finish them from the earth or to marginalise them. All must meet around the dialogue table and make a truce". [220]  Sami supported the same idea and added that granting amnesty and forgiveness to all parties will ease the dialogue and will help in finding solutions.[221]

Thirdly, many participants stressed the need to compromise and prioritised Yemen interest above all. Seeking peace needs compromising and willingness for a commitment from all parties according to the participants. Salma emphasized that by saying: "there should be seriousness from all parties".[222] Yaser also called the political parties to stop being stubborn as it does not lead to a solution. Kareem further wished that the "Houthis and the legitimate government" drop their weapons and stop fighting as both have lost so many people and it is time to end this war.[223]

Fourthly, Yemen's history war and this current civil war has planted a division in the Yemenis hearts. In the current and ongoing Saudi-led Coalition war, people have lost trust in each other and are in need to strengthen it. Salem clearly stated that we need to "regain people's trust". [224]  Yaser reiterated that and explained:" There is an ideological division between Sunnah and Shiit. And it is more dangerous than the political division". [225]  Houthis being Shiit and the Saudi Arabia war "air" campaign against it, has fuelled the division that is historically always there- explained earlier in the third chapter. Thus, a need for trust-building and acceptance of others are seen as a solution by some of the participants and it is already expressed above that they are Yemenis and won't leave.

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[217] Interview Fares, 23 April 2021, online.

[218] Interview Yaseen, 19 April 2021, online.

[219] Interview Kareem, 14 April 2021, online.

[220] Interview Marwa, 16 April 2021, online.

[221] Interview Sami, 18 April 2021, online.

[222] Interview Salma, 06 April 2021, online.

[223] Interview Yaser, 18 April 2021, online.

[224] Interview Salem, 17 April 2021, online.

[225] Interview Yaser, 18 April 2021, online.

When I asked the participants about their strategy in order to take the proposed steps to the implementation level, they all proposed some suggestions and all agreed on one thing that first and foremost there should be an honest intention for going for peace from the Yemenis and the international community. However, participants are aware that the solution is not solely in the Yemenis hands. Thus, they call for a neutral mediator who will help to mediate and bring people to peace. That is what Abdullah explicitly explained:

*"The solution is not in the hands of the Yemenis nor Saudi Arabia. The topic is very big. If there is a real intention from the United Nations and the UN representative. Honest intention to solve the Yemen crisis. Then for sure, all the parties will respond. If the great fighting powers intervened and the UN with honest intention then for sure we will reach a solution".*[226]

Salem, Marwa and Kereem echoed that and added that the UN must adopt the dialogue and end it with concrete results and not a dialogue with no results like the previous ones. Salem further explained that:

*"It is necessary to put pressure on all the parties and they [UN & International Community] are capable of putting pressure on all the parties to come up with executive mechanisms that everyone should follow. This is the primary step. Then the society unity topic should be in and then the economic topic. Then sharing the authority with a fair division ...this is what should happen".*[227]

To the participants, the UN should have a productive and strong position. Marwa described the UN previous attempt as wasn't strong enough to make the parties sit around the dialogue table and come up with a solution, thus, it is necessary to have "a real and firm call"[228] to all the political parties to sit at the dialogue table and agree on how to have peace in Yemen. Then she proceeds with her plan saying that they need to discuss how to transfer Yemen into a new Yemen, how to form a new government and presidential council, how to build the infrastructure and how to build new institutions, "all of this needs a lot of work".[229]

In parallel, some of the participants see that the Saudi-led Coalition should take a role in that. Laila explained that as the Saudi-led Coalition gathers to damage, they need to gather to fix what they have destroyed.[230] Yasen reiterated and added that they also should compensate for what the war has destroyed:

*"Compensation (for building) the infrastructure, compensation for building the whole of Yemen by the coalition countries..... compensate for the killing and the families....pay the salaries of the past, there are no salaries, therefore, a full compensation"*[231] *is a must.*

[226] Interview Abdullah, 24 April 2021, online.

[227] Interview Salem, 17 April 2021, online.

[228] Interview Marwa, 16 April 2021, online.

[229] Interview Marwa, 16 April 2021, online.

[230] Interview Laila, 17 April 2021, online.

[231] Interview Yaseen, 19 April 2021, online.

NGOs have been mentioned among the participants. The participants stressed on the importance of their role in such a crisis. They explicitly requested that NGOs should be more active in their role and go beyond just food distribution. As Marwa stated: "don't teach me how to eat the fish, teach me how to catch the fish". [232] Salem, Marwa, Zaymat and Laila proposed that NGOs should help in building the country not only in Sana'a but also Taiz and Aden; fix the roads, help small grassroots NGOs to grow and/or help to fund small projects by supporting productive families or medium projects that will help them to grow big. In addition to that, support some of the local investments to get back to business. Firmly, Zaymat pointed out that Yemen is suffering from the lack of its basic human needs and the Human Rights Organization should react and work according to its mandate:

*"Human Rights Organization, where is it? Our simplistic (basic) rights in Yemen we can't find them...like electricity and water. These are the simplest rights so where is the Human Rights Organization to ask for stopping the war and then Yemeni people can live a decent life".*[233]

In the end, the actual need, expressed repeatedly by almost all the participants, was the need to lift the siege on Yemen and stop the airstrikes. As Salem said to me in the interview: "why do they block us?". [234] Abdullah suggested that if Saudi-led Coalition opens Sana'a international airport and stops the air and sea blockade. This will put the Houthis in a position where they will have no excuse to keep the war ongoing "street will put pressure on the Houthis (to stop fighting) and sitting around the dialogue table is going to be the only solution". [235] Yasen reiterated that and added that Saudi-led Coalition must lift the siege of Yemen and move out of Yemen. They need to stop the war (airstrikes). Here, it can be seen, again the discrepancy between the Saudi Officials' frames and the victims' families' frames. The diagnosed problem, according to Saudi-led Coalition, is the Houthis that have to be defeated, whereas among the Sana'a people whom I interviewed the main problem is the Saudi-led Coalition and has to be out of Yemen. This is a strong indication and reflection of how dominant discourses on War on Terror under the self-defense principle in general. Subsequently, it resulted in conducting a series of violent actions that are in the end contested by civilians who are at the receiving end. In the Yemeni case, it can be seen that these dominant discourses on remote warfare are effectively reproduced by non-democracies states who are following suit. And the same scenarios are played out.

## MOTIVATIONAL FRAMING

### *"Yemeni people are weak"* [236]

The participants collectively expressed their frustration that they can't do anything whether to stop the war or even call for engaging in ameliorative collective action. As Salma explained: "we are just civilians".[237] As clearly stated in the quote above by Abdullan, all the interviewees described

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[232] Interview Marwa, 16 April 2021, online.

[233] Interview Zaymat, 19 April 2021, online.

[234] Interview Salma, 06 April 2021, online.

[235] Interview Abdullah, 24 April 2021, online.

[236] Interview Abdullah, 24 April 2021, online.

[237] Interview Salma, 06 April 2021, online.

themselves as weak and have no power to do anything in or for Yemen. The reasons articulated by the participants were as follows: no freedom of speech, busy with fulfilling the primary needs, and the division between people. Let me elaborate on each reason as articulated by the participants.

Firstly, the interviewees showed their frustration with the current situation of Yemen. They explained their suffering from the airstrikes which they called the air war and the ground suppression. While Abdullah stated earlier that Yemeni people are weak, he elaborated to explain what he meant by that:

*"I don't think there is anyone who would go to the street in Sana'a to reject the situation that we are in and say it is wrong. It is difficult to do this. There is no understanding. Houthi won't give you the right to go for demonstrations and put pressure on the state to make a change. We are weak".*[238]

In the area where the Houthis are based and indeed targeted by the Saudi-led Coalition, people don't feel safe anymore neither from the airstrikes -as explained earlier- nor from the Houthis on the ground to express their opinion freely. Many attempts have taken place to protest and they were stopped by the Houthis aggressively. Rana with her ironic tone said that Houthis want the people to always say "yes" and never object and she smiled and said to me:

*"You know Maha, the last thing we need is just one air/strike to finish the ones who will get out to protest whether from the Houthis or Saudi. The solution is to live together and to say YES and OK [irony]. We can't do anything. We did demonstrations...they took them to the prison and we don't know where they took them... We didn't see them. Many who said the truth, they disappeared from Houthis themselves and legitimate government themselves".*[239]

Secondly, participants complained of their suffering to fulfil their basic human needs. Due to this long-lasting war as described by one of the interviewees, Yaser, and called it the longest war in history "longer than the WW1&2", people have not only lost their beloved ones but also houses, work and money. Zaymat again called upon the Human Rights Organization and she wishes if they can hear her, said:

*"Human Rights Organization should lift up our case. We are affected by this war. Our houses are destroyed. People are affected and their families too. Human Rights doesn't do anything for the Yemenis. For instance, if a person gets sick in Sana'a, he might arrive at Aden airport and/or die in the middle of the way [*to go abroad for treatment*] and that's because of the difficult roads…. where is the Human Rights Organization?".*[240]

Abdulrahman reflected more on the situation and described that Yemenis are facing the reality of their loss. Yemenis are busy with their livelihoods nowadays and don't care about anything else. Yemenis don't think any more of going to the street to protest, their thinking now has been directed on how to find and provide for their kids, how to pay the rent, and buy gas and electricity. He ended his note by saying: "society has become careless and desperate that there is

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[238] Interview Abdullah, 24 April 2021, online.

[239] Interview Rana, 23 April 2021, online.

[240] Interview Zaymat, 19 April 2021, online.

a solution for Yemen (crisis) in the near future".[241] This reflection was repeated over and over among the participants.

Thirdly, participants clearly stated that they don't have the power that they used to have before through their government and their affiliated politicians who would have delivered their voices peacefully. They are divided now: each has a party to support and a religion to fight for. This division was clear even among the participants themselves. Some of them said that the solution to come together is in the Yemenis hands as Salem, further, argued that:

*"If there is no solution among the Yemenis themselves, no one will give us the solution. There are interested parties from this conflict and from the war. And you know that. I mean that there are some parties selling the weapons and some smuggling and that's why the solution should come from inside otherwise there will be a very big gap. And if there is a truce for a year, 2 or 3 and Yemenis have no decision in it, after a year or 2 or 3 war will be back again and much worse".* [242]

Whereas, some other participants argue that it is difficult without external or third-party support. Yaser, on the other hand, argued that people are charged with hatred and now are in trouble in Yemen due to the regional problems explained earlier in the history chapter. Thus, external help is needed and without it will be "not possible".

However, one participant was more optimistic and motivated than the rest with regards to the improvement of the situation, Marwa. She is the only interviewee who doesn't live in Yemen anymore. She proposed many ways to improve the situation such as by using the media. She thinks that media channels can be an effective tool to raise awareness of Yemeni suffering. She stated "Yemenis must do campaigns. They must press on social media about the Yemen case and its suffering". She also went on to propose that Yemeni's youth should volunteer more in building the country and support the NGOs facilitating their job through the society in such difficult times. She acknowledges the need for demonstrations and even coups to speak up in such a time as there is no government but she is not in favour of it, as to her, it only leads to more "chaos and tragedy".

It can be seen that Sana'a people are trapped between: on one hand, the dominant discourse of the Saudi officials who proclaimed the people's protection and support while air striking their infrastructures and houses and causing casualties and humanitarian crisis, and on the other the Houthis who are purposely trying to mitigate this crisis and play the government role in Yemen. Also, It can be seen that the participants contest the Saudi officials' motivational frames, in other words, their motive for war and calling for a collective engagement from the region and the world at large while Yemenis are calling for peace and stopping the war. The motivational frame clearly shows the unbalanced power and ultimate desire of each side; Saudi Arabia and the Yemenis. While Yemenis motive is to live peacefully and have a decent life without more casualties and pain, Saudi Arabia motive is to continue to use the air power until its goals are achieved while claiming to support the Yemenis.

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[241] Interview Abdulrahman, 19 April 2021, online.

[242] Interview Salem, 17 April 2021, online.

## REMOTE WARFARE DISCOURSE CONTESTATION

As it can be seen, through the diagnostic frame lens, the Sana'a victims' families whom I interviewed, diagnosed the Saudi-led Coalition as the primary problem of the current situation in Yemen and the one and only responsibility of the civilian's death and urban destruction. Using the airstrikes as a new mode of remote warfare, it is unable to differentiate between civilians and the armed group "Houthis" and this is questioned by the respondents. The coalition strategy has been questioned to the level that they doubt the Saudi-led Coalition objectives with regards to civilian protection. During the interviews, they voiced that these airstrikes are only targeting them and this Coalition is only tightening its grip around the civilians' necks. Thus, using the prognostic lens, they proposed reconciliation and peace and urge for stopping the airstrikes and lifting the siege as a first and important option to protect civilians. The participants, further, using the motivational lens, declared about their weakness and inability to participate in any solutions and asked for all the Yemenis parties to unite and to compromise.

As a result, participants herein implicitly contest the Saudi-led Coalition's diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames. To begin with, first, the participants do not agree with the Saudi-led Coalition's diagnostic frame, which identifies the Houthis as the primary problem. Actually, the Saudi-led Coalition is the main problem according to the participants' interpretations regardless of their disagreement with the Houthis coup. Second, the proposed solution from the Saudi-led Coalition which is launching the air campaign against the Houthis to defeat them from a distance is also contested by the participants. Remote warfare strategy, as the same exact problem, is identified by the participants. Third, the motivational act done by the Saudi-led Coalition when calling to arm the other Arab and international nations is further contested by the participants. They expressed their surprise at the fast formation of the coalition and expressed their weakness to oppose it along with the one practised by the Houthis on the ground.

In general, these interpretations of the victims' families, who are at the receiving end, are reflecting on the Saudi-led Coalition violence interpretations of the 'truth'. Hence, first, remote warfare is presented as the most precise war through using "smart bombs" and advanced technology and thus portrayed as beneficial for civilians.[243] This has been greatly contested and interpreted as problematic for civilians on the ground causing death and urban destruction. Second, according to participants, the coalition is the problem and not the Houthis. The self-defence discourse that is used to legitimise the Saudi-led Coalition to intervene militarily to fight the Houthis, is thus contested by the victim families on the ground. The need to defeat the Houthis is not accepted completely but rather questioned as the participants claimed that none of the Houthis is targeted and only civilians are the victims. This led to our third point which is the general participants interpretations around causing more harm than good and it is far from protecting the Yemeni people as proclaimed. These three discourses of "precision", "collective/self-defence" and "humanitarianism" that have been used to legitimise and interpret the Saudi-led Coalition remote warfare, are highly contested by the victims' families who are at the receiving end of such violence. They interpreted the riskless with zero body bags of the coalition remote warfare as being a war full of risk and unlimited death of civilians at its receiving end.

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[243] Espinoza, 'State Terrorism', 378.

This helps to have a firm grasp of the intimacies of remote warfare and the dominant discourse around it and how it is presented as a legitimate mode of violence, and how non-democracies states are now following suit. It has also proved how these intimacies of remote warfare can be contested when giving voice to the realities on the ground and not only focusing on the dominant discourses.

# CONCLUSION

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

Bearing in mind the sensitivity of this topic and the nature of the case studied, this final chapter does not seek to make broad generalizations, but rather to provide a thorough and careful in-depth analysis of the airstrike's consequences in the context of the situation at hand.

In chapter four, I first sketched the background in which the Saudi-led Coalition formulated and aroused and therefore was legitimised by using Hadi's letter and the UN charter as a legal basis. Then used the frame analysis of the Saudi official statements and press releases to examine the Saudi state interpretation of the Saudi-led Coalition as a whole. This "official story" as I illustrated, is primarily focused on the Houthis and portrays them as a danger and a threat (diagnostic frame) that must be fought and defeated by distant tactics (prognostic frame). i.e., airstrikes. And the reasoning behind why they chose such tactics and why other Arab and non-Arab's nations should join (motivational frame). These are three extremely powerful and resonant frameworks, as I demonstrated, that all draw on wider discourses about "precision", the "self/collective-defence", and "humanitarianism". The Saudi-led Coalition has been presented, officially -as limited in nature and precise- that it is fighting for protecting the Yemeni people and its legitimate government.

Remarkably, throughout all these discourses, the Saudi state has used the Yemeni legitimate government letter as an ultimate legitimate excuse for their military intervention in Yemen which some scholars refer to as intervention by invitation. Not only that, but they also used the narratives used in the letter along with their discourses with the aim to justify the intervention as solely was to defend the country's sovereignty and legitimacy. This was shown in the data collected that the concept of legitimacy was used consistently throughout the government's discourses particularly in reference to the legitimate government Hadi. This shows how Saudi carefully and extensively used the letter and the UN charter as a reason that they've been asked to come and intervene to protect the Yemenis and themselves and the region at large against the Iranian-backed Houthis in terms of collective/self-defence. Interestingly, this shows how non-democratic and non-western countries such as Saudi Arabia are following suit in using the same wider legitimate discourses and succeeding in reproducing such remote violence.

On the other hand, however, in chapter 5, based on the 14 in-depth interviews conducted with victim families of Sana'a who are at the receiving end of such violence, I described how the participants I spoke with who lived or were from Sana'a were directly affected by the airstrikes understand the Saudi-led Coalition's violence. Further, I illustrated how they interpret and contest the Saudi-led Coalition. By sharing their loss with regards to family members or part of their body parts and/or houses in particular and to the civilian casualties and the urban destruction in general, they interpret the Saudi-led Coalition violence as very problematic, notably through the use of distant tactics (diagnostic frame). The Sana'a people I spoke with stressed the need for peace first and for them, justice comes later. They proposed the dialogue as a first-aid option to stop the bleeding and then go for a full recovery. They are calling all the parties, especially the Yemenis

ones to sit around one table and solve this problem peacefully. They pointed at the need for an honest intention to go for peace; from people at the national level to gather around the dialogue table and at the international level by calling the UN to effectively mediate and come out with good results (prognostic frame). They expressed their weakness in supporting any of their proposed solutions and admitted that they are no longer one united nation (motivational frame).

However, Sana'a people, in the end, ultimate desire is for the siege to be lifted up and the airstrikes to be stopped. In fact, Sana'a people have contested the Saudi-led Coalition's description of the problem as well as the suggested remedy and the motivation behind it. They interpret civilian deaths and city destruction as a result of the Saudi-led Coalition's violence, and thus, they largely oppose the officials' interpretations of precision and humanitarianism in this regard.


## CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH GAPS IDENTIFIED

By providing a contested frame, I can answer the main question by seeing how Sana'a people from the north of Yemen are willing to contribute to the contestation of the Saudi-led Coalition's airstrikes violence in particular and the remote warfare at large and its truth. However, these voices are not heard as it doesn't suit the dominant interpretations and thus remains at the struggle over meaning loose ends. So, what do these findings tell us with regards to remote warfare?

To begin, it has been seen how remote warfare is portrayed as an acceptable method of violence in the case of the Saudi-led Coalition against the Houthis in Yemen, based on three worldwide major discourses. Precision discourse explains the use of modern remote technologies that enable precise bombing with the least amount of civilian suffering possible. The collective/self-defence discourse under the war on terror policy is based on the belief that terrorism is the greatest evil of our day, posing a threat to people all around the region and the world, and must be fought against. The humanitarianism discourse describes how Western countries may fight wars in a compassionate manner while also delivering freedom and protection to other countries. Based on these discourses of necessity and violence perpetrated moderation, Western's interventionists are tempted to believe that this type of violence is more efficient and effectively and successfully used in a proper way.[244]

In the same vein as the Western states' interpretations and legitimation of the remote warfare, non-Western states interpretations, in our case Saudi Arabia, has gone and followed suit. It is a mirror image of what the West is doing. So when the West engaged in remote warfare for example in Syria and Iraq, they legitimized it as an invitation from the Iraqi government and in the name of self-defence to eliminate the Islamic State risk. Similar lines of argumentation and reasoning appear to be used by the Saudi-led Coalition to legitimize remote warfare using airstrikes. Moreover, It can be seen that the letter is indeed significant because it is using the same kind of legitimising discourse as was used by the West. Therefore, it is a replica. However, it is not only used to legitimize the intervention to their own population, and even maybe to the Yemeni population. But most importantly it is used to legitimising their intervention to the international

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[244] Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils*, 11.

community, arguing that westerns are doing it elsewhere for instance in Iraq and Syria, thus we are following the exact suit.

On the ground, however, a different story is told. Sana'a people through their interpretation of remote warfare violence are, in fact, rejecting and contesting these new distant tactics. They are opposing its effectiveness, precisions and accuracy. Further, Sana'a people want to reconcile and compromise at this stage of the conflict. By facing a lot of violence, their main priorities for the violence have become to stop it and justice comes later. In other words, peace first and justice can come later. Perhaps some of the legal scholars would argue that and say we can not have peace without justice; however, I argue that actually a lot of people really want to prioritize peace before justice because it has become a matter of life and death for the majority when they are in the stage of violence.

It has been seen from the data collected three outstanding points aggregated and worth being further studied and they are as follows: first, the civilians harm beyond the casualties, i.e., the mental consequences. This has been clear in the fifth chapter where the perspectives presented to demonstrate the necessity of broadening our concept of civilian suffering beyond casualties to encompass all forms of injury, whether indirect, physical, or mental. All the respondents expressed the ongoing psychological stresses of the ongoing airstrikes campaign, which, in turn, significantly affects the quality of life of all. It further, reflects the lack of a complete understanding of civilians' harm caused by remote warfare in the Western policies. Thus, it keeps it replicated progressively by Western and currently by non-Western actors. Saying this takes us to our second point and it is the absence of the full acknowledgement of the remote warfare effect in the policies and among the decision-makers. Thus, based on my research findings, the concept of civilian harm needs to be broadened to including mental wellbeing. The third point is the Saudi-led Coalition remote warfare blowback. It was designed to be limited and decisive. However, it ended up being an ongoing war with no end. Further, it resulted in the Houthis having a firm grip of Yemen North. They even gain power and are responding militarily to the Saudi Arabia war. This contributes to the existing debate among scholars and researchers about remote warfare in general and its effect and blowback.

**CONTRIBUTION TO ACADEMIC DEBATE**

This thesis contributes to the academic debates on remote warfare in a few different ways. First by bringing a non-western case study into the academic debate. Although there are differences, yet there are a lot of similarities and I believe that is really important to emphasize and to critique: It is not only a mimicking of the remote warfare strategies but also the remote warfare legitimising discourses. So, if everyone uses these tactics and civilian harm in such a judgmental way, these only feed into a new cycle of violence and only creating a real devastating level of security across the world. Thus, if westerners lead the way in these types of interventions, then others will follow and they will use the same kind of legitimising discourse.

Second, it is the first time that empirical evidence on the remote warfare intimate reality of people on the receiving end of such violence has been presented. These realities are made even more intimate, as I illustrated because the victims of that violence are still to the moment

experiencing such violence and affected by it. Remote warfare has a detrimental impact on civilians. It has been seen how civilians tried to contest it but their voices are often not heard and not given a space in the political debate. Thus, I have been able to do so by bringing the collective action frames to study this in a structured way. Which to my knowledge has not been done before.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Much more academic research needs to be done in civilian harm in Sana'a from remote warfare as I'm one of the first. Evidence has shown that there is a need to broaden the concept. To do so, it needs additional research to understand how reverberating effects for triggering events and reverberating affected each other and cause long term issues. Secondly, when we study civilian harm, we have to develop a methodology that not only looks at the physical aspect (causalities and injuries) but also at the psychological aspect (mental health).

In terms of methodology, often qualitative and quantitative approaches work together. I have completed the first steps to develop a set of certain qualitative questions to ask about civilian's harm. However, a big limitation of this research is that I only interviewed 14 people. Whereas a survey could help to supplement this research by gathering insight from many more people. It would help reveal the scale of civilian harm caused by remote warfare. Therefore, I would recommend using a quantitative approach.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: List of participants

| NO | Name (fake) | Gender | Age | Date | Data |
|----|-------------|--------|-----|------|------|
| 1 | Salma | F | 34 | Humanitarian Worker | 06.04.2021 |
| 2 | Kareem | M | 42 | HR Manager | 14.04.2021 |
| 3 | Marwa | F | 29 | Student | 16.04.2021 |
| 4 | Laila | F | 39 | Online seller | 17.04.2021 |
| 5 | Salem | M | 33 | Economic & Empowerment Manager | 17.04.2021 |
| 6 | Abdulrahman | M | 31 | Photographer | 17.04.2021 |
| 7 | Yaser | M | 40 | Employee | 18.04.2021 |
| 8 | Sami | M | 32 | Accounting | 18.04.2021 |
| 9 | Yaseen | M | 30 | Employee | 19.04.2021 |
| 10 | Zaymat Alyaman | F | 42 | Supervisor in Educational sector | 19.04.2021 |
| 11 | Rana | F | 30 | Humanitarian Worker | 23.04.2021 |
| 12 | Fares | M | 40 | Employee | 23.04.2021 |
| 13 | Abdullah | M | 52 | Artist | 24.04.2012 |
| 14 | Osamah | M | 30 | IT | 3.05.2021 |

## Appendix 2: Interview Guide

| **1.** | **Interviewee General Information** |
|---|---|

Gender: M/F
Age:
Region:
Profession:

| **2.** | **Qualitative interview introduction** |
|---|---|

Length: 45-60 minutes
Introduction of topic: Short summary of my research topic and its relevance.
Introduction of interview-style: Information about the structure of the interview
Primary goal: to know how the victim families interpret and frame Saudi-led Coalition airstrikes. More like a conversation with a focus on his/her experience, opinions and what he/she thinks or feels about the SLC.

| **3.** | **Verbal Consent** |
|---|---|

**Consent**: Would you like to participate in this interview?
**Ethical issues**: Discussing anonymization and that the interview can always interrupt.

| **4.** | **Background Information** |
|---|---|

Overview: Invite interviewee to briefly tell me about him/herself: General information about background mostly about and perspectives on issues surrounding the war in Yemen led by Saudi-led Coalition.
- General Description of the situation in Yemen/Sana'a:
  ● What is the problem now in Yemen?
  ● How should it be solved?

| 5. | **Focused Information** |
|---|---|

 The Saudi-led anti-Houthi coalition:
  ● When was the first experience with the airstrikes?
  ● Who's to blame? Who's responsible for this war?
  ● What is the plan to end the SLC airstrike? How?
  ● Is there any way or plan to face this situation collectively as Yemenis?
  ● How do you see the SLC intervention? What do you think of it?
  ● When did you hear about the SLC?
  ● What was your reaction to the SLC airstrikes?
  ● How do you understand the SLC attacking Houthis?
  ● How do you understand the SLC justification of their attacks on Houthis?
  ● Does this still affect/impact your life?
  ● What do you think of this remote warfare?

## Appendix 3: Hadi's letter quoted. [245]

"Dear Brother the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, The King of the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Dear Brother, His Highness, Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayid Al Nahayan, The President of The Brotherly United Arab Emirates. Dear Brother, His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, The King of The Brotherly Kingdom of Bahrain. Dear Brother, His Majesty the Sultan Qabus Bin Said, The Sultan of the Brotherly Oman. Dear Brother, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, The Emir of the Neighborly State of Kuwait. Dear Brother, His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, The Emir of the Brotherly State of Qatar.

Dear Brothers, I write to you this letter with sadness and my heart is overwhelmed with great sadness and sorrow as a result of the security situations in the Republic of Yemen, the result of the enormous deterioration and the great danger due to the ongoing aggressive actions and the continuing violence against the sovereignty of Yemen that the Houthi coup orchestrators are undertaking and continuing to undertake with the intention to disintegrate Yemen and to strike its security and stability. We have exerted all possible efforts to end these Houthi criminal sinful aggressions against our people, which left deep wounds in each Yemeni home. We sought with all our power to reach a peaceful solution to get Yemen out from a dark tunnel that the coup Houthi orchestrators put the country in, to safeguard our people from the fire of chaos and destruction, and to avoid implicating the country into a war that will burn the entire land that the coup orchestrators sought and continue to seek its ignition. But our all peaceful efforts and our continuous determination faced a categorical refusal by the Houthi coup orchestrators who are continuing their transgressions to bring the remaining region and especially in the south under their control, which led the Republic of Yemen to go through the most difficult conditions in its history. The people of Yemen, who abide by our Islamic religion, have never witnessed such a similar sinful aggression, which is refuted by Islamic principles and traditions as well as International charters. This sinful aggression executed by internal Militias supported by forces from within who sold their conscience and are only concerned about their self-interests, and also supported by regional powers, whose objective is to dominate this country and to make it a base for their dominance in the region. This threat is not only menacing the security of Yemen only, but also the security of the entire region as well as the world peace and security.In the face of these serious developments, and the keenness on Yemen's security and stability and the security of the region and international peace and security, and the protection of the Yemeni brave people who pay a heavy price as a result of the Houthi coup, I am out of my constitutional responsibilities that necessitate that I have to take care of people and the preservation of the nation's unity, independence and territorial integrity, and taking into account what have been and being carried out by Houthi militias of aggressive acts, the most recent one is monitoring military convoys destined to attack Aden and seize it and the rest of the South, and the announcement of that criminal militias of their intentions to move militarily towards the south which was confirmed by the recent report of the special envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations submitted to the Security Council including the confirmation that the so-called Houthi Revolutionary Committee has issued an appeal for Public Mobilization in the military units controlled by it in the north in preparation for the campaign on the south, and the report also confirmed that the Houthis are continuing their

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[245] 'GCC Issues Statement on Yemen _ The Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia', n.d.

occupation of government institutions and expansion into new areas, despite repeated demands by the Security Council, and that the Air Force aircraft seized by the Houthis are continuing to fly over and bombarding the city of Aden, which is considered a serious unprecedented escalation. And as the United Nations envoy's report has confirmed that the Houthis began to move now toward the south, Lahaj and Aden, and that fears spread of the exploitation of al-Qaeda of the current instability to provoke further chaos which makes the country slide toward more violent conflict and fragmentation, I appeal to you my brothers and your sisterly nations to stand - as you have accustomed us always- by the Yemeni people for the protection of Yemen, and I ask you, based on the principle of self-defense in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, and on the basis of the Charter of the Arab League and the treaty of joint Arab defense, to provide instant support by all necessary means, including military intervention to protect Yemen and its people from continuous Houthi aggression and deter the expected attack to occur at any hour on the city of Aden and the rest of the southern regions, and to help Yemen in the face of al-Qaeda and ISIS. The Yemeni people will not forget the standing of his brothers by its side in these difficult circumstances and threats to it. In conclusion, I assure that the Yemeni people's trust in Allah Almighty will never be shaken, and would remain committed to their national fundamentals imposed to make it dearly in order to maintain the pride and dignity of the nation and its sovereignty. Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, March 24, 2015.".