



Universiteit Utrecht

Framing the War in Yemen: Narratives of Aggressive Neighbours, Internal Extremism, and Humanitarian Crisis

An Analysis of the Narratives used by Yemeni, Saudi and Iranian News Agencies

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to pull apart the narratives used by Yemeni, Saudi and Iranian news agencies concerning the conflict in Yemen, in order to understand how the conflict is framed by these agencies. In approaching the research question; *How do the contending narratives of Saudi, Iranian, and Yemeni news agencies frame the conflict in Yemen between March 2015 and May 2016?*, this thesis identifies and analyses the narratives each of these agencies use to portray the conflict in Yemen, using a theoretical framework built around the concept of framing to analyse how each agency places blame, proposes solutions, and positions their country within the conflict, through the concepts and language they use to create their narratives. The analysis seeks to understand each agency's stance towards the conflict, and analyse how this is perpetuated by their news coverage in order to further justify their understanding of, and intended outcome for, the conflict in Yemen. By outlining the role that the narratives in the media play in shaping the audience's attitude, this thesis highlights the relevance of identifying and analysing how such narratives are framed. Rather than aiming to uncover facts, or truths, about the conflict in Yemen, its relevance lies in the result of highlighting and analysing the claims made by these news agencies, thus identifying points of contention between them and serving as an alternative perspective through which to understand the battle of words and ideas that is taking place surrounding the conflict. An awareness of the framing processes used to shape contending understandings of the conflict, and the solutions they propose, will allow a more critical overview of the conflict as it unfolds. Furthermore, this research highlights how a set of core concepts was manipulated by each agency; using the same bank of concepts to frame their evaluation of, and proposed solution for, the conflict in Yemen.

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Introduction

On the 26th of March 2015, Saudi Arabia and a coalition of Arab states began ‘Operation Decisive Storm,’ launching their first airstrike against the Houthi in Yemen (Abdo & Grinstead 2015). This marked the most recent stage in the transformation of Yemen’s ongoing internal struggles with Houthi uprisings, into a war involving military actors from outside of its territory. Following the Houthi takeover of the capital Sana’a in September 2014, the already fragile and instable state collapsed into a civil war (BBC 2015). As the Houthi continued to gain greater territory and control President Hadi was forced to flee, first to Aden in the south and eventually to Saudi Arabia, at which time he personally requested an intervention to halt the Houthi advance. By responding to his call, Saudi Arabia brought itself deeper into the discourse surrounding the conflict, and in doing so emphasized what it saw as the disruptive role played another regional power; Iran. As such, the conflict in Yemen has been viewed as a new front in the struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran (Petrou 2015).

The main parties in the conflict in Yemen are now often identified not only as the Houthi and the Yemeni government, but included in the discourse are the governments of Saudi Arabia and Iran, and thus the contest over establishing a dominant narrative through which the conflict should be understood has become significantly more complex. The discourse of war is based on its justification and rationalization (Jabri 1996). As such, each party has had to respond to the role others perceive them as having in the conflict, by building a narrative through which they rationalize how they perceive the conflict, as well as justifying this opinion and their subsequent actions. Through such narratives, the parties legitimize how they view the situation in Yemen and establish their own position towards the conflict.

One location in which narratives surrounding the justification and rationalization of a conflict can be identified is in the news. News reports are not direct reflections of real events, but represent a constructed version of reality (Jabri 1996) (Roy and Shaw 2016). As such, each news agency participates in its own construction of a narrative of events. In a conflict that is currently ongoing, such as the one in Yemen, news reports often act as the primary source of current information. Particularly in a situation when limited academic research is being done into the conflict, such an analysis of the narratives surrounding the conflict can play an important role. A critical analysis of the narratives of several news agencies, which act as important sources of

information surrounding the conflict, will provide an understanding of the frames used by such agencies and thereby allow a more critical perspective through which to view further reports on the conflict.

These news agencies' narratives portray the conflict in Yemen a simplified manner, by shaping it using distinct frames. By building and maintaining these narratives, the understanding put forth by the news agency of the nature of the conflict, and proposed solutions for it, are continuously justified. As such, identifying the frames used to portray the conflict in Yemen, and further pulling these frames apart to understand which core concepts are highlighted, how these are portrayed in a coherent narrative, and how the news agencies continue to create and maintain their narratives using these frames, allows for a broader understanding of the conflict in Yemen. This broader understanding is essentially a collage of different and contending narratives, an open-minded overview of the conflict that allows for the identification of each distinct frame used to shape a particular understanding. By taking a step back, and observing the continuous process of framing, building narratives through which contending sides seek to understand and portray the conflict in Yemen, the complexities of the situation can be understood. Such an approach does not seek to understand 'the truth' of the conflict in Yemen, but instead seeks to identify and understand the many narratives of the truth as they are represented by the main news agencies in the states that are involved. To investigate this, the research question - *How do the contending narratives of Saudi, Iranian, and Yemeni news agencies frame the conflict in Yemen between March 2015 and May 2016?* - has guided this thesis. By rooting these narratives in an understanding of the sources from which they come, the results of this research will allow a level of critical reflection on the main narratives that are put forth to the audiences of these news agencies, and the framing which shapes the complexity of explanations surrounding the conflict.

In answering the research question, the thesis has directed its analysis through the following questions;

1. What is the central narrative put forth by each agency?
2. What are the core concepts highlighted by these narratives?
3. What framing processes are used to shape each narrative, and how do they make use of the core concepts?
4. What are the main points of contention between the narratives?

Before delving directly into the data, Chapter One of the thesis will provide the necessary background information on the roots of the conflict, as well as contextualizing it within a brief review of more academic literature in order to outline the foundation upon which the provisional codification of the data took place. This will be described in Chapter Two, which will first run through the data collection process by outlining the methodology used by the research. This section will include the justification for the approach this research took in selecting, collecting, organizing and codifying the data. Finally, the second chapter concludes with a detailed summary of the narratives put forth by each news agency. The analysis of the data is covered in Chapter Three. The research will analyse the narratives set forth by the news agencies to portray the conflict in Yemen using a theoretical framework built around the role of the media in conflict, and the concept of framing. This analysis seeks to understand each agency's stance towards the conflict, and analyse how this is perpetuated by their news coverage to further justify their understanding of, and intended outcome for, the conflict in Yemen. Following the formulation of the theoretical framework, the analysis of the narratives will be covered in two stages. Firstly, the core concepts that were highlighted across the narratives of all three agencies through the codification of the data will be presented and briefly discussed. Finally, the diagnostic and prognostic framing of the narratives by each agency will be analysed based on the framing processes they use, and how these reveal the contestation that takes places between the narratives, surrounding the core concepts that were identified.

Through these chapters, this thesis seeks to provide an overview of how the conflict in Yemen is represented by the selected news agencies by identifying their central narratives, and analysing how they each make use of core concepts in order to shape these narratives in terms of their diagnostic, prognostic and contentious framing. Understanding the role of news agencies in conflict, particularly how their narratives shape and perpetuate a specific understanding of the conflict, allows for a more critical view on the situation. Therefore, an investigation into the framing of the conflict in Yemen by news outlets in Saudi Arabia, Iran and Yemen will reveal the points of contention between these sides in their battle over of words, rather than on the ground. The aim of this thesis is not to reveal the main narratives of each government, but to focus solely on the narratives put forth by the agencies themselves, due to the fact that an investigation into one news agency does not allow for definitive statements to be made about an overall government narrative. Moreover, the agencies selected by this research were not all state run,

having been selected instead based on their audience and the position they hold in the media of that country. By doing so, the research was able to identify and analyse the narratives presented by the dominant news provider in each state, thus reflecting the frames through which the larger audiences were shown the conflict in Yemen. This unique perspective reveals how the conflict over 'truth' which occurs through the media reflects the conflict on the ground. Furthermore, the presence of contending narratives surrounding the conflict in Yemen often makes the situation appear incredibly complex. By outlining these narratives and highlighting how they each make use of the same core concepts, this research hopes to bring some clarity to these dominant understandings of the conflict.

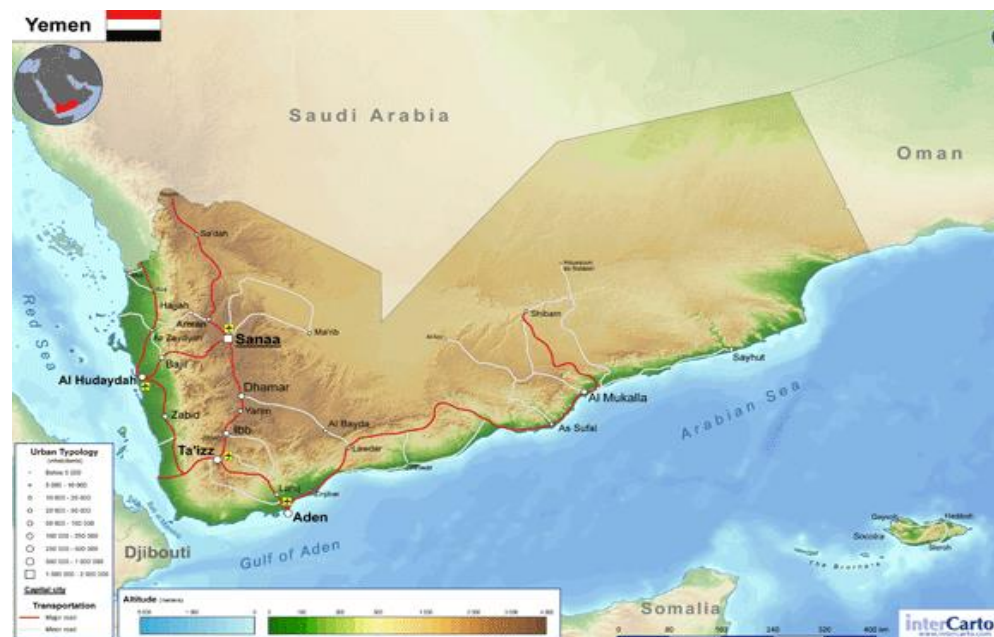
Chapter One: Background Information

This first chapter outlines important background information that will contextualize the analysis undertaken in this research. Starting with a brief profile of Yemen, it will run through an overview of the conflict in Yemen by outlining its history - from unification to the outbreak of the current conflict. Lastly, a review of academic research into the conflict in Yemen seeks to further contextualize the conflict within the academic field of understanding. This background information is particularly relevant as the conflict in Yemen is both complex and relatively unknown, with limited current research being done on the topic.

Country Profile

The Republic of Yemen was formed in 1990, and has an estimated population of 26 million people, 99,1 % of which are Muslim. A 65% majority of these are Sunni, the remaining 35% are Shia (CIA 2016). The current conflict has exasperated the country's economic difficulties (Laub 2016), and a staggering 82% of the population is thought to require humanitarian assistance (CIA 2016). It is the poorest country in the Arab region (UNOCHA 2016), with more than half of the population living below the poverty line (CIA 2016).

Figure 1.1 – Map of Yemen¹



¹ Retrieved from http://www.intercarto.com/EN/produits_image/image_1535_BDM_Yemen_GB.gif

A History of Division and Unification

According to the UN, Yemen is currently the poorest country in the Arab region; though it was once known as ‘Arabia Felix’ by the Romans (Retsö 2002), is thought to be the biblical land of *Sheba* (BBC 2011), and was long described as a fertile and bustling nation. When Islam came to Yemen in the 6th century AD, Shia Zaydi imams established control over the Northern territories. The Southern and Eastern regions flourished through the growing trade that ran through Sana’a and the port at Aden, which in the late 1950s was the second largest port in the world (Brehony 2011) and merchant towns became fortified settlements said to be the oldest example of people living in multi-story housing (such as at the UNESCO site at Shibam).

By the 19th century, Yemen’s position as strategically and geopolitically important in the region, with its control over trade routes and location near Mecca and Medina, meant that world powers began to seek control over the state. The Ottoman Empire had taken control over Yemen in the 1500s (BBC 2015), but in 1839 the British sought to gain influence in the region and captured the port city of Aden, driving the Ottoman Sultan out (Brehony 2011). This conflict between the British and the Ottomans was the birth of the official the division between North and South Yemen (Brehony 2011). The Ottomans, seeking to maintain their power in the region, took control of the North and established a capital in Sana’a, whilst the British maintained control over Aden and the South. The northern regions, where the Zaydi tribes had long thrived, were difficult for the Ottomans to control, and they did not succeed in fully established a centralized government before revolts in 1904 and 1911 lead to the Ottomans relinquishing control of the Northern highlands to the Zaydi imam. Following the death of the imam in 1962 and the subsequent civil war, the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) was formed in 1968. This coincided with the British losing control over Aden in 1967, and in the South the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) was established by radical Marxists, and supported by the Soviet bloc (Brehony 2011).

The independent states of the YAR and the PDRY existed for a relatively short period, though their legacy continues to add to the internal divisions within modern Yemen. The Republic of Yemen was formed in 1990 by the unification of these two states, which had existed in complete opposition with each other due to their differing ideologies (the PDRY was the only Marxist state in the region), close proximity, and contending claims towards representing the

whole of the Yemeni nation (Dingli 2013). The Republic of Yemen continued to represent a type of pluralism, as the presence of a strong traditional civil society consisting of various tribal and religious groups prevented the new government from monopolizing power across all of its territory, and state-society relations were rarely peaceful (Bonney 2011). Unification is generally seen as the result of the need for agreement on the exploitation of new found oil resources, as well as the weakening of the PDRY following the collapse of the Soviet Union and their growing crisis of legitimacy following a civil war in 1986 (Dingli 2013). Unification was entered into, therefore, with the members of the YAR having the upper hand, particularly President Ali Abdallah Saleh who consolidated his power by taking over the presidency of the Republic of Yemen in 1990. A lack of new institutions to bring about democratization and true unification, the failure to integrate the militaries of the YAR and the PDRY, and the concentration of government institutions in Sana'a, meant that members of the PDRY's government and elite were left at a disadvantage whilst those who had previously been part of the YAR gained position, power, and greater wealth (Dingli 2013). Moreover, greater emphasis was set on the consolidation of power, infrastructure and administrative institutions in the capital of Sana'a, leaving peripheral regions chronically underdeveloped, adding to the hostility felt towards President Saleh (Lewis 2013). Combined with the lack of true unification, unrest between the North and south was never overcome, and a civil war broke out in 1994. It was won by those loyal to Saleh, the former North, and was expected to bring about further unification by eradicating the Southern opposition (Dingli 2013). However, what followed was increased oppression of civil society opposition and repression of the South by northern elites (Lewis 2013).

The beginnings of the current armed conflict can be traced to the sparks that lit the smouldering unrest between the north and south of the country in 2003, including the crackdown of President Saleh's government on the so-called Believing Youth - part of the Zaydi community and later known as the Houthis (Winter 2011). Their leader, Husayn al Huthi, evaded arrest and the government crackdown that ensued led to further clashes between government forces and his followers in the Sada'a region, until his death in 2004. The government's pursuit of al Huthi's supporters after his death is thought to have increased support for the Houthis, who had now formed a more unified rebel unit and continued to carry out attacks in the Sada'a region with the government increasing their military response to the unrest. The Sada'a region has been at the

centre of conflict and unrest in Yemen due to its history as the seat of power for the first Yemeni imamate, until its decline in the seventeenth century. The region's political power declined steadily, but it remained important for the scholarship of Zaydism, the branch of Shia Islam from which the Houthi spring. Government presence in the Sada'a province has been weak, particularly since the clashes in 2004 (Winter 2011). Appointed governors failed to control the region and balance the various factions present there. A new provincial governor appointed to Sada'a in 2006 was an attempt for the government to improve relations with the Houthi, leading to a year of relative peace. After 2007, several severe armed clashes broke out between the two sides, and unrest continued to grow, interrupted by periods of unstable peace brokered by Qatar and fuelled by Saudi Arabia's involvement in 2009 against Houthi positions along their border with Yemen (Winter 2011).

Against the backdrop of this smouldering unrest in Yemen, 2011 brought an unprecedented wave of revolt and change across the Middle East. After the Arab Spring, an opportunity for real reform in Yemen seemed within grasp (Dingli 2013). The combination of youth revolts and grassroots organizations calling for change at a time of growing opposition within the government against President Saleh, the momentum was growing for this wave of change to put out the fires of unrest in Yemen. This led to President Saleh signing a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) deal granting him immunity, in exchange for him standing down and establishing an interim government which would restructure the military and draft a new constitution by 2014. However, the potential promise of this wave of change quickly fell flat, with many remarking that this appeared to have been a "change in names and faces, but not in substance" (Dingli 2013: pg. 96). Furthermore, the problems of underdevelopment and lack of governmental control in the North were not resolved, and in fact have led to increasing levels of self-governance in these regions (Lewis 2013).

Nonetheless, in the immediate aftermath of the Arab Spring many were hopeful that the situation in Yemen was being turned around, particularly in the international community, prompting the rise of discourse surrounding transitional policies towards development and democratization. The new unifying government, supported by the international community, set up a period of transition including the establishment of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC), which concluded at the end of 2013 and was intended to spearhead the transitional justice process and bring about further unification and political change. However, though a "just

solution” document was signed by all parties, no real consensus was made on key issues of contention such as the division of power, resources, and the new federal system, leading to a weak support for the conclusions of the NDC and a lack of real progress (USIP 2014). The NDC was viewed as powerless, elitist and international, and the underlying conflict between the government and the Houthi continued throughout its process and after its conclusion (USIP 2014). Moreover, those groups in positions of power continued their actions on all fronts, simultaneously taking part in the process of transforming government, and participating in acts of civil protest and even violence, making the implementation of the decisions of the NDC impossible (van Veen 2014).

In February 2014 another wave of Houthi uprisings took Yemen, forcing President Hadi to flee first to Aden and eventually fleeing to Saudi Arabia (BBC 2015). This uprising, in which the Houthi have rejected the draft constitution, the propositions of the NDC, and appointed a presidential council to replace Hadi, has resulted in the most widespread attempt by the Houthi to take control of power in Yemen (BBC 2015). In response to the actions of the Houthi, President Hadi called upon neighbouring states to intervene, and a coalition of five Gulf States, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco and Sudan, led by Saudi Arabia, began launching airstrikes against Houthi targets in March 2015 (BBC 2015). The conflict is ongoing, as of January 2016 there have been 8,100 reported casualties, with 2,800 of these reported as civilians (Al Jazeera 2016). The conflict has deepened the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, with the threat of famine widespread (Laub 2016). Although the Saudi coalition has succeeded in regaining some territory from the Houthi (Laub 2016), an end to the conflict is not yet in sight. UN mediated peace negotiations that have been taking place in Kuwait, accompanied by an unstable ceasefire agreement, have failed to make any progress in ending the conflict between the Houthi and the government, and the Saudi coalition’s airstrikes continue (Reuters 2016).

Contextualizing the Conflict

A review of the academic literature surrounding the conflict in Yemen has highlighted the key issues and theoretical concepts used to understand the conflict in Yemen, which will be explained in the following section. This literature review informed the body of concepts used to form a provisional set of codes, through which the data was codified – a process which will be outlined in depth in later chapters.

Firstly, the situation in Yemen is often understood as an example of the conflict that arises from the nature of a failed or fragile state. To what extent Yemen reflects such a situation is a difficult question to answer. It seems frequently assumed that the criteria of a fragile state, namely an “inability to provide basic services and meet vital needs, unstable and weak governance, persistent and extreme poverty, lack of territorial control, and high propensity to conflict and civil war” are met (Lewis 2013:2). Such criteria are mirrored by most academics, including Robert Rotberg, who also emphasizes enduring violence against the government and relentless demands for autonomy or shared power as important criteria (Dingli 2013). Yemen is often seen as an example of a failed state, predominantly due to the Houthi conflict revealing the government’s consistent failure to hold a monopoly over the means of violence and to control the territory. Various factors have been highlighted as root causes for the conflict, such as the presence of tribalism and sectarianism, local material inequalities, contesting identity claims, the attempts of the government at legitimization and the involvement of external powers such as Saudi Arabia in Yemen’s sovereign territorial issues, all of which are also seen as strong indicators of a failing state (Dingli 2013). Furthermore, Yemen can be seen as fragile due to the questioning of its legitimacy and legality of violence committed by the government against those within its territory, both locally and by the international community (Lewis 2013).

It is such an understanding of a failed state, based off a Eurocentric conception of what a state is, that has shaped conflict analysis and even the creation of policy solutions for the civil war in Yemen. The extent to which a state portrays an ability to conform to Western norms of what a state should look like and how it should operate, determines its treatment as a legitimate sovereign state, or as a fragile or failed state, with all the international policy implications that come with either label (Dingli 2013). For the reasons highlighted previously, the failed state discourse is often applied to the case of Yemen. It meets the criteria of a failed state, and

importantly, through the presence of specific local conditions and socio-cultural associations, does not conform to the Western perception of state and government. However, it is for this same reason that the failed state narrative can be problematic when trying to understand conflicts such as that in Yemen. By oversimplifying the narrative to that of a failed state, the discourse focuses on exactly how and where Yemen ‘fails’ as a state and how to remedy this situation, often pushing local conditions aside and failing to emphasise the importance of underlying governing structures in Yemen, such as the role of tribal and patronage systems (Dingli 2013).

Further discourse surrounding the conflict in Yemen lays emphasis on the proxy conflict being played out between Saudi Arabia and Iran. As highlighted in the previous section, Saudi Arabia has been involved in disputes between the Houthi and the government for some time, often combating the Houthi holding positions near the Saudi border. Moreover, the religious aspects of the conflict have been emphasized before, with ties between the Houthi and Iran, both practising Shi’ite Islam, often insinuated as a source of their external support. Recent developments in the Yemen conflict have added fuel to this understanding of the situation as a proxy war, reflecting the greater regional conflict between Shia Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia. This narrative of the Sunni/Shia conflict in Yemen is often perpetuated by the parties themselves, as it is used by the Yemeni government and the newly formed Saudi coalition to support their action against the Houthi (Petrou 2015). However, as a deeper understanding of the conflict in Yemen shows, the contention between the Houthi and the government has been ongoing, and extend far beyond this most recent clash in which regional powers have been involved to a greater extent than previously. Though Saudi Arabia has always been involved in the margins of the conflict, due to its interests in border stability and opposition to what they see as the extremist religious Houthis, Iran’s connection to the conflict is more complicated. The Houthi have been rebelling against the Yemeni government for twelve years, and it is only the most recent outbreak of violence that a connection between their actions and Iran have been emphasized – though not by Iran, who continue to deny the presence of any alliance between them (Petrou 2015).

The problem with focusing on this proxy war narrative is that it takes the current conflict out of its national context, as the latest in a long line of Houthi clashes, turning the issue into one of regional struggles rather than local, domestic contention (Petrou 2015). In fact, there is a fear that the increasing focus on the narrative of a proxy, Sunni/Shia conflict in Yemen is leading to a

self-fulfilling prophecy, as the Zaydi Houthis may grow to emphasize their connection to Shia Islam (overcoming significant theological differences) to benefit from such an ally in the face of a growing alliance of Sunni states fighting against them (Petrou 2015). In doing so, many think that by “fighting the Iranian mirage, the Saudis may have inadvertently made the genie real” (Abdo & Grinstead 2015). Furthermore, the regionalization of the conflict by Saudi involvement has meant that any peace agreement now requires their acquiescence, drawing them more closely into the core of the conflict and complicating the situation even further (Abdo & Grinstead 2015).

Chapter Two: Data Collection

This chapter details the research design of the thesis, covering the collection, analysis and presentation of the data. The chapter will outline and justify the method used for selecting sources, followed by an explanation of the codification techniques used to organize and analyze the data collected. Finally, this section will present detailed summaries of the data in the form of the narratives put forth by each news outlet. These central narratives are a summary of the story which each agency tells about the conflict in Yemen, and are the subject of the following analytical chapter.

Source Selection

As this paper has attempted to highlight, the situation in Yemen calls to attention the perspectives on the conflict and subsequent actions of external as well as internal actors. These key regional actors have an interest in the conflict due to the geopolitical position of Yemen – drawing both interests from their Saudi neighbours due to proximity, as well as calling upon the regional politics and sectarian divisions which have drawn Saudi Arabia and Iran into the conflict. Their interest in Yemen is also emphasized by their growing concern for the conflict’s impact on regional security and the humanitarian needs of the Yemeni population. The threat of terrorism, the spread of instability caused by the actions of the Houthi, and the deepening humanitarian crisis faced by some of the regions poorest have brought the conflict into the eye of the world’s media. In particular, the perspectives represented in the media in Saudi Arabia and Iran reflect their countries’ level of involvement in the conflict, as it is sometimes portrayed as a stage for the continued regional conflict between them.

As will be detailed in a later theoretical framework, the framing of the conflict by news agencies from these countries has an impact on the understanding of the situation which is perpetuated and consequently acted upon. However, this research is not an investigation into the narratives of any particular government, per se. This is mainly due to the fact that such an investigation cannot be undertaken through the analysis of only one news agency. Instead, the focus of this thesis is on the narratives put forward by one of the main news agencies from each country, in order to analyse the frames through which their audiences are shown the conflict in Yemen. Understanding and analysing the narratives put forth by these agencies is a very relevant

insight into the conflict, as it will identify and discuss the central concepts, framing processes, and key points of contention between these narratives, and provide insight into how each agency portrays the conflict to their audience. To do so, this research has selected the following news sources from Saudi Arabia, Iran and Yemen. The sources that were selected are as follows;

Yemeni News Agency

The selection of a news source from Yemen focused on finding a legitimate news website with content in English, which kept up to date on the latest news and posted articles daily. At the outset of this research, there appeared to be an obvious choice, and the outlet selected for this research was the Yemen News Agency: Saba News. The Saba News Agency was established prior to unification in the former Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) in 1970. Saba was combined with the Aden News Agency upon unification in 1990 to form the official news agency of the Republic of Yemen, Yemen News Agency: Saba News. The agency is a member of several news organizations, including the Federation of Arab News Agencies and the Organization of Asian News Agencies, and has published a daily newspaper since 2007 with articles translated into English, French and Arabic. Furthermore, the Saba News Agency holds the claim of being the official state agency (Saba News Agency 2016). However, upon further research into Saba News it became clear that the agency had been taken over by the Houthi in May 2015, and was therefore reporting not the narrative of the Yemeni government but of the Houthi themselves (Telegraph 2015). As the aim of this research is not to define the narrative of the governments of Iran, Saudi Arabia or Yemen, it was decided that the Saba News Agency would in fact be a favourable addition to the research. The government had little to no voice for the news on the internet until the 30th of May 2016, the end of the research period, when they established an alternative website for the Saba News Agency – which differs only slightly in its web address (Saba News Agency 2015). It would have been even more preferable for the research to have been able to analyse both the news coverage of the Houthi and the Yemeni government, in order to truly compare the narratives of all the significant actors in the conflict, however this option was not available. Nonetheless, as the aim of the research is to analyse the narratives put forth by the news agencies of each country, and the Houthi controlled Saba News was the main news agency during the period study, it is no less relevant to the conclusions of the

research. Data was collected from 127 articles published by Saba News over the course of the research period.

Saudi Arabian News Agency

Saudi Arabia has a significant number of news outlets, and is further involved in several Arabian news companies. However, this research wanted to focus on finding a news outlet which is geared more towards the Saudi public. Furthermore, the news source had to be active, and particularly had to be actively reporting on the situation in Yemen. This was observed by a simple scan of the news to check that it was up to date, as well as a check that there was an article released on the situation in Yemen at least every week. The Saudi Press Agency was selected due to their frequent and detailed reporting on the situation, as well as first hand access to official statements by officials in Saudi and other officials within the Coalition, the UN and the US. The Saudi Press Agency was established in 1971 and was the first, and soon the main, news agency in the kingdom. It was a founding member of the Federation of Arab News Agencies, the Gulf News Agency and the International Islamic News Agency (Saudi Press Agency 2016). The Saudi Press Agency published a significantly larger amount of articles concerning Yemen in the period of time this study took place, with the research collecting data from 243 articles in total. A report was published on the situation in Yemen almost every single day, often multiple articles on the same day, though a lot of information was repeated in these reports.

Iranian News Agency

The news outlet from Iran was selected through the same method, with the same criteria in mind. It was considerably more difficult to find a news source that published frequently and in English, therefore due to its position as a well established paper, the outlet that was included in this research is the Tehran Times. The Tehran Times was established in 1979 and was the first daily newspaper to publish in English, with current readership across 80 countries, and is known as Iran's leading international daily (Tehran Times 2016). It was selected due to the frequency with which it reported on Yemen, as well as its considerable and widespread audience. Over the course of the research period, data was collected from 112 articles published by the Tehran Times.

Article Selection

Upon selecting the news outlets, the next focus of the research was developing an accurate method for specifying, finding and selecting the individual articles to be analysed. To do so, a set of criteria was developed. Additionally, the distinct time frame within which this research was performed had to be decided. This set of criteria ensured a representative and comparable data set from each of the news outlets selected.

First of all, the research focused on news articles published within a strict time frame, beginning in March 2015 with the start of the Saudi coalition's air strikes and ending in April 2016. This time frame was heavily influenced by the time constraints on the research, as a more accurate and in depth analysis would have gone back as far as September 2014, to the Houthi take-over of the capital Sana'a, as this was the true start of the civil war. However, the time frame selected reflects a turning point in the conflict, as the intervention of the Saudi coalition brought greater media attention to the conflict from the news outlets selected, and reflects the point at which Saudi Arabia and Iran were pulled into the discourse surrounding the conflict. As such, the starting point that was selected seemed appropriate for the research as it marked the height of the external actors' involvement in the conflict. The end point of the research was selected considering the scheduling of the thesis, allowing for just over a full year of data to be analysed, but would ideally have continued further. As will be discussed in later sections, the results of the research could have been influenced by the continued developments in Yemen after April 2016, particularly in relation to the growing negotiations for peace; however a strict time frame was vital to completing the research effectively and on time.

Within this time frame, articles were selected according to the following criteria. Firstly, the article had to be solely on the topic of Yemen. Articles discussing the conflict in Yemen as part of a larger analysis of the region or any other wider analysis were not included for several reasons. The first of these is pragmatism; such articles are often longer, including only a small section on Yemen or even simply a mention of the conflict without any real discussion. Here the situation in Yemen is used more as support for a larger argument, and the focus of the article is therefore not on representing a particular perspective on that conflict. It was felt that such articles often pre-empted a certain frame; for example a mention of Yemen in an article concerning terrorism in the Middle East would indicate that the conflict is being framed as part of a larger

narrative on terrorism. However, as the focus of this article is on terrorism in the Middle East as a whole, this does not provide a real window into how the conflict in Yemen itself is framed. Whilst it is useful additional information and supports the framing of the situation in Yemen in a certain way, such articles were considered less informative than articles in which the focus lay clearly on Yemen. Moreover, the inclusion of such articles would have increased the data set to a volume greater than a single researcher could process within the timeframe of the research.

Additionally, the research did not include articles considered low in content; for example articles which simply stated that a meeting had occurred, or that an attack had happened, and so forth. This decision was made because such articles did not include data suitable for coding, often being limited to one of two lines stating the bare minimum coverage of an event without evoking a certain framing of the conflict. In situations where it was possible to identify concepts and phrases which revealed a certain opinion, or frame, the article was included. In general, these were identified by the presence of concepts or phrases which had previously been identified as codes representing such a frame. For example, an article such as shown in Figure 2.1 was not included, whilst 2.2 was;

Figure 2.1 – Article Not Included²



Figure 2.2 – Article Included³



²Retrieved from: <http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1431001>

³Retrieved from: <http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1482915>

Codifying Data

Once the data sources were selected and the relevant articles identified, the final step in the research was to codify the data for further analysis. Essentially, codification of the data allowed for the easy identification of the central concepts in each article, which would form the basis of the analysis into how these concepts are used in the framing processes of each news agency. Coding is a technique in qualitative content 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” (Hsieh & Shannon 2005:1278). As such, coding is merely the initial stage of data analysis, in which key concepts can be labelled, linked, and counted. Codes are generally words or phrases which summarize or capture the essence of a portion of data for further analysis. “Just as a title represents and captures a book or film or poem’s primary content and essence, so does a code represent and capture a datum’s primary content and essence” (Saldana 2009:3). Therefore, once the raw data was codified, it could be grouped into series of codes representing the central concepts within the data, which were further analysed in order to form coherent and distinct categories. Each category represents a collection of coded concepts, which relate to a specific understanding of the conflict and were used to form the frames through which each news agency shaped their narrative.

As laid out in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Saldana 2009), there are many different approaches to coding qualitative data, which reflect both the nature of the data and the aim of its analysis. These approaches are not mutually exclusive, and each researcher adapts their methodology to use a combination of coding techniques to reflect the requirements of their research (Saldana 2009). The coding techniques used in this research most closely resemble a combination of simultaneous, holistic and provisional coding. Simultaneous coding recognises the complexity of data and presence of multiple possible concepts to be codified, which may overlap and can be analysed into a further possible pattern, such as the frames identified by this research. Holistic coding was used to work with the data as a whole, clustering key concepts together rather than analysing and codifying the data line by line. The data in this research was treated holistically, as often an entire article could be summed up by simply one or two codes. Furthermore, this research used the provisional coding approach, as it entered into the data with a pre-set list of potential codes with which to holistically codify the data, which were

developed from the review of the literature as detailed previously. The pre-set codes were continuously developed and adapted throughout the research as new and more detailed concepts emerged from the data.

Based on the background information that was gathered for this investigation, the research approached the data with the following provisional codes, with their given sub codes;

Table 1 – Provisional Codes and their Sub-codes

Proxy War	Terrorism	Failed State	Failures of Unification
Saudi-government alliance	ISIS	Insecurity	North/South tensions
Iran-Houthi Alliance	AQAP	Poverty and unemployment	Demand for separation
Regional power struggle	War against terror	(government) violence	Inequality between regions
Sectarian tensions	Extremism	Failures in infrastructure	Failures in government transformation

These codes developed and transformed throughout the process of codification, with an emphasis on certain categories being clearly supported by the data, whilst others were less-relevant. Furthermore, certain concepts which were not included in the provisional codes were identified in the data as being central to the narratives and framing of each news agency, and were thus developed as codes from the data itself.

Each article was first processed by highlighting relevant concepts or phrases to their corresponding codes, which were colour coded to create an effective visual codification of the data. Following this the main codes present in each article were summed up separately, to create a chronological list of the articles and the codes used by each news outlet. Therefore, the codification of the data was completed through several stages, each one representing a further condensing of the codes used. To illustrate how this process developed an example of the

codification of an article has been included in appendix 1. The analysis of the data and process of distilling the codified data into key frames will be expanded on in a later section.

The News Agencies' Central Narratives

Before entering into the analysis of the codified data collected, the research initially formed a detailed overview of the central narratives put forth by each news agency. The central narrative of each news agency is herein identified and summarized, allowing for it to be pulled apart into its key concepts, and an analysis of the framing processes used by each to take place. These narratives represent a summary of the raw data collected from each news agency. The following chapter will focus on the analysis of this data; here the main aim is simply to outline how each news agency told the story of the Yemen conflict during the time covered by the research.

The Saba News Agency

Early reports on the situation in Yemen from Saba News appeared to reflect a relatively balanced and neutral position towards the conflict, which soon shifts towards the emphasis on the aggression of the Saudi coalition and the worsening humanitarian crisis. This shift can be related to the fact that the Houthi take-over of Saba news occurred in May 2015, after which the narrative of the agency took a definite turn.

In the first weeks of March, 2015, most reports covered statements made by Yemeni, Saudi and Iranian officials, generally all calling for efforts to “maintain Yemen's unity, stability and sovereignty and reject any interference in its internal affairs”⁴ and reflecting the need to support President Hadi and a peaceful political process for change. Interestingly, the Saba News Agency frequently highlighted statements made by Saudi officials at this time, not only calling for support for the President and the political process in Yemen, but stating repeatedly that the Saudis regard the sovereignty and unity of the Yemeni state as an issue of great importance.⁵ Similar statements were reported from Iranian officials, also calling for continued dialogue and political process in the face of what it called “terrorist acts.”⁶ Furthermore, Saba News reported on a statement made by the Arab League outright rejecting any interference in the internal affairs of Yemen, particularly condemning the use of violence and calling instead for support for

⁴Saba News Agency (7 March 2015), 'Yemen's delegate to AL urges continual support to dialogue'
<http://sabanews.net/en/news390484.htm>

Saba News Agency (8 March 2015) 'Saudi Arabia confirms its firm position towards Yemen's unity'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news390592.htm>

Saba News Agency (21 March 2015) 'Iran: Friday terrorist attacks aim to destabilize Yemen'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news391888.htm>

national dialogue and the political process within Yemen to strengthen and respect the sovereignty and unity of the Yemeni state.⁷ Reports of statements from the UN reflect this warning against international interference, reiterating the call for “all parties and Member States to refrain from taking any actions that undermine the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen” and to focus instead on supporting national dialogue in Yemen.⁸

Concerning the early stages of the conflict, Saba news emphasized reports by the UN and other international organizations describing the “patchwork of simmering feuds – an explosive mix of unresolved grievances,”⁹ including the problems of sectarian violence, political tensions, the deepening north-south divide, the failure of a political transition towards democracy since the introduction of the new government in 2014, increasing violent attacks by both the Houthi and Al Qaeda, and a deepening humanitarian crisis. These statements called for overcoming such “political, tribal and sectarian” divisions for the protection of the Yemeni people, and once again call for national dialogue and a political peace process against the trap of violent conflict and the war on terror within Yemen.¹⁰ In particular the continued actions of the Houthi against the government and the legitimacy of President Hadi were seen as undermining the political process and the potential for peaceful dialogue within Yemen, deepening the security crisis and creating further opportunities for Al Qaeda terrorist actions. In other words, the situation in Yemen was reported by Saba News as a self-perpetuating cycle in which a combination of political, tribal and sectarian and humanitarian grievances have lead to growing unrest and instability, highlighting divisions in society and allowing for the rise of opposition groups such as the Houthi, who's opposition of the government was seen as damaging the legitimacy of President Hadi's government and any potential movement for change, as well as creating a security vacuum in which terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda have been able to thrive. By emphasising international and regional support for the legitimacy of President Hadi and his government, and repeated calls for internal dialogue and peaceful political action, the early reporting of the Saba

⁷ Saba News Agency (10 March 2015) 'AL's Ministerial Council rejects interference in Yemen affairs'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news390864.htm>

⁸ Saba News Agency (27 March 2015) 'UN: Negotiation is the only option for resolving Yemen's crisis'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news392599.htm>

Saba News Agency (28 March 2015) 'UN Secretary-General calls for peaceful solution in Yemen'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news392664.htm>

⁹ Saba News Agency (23 March 2015) 'UN envoy says Yemen on 'rapid downward spiral' as tensions rise'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news392208.htm>

¹⁰ Saba News Agency (23 March 2015) 'OIC calls Yemeni parties to give priority to Yemen interests'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news392232.htm>

news agency did not develop its own critical view on the situation, reporting instead in a relatively neutral manner on these statements.

Quite quickly this neutral stance shifted, particularly following the growing intervention of the Saudi coalition. Following the reports on various international organizations warning against intervention in Yemen's sovereign issues, the Saba News Agency quickly began including articles condemning this Saudi-led action. This included statements from Iran, Iraq, the Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International condemning Saudi Arabia's intervention in Yemen, criticising them for perpetuating the violent conflict and deepening the humanitarian crisis, thus endangering civilians rather than promoting peaceful dialogue,¹¹ in addition to further statements from China, Germany, Kuwait and the UN which called for a ceasefire from all sides, ending military efforts in favour of a political solution.¹² In addition to these statements, the Saba News Agency at this time focused on criticisms of the violent conflict by reporting predominantly on the humanitarian consequences of the conflict. Frequent reports which discussed statements made by the World Health Organization, the UN, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Action Against Hunger, Save the Children, Oxfam, UNICEF, the World Food Program, International Medical Corps, and Médecins Sans Frontières, emphasised the effects the conflict has had in deepening the existing humanitarian crisis in Yemen, with extensive damage to infrastructure having a ripple effect in the areas of healthcare, food security, shelter, water, education, fuel, communications, and human rights.¹³ Several sources specifically condemned

¹¹Saba News Agency (2 April 2015) 'Iraq, Iran calls for halting military aggression on Yemen'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news393022.htm>

Saba News Agency (2 April 2015) 'HRW requests neutral investigations with Arab coalition forces against Yemen'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news393053.htm>

Saba News Agency (29 April 2015) 'AI calls for probing into Yemen's civilian deaths by Saudi-led airstrikes'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news394811.htm>

¹²Saba News Agency (17 April 2015) 'UN Chief calls for immediate halt to fighting in Yemen'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news394107.htm>

Saba News Agency (22 April 2015) 'China welcomes ending Saudi airstrikes on Yemen'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news394383.htm>

Saba News Agency (23 April 2015) 'UN welcomes ending Saudi-led coalition airstrikes on Yemen'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news394462.htm>

Saba News Agency (23 April 2015) 'Iran, China affirms importance to end air raids, start dialogue in Yemen'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news394487.htm>

Saba News Agency (20 April 2015) 'Germany calls for int'l peace conference on Yemen, rules out success of military operations'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news394299.htm>

Saba News Agency (29 April 2015) 'Kuwait Deputy PM: No solution in Yemen except for the political one'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news394773.htm>

¹³Saba News Agency (11 April 2015) 'UN warns of rapidly deteriorating security, humanitarian crises in Yemen'

targeted attacks against civilians and health facilities¹⁴ whilst others tied the humanitarian crisis directly to effects of the Saudi-led intervention by emphasizing their blockade of Yemen's airspace and ports as preventing the ability of aid reaching those in need.¹⁵ Additionally, fears for the rise of terrorism in the growing instability in Yemen were referenced in statements from the EU¹⁶ These statements reflect the focus of the Saba News Agency's reporting in following the Saudi coalition's intervention, during which time they emphasised the human costs of the conflict over any discussion of underlying causal factors or the nature of the conflict itself.

As the conflict in Yemen worsened, with casualty numbers increasing and the humanitarian crisis deepening, the reporting of the Saba News Agency shifted further towards outright condemnation of the Saudi coalition's intervention. In addition to articles similar to early reports, which emphasized the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, occasionally tying this to the actions of the coalition but often referring only to an “escalating conflict...upsurge in violence,”¹⁷ the news agency began referring to the conflict as the “Saudi war against Yemen,” “Saudi aggression,”¹⁸ and the “Saudi massacre.”¹⁹ The language used by the news agency changed completely from May 2015 onwards, as they began describing the Saudi coalition as using

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- <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news393631.htm>
Saba News Agency (14 April 2015) 'OIC appeals to support Yemen with medical aid'
- <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news393882.htm>
Saba News Agency (21 April 2015) 'WHO warns of imminent health crisis in Yemen'
- <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news394330.htm>
Saba News Agency (25 April 2015) 'Humanitarian crisis is worsening in Yemen: UN official'
- <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news394556.htm>
Saba News Agency (3 May 2015) 'UN: Humanitarian situation in Yemen to collapse within days'
- <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news395046.htm>
Saba News Agency (9 May 2015) 'UNICEF: Yemen's children at immediate risk of severe malnutrition'
- <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news395387.htm>
¹⁴Saba News Agency (28 April 2015) 'WHO condemns attacks on health facilities in Yemen'
- <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news394753.htm>
¹⁵Saba News Agency (7 May 2015) 'Agencies warn of risk of preventing aid arrival to Yemen'
- <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news395278.htm>
¹⁶ Saba News Agency (7 May 2015) 'EU official: Situation in Yemen is extremely dangerous'
- <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news395255.htm>
¹⁷Saba News Agency (25 April 2015) 'Humanitarian crisis is worsening in Yemen: UN official'
- <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news394556.htm>
¹⁸Saba News Agency (7 May 2015) 'UN endeavors continue for pause in war against Yemen'
- <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news395302.htm>
Saba News Agency (8 May 2015) 'Iran, Russia discuss Yemen development'
- <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news395317.htm>
Saba News Agency (14 May 2015) 'Iran, Iraq emphasize halting war on Yemen, lifting siege'
- <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news395729.htm>
¹⁹Saba News Agency (29 September 2015) 'New deadly Saudi massacre in Yemen kills 131'
- <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news405207.htm>

“coalition war jets” to launch airstrikes in a joint “US-Saudi aggression” against Yemen, targeting civilians, refugees, and vital infrastructure, whilst allegedly breaching international law and human rights.²⁰ This shift directly reflects the Houthi takeover of Saba News at this time. The news agency frequently reported on instances in which the Saudis breached ceasefire agreements, further painting the coalition as the aggressor in the conflict, and emphasising them as the main reason why the humanitarian situation continued to worsen and any attempts at negotiations failed.²¹ Discussion of Houthi actions within the conflict was no longer included in their coverage, from this point onwards the narrative focused on an attack of the Saudi coalition against Yemeni sovereignty, the humanitarian crisis which was being worsened by these attacks, the number of civilian casualties, and the prevention of aid and peaceful negotiation by the Saudi refusal to maintain a ceasefire.²² Saba News’ central narrative of Saudi aggression is most coherently summed up in an article from February 2016, an excerpt of which is included here with the full article available in appendix 2;

“The Saudi aggression has killed and injured thousands of innocent people and has affected all the life aspects in the country. The death toll of the aggression amounted to 7,018 martyrs, including 1,601 children and 1,161 women ... more than 340 medical facilities ... were destroyed by the aggression ... damage resulting from the lack of the oil products and medical materials due to the unjust blockade on the country ... the crimes and violations committed by the Saudi aggression in Yemen, which fall within the war crimes and crimes against humanity ... include the deliberate murder through targeting civilians and populated areas, devastating the infrastructure and the service facilities and starving the people via the complete siege on the country and preventing the entry of

²⁰ Saba News Agency (21 May 2015) 'Coalition war jets kill 30 people throughout Yemen'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news396139.htm>

Saba News Agency (31 May 2015) 'More than 50 int'l personalities, org's lodge claim to UN on Saudi aggression against Yemen'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news396773.htm>

Saba News Agency (8 July 2015) 'Amnesty International affirms reports on Saudi aggression on Yemen'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news399265.htm>

²¹ Saba News Agency (16 December 2015) 'Security source: Saudi-led coalition countries violate ceasefire in Yemen'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news412980.htm>

²² Saba News Agency (1 July 2015) 'Iranian Foreign Ministry denounces Saudi attack against UN office in Aden, calls for sending aid to Yemen'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news398789.htm>

foodstuffs and goods and bombarding ports, airports, roads and bridges ... In the agricultural sector, three million workers have lost their jobs because of the Saudi aggression, which destroyed 4,817 sites ... the damage suffered by the Handicapped Fund and the social care houses due to the Saudi aggression, which caused the stopping of 350 thousand workers in the private sector. The oil exportation has stopped and the production declined due to the aggression on the country ... the telecommunications sector has suffered massive losses estimated at tens of billions of rials because of the Saudi aggression.”²³

Repeated use of the phrases “the aggression” and “the Saudi aggression” by the news agency has transformed their narrative of the conflict completely, moving it from the early reports on internal divisions, tensions and grievances towards reports of a Saudi war against Yemen, not a civil war but a regional one, in which the coalition's intervention is emphasized over the internal conflict that initiated it.

The motivation behind the Saudi coalition's intervention in Yemen is an issue that is not frequently touched upon by the Saba News Agency. In fact, they make certain contradictions in their reporting of the Saudi's connection with the US – as mentioned previously the intervention was referred to as the US-Saudi aggression against Yemen, but the agency has also reported on statements by US officials condemning Saudi airstrikes for worsening the humanitarian situation in the country.²⁴ Furthermore, the agency both emphasises the concerns of international organizations such as the UN, WHO and other humanitarian organizations regarding the situation in Yemen, whilst increasingly criticising such international bodies for failing to come to the aid of Yemeni civilians, disregarding the violations committed by the Saudi coalition and being unable to provide the promised support for dialogue and peace negotiation to end the conflict.²⁵

In sum, whilst the narrative of Saba News changed from a more balanced overview of the conflict, focusing on the internal tensions, to a view that it will soon be made clear falls mostly in

²³Saba News Agency (17 February 2016) 'Aggression kills over 7,000 in Yemen so far'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news419672.htm>

²⁴Saba News Agency (24 August 2015) 'US warns of worsening humanitarian situation in Yemen'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news402474.htm>

²⁵Saba News Agency (18 October 2015) 'CSOs: Saudi Arabia commits crimes in Yemen under UN cover'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news406923.htm>

Saba News Agency (9 January 2016) 'UN concerned deeply by coalition's intensified air strikes in Yemen'
<http://www.sabanews.net/en/news415477.htm>

line with the narrative set forth by the Tehran Times. This is particularly interesting considering this shift in narrative followed the Houthi takeover, as it becomes clear that the narratives of the Houthi and Iran surrounding the conflict are very similar. The emphasis lay predominantly on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, and the position of the Saudi coalition as the aggressors, whose intervention in Yemen only deepened the human suffering experienced by the Yemeni people. Their narrative acts as a cry for help, in the form of humanitarian aid, a call for attention to the violence and alleged war crimes committed by the Saudis, and a request to respect the sovereignty and unity of Yemen.

The Tehran Times

Overall, the Tehran Times' coverage of the conflict in Yemen treats the situation as Saudi Arabia's interference into Yemen's internal affairs, with the Saudi coalition targeting what are often referred to as "revolutionaries" - the Houthis (also called Ansarullah fighters by the Tehran Times) - in order to reinstate the former President Hadi and thus bring Yemen back into their control.²⁶ The Tehran Times' coverage of the conflict in Yemen centred on a very critical stance towards the actions of Saudi Arabia. Early articles suggested the motivations behind the Saudi intervention were purely out of self-interest²⁷ and not only condemned the coalition's aggression, but denied its success and support from other Arab nations.²⁸ Between such reports condemning the intervention, the Tehran Times positioned Iran as a peace broker, as the leading regional power calling for internal dialogue and an end to external aggression.²⁹ However, this stance was not always clear cut. The majority of the coverage followed this narrative of the Saudis as the leaders of an aggressive intervening force, whilst denying any involvement of the Iranians in a military capacity, providing only aid and applying international pressure to pursue an alternative

²⁶The Tehran Times (30 May 2015) 'Iran aid plane for Yemen lands in Djibouti airport

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/247039/Iran-aid-plane-for-Yemen-lands-in-Djibouti-airport>

The Tehran Times (11 June 2015) 'Saudis must accept Ansarullah: ex-Iranian ambassador'

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/247312/Saudis-must-accept-Ansarullah-ex-Iranian-ambassador>

²⁷The Tehran Times (13 April 2015) 'Saudi soldiers killed in fighting near Yemen border'

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246058/Saudi-soldiers-killed-in-fighting-near-Yemen-border>

²⁸The Tehran Times (14 April 2015) 'Saudis' political and military defeat in Yemen'

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246105/Saudis-political-and-military-defeat-in-Yemen>

The Tehran Times (10 May 2015) 'Saudi attack on Yemen is 'strategic mistake': Rouhani'

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246629/Saudi-attack-on-Yemen-is-strategic-mistake-Rouhani>

²⁹The Tehran Times (15 April 2015) 'Iran lays out Yemen peace plan'

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246125/Iran-lays-out-Yemen-peace-plan>

The Tehran Times (18 April 2015) 'Zarif renews call for quick end to Saudi attack on Yemen'

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246149/Zarif-renews-call-for-quick-end-to-Saudi-attack-on-Yemen>

approach to peace in Yemen.³⁰ The general message was that Iran wished to see a peaceful negotiation take place in Yemen, following what has been called their 'four point plan' which outlines the need for peace to occur through internal dialogue, increased humanitarian aid, and renewed attempts at political transition through an inclusive new government, with minimal external involvement and an immediate ceasefire.³¹ Nonetheless, there was also mention of the situation in Yemen as a proxy war, relating the conflict there – and the subsequent Saudi intervention – as a consequence of deeper regional and religious struggles, as well as a continued emphasis that Iran would not accept the actions nor power-plays of Saudi Arabia, or their allies.³² Creating this balance between portraying Iran as the voice of reason – calling for peaceful negotiation, emphasising humanitarian aid – and appearing strong against the aggression and interference of Saudi (and the US), characterises the coverage of the Yemen conflict by the Tehran Times. This was achieved by emphasising several aspects of the conflict, namely the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, the crimes of the Saudi aggression, and the implementation of Iran's 'four point plan.'

The Tehran Times reported consistently on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, throughout which they emphasized the role Iran was playing in providing humanitarian aid, and condemned the actions of the Saudis for interfering in the supply of aid and deepening the crisis through their aggressive intervention. Iranian support was portrayed as being directed predominantly towards the Yemeni people, through the promise of continued humanitarian aid, and thus rejected the idea that Iran in some way supported the Houthi through a stronger – military – alliance.³³ By describing the call for humanitarian aid in Yemen as a fundamental obligation for all humanity, not a representation of their alliance to any one group in Yemen; “Yemen is a historical test for the world; if our grief for Yemen is not equal to our grief to a certain European or Asian country, obviously we have violated all the principles of humanity, the Red Cross [the International

³⁰The Tehran Times (11 June 2015) 'Saudis must accept Ansarullah: ex-Iranian ambassador'
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/247312/Saudis-must-accept-Ansarullah-ex-Iranian-ambassador>

³¹The Tehran Times (19 April 2015) 'Iran submits four-point Yemen peace plan to United Nations'
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246196/Iran-submits-four-point-Yemen-peace-plan-to-United-Nations>

³²The Tehran Times (16 April 2015) 'Pourdastan: Iran should be prepared for proxy wars'
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246133/Pourdastan-Iran-should-be-prepared-for-proxy-wars>

The Tehran Times (26 April 2015) 'Iran says will stay 'powerfully' in Gulf of Aden'
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246346/Iran-says-will-stay-powerfully-in-Gulf-of-Aden>

³³The Tehran Times (28 May 2015) 'Iran says never supplied arms to Yemeni Houthis'
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/247017/Iran-says-never-supplied-arms-to-Yemeni-Houthis>

Committee of the Red Cross] and the Red Crescent,”³⁴ the reports further condemned the actions of not only the Saudi coalition in preventing aid from being sent but also the international community for not taking further action against the Saudis and the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.³⁵ The Tehran Times reported frequently on the Iranian aid efforts, mentioning the shipments of humanitarian aid sent to Yemen in thirty separate reports over the time studied (in a total of ninety-eight). In particular, the acts of the Saudis preventing several Iranian aid shipments were emphasized by the coverage. The first instance involved the interception of Iranian planes by Saudi fighter jets, forcing them to leave Saudi air space, in April 2015. Coverage emphasized the legality and humanitarian nature of Iran’s efforts, stating that the plane was carrying food, medicine and wounded Yemenis, and that all necessary arrangements for flying through Omani and Yemeni airspace had been made in coordination with both the Red Cross and the Red Crescent. In contrast, reports emphasized how the Saudis continued to deepen the humanitarian crisis; preventing aid, interfering in Yemeni affairs and violating its airspace, and continuing airstrikes and a blockade on Yemen despite announcements that the attacks had ended.³⁶ The second instance reported by the Tehran Times appeared to portray a much tenser situation, in which Iran was described not only as the party standing up for the humanitarian needs of the Yemeni people as before, but also taking a strong stance against Saudi Arabia and the US. In May 2015, Iran sent a cargo ship carrying humanitarian aid to Yemen, following vows for renewed and strengthened attempts to see aid reaching the people of Yemen despite Saudi attempts at preventing them.³⁷ Once again, the coverage emphasized the claim that these efforts were in coordination with the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, internationally as well as in Oman, Djibouti, and Saudi Arabia.³⁸ However, the Tehran Times’ coverage of this event went

³⁴ The Tehran Times (10 May 2015) ‘Saudi attack on Yemen is ‘strategic mistake’: Rouhani’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246629/Saudi-attack-on-Yemen-is-strategic-mistake-Rouhani>

³⁵ The Tehran Times (25 April 2015) ‘Iran says Saudi Arabia prevents sending aid to Yemenis’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246312/Iran-says-Saudi-Arabia-prevents-sending-aid-to-Yemenis>

The Tehran Times (14 September 2015) ‘Iran slams continuation of Saudi military aggression against Yemen’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/249382/Iran-slams-continuation-of-Saudi-military-aggression-against>

³⁶ The Tehran Times (26 April 2015) ‘Iran summons Saudi diplomat over plane interception’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246338/Iran-summons-Saudi-diplomat-over-plane-interception>

The Tehran Times (27 April 2015) ‘Iran vows to respond to S. Arabia for blocking aid to Yemenis’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246372/Iran-vows-to-respond-to-S-Arabia-for-blocking-aid-to-Yemenis>

The Tehran Times (6 May 2015) ‘Iran preparing report on Riyadh’s move to block humanitarian aid to Yemen’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246545/Iran-preparing-report-on-Riyadh-s-move-to-block-humanitarian>

³⁷ The Tehran Times (14 May 2015) ‘Iran says ready to send more aid to Yemen’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246731/Iran-says-ready-to-send-more-aid-to-Yemen>

³⁸ The Tehran Times (11 May 2015) ‘Iran’s relief ship set to depart to Yemen’

further, depicting a defiant Iran which was sending the cargo ship into Yemeni waters with support from the Iranian navy, and would not be prevented from reaching its intended target; “we send Iran’s relief aid ship to Yemen and will not allow any foreign power to inspect or stop it”³⁹ This action is described as a challenge to the efforts of Saudi Arabia and the US to prevent Iran from supporting Yemen⁴⁰ and reports emphasize the claim that any attempt at preventing the ship from reaching Yemen will result in decisive action not only from Iran, but from the international community.⁴¹ By emphasizing Iran as the regional actor spearheading aid efforts to relieve the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, against direct preventative measures by Saudi Arabia, the Tehran Times’ coverage balanced an image of Iran as both a strong force against the Saudis and as a provider of aid for the citizens of Yemen.

This image of Iran as a strong regional leader was also built through the Tehran Times’ coverage of what were depicted as the crimes committed by the Saudi aggression against Yemen, and the failures of Saudi Arabia’s coalition. The intervention of the Saudi coalition in Yemen was consistently condemned throughout the Tehran Times’ coverage of the conflict during the time period recorded. A clear line running through their narrative is that they view Saudi Arabia as the aggressors, as the party to be “held responsible as the country that has attacked Yemen.”⁴² Reports labelled Yemeni citizens as the “defenceless and oppressed”⁴³ victims to Saudi raids on their neighbours,⁴⁴ condemning the Saudi’s stated objectives in Yemen as “they define the killing of defenceless women and children and the destruction of a country’s infrastructures as their pre-

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246653/Iran-s-relief-ship-set-to-depart-to-Yemen>
³⁹The Tehran Times (18 May 2015) ‘Iran aid ship passes Oman, nears Yemen coast’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246770/Iran-aid-ship-passes-Oman-nears-Yemen-coast>
The Tehran Times (14 May 2015) ‘Iran not to allow inspection of Yemen-bound aid ship’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246720/Iran-not-to-allow-inspection-of-Yemen-bound-aid-ship>
⁴⁰ The Tehran Times (21 May 2015) ‘Iranian relief ship in Aden waters’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246832/Iranian-relief-ship-in-Aden-waters>
The Tehran Times (26 April 2015) ‘Iran says will stay ‘powerfully’ in Gulf of Aden’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246346/Iran-says-will-stay-powerfully-in-Gulf-of-Aden>
The Tehran Times (14 May 2015) ‘Iran warns Saudis against any obstruction to helping Yemenis’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246737/Iran-warns-Saudis-against-any-obstruction-to-helping-Yemenis>
⁴¹ The Tehran Times (21 May 2015) ‘Any action against relief ship will be responded internationally: Iran’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246846/Any-action-against-relief-ship-will-be-responded-internationally>
⁴² The Tehran Times (21 April 2015) ‘Iran summons Saudi diplomat as rocket lands near Tehran embassy in Yemen’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246245/Iran-summons-Saudi-diplomat-as-rocket-lands-near-Tehran-embassy>
⁴³The Tehran Times (9 May 2015) ‘Iranians stage rallies against Saudi aggression on Yemen’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246598/Iranians-stage-rallies-against-Saudi-aggression-on-Yemen>
⁴⁴The Tehran Times (18 April 2015) ‘Zarif renews call for quick end to Saudi attack on Yemen’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246149/Zarif-renews-call-for-quick-end-to-Saudi-attack-on-Yemen>

planned objectives.”⁴⁵ Air strikes against Yemen using “Saudi warplanes” were condemned as illegitimate, and reports emphasized that Saudi Arabia acted without a UN mandate, interfering in Yemen’s internal affairs to restore their own strong supporter, the ‘former’ President Hadi to power.⁴⁶ This view of Saudi Arabia was summed up in an article which stated that “incessant military attacks” by the Saudi coalition meant that Yemen had “been taken hostage through a comprehensive land, sea and air blockade ... in order to meet the interests of Riyadh and its allies.”⁴⁷ In one report, the Tehran Times quotes a senior advisor to the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ali Akbar Velayati, stating that “Saudi Arabia’s military deployment in countries like Yemen ... is considered a terrorist act,”⁴⁸ revealing the extent to which the Saudis are portrayed as the aggressors. In addition to the idea that Saudi Arabia launched “savage attacks”⁴⁹ on innocent Yemeni civilians, acting against “all humanitarian, legal, and international norms,”⁵⁰ the Tehran Times further denied Saudi Arabia any legitimacy by labelling their actions in Yemen a “failed ... “childish” offensive.”⁵¹ They reported on the coalition’s interference as a strategic mistake⁵², stating that “wise Saudis must now precisely assess their conduct, [and

⁴⁵ The Tehran Times (23 April 2015) ‘Shia school of Islam shuns terrorism: Judiciary chief’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246281/Shia-school-of-Islam-shuns-terrorism-Judiciary-chief>

⁴⁶ The Tehran Times (20 April 2015) ‘Clashes, Saudi-led air strikes kill 44 in Yemen’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246209/Clashes-Saudi-led-air-strikes-kill-44-in-Yemen>

⁴⁷ The Tehran Times (9 May 2015) ‘Yemen taken ‘hostage’ by Saudi Arabia, Iran says’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246600/Yemen-taken-hostage-by-Saudi-Arabia-Iran-says>

⁴⁸ The Tehran Times (28 October 2015) ‘Saudi Arabia plotting terrorism in Islamic countries: Velayati’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/250411/Saudi-Arabia-plotting-terrorism-in-Islamic-countries-Velayati>

⁴⁹ The Tehran Times (9 May 2015) ‘Iranians stage rallies against Saudi aggression on Yemen’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246598/Iranians-stage-rallies-against-Saudi-aggression-on-Yemen>

⁵⁰ The Tehran Times (23 May 2015) ‘Saudi attack on Yemen against all norms: Iranian cleric’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246882/Saudi-attack-on-Yemen-against-all-norms-Iranian-cleric>

The Tehran Times (14 September 2015) ‘Iran slams continuation of Saudi military aggression against Yemen’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/249382/Iran-slams-continuation-of-Saudi-military-aggression-against>

⁵¹ The Tehran Times (23 April 2015) ‘Iran says Saudis’ halt to Yemen bombing amounts to defeat’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246280/Iran-says-Saudis-halt-to-Yemen-bombing-amounts-to-defeat>

⁵² The Tehran Times (10 May 2015) ‘Saudi attack on Yemen is ‘strategic mistake’: Rouhani’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246629/Saudi-attack-on-Yemen-is-strategic-mistake-Rouhani>

The Tehran Times (14 May 2015) ‘Killing of Yemenis must end immediately: Leader’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246743/Killing-of-Yemenis-must-end-immediately-Leader>

The Tehran Times (24 May 2015) ‘Saudi Arabia has realized attack on Yemen is a failure: ex-diplomat’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246905/Saudi-Arabia-has-realized-attack-on-Yemen-is-a-failure-ex-diplomat>

The Tehran Times (7 June 2015) ‘Saudi attack on Yemen puts Mideast security in jeopardy: Iran’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/247190/Saudi-attack-on-Yemen-puts-Mideast-security-in-jeopardy-Iran>

The Tehran Times (4 August 2015) ‘Tehran insists Saudi war on Yemen is strategic mistake’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/248437/Tehran-insists-Saudi-war-on-Yemen-is-strategic-mistake>

The Tehran Times (8 April 2016) ‘Has Saudi Arabia achieved its goals in Yemen?’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/300380/Has-Saudi-Arabia-achieved-its-goals-in-Yemen>

realize] that such methods will not only have no benefit for their security but will totally lay to waste their Islamic dignity.”⁵³ These articles outline the decision to intervene as the actions of the “ignorant ... inexperienced,”⁵⁴ “politically naïve” new Saudi rulers, who have sought to display their power by following “the path of the bomb” and attacking “the impoverished people” of their neighbouring developing country.⁵⁵ Their position as a regional power is portrayed as damaged, with reports quoting that “there are mutterings around the Gulf states now that the Saudi leadership is impulsive and rash ... there is hushed talk of a team out of its depth with no plan for an endgame.”⁵⁶ Further criticism of the intervention by the Saudi coalition covered by the Tehran Times were reports that Saudi Arabia was guilty of committing war crimes and crimes against the Yemeni people, targeting civilian locations and violating the human rights of Yemen’s civilians.⁵⁷ They reported that these crimes consisted of the Saudis preventing humanitarian aid from reaching Yemen,⁵⁸ using cluster munitions against Yemeni civilians and even condemning them for committing the crime of genocide against the people of Yemen; calling the Saudi

⁵³ The Tehran Times (23 April 2015) ‘Iran says Saudis’ halt to Yemen bombing amounts to defeat’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246280/Iran-says-Saudis-halt-to-Yemen-bombing-amounts-to-defeat>

⁵⁴ The Tehran Times (24 May 2015) ‘Saudi Arabia has realized attack on Yemen is a failure: ex-diplomat’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246905/Saudi-Arabia-has-realized-attack-on-Yemen-is-a-failure-ex-diplomat>

⁵⁵ The Tehran Times (10 May 2015) ‘Saudi attack on Yemen is ‘strategic mistake’: Rouhani’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246629/Saudi-attack-on-Yemen-is-strategic-mistake-Rouhani>

The Tehran Times (8 June 2015) ‘Saudi attack on Yemen most stupid war in history: Iranian general’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/247204/Saudi-attack-on-Yemen-most-stupid-war-in-history-Iranian-general>

⁵⁶ The Tehran Times (24 May 2015) ‘Saudi Arabia has realized attack on Yemen is a failure: ex-diplomat’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246905/Saudi-Arabia-has-realized-attack-on-Yemen-is-a-failure-ex-diplomat>

⁵⁷ The Tehran Times (29 April 2015) ‘House of Saud committing serious crimes against Yemenis: general’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246420/House-of-Saud-committing-serious-crimes-against-Yemenis-general>

The Tehran Times (14 May 2015) ‘Iran warns Saudis against any obstruction to helping Yemenis’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246737/Iran-warns-Saudis-against-any-obstruction-to-helping-Yemenis>

The Tehran Times (1 July 2015) ‘Iran condemns Saudi-led airstrike on UN compound in Yemen’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/247795/Iran-condemns-Saudi-led-airstrike-on-UN-compound-in-Yemen>

The Tehran Times (6 August 2015) ‘Iran criticizes Saudis for violating human rights’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/248499/Iran-criticizes-Saudis-for-violating-human-rights>

The Tehran Times (30 September 2015) ‘Iran urges UN for immediate action to halt Saudi attacks on Yemen’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/249729/Iran-urges-UN-for-immediate-action-to-halt-Saudi-attacks-on-Yemen>

The Tehran Times (22 November 2015) ‘Lawmaker slams UN inaction on Saudi war against Yemen’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/251024/Lawmaker-slams-UN-inaction-on-Saudi-war-against-Yemen>

⁵⁸ The Tehran Times (29 April 2015) ‘House of Saud committing serious crimes against Yemenis: general’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246420/House-of-Saud-committing-serious-crimes-against-Yemenis-general>

regime a “child killer.”⁵⁹ Having emphasized throughout their coverage the desperate humanitarian crisis Yemen was in, even prior to the conflict, the Tehran Times outlined in several reports how the actions of the Saudi coalition in the country have deepened this crisis – by destroying infrastructure, spreading terror among civilians and preventing the flow of much needed aid.⁶⁰ This aspect of the Tehran Times’ coverage depicts Saudi Arabia as illegitimate aggressors, terrorising defenceless civilians and deepening the humanitarian crisis in Yemen by committing serious crimes against its people, whilst failing to achieve their objectives.

Finally, emphasising the Iranian ‘four point plan’ as the peaceful alternative to the aggressive intervention of the Saudi Arabians was a consistent feature of the coverage of the Tehran Times during this period.⁶¹ The four point plan outlines the need for dialogue, aid, a new government and an immediate ceasefire in order to bring peace and stability to Yemen. Firstly, the need for dialogue is emphasized in several articles as the need for internal dialogue, amongst all parties in Yemen, not involving foreign powers, and on neutral grounds that can be agreed upon by all parties.⁶² Furthermore, the Tehran Times’ coverage emphasized that the Iranians did not wish to involve themselves in these negotiations for Yemen, merely to aid in the fostering of dialogue alongside other nations and the UN, whose role in resolving the conflict was described as “active and independent.”⁶³ This first point of the plan is further understood through an article

⁵⁹ The Tehran Times (14 May 2015) ‘Iran warns Saudis against any obstruction to helping Yemenis’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246737/Iran-warns-Saudis-against-any-obstruction-to-helping-Yemenis>

The Tehran Times (25 May 2015) ‘War on Yemen will end in aggressors’ defeat: defense minister’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246932/War-on-Yemen-will-end-in-aggressors-defeat-defense-minister>

⁶⁰ The Tehran Times (29 July 2015) ‘Iran warns Saudi Arabia against ‘playing with fire’ in Yemen’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/248313/Iran-warns-Saudi-Arabia-against-playing-with-fire-in-Yemen>

⁶¹The Tehran Times (15 April 2015) ‘Iran lays out Yemen peace plan’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246125/Iran-lays-out-Yemen-peace-plan>

The Tehran Times (19 April 2015) ‘Iran says ready to resolve Yemen crisis’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246201/Iran-says-ready-to-resolve-Yemen-crisis>

The Tehran Times (19 April 2015) ‘Iran submits four-point Yemen peace plan to United Nations’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246196/Iran-submits-four-point-Yemen-peace-plan-to-United-Nations>

⁶² The Tehran Times (10 October 2015) ‘Tehran insists it backs Yemen against foreign intervention’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/249975/Tehran-insists-it-backs-Yemen-against-foreign-intervention>

The Tehran Times (18 April 2015) ‘Zarif renews call for quick end to Saudi attack on Yemen’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246149/Zarif-renews-call-for-quick-end-to-Saudi-attack-on-Yemen>

The Tehran Times (3 May 2015) ‘Diplomat says Iran considers Yemen’s security as its own’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246468/Diplomat-says-Iran-considers-Yemen-s-security-as-its-own>

The Tehran Times (19 May 2015) ‘Velayati: Any meeting on Yemen must be held in a neutral country’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246806/Velayati-Any-meeting-on-Yemen-must-be-held-in-a-neutral-country>

The Tehran Times (27 May 2015) ‘One-sided solutions cannot settle Yemeni crisis, Iran says’
<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246994/One-sided-solutions-cannot-settle-Yemeni-crisis-Iran-says>

⁶³The Tehran Times (23 May 2015) ‘No country should be present in Yemeni talks, Zarif tells UN’

quoting Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Havad Zarif, who explains;

“This is not a negotiation between the Yemenis and foreigners, nor is it a negotiation between foreign powers. Foreign powers should not set conditions for the future of Yemen, nor should they engage in negotiations. What they need to do is facilitate the dialogue among various Yemeni groups. And that is what we are prepared to do ... We should have inter-Yemeni dialogue, intra-Yemeni dialogue, dialogue among Yemenis ... this issue should be resolved by the Yemenis ... Iran and Saudi Arabia need to talk but we cannot talk to determine the future of Yemen.”⁶⁴

Besides dialogue between the parties in Yemen, the ‘four point plan’ outlines the need for humanitarian aid, which has been discussed extensively, and the formation of a new, inclusive Yemeni government. The demands of the Houthi, and further grievances of the Yemeni people, must be taken into consideration. It is outlined in the articles of the Tehran Times that this is best achieved by forming a more inclusive government and allowing the people of Yemen to “make decisions about their destiny themselves,” not by allowing the Saudi aggression to reinstate an ousted president.⁶⁵ Several articles reflect this call for an internal political solution, rather than the “imposed and interventional approaches” of foreign powers.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the ‘four point plan’ calls for an immediate ceasefire, stating that peace talks would not be successful without the end of violence⁶⁷ – and the Tehran Times condemned in its articles the frequent violations of ceasefires which occurred throughout the time period of the study.⁶⁸

Through this emphasis of Iran’s ‘four point plan’ the Tehran Times depicted Iran as a regional leader, providing humanitarian aid and calling for the peaceful resolution of the conflict

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246873/No-country-should-be-present-in-Yemeni-talks-Zarif-tells-UN>
⁶⁴ The Tehran Times (18 April 2015) ‘Zarif renews call for quick end to Saudi attack on Yemen’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246149/Zarif-renews-call-for-quick-end-to-Saudi-attack-on-Yemen>

⁶⁵ The Tehran Times (11 June 2015) ‘Saudis must accept Ansarullah: ex-Iranian ambassador’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/247312/Saudis-must-accept-Ansarullah-ex-Iranian-ambassador>

⁶⁶ The Tehran Times (15 October 2015) ‘Political solution ‘essential’ to settle regional crises, Zarif says’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/250126/Political-solution-essential-to-settle-regional-crises-Zarif>

⁶⁷ The Tehran Times (24 May 2015) ‘Iran, Russia demand immediate end to Saudi war on Yemen’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246888/Iran-Russia-demand-immediate-end-to-Saudi-war-on-Yemen>

The Tehran Times (23 September 2015) ‘Rouhani, Qaboos urge cooperation to tackle Yemen crisis’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/249603/Rouhani-Qaboos-urge-cooperation-to-tackle-Yemen-crisis>

⁶⁸ The Tehran Times (20 May 2015) ‘UN envoy for Yemen to visit Tehran’

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246831/UN-envoy-for-Yemen-to-visit-Tehran>

in Yemen. This was built upon through articles outlining Iran's willingness to work with the international community and specifically the UN to bring all sides of the conflict to the negotiating table,⁶⁹ as well as their willingness to work with Saudi Arabia on the issue of Iran.⁷⁰ The UN and the international community at large was frequently called upon to do more - "it is imperative for the international community to get more effectively involved in ending the senseless aerial attacks and establishing a ceasefire, ensuring delivery of humanitarian and medical assistance to the people of Yemen and restoring peace and stability to this country through dialogue and national reconciliation without pre-conditions"⁷¹ - thus emphasising through such reports Iran's position at the head of such efforts. It was further emphasized by the previously outlined focus on Iran's leadership in humanitarian aid efforts, as well as their consistent calls to end the violence in Yemen. Military approaches to Yemen's situation, the Tehran Times reported, would never work - instead the solution had to be political.⁷² The continued presence of violent conflict in Yemen was described by several reports from the Tehran Times as the root cause of insecurity, extremism and terrorism,⁷³ outlining the fear that the deepening humanitarian crisis would "result in further exacerbation of the already tense circumstances in a region that has been plagued by one of the most barbaric types of extremism and (a) multi-pronged vicious campaign of foreign-backed terrorists."⁷⁴ Overall, the coverage of

⁶⁹ The Tehran Times (19 May 2015) 'Diplomat says Iran will support Yemeni talks'

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246798/Diplomat-says-Iran-will-support-Yemeni-talks>

The Tehran Times (20 May 2015) 'UN envoy for Yemen to visit Tehran'

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246831/UN-envoy-for-Yemen-to-visit-Tehran>

⁷⁰ The Tehran Times (28 May 2015) 'Iran says favors amicable ties with neighbors, warns of Yemen war repercussions'

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/247012/Iran-says-favors-amicable-ties-with-neighbors-warns-of-Yemen>

The Tehran Times (30 September 2015) 'I am ready to talk to anybody to secure Syria, Iraq and Yemen: Rouhani'

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/249750/I-am-ready-to-talk-to-anybody-to-secure-Syria-Iraq-and-Yemen>

⁷¹ The Tehran Times (19 April 2015) 'Iran submits four-point Yemen peace plan to United Nations'

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246196/Iran-submits-four-point-Yemen-peace-plan-to-United-Nations>

The Tehran Times (12 May 2015) 'Iran urges UN 'effective action' in Yemen'

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246681/Iran-urges-UN-effective-action-in-Yemen>

⁷² The Tehran Times (7 May 2015) 'Iran, Russia urge national dialog on Yemeni crisis'

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246577/Iran-Russia-urge-national-dialog-on-Yemeni-crisis>

The Tehran Times (16 August 2015) 'Iran urges political solution for Yemen war'

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/248689/Iran-urges-political-solution-for-Yemen-war>

The Tehran Times (10 October 2015) 'Tehran insists it backs Yemen against foreign intervention'

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/249975/Tehran-insists-it-backs-Yemen-against-foreign-intervention>

⁷³ The Tehran Times (29 August 2015) 'Iranian official warns UN of spread of terrorism'

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/248994/Iranian-official-warns-UN-of-spread-of-terrorism>

⁷⁴ The Tehran Times (29 July 2015) 'Iran warns Saudi Arabia against 'playing with fire' in Yemen'

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/248313/Iran-warns-Saudi-Arabia-against-playing-with-fire-in-Yemen>

The Tehran Times (19 April 2015) 'Iran submits four-point Yemen peace plan to United Nations'

the conflict in Yemen by the Tehran Times over the period studied followed the narrative of Saudi Arabia as an aggressive regional power attempting to interfere in Yemen's internal affairs by reinstating former President Hadi, whilst Iran positioned itself as the regional leader in providing humanitarian aid to Yemen and focusing international efforts towards the resolution of the conflict through their 'four point plan.'

The Saudi Press Agency

The red line that ran through the Saudi Press Agency's narrative surrounding the conflict in Yemen was that the coalition they spearheaded acted in response to a request from the legitimate government, lead by President Hadi, to protect the stability of Yemen and the region by preventing the Houthi from seizing power. This narrative was built up out of several key components, namely the legitimacy of Saudi Arabia's intervention, the threat of regional instability, and their responsibility to protect and aid the people of Yemen during this humanitarian crisis.

The concept of legitimacy is used consistently throughout the Saudi Press Agency's coverage, particularly in reference to the legitimate government of President Hadi⁷⁵, even going so far as to frequently use the phrase as a synonym for the restoration of the Yemeni government⁷⁶. The centre of this narrative is that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, along with other Arab nations, was implored by President Hadi to defend the security and stability of Yemen by any means necessary. This letter from President Hadi requesting Saudi Arabia to come to the aid of Yemen's legitimate government against the "Houthi coup"⁷⁷ was referred to throughout the research period, and more significantly was included in full in the article which reported the

⁷⁵ <http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/246196/Iran-submits-four-point-Yemen-peace-plan-to-United-Nations>
Saudi Press Agency (26 March 2015) 'Saudi Ambassador to USA holds press conference on Military Operations in Yemen'

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1342515>
Saudi Press Agency (27 May 2016) 'Coalition command in Yemen: Statement on operations'
<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1504715>

⁷⁶ Saudi Press Agency (26 March 2015) 'Chairman of Shura Council: Determination Storm supports Yemen's legitimacy'
<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1342614>

Saudi Press Agency (31 January 2016) 'Command of Yemen Legitimacy Alliance: Independent Group on Weapons and International Humanitarian Law Formed'
<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1461122>

⁷⁷ Saudi Press Agency (15 December 2015) 'Recording dozens of violations of the truce by militia coup in the Yemeni province of Taiz'
<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1429583>

Saudi's intention "to respond to the request ... to protect Yemen and its dear people from Houthi militias' aggression, which was and is still a tool in the hands of foreign powers that did not stop tampering with the security and stability of brotherly Yemen."⁷⁸ President Hadi's letter is an important insight into the coverage of the situation in Yemen, as he request laid out in it was used by the Press Agency to establish very clearly the legitimacy upon which the Saudis based their intervention. Due to its length, it has been included in full in appendix 3. Included here are the following excerpts, which illustrate how this letter was used as the foundation for the Saudi Press Agency's narrative by highlighting several key concepts around which it was built;

"... due to 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 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 ... 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

⁷⁸ Saudi Press Agency (26 March 2015) 'Statement from The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait regarding latest developments in Yemen'
<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1342487>

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 in the face of al-Qaeda and ISIS. "79

The portrayal of the Houthi, and the nature of the conflict in Yemen, in the publications of the Saudi Press Agency reflected the language and sentiments of Hadi's letter – further emphasising that the Saudi government was seen to be standing on the same side as Yemen's 'legitimate' government. The Houthi were labelled "a Houthi violent and extremist militia,"⁸⁰ the "Houthi rebel organization,"⁸¹ the "Houthi terrorist militia,"⁸² an "insurgent group,"⁸³ and "war criminals."⁸⁴ Throughout these reports the Houthi are described as the aggressors against the citizens of Yemen, targeting civilians and infrastructure whilst seeking to destroy the unity of the state and its people through the promotion of violence, terror and sectarianism⁸⁵ This description further legitimizes the actions of the coalition, who's actions were described as being directly focused on the military targets of the Houthi, whilst denying any allegations that they too

⁷⁹ Saudi Press Agency (26 March 2015) 'Statement from The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait regarding latest developments in Yemen'

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1342487>

⁸⁰ Saudi Press Agency (26 March 2015) 'Saudi Ambassador to USA holds press conference on Military Operations in Yemen'

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1342515>

⁸¹ Saudi Press Agency (26 March 2015) 'Brig. Gen. Ahmed Asiri says, in his first daily briefing of the "determination storm" operation, that the goals of phase I of the operations were achieved'

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1342787>

⁸² Saudi Press Agency (6 April 2015) 'Saudi ambassador to Morocco: Determination Storm to save Yemen, to ensure security and stability'

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1346537>

⁸³ Saudi Press Agency (29 March 2015) 'Yemen's Foreign Minister: Houthi is an Insurgent Group, and we will not go into a Dialogue with them on the Basis of Equality'

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1343806>

⁸⁴ Saudi Press Agency (17 October 2015) 'Yemeni protesters stage demonstration against Houthi rebels and Ex president Saleh before The Hague court'

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1409479>

⁸⁵ Saudi Press Agency (31 July 2015) '"Human Rights Watch:" Houthi rebels are committing war crimes in Yemen'

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1384212>

Saudi Press Agency (17 October 2015) 'Yemeni protesters stage demonstration against Houthi rebels and Ex-president Saleh before The Hague court'

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1409479>

Saudi Press Agency (22 April 2016) 'Yemeni coup militias committed war crimes enjoying no statutes of limitations, Symposium says'

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1492640>

Saudi Press Agency (21 May 2016) 'President Hadi addresses the nation to mark the anniversary of Yemen's ND'

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1502728>

targeted civilians during their campaigns.⁸⁶ Furthermore, the language that was used to describe the relationship between the coalition states and Yemen reflected the language in President Hadi's letter, and further underlined the legitimacy of their intervention. The letter was addressed "dear Brothers,"⁸⁷ and this reference to the "duty of brotherhood and neighbourhood"⁸⁸ between Yemen and the Islamic, Arab, nations in the coalition was emphasized in several articles. This duty to defend "the brotherly people of Yemen"⁸⁹ – or alternatively the "sisterly people"⁹⁰ – made use of common language for describing those bound by a strong relationship – in this instance through the bond of faith - and thus strengthened the narrative that the Arab coalition was legitimately coming to the defence of a group inherently tied to themselves.

The key criticism against the coalition's intervention in Yemen is the issue of Yemen's sovereignty. The clear request from President Hadi for Arab nations to defend this very sovereignty, to protect Yemen's national unity and security by military means, is used throughout the Saudi Press Agency's coverage to legitimize the intervention and undermine this criticism. The legitimacy of President Hadi's government to make such a request, and for his regime to be supported against the Houthi, is further built up by the frequent inclusion of reports from regional and international powers voicing their support for this position.⁹¹ Moreover, throughout

⁸⁶ Saudi Press Agency (6 April 2015) 'In today's briefing, Brig. Gen. Ahmed Asiri says that the Coalition forces are targeting Militia movements and have never demolished an infrastructure facility in Yemen'
<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1346765>

⁸⁷ Saudi Press Agency (26 March 2015) 'Statement from The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait regarding latest developments in Yemen'
<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1342487>

⁸⁸ Saudi Press Agency (26 March 2015) 'Senior Scholars: Decision of Kingdom, Gulf states, participating countries to start military operation in Yemen to protect legitimate government, defend its people is fit, wise'
<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1342547>

⁸⁹ Saudi Press Agency (27 March 2015) 'Najran Governor: "Determination Storm" Operation Defends Yemen's People'
<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1342903>

⁹⁰ Saudi Press Agency (10 May 2015) 'Saudi Arabia and its allies in Determination Storm took up arms in response to duty call to salvage Yemen and its sisterly people from a sectarian-oriented group opposing its country's government, King Salman says'
<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1359786>

⁹¹ Saudi Press Agency (26 March 2015) 'White House: Obama Approves Logistical and Intelligence Support for Al-Hazm Military Storm Operation in Yemen'
<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1342519>

Saudi Press Agency (26 March 2015) 'Organization of Arab Peoples and Parliaments Supports Determination Storm Operation in Yemen'
<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1342699>

Saudi Press Agency (28 March 2015) 'Russia Reaffirms Supporting Yemeni President Legitimacy'
<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1343365>

Saudi Press Agency (29 March 2015) 'Mufti of Australia commends the decision of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to save Yemen'

the period researched there were frequently articles published reaffirming that President Hadi – and thus the legitimate government of Yemen – stood behind the coalition.⁹² Such statements emphasized that they were acting in accordance with the wishes of the Yemeni leadership, and by extension “the Yemeni people [who] will still remember the fraternal stances of the Arab coalition and their support for legitimacy in Yemen.”⁹³

The Saudi Press Agency further highlighted how the actions of the Saudi coalition were in support of the citizens of Yemen of by emphasising their role in supplying aid to those affected by the conflict and the humanitarian crisis. The humanitarian crisis in Yemen was strongly linked to the disruptive actions of the Houthi, and the instability they have created in the country.⁹⁴ Furthermore, the coverage focused on how Saudi Arabia, as well as other coalition forces such as the United Arab Emirates, were stepping up to the demands of humanitarian assistance.⁹⁵ Such articles painted the Saudis not only as the leaders of the coalition, prepared to step up and defend the people of Yemen, but also as leaders in the effort to support civilians through shipments of food, medical supplies and the protection of refugees.⁹⁶

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1343524>

⁹² Saudi Press Agency (4 September 2015) ‘Yemeni President on the sacrifices extended by Saudi Arabia, UAE and other Arab coalition in defense of Yemen’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1394792>

Saudi Press Agency (23 December 2015) ‘Yemeni President Lauds Kingdom's Efforts in Supporting Yemen’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1431993>

Saudi Press Agency (2 May 2016) ‘Yemeni president praises Saudi efforts to spare his country's conflict cycles’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1496493>

⁹³ Saudi Press Agency (18 August 2015) ‘Yemeni President commends Arab coalition for its support for legitimacy in Yemen’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1388913>

⁹⁴ Saudi Press Agency (23 May 2016) ‘Yemeni PM lashes out at rebels’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1503429>

⁹⁵ Saudi Press Agency (18 May 2015) ‘Coalition countries confirm their commitment to humanitarian truce in Yemen to help the Yemeni people and alleviate their human sufferings’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1362564>

Saudi Press Agency (12 August 2015) ‘300,000 Yemenis benefit from humanitarian aid provided by King Salman Center’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1387441>

Saudi Press Agency (23 August 2015) ‘UAE ship carrying 3,000 tonnes of aid arrives in Yemen as part of ongoing support programmes’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1390500>

⁹⁶ Saudi Press Agency (5 April 2015) ‘More than three billion US dollars Saudi aid to Yemen in five years’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1346101>

Saudi Press Agency (7 April 2015) ‘Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at the forefront of supporting Yemen’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1347002>

Saudi Press Agency (4 May 2015) ‘Al-Jubeir: Saudi Arabia to Establish Unified Center to Coordinate Efforts in Providing Assistance to the Yemeni People’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1357584>

In direct contrast with this image of Saudi Arabia as the regional leaders in providing humanitarian assistance and military protection to the people of Yemen, the Saudi Press Agency highlighted the role played by Iran in worsening the situation in the region. The alliance between the Houthi and Iran is frequently emphasized,⁹⁷ with the root cause of the Houthi coup described as an attempt by foreign powers to intervene and disrupt the unity and stability of Yemen and the region.⁹⁸ Iran was depicted as a disruptive force, attempting to seek power in the region and acting without regard to regional stability or security, their actions in Yemen even being labelled “Iran’s expansionist project.”⁹⁹ Against this depiction of Iran, the image of the coalition forces that was created by the Saudi Press Agency, with the legitimacy, support, leadership and concern for the humanitarian situation as described above, is strengthened. The enemy in Yemen is not really the Houthi, a rebellion from within Yemen and therefore reflecting to some extent the Yemeni people, but the actions of a group of extremists supported by a foreign power seeking to destroy Yemen from the inside.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, intervention by the coalition was further justified,

Saudi Press Agency (15 May 2015) ‘Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: A Prominent Country in Humanitarian, Relief, Development Work in Yemen’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1361445>

Saudi Press Agency (26 July 2015) ‘Saudi relief ship loaded with 3540 tons of food and medical supplies arrives in Aden Port’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1383259>

⁹⁷ Saudi Press Agency (1 April 2015) ‘BBC Interview with Saudi Ambassador to UK, Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf bin Abdulaziz’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1344752>

Saudi Press Agency (19 May 2015) ‘Riyadh Conference on "Saving Yemen and Building Federal State" Concluded’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1362754>

Saudi Press Agency (26 February 2016) ‘US Secretary of State: we have stopped shipment of weapons coming from Iran to Yemen, evidence of Iran's support for Houthis’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1471364>

⁹⁸ Saudi Press Agency (1 April 2015) ‘BBC Interview with Saudi Ambassador to UK, Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf bin Abdulaziz’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1344752>

Saudi Press Agency (7 April 2016) ‘Yemeni Premier confirms Iran's continuation of sending weapons to rebels, interference in Yemen's internal affairs’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1486583>

Saudi Press Agency (30 March 2015) ‘Saudi Ambassador to USA: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia works to protect Yemeni people and defend their legitimacy’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1343937>

⁹⁹ Saudi Press Agency (21 May 2015) ‘Saudi, GCC, Yemen representatives to United Nations call on international community to put pressure on coup militias in Yemen’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1363561>

Saudi Press Agency (28 July 2015) ‘Kingdom denounces, rejects aggressive Iranian officials' remarks against GCC countries’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1383700>

¹⁰⁰ Saudi Press Agency (7 April 2015) ‘Brig. Gen. Ahmed Asiri says, in today's briefing, that Determination Storm

as the conflict was shown as less of an internal issue, and more of a regional struggle.

This narrative of the Saudi Press Agency remained consistent throughout the time period studied, including during the final months as the attention turned towards the peace negotiations in Kuwait which took place in May. During this time similar reports were published as described previously, emphasising the support of the ‘legitimate’ government for the actions of the coalition, applauding the humanitarian contributions of the coalition nations, and denouncing the actions of the Houthi and Iran. In terms of the peace negotiations, the reports focused on the optimism of the Yemeni government and their supporters that a solution could be found, once the military aggression had ended and a political process could begin.¹⁰¹ The government was described as making the necessary sacrifices and compromises to take steps towards this process, including the maintenance of a ceasefire.¹⁰² The slow pace and lack of progress was blamed consistently on the Houthi, who were accused of breaching the ceasefire and not taking the peace process seriously enough.¹⁰³ The negotiations took place under the guidance of the UN, which was called upon to put pressure on the Houthi to participate more seriously in the negotiations by meeting their obligations to the peace process.¹⁰⁴

Targets Brigades and Forces Supporting Houthi Militias’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1347198>

Saudi Press Agency (21 November 2015) ‘Saudi press Riyadh’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1421531>

¹⁰¹ Saudi Press Agency (18 May 2016) ‘Hadi says peace map to stop war, militia’s hand over their weapons and resume political process is visible’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1501815>

¹⁰² Saudi Press Agency (19 January 2016) ‘Yemeni FM discloses that Yemeni legitimate authorities have offered great compromise for peace’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1448432>

¹⁰³ Saudi Press Agency (23 May 2016) ‘Yemeni Peace consultation talks resume after five-day suspension’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1503420>

Saudi Press Agency (28 May 2016) ‘Yemen Foreign Minister Accuses Coup masterminds in Sanaa of lacking Seriousness in Reaching Peace’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1505181>

¹⁰⁴ Saudi Press Agency (12 January 2016) ‘Yemeni Foreign Minister confirms coup militias not serious for bringing peace in Yemen’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1445808>

Saudi Press Agency (18 January 2016) ‘Yemeni Vice President Calls upon International Community, UN to Implement Urgently all UN Resolutions on Yemen’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1448061>

Chapter Three: Data Analysis

In this final chapter, the narratives summarized previously will be analysed, pulling them apart in order to identify the core concepts upon which they are built, and the framing processes through which the formation of these narratives takes place. In order to do so, this chapter will begin with a detailed construction of the theoretical framework, which will subsequently be applied to the data. Following the process of identifying in the codified data categories of core concepts, through to their use in the diagnostic and prognostic framing undertaken by each news agency, this chapter will highlight how each narrative is formed by a diverse use of framing and counter-framing processes.

Theoretical Framework

In order to analyse the central narratives set forth by the news agencies, the following theoretical framework has been put together to provide the tools and analytical lenses used by the research to approach the data. It underlines the role of the media in conflict, in order to provide a theoretical basis for this investigation into the news coverage surrounding the conflict in Yemen. The previously summarized narratives, which have been identified in the news coverage from each agency, represent the story being communicated by that news source to its audience, and it is this storytelling process which will be contextualized within the following theoretical framework. As this research is based on the understanding that these narratives are built upon a core set of concepts, framed by each agency to represent a particular interpretation of the conflict, the theoretical framework will further focus on the concepts of framing and contention.

The Role of Media and the News in Conflict

Often, when discussing the way in which wars are reported on, the concept of propaganda is brought into play. “War, as a distinct form of social and political activity, has had deep impact on the public sphere, and one of the most distinctive aspects of that impact has to do with the way in which war planners attempt systematically to manage public opinion in wartime” (Hallin in Seethaler 2013:96). This focus on propaganda - which is understood as the instrumental use of communication by those in a position of power, to influence the public - is understandable, however it emphasizes the negative, manipulative, connotations of communication in conflict

and disregards the finer relations between conflict and culture which can be revealed through a study of the media at large (Hallin in Seethaler 2013:96). Communication can be defined as “the practice of creating meanings or symbolic resources,” and intercultural communication as “a process of interaction between groups of people with different systems of symbolic resources” (Klyukanov 2005:10 in Roy and Shaw 2016:33). Intercultural communication and conflict have a clear overlap; as such interactions between different cultures can often form their own ‘clash of civilizations.’ In other words, Huntington’s concept of conflict as a ‘clash of civilizations’ is not restricted to armed conflict, as “there can be clashes of perspective, the beginnings and outcomes of which are affected by information flows; how people see the world shapes their attitudes toward other cultures” (Seib 2004:80). The effect of these information flows are often concentrated in the ability of news coverage to influence the attitudes and perspectives of the audience, an effect which has been strengthened and shaped by the growth of the internet as a source for news (Seib 2004:81). Conversely, the internet could act as a diffuser of such cultural clashes, as it can provide a diverse source of information which undermines many myths and stereotypes (Seib 2004:82), though this affect requires the audience to actively seek out information from diverse source, limiting it considerably.

Conflict and communication can be seen as both essential and universal features of human life, tied inextricably together. War and communication are shaped by each other, and violence itself is an act of communication (Karmasin, Melischek, Seethaler and Wohlert in Seethaler 2013:ix). In this intersection between war and communication lies propaganda, the tool used in the struggle over the framing of conflicts. As communication technology has advanced - introducing photographs, telecommunications, and ever expanding forms of mass media - the role of propaganda in conflict has grown ever more influential; “war was not only waged on the battle field; it also fought for acceptance and – in the words of Lyotard – for metahistory: the struggle to determine the dominant interpretation of war” (Karmasin, Melischek, Seethaler and Wohlert in Seethaler 2013:xi). However, in terms of the research undertaken by this thesis an over emphasis on the idea of propaganda has been avoided – focusing instead on the general theory concerning communication and narratives used by news media. This is due to the fact that an analysis of a select few news agencies’ narratives surrounding the conflict in Yemen does not allow for a significant analysis of propaganda. “Propaganda must be total,” and cannot be identified in the sporadic use of certain media but is formed by the strategic use of all media

(Ellul 1972:9). Therefore, whilst news media – and the analysis performed by this research – can be understood as one representation of propaganda, it is not representative of a propaganda scheme as a whole.

The media both reflects and shapes the audience’s perception of reality, and in conflict “the media are missiles” which, in today’s globalized world have a significant influence over the progress of conflict (Karmasin, Melischek, Seethaler and Wohler in Seethaler 2013:xiii). Moreover, modern wars require greater levels of consent and involvement from the public than wars in the past, making the role of media in formulating and perpetuating narratives surrounding a conflict vital in order to attain such popular support (Lazzarich in Seethaler 2013:39). In order to garner such support a narrative of the conflict must be formed that is deemed acceptable by the public, as it must transform the common sense idea that war leads to death by associating the conflict with socially preferable outcomes (Lazzarich in Seethaler 2013:53).

The extent to which the government narrative on a conflict reflects that which is published in the media, depends on the relationship that the news media has with the government – built through the use of government sources, the presence of state-run news agencies, and the level of diversity and criticism reflected by the media (Seib in Seethaler 2013:12). There is some dispute about how the news is formed, as it can be understood as either professional, organizational, economic or political – in other words the selection of newsworthy stories is based on the work of professional journalists, the organization of news agencies, or external factors such as economic interests or political/ideological pressures from leadership or the audience (Gitlin 1980:251). However, the news can also be understood as a representation of all these factors, “as information which is transmitted from sources to audiences, with journalists – who are both employees of bureaucratic commercial organizations and members of a profession – summarizing, refining, and altering what becomes available to them from sources in order to make the information suitable for their audiences. Due to the fact that news has consequences, however, journalists are susceptible to pressure from groups and individuals” (Gans 1979 in Gitlin 1980:251). This understanding of the news highlights how it can also be understood as “the exercise of power over the interpretation of reality” (Schlesinger in Gitlin 1980:251). This highlights that, whilst it is not the main feature of the news, in general the news that is reported is

influenced by outside forces. It is clear therefore, that communication through media such as the news can be used strategically, as a tool for influencing public opinion.

Strategic communication is “the use of words, actions, images, or symbols to influence the attitudes and opinions of target audiences to shape their behaviour in order to advance interests or policies, or to achieve objectives” (Farwell 2012:xviii). The language used to express an idea, through the creation of a specific narrative, can be analysed in order to understand the strategy behind that narrative, to identify the main themes and messages contained within that narrative (Farwell 2012:57). In the case of contending narratives, language acts as a tool of contention through the dichotomy in the use of language to define and evaluate key components of a narrative. Farwell uses the example of the Israel-Palestine conflict, in which both sides use language to convey themselves as the victims and the other as the aggressors (Farwell 2012:58). It is generally accepted that the public perception of friends and rivals is a considerable constraint on foreign policy, and thus the use of the media to communicate a strategic perception of ourselves and others – of ‘us’ and ‘them’ - in order to justify policies such as the decision to go to war is vital (Seethaler and Melischek in Seethaler 2013:188). The ability to use the media to name and label the enemy is central to the role communication has in conflict. Farwell emphasises specifically the power of naming something, of assigning a particular label to a group or situation, as words have the ability to influence attitudes by directing how the audience associates that label with a certain understanding of that which is being labelled (Farwell 2012:58). Strategic communication essentially outlines how the power of language (as well as images, symbols and deeds) can be used effectively in propaganda campaigns – through for example speeches, manifestos, reports or statement – to garner support, influence public opinion, and create a central narrative of events. The potential reach communication has also influences how powerful it can be – the printing press allowed Martin Luther to launch “a full-scale media campaign” through cheap and widespread pamphlets, whilst Barack Obama’s campaign made extensive use of the internet to reach and influence voters (Farwell 2012:65). Here we can once again make a distinction between identifying narratives within strategic communication, such as an election campaign, and the narratives contained in propaganda. Ellul (1973) distinguishes propaganda by highlighting its continuous nature – in contradiction to the short time-span of, for example, a campaign. News reports often communicate specific events, particularly through the immediacy of live reporting, which can be considered as part of a wide propaganda scheme, but

particularly in small-scale, short term, studies such a connection is difficult to make. Instead, concepts such as strategic communication outline similar processes undertaken by actors to influence an audience, without the implications of a wider propaganda narrative.

The example of election campaigns to illustrate the power of language in strategic communication is particularly interesting, as the process of targeting and influencing voters to accept, support, and internalize the candidate and their position is compatible with most situations in which strategic communication is used. Language is vital as “political campaigns combine deeds, images, symbols, and language, but every aspect of them starts with developing a credible rationale for a cause or candidacy, a narrative, and the themes and messages that emanate from them” (Farwell 2012:72). Thus, the language used to build up a certain narrative is the foundation of any form of strategic communication.

Communication through Framing Processes

The power of language to influence an audience can be further understood through the concept of framing; “the power of a frame can be as great as that of language itself” (Entman 1993:55). Framing can be identified in four points of the communication process; (1) in the communicators who frame a situation; acting either consciously or subconsciously, and guided by the frames which make up their own beliefs, (2) in the texts which contain the key words, ideas, stereotypes, images and sources of facts and judgements, (3) in the receiver; whose frames may differ from those of the text or the communicator, and (4) in the culture; which forms the bank of commonly used frames (Entman 1993:52). Individual actors in a society are not simply the carriers of a certain meaning, or understanding, but are instead actively involved in the formation and maintenance of the frames which determine this understanding, along with the media, local government and the state (Benford & Snow, 2000). Framing is seen as the interactive, dynamic processes that create the frames through which people view certain issues. Frames guide the perception of reality, as they are formed through negotiations in which meaning is given to certain issues, and reflects their representation to one’s self and to others (van Hulst & Yanow, 2014). Frames used in the news “reflect broader cultural themes and discourses, providing audiences with ways to think about issues” (Roy and Shaw 2016:35). Whilst framing can be understood as a subconscious process that occurs through communication; research has also emphasized the strategic nature that framing can take (van Hulst & Yanow, 2014) which follows

more along the lines of framing as a form of strategic communication. This strategic altering of frames, of the definitions of reality, is used by actors to shift the understanding of the situation in their favour. In the news, framing can be seen as the process of selecting “some aspects of a perceived reality and [making] them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman 1993:52). Rein and Schon highlight three specific processes involved in framing; naming, selecting and storytelling. Through these processes, the language used to name a situation reflects and portrays the actors' understanding of that issue, selecting the aspects that should be included in this understanding and presenting this through the act of storytelling (van Hulst & Yanow, 2014). In terms of framing in the news, these processes can also be seen as the “persistent cognitive ways in which information is selected, excluded, emphasised, and organised into discourse” (Chong and Druckman 2007:100 in Roy and Shaw 2016:35).

For a frame to be successful, it should be culturally congruent; “the more a frame is clearly congruent with a schema that dominates the political culture, the more readily it will be accepted” (Kutz in Seethaler 2013:114). In other words, the meaning attributed to a situation through the language used should be made acceptable to the audience by seeming in line with the pre-existent relevant narratives. More specifically, successful framing in the world of modern news media requires speed, particularly in crisis and conflict situations, as news is expected to be reported live. Therefore, framing has to take place constantly and is no longer always given the luxury of well planned articles and interviews (Kutz in Seethaler 2013:118). In terms of conflict framing, a successful frame is often based on the concept of just war, or *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bellum*, which outline the right to go to war – based on the principles of just cause, legitimate authority, right intention, proportionality, last resort, reasonable hope for success and the aim for peace – and the just way to act whilst at war – based on the principles of proportionality and non-combatant immunity (Kutz in Seethaler 2013:113). This concept, or a variation on its main principles, is a feature of many frames surrounding conflict, as it represents the most widely accepted justifications for violent action. Under the circumstances of a just war a conflict “despite its consequences as a destructive force, is defined as a positive good” (Jabri 1996: 104).

In simple terms, frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements, and suggest remedies (Entman 1993:52). This can be more technically understood as the various types of framing which can be used, often within a single narrative. In such terms, frames can be

understood as being *diagnostic*, *prognostic*, or *motivational* (Benford & Snow, 2000). The identification of the source of the blame is vital in situations of contention, as the attribution of blame through diagnostic framing allows for the mobilization of collective action. This relates to what Tilly refers to as the *blame game* (2010), which involves the attribution of credit and blame through simplified stories of cause and effect. This takes place in everyday life, assigning blame to those who do not meet their obligations, and award to those who exceed them, however Tilly also applies it to major public events (Tilly 2010:384). The *blame game* sets up a distinction between those responsible for an action and their victims, in many ways similar to the us-them, victim-aggressor, distinction described by Farwell and in the work of Seethaler and Melischek. By naming a certain group the aggressor, that group is diagnostically framed as responsible for the conflict, as the party to be blamed. Moreover, attributing blame and thus responsibility to a specific group can frame further actions, such as conflict or intervention, as justified. As Tilly puts it, the *blame game* matters both retroactively and prospectively (2010:388). Assigning blame and credit creates the narratives of the past, in other words framing those actions, behaviours, and peoples which should be condemned, and building a narrative of the events which represents a certain perspective. Such frames become lenses through which we understand the world, thus informing future opinions and decisions, and will form part of the bank of narratives from which future frames are built.

Often following diagnostic framing is the introduction of a prognostic frame, which proposes a solution to deal with the problem that has been identified. This will differ with the nature of the actors involved in the framing, and often forms as a source of contention between the frames of opposing groups, through which they attempt to highlight their own prognoses as more appropriate and effective (Benford & Snow 2000).

Furthermore, frames are developed, generated and elaborated on through the use of *discursive*, *strategic* and *contested* processes (Benford & Snow, 2000). Discursive processes describe the communication of meaning which create and portray frames; the speech acts and written texts which articulate reality, amplifying those aspects which make up this version of reality. Strategic processes are deliberate and directed towards a certain goal, using frames to further action towards that goal – this relates directly to the concept of strategic communication (Farwell 2012). Lastly, contested processes involve the construction of frames in contest with a contending frame. This involves counter framing, through which the opposition attempts to

challenge the diagnostic and prognostic frames used in order to further their own (Benford & Snow, 2000).

This contention between frames can be understood as part of a larger theory, namely that of contentious politics. Tilly and Tarrow (2007) outline what they label 'contentious politics' or the coordination of efforts based on claims on shared interests and goals, which combine contention, collective action and politics. This relates to framing as they investigated how groups or communities make claims through the use of performances and repertoires, as well as alliances, political opportunities and institutional routines. Tilly and Tarrow explain how successful claim-making occurs through the use of particular performances, as well as modular performances, to make contentious politics both diverse and regular. They argue that the process of making claims follows a fairly restricted set of performances that are available in the repertoire of a group, thus indicating that performances of collective action will have many similarities across different incidents. However, the use of innovative new performances which are built around the specific features of a particular claim also allow for change within the repertoire. Understanding a repertoire of actions as various possible performances reveals the conscious decision made by the claimants to evoke certain emotions and reactions through their actions. This relates again to the idea that successful frames must be culturally congruent, as such repertoires have a history of use which is embedded in the culture of that group. As in the prospective implications of playing the *blame game*, such repertoires are built from performances and narratives used in the past. In terms of framing, this can be found in the third location identified by Entman in which framing can be identified, namely in the culture of the group. It can be said that every culture has a "framework of frameworks;" constituted by the collection of frames accepted by the members of the group to understand their world (Goffman 1974:27). This bank of commonly used frames, and the repertoire described by Tilly and Tarrow, reflects a similar idea that collective action, such as the performance of a specifically framed narrative, is most successful when it builds upon a history of similar performances. Thus, the use of a certain frame from a repertoire which has been used and adapted to several different incidences, gives it greater meaning and more cultural and historical significance. Contentious politics outline the conscious decisions made by a group's leadership to carry out performances in a certain way, evoking a certain tradition of claim making, specific emotion, or history, in order to benefit the strength of mobilization behind their claim.

Analysing the Agencies' Narratives

Using this theoretical framework, the narratives put forth by each news agency will be analysed in order to highlight the core concepts used in the framing of the conflict, and the specific framing processes through which each narrative is built. Looking back at the second chapter on data collection, this section will follow the process of analysing the data from the codification of the narratives in their raw form, through to the separation of these narratives into categories of core concepts, and specific acts of framing and counter-framing which are performed by the news agencies using these core concepts.

Codifying the Narratives

The codification of the data was a long process, which led to a large body of data being condensed into simplified lists of coded articles. Each article was coded by highlighting extracts that identified certain concepts according to their corresponding codes, which were colour coded for clarity. Statements which reflected a certain perspective on the conflict, either following the provisional codes or through their repetitive use throughout the articles, were codified. Subsequently, each article was summed up by the main codes identified in that article, in order to form a chronological list of the main codes found in the coverage of each agency. This allowed for the subsequent ordering of the codes data from each outlet, ranked from most to least frequently identified; as shown in the following table;

Table 2 – Key Codes Found Across News Sources

News Source	Codes					
	from most to least frequently identified					
Yemen						
<i>Saba News</i>	Saudi aggression	Terrorists taking advantage of security crisis	Humanitarian crisis deepened by Saudi intervention	Saudi war crimes	Western states/UN inactive against Saudi actions (complicit)	Yemen conflict internal affair, not regional
Saudi Arabia						
<i>Saudi Press Agency</i>	Saudi Coalition defending legitimate government against Houthi coup	Regional Insecurity	Iranian support of Houthi rebels spreading Shi'ite influence	Houthi war crimes	Terrorists taking advantage of security crisis	Humanitarian crisis deepened by Houthi
Iran						
<i>Tehran Times</i>	Saudi aggression	Yemen conflict internal affair, not regional	Humanitarian crisis deepened by Saudi intervention	Saudi war crimes	Terrorists taking advantage of security crisis	Western states/UN inactive against Saudi actions (complicit)

As these codes are laid out in the above table, certain key concepts stood out in the narratives across all of the news outlets, and though these concepts were often treated differently by each outlet, it is interesting to highlight that they appear to be considered central features of the conflict by all. These concepts can be grouped into the following categories; regional conflict, terrorism and humanitarian crisis. These three categories form the basis of the framing of the conflict as performed by each news outlet. The research has identified these categories, therefore, as the broader cultural themes and discourses (Roy and Shaw 2016:35) used by the news agencies in order to build culturally congruent (Kutz in Seethaler 2013:114) frames. In other words, the categories that have been highlighted as the key concepts through which framing of the conflict in Yemen occurs, are the news agencies' repertoires (Tilly & Tarrow 2007) or banks of commonly used frames (Entman 1993:52). Before progressing into a more detailed analysis of the framing processes identified in the news agencies' narratives, a brief overview of these key

categories has been included. This will strengthen the later analysis, as it reveals how the framing of the conflict essentially involves the processes of building a narrative from these categories, using them as a basis from which each agency names, selects, and tells a story (van Hulst & Yanow, 2014) which reflects their intended message. The identification of these three categories of core concepts as being the common foundation in each of the agencies' narratives, reflects what Prince (1982) said different cultural group's having telling similar, comparable narratives. He explains this by highlighting that despite the presence of contention between narratives, there is often consensus between different groups concerning the symbols that constitute narratives, and at their core even contending narratives are based on framing the same situation or event (Prince 1982:171). Thus, regardless of "what the "real" point of the narratives, their ultimate implications, or their symbolic significance are taken to be," a situation can be framed through a narrative in a large – but not infinite – variety of ways, as responses to the situation must have some connection to the actual events (Prince 1982:181).

Regional Conflict

This category of key concepts was based on the provisional code surrounding the concept of a proxy war, as many of the concepts corresponding to the sub codes of this (such as the emphasis of an alliance between the Houthi and Iran, or Saudi and the Yemeni government) were present across all news outlets. This was clearly a dominant feature of each narrative, however, each agency used the concept differently in their process of framing the conflict in Yemen. Labelling this category as a proxy war would not have been appropriate, as it would not have represented its use across all of the agencies. In the cases of the Saudi Press Agency and the Tehran Times in particular, the concept of a proxy war was not only avoided but actively denied. In fact, the main aim of many articles published by both sides was to highlight the involvement of the other in perpetuating the conflict and endangering the humanitarian situation in Yemen. It was therefore decided that the label regional conflict would be more appropriate, as it encompasses the concepts of a proxy war, but also of the tension and counter-framing which occurred between the Saudi Press Agency and the Tehran Daily, and which will be further analysed in the following section.

The category of concepts regarding a regional conflict summed up the situation in Yemen as one in which regional actors were playing the part of an external power attempting to take

control of Yemeni internal affairs, interfering in their sovereignty, and further endangering the lives of a population already facing a humanitarian crisis. The specific actors which were selected and named, identify the *blame game* (Tilly 2010) played by the news outlets concerning who was responsible for making the conflict in Yemen a regional conflict. In this category, the codification of concepts showed that the narrative of a regional conflict was perpetuated by the constant emphasis of the alliances that were either pledged or alleged between key regional players. This consisted of the reports that the Saudi coalition was working in support of the Yemeni government, which was framed positively by the Saudi Press Agency, and negatively by both Saba News and the Tehran Times. It also showed the emphasis on the Houthi's alleged alliance with Iran, which again was framed by the Saudi Press Agency as a strong, disruptive, military alliance, whilst being firmly denied in the Tehran Time in favour of a narrative of support and friendship. Moreover, each side made attempts at justifying their own position by emphasising in their reports those international actors, organizations and states which supported them, as both the Iranian and Saudi news outlets emphasized any instance in which either the UN, international organizations or other states made statements in which they could be seen agreeing with their position.

Framing the conflict in Yemen through the use of concepts describing a regional conflict places it within the wider context of Middle Eastern regional politics. It reflects a history of viewing the region through this frame, making reoccurring use of the concepts which make up the repertoire of this frame. Firstly, the presence of Saudi Arabia as a significant regional power bordering Yemen brings the pre-existing concepts of regional leadership, influence, and instability into the narratives, to be used in the framing processes of each agency. Furthermore, concepts concerning the sectarian tensions that have been identified as underlying many of the conflicts within the region, between the Shia and Sunni sects of Islam and in turn between the policies of Saudi Arabia and Iran, have shaped much of the framing of regional issues, both from within these states and by outside sources. These concepts therefore form a well-known, widely used, and culturally accepted repertoire from which each news agency shaped their own frames.

Terrorism

The codification of the news coverage revealed that each agency's narrative surrounding the conflict in Yemen highlighted not only the conflict between the Houthi and the government within Yemen, but also emphasised significantly the rise of extremism and terrorist activity in the country. These reports focused on the growing influence of terrorist groups Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and a growing branch of ISIS in Yemen. Each news agency related the growing problem of terrorism in Yemen to the opportunities that a deepening security vacuum and increasing instability have given them, as well as the pattern of terrorist groups making use of the existing divisions within Yemeni society to build support for their own aims and activities within the region. In the case of the Saudi Press Agency, the category of terrorism extended to include the Houthi, who were themselves framed as terrorist by labelling them a terrorist, extremist, militia.

The problem of a growing terrorist threat across most of the Arab world is an issue can be seen as central to many narratives surrounding the areas of conflict or tension in the region. The rise of ISIS and the presence of Al-Qaeda, and its counterpart AQAP which is active in Yemen, are frequently used concepts in the framing of the Middle East. It is therefore unsurprising, what with the presence of both ISIS and AQAP in Yemen, that this issue would be emphasized so significantly in the narratives of each of the news agencies included in this research. As mentioned, framing is most successful when it reflects a pre-existing, widely accepted, narrative. As the concept of terrorism is so widely used surrounding conflicts and instability in the Middle East, it provides an readily accessible, emotive and easily acceptable language to use in framing the conflict in Yemen. To fully understand how the news agencies' respective uses of this concept fit into the larger context of the issue of terrorism in the Middle East, involves understanding this pattern of emphasising terrorism in the wider discourse surrounding the region.

In relation to this category of terrorism, the narratives of Saba News and the Tehran Times in particular, use concepts similar to those of terrorism to name and blame the Saudis as aggressors in the Yemen conflict. In fact, just as the Saudi Press Agency used the concepts of terrorists and extremists to define the Houthi, the Tehran Times defined the actions of the Saudis in Yemen as terrorist acts. Thus, in the process of framing the conflict using the concept of terrorism each agency extended beyond the narrative of AQAP and ISIS to include other parties in the frame, using the language of terror and violence. The emphasis of war crimes committed

by the Houthi in the articles of the Saudi Press Agency, and those committed by the Saudi coalition in the articles of Saba News and the Tehran Times, further reveal how such concepts were used in the framing of the conflict. This is part of the diagnostic framing of the conflict, which will be discussed in detail in the next section.

Humanitarian Crisis

The emphasis on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen was somewhat unexpected in the initial approach to the research, and was not included in the provisional codes used to organize the data. However, as this research took a combined approach to codification, taking into account the development of new codes according to the prominent concepts found in the data, a new category of concepts quickly formed around the issue of a humanitarian crisis. As revealed in the identification and summary of each news agency's central narrative, the issue of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen was central across the board. Just as the categories of regional conflict and terrorism were used differently in the framing processes of each agency, the humanitarian crisis was used to serve several distinct purposes in their narratives.

Firstly, the dire humanitarian crisis in Yemen served as a concept which was used to underline the urgency of the situation in the country. Frequent reports, based both on internal sources and data from international and aid organizations, emphasized the human costs of the conflict, as well as the widespread damage to infrastructure, livelihoods, provisions in healthcare, food, shelter, water, electricity, transport, communications, education, industry and infrastructure. These were used to legitimize immediate action, and mobilize further action not only in providing humanitarian aid, but also through intervention and a call for dialogue and negotiation. In other words, as will be analysed in more detail later, the concepts of a humanitarian crisis were used by agencies to diagnose the problem in Yemen, propose a possible solution, and by placing their own nation at the forefront of such calls for action, frame themselves as a leader in the provision of humanitarian aid.

Furthermore, concepts related to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen were used by each of the agencies in playing the *blame game*; for in their narratives it was clear that each agency sought to place responsibility for the deepening of the crisis at the hands of one of the parties, or blame them for failing or preventing the successful provision of aid. The use of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen through each narrative took a different approach to identifying the problem,

evaluating the cause, naming the party to blame, and proposing the solution to the crisis. The use of this concept in framing the conflict in Yemen therefore spans not only the placing of blame, but also the issues of legitimacy and leadership, as well as the framing of proposed solutions. These are the key forms of framing which will be further analysed by the research.

The Use of Diagnostic and Prognostic Framing

This final section of the thesis will delve deeper into the analysis of each news agency's narrative, by highlighting the distinct framing processes being used to build up these narratives, and the counter framing which occurred between them. To do so, this section will rely heavily on the theoretical framework outlined previously. In short, this section will analyse the diagnostic and prognostic framing undertaken by the news agencies. These focus around key concepts, and key framing processes. Firstly, the analysis will look into diagnostic framing using primarily the concept of the *blame game* (Tilly 2010). The *blame game* consists of assigning blame as well as taking credit – in other words it consists of the processes of selecting, naming or labelling, and storytelling (van Hulst & Yanow 2014) which take place in order to create a narrative of 'the good' and 'the bad.' Applying this theory to the narratives surrounding Yemen, these processes will first be analysed in terms of the agencies' framing of those to blame, followed by their framing of those to be given credit for their actions – and specifically their leadership. The latter also plays into the idea of framing as a tool for establishing, presenting and perpetuating a sense of legitimacy, in order to justify an action either retroactively or proactively. Lastly, the analysis will look into the contested prognostic frames used by each news agency, reflecting upon how these are built from their respective diagnostic frames in order to legitimize their position to propose solutions, and how this corresponds with their position towards the conflict.

Placing the Blame

Framing, particularly the framing that occurs in the news, consists of the telling of a particular story through a distinct lens, which is created by the selection, evaluation, naming and labelling, and presentation of certain key concepts of the story. Issues are strategically framed in order to express an understanding of the situation, influence the attitudes of the audience, legitimize or justify a reaction to the situation, propose potential solutions or possible reactions to the situation, or mobilize the audience behind such an opinion or proposition. As has been expressed in the theoretical framework, one of the most powerful tools in framing is language; naming and labelling are highlighted as their own vital process in building an effective frame. The process of naming and labelling is the essence of the *blame game*, the form of diagnostic framing which emphasises identifying a certain group, or factor, as those responsible for the situation. Placing

the blame is inherently a negative framing process. Naming a group as those to blame for a conflict is often done through the use of emotive language, applying negative labels to the group to indicate that they are to be understood as bad - as guilty - often even distancing that group along the lines of us and them (Tilly 2010).

So, where do the narratives of Saba News, the Tehran Times and the Saudi Press Agency place the blame; which groups do they name as guilty and what kind of language do they use to label them? Analysing how each of these agencies played the *blame game* reveals the first mayor point of contention between them; and their contending allocations of responsibility form the basis of the counter-framing processes that seek both to tear down each other's narratives, and build upon their own by opposing the narrative of the other.

In playing the *blame game*, both Saba News and the Tehran Times followed a similar process of framing, using the same language to name and label the Saudis as the party to blame in the Yemen conflict. Once the Saudi coalition was named the guilty party, the processes of evaluating and justifying this position, and using emotive language to label them as guilty, built up the frame used in their narratives. Firstly, the naming of the Saudis as the guilty party was justified through the use of all three of the key categories previously identified. The concept of regional conflict was used to contextualize the actions of the Saudis within a history of regional tension, particularly by the Tehran Times, who used the position of power Saudi Arabia claims to have as a criticism for their violent attacks against a weaker neighbour, infringing on their sovereignty and interfering in their internal affairs based on a naive, childish, strategic mistake. In terms of the language used to label the Saudis as the guilty party, both the Tehran Times and Saba News build their frames using emotive language. The Saudi coalition itself is labelled the aggressor, as war criminals and child killers. Their actions are labelled the Saudi war against Yemen, the Saudi massacre, terrorist acts described as savage, incessant military attacks. The Tehran Times most effectively plays this *blame game*, opposing this description of the Saudi aggressors against the defenceless and oppressed civilians – particularly emphasising victims that are women and children. Lastly, the framing of Saudi Arabia as the party to blame was further justified by the Tehran Times in particular by emphasising their role in deepening the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, and specifically through the Saudi blockade of Yemen which was described as taking the people of Yemen hostage and preventing the arrival of desperately needed humanitarian aid.

In contest with this, the Saudi Press Agency placed the blame for the conflict in Yemen with the Houthi, and by extension named Iran the guilty party behind the actions of the Houthi. The concept of regional conflict is central in the justification of this allocation of blame, as the agency emphasized repeatedly throughout their coverage the alleged connection between the Houthi and Iran, describing Iran as a foreign power attempting to intervene in Yemen in order to disrupt national unity and regional stability. The Houthi are labelled as violent, extremist terrorist militias, as an insurgency and a rebel coup, and as war criminals, whilst Iran's involvement in Yemen is labelled Iran's expansionist project. In a parallel logic to that of the other news agencies, the Saudi Press Agency further justified the naming of the Houthi as the party to blame by emphasising their role in deepening the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, frequently reporting on how their actions have been disruptive and furthered the instability which fostered the humanitarian crisis, as well as the problem of terrorism, in the country.

The *blame game* represents the process of counter framing in action, as the labelling of the key parties served as a key point of contention between the narratives of the news agencies studied. Whilst the Saudi Press Agency labelled the Houthi using negative language to place blame, the Tehran Times labelled them revolutionaries. Soldiers fighting for the Yemeni government or the Saudi coalition were labelled martyrs by the Saudi Press Agency, whilst Saba News emphasized the deaths of innocent civilians, of women and children. The use the label war criminals by all of the agencies as a label for what they framed as the guilty party also reflects how the same concepts can be used by opposing groups to form contending frames.

The labels used in the *blame game* are effective because they have emotional weight or significance, and relate the justification of the placement of blame to a larger narrative. As such, the label war criminals invokes the significance of international law, and calls for attention from other actors – often the United Nations and other international organizations – to investigate such claims. The labels aggressors, acts of war, violent attacks, all have an emotive effect, relating the party blamed to a wider concept of conflict, of a strong bully against a weaker victim, thus calling for and justifying support for that victim. In this way, the naming and labelling of a guilty part not only selects the 'bad guys' in the narrative surrounding the conflict, but in doing so also forms a concept of the victim, and the 'good guys,' though as ill be shown in the following section, these are not always the same group.

Legitimacy and Leadership

Besides the negative side of the *blame game*, selecting, labelling and telling the story of the guilty party in the conflict, the news agencies also built their narratives through the positive process of taking credit – of framing the ‘good guys.’ This was done predominantly by the Saudi Press Agency and the Tehran Times, who each sought to present their own country as the deserving the credit for playing a positive part in the conflict. The narrative set forth by Saba news focused more on the previously mentioned blaming of Saudi Arabia, and the development of a prognostic frame, which will be put forth in the final section.

The process through which the Tehran Times and the Saudi Press Agency both framed their own country as the ‘good guys’ involved the strategic storytelling surrounding their actions in relation to the conflict in order to portray them as playing a leadership role, and to establish the legitimacy of their actions.

In the case of the narrative of the Saudi Press Agency, their approach can be analysed using the just war concept, as this outlines the principles which determine the right to go to war – in other words the legitimacy of Saudi Arabia’s decision to intervene in Yemen. These principles include just cause, legitimate authority, right intention, proportionality, last resort, reasonable hope for success and the aim for peace (Kutz in Seethaler 2013:113). All of these principles were reflected in the coverage of the Saudi Press Agency. The principles of just cause, legitimate authority, and right intention were represented in their framing of their actions as a response to the request from the legitimate leader of Yemen, President Hadi, to come to their assistance and return the country to stability and unity. Furthermore, their legitimacy was built upon through frequent reports emphasizing the support of not only the legitimate government of Yemen for the Saudi coalition, but also that of other states, and of regional and international organizations. The intentions of the Saudis were also framed as being just and right, through the use of emotive language such as labelling the people of Yemen as their brothers and sisters. This concept of fraternity, based on the proximity between the two countries, as well as their shared Arab and Islamic identities, was used to frame the actions of the Saudis coming to the defence of Yemeni civilians as a moral requirement. Their narrative paints the idea that not responding to President Hadi’s request, standing up to the intervention of Iran through the violence of Houthi extremists, would be to deny the responsibility the Saudis have towards their brotherly neighbours. The principles of proportionality, last resort, reasonable hope for success and an overall aim for peace

are emphasized in the narrative of the Saudi Press Agency by focusing on two concepts. The first is the need for dialogue, reflected by a parallel reporting on the military successes of the campaign whilst including reports on the peace negotiations taking place, framing Saudi Arabia as a leader in both by emphasizing their role in maintaining ceasefires and allowing all parties to come to the negotiating table. The second is the emphasis of Saudi Arabia, and the other coalition nations', role in providing humanitarian assistance to alleviate the crisis in Yemen. By emphasizing each of these principles, the Saudi Press Agency frames Saudi Arabia as a leader in solving the conflict in Yemen, simultaneously through their military intervention in order to reinstate the legitimate government and their efforts in providing humanitarian aid and supporting peace negotiations. This leadership position is strengthened by the news agency's emphasis on the legitimacy of Saudi Arabia's actions.

In contrast, the Tehran Times did not frame Iran's role in the Yemen conflict along the lines of a just war, as they did not label their involvement in any military sense. In fact, the reports in the Tehran Times reflected a distinct denial of any alliance between Iran and the Houthi – framing their relationship instead as one of moral support. The coverage rarely mentioned the Houthis specifically, other than in a simple explanation of the nature of the conflict as taking place between the Houthi and Yemen's government. Moreover, the Tehran times selects as their victims the citizens of Yemen as a whole, labelling the victims as innocent civilians. Instead, their narrative focused on the role Iran plays in regards to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, framing their nation as leading the effort to provide aid to the people of Yemen against the Saudi blockade. This frame is built by selecting in their articles stories of Iranian shipments of aid being prevented from entering into Yemen by Saudi Arabia, thus further demonizing the Saudis and painting the Iranians as strong and persistent as they continue to send aid to Yemen. Reports in the Tehran Times emphasized the amount of aid Iran sent, every event in which the Saudi sought to stop this aid, statements of determination from Iranian officials that they would get the people of Yemen the supplies they needed, and calls to other countries to follow in their lead. This framing of Iran in this leadership position was further strengthened through reports of their coordination with, and support from, international organizations such as the Red Cross, and their condemnation of other nations and organizations for not doing enough.

The Solution to Peace

Lastly, the narratives of the Tehran Times, Saba News, and the Saudi News Agency are each built through a distinct use of prognostic framing. Each agency puts forth a proposed solution for the conflict, which in many ways reflects the diagnostic framing employed by each as they built upon an intended outcome in relation to their diagnosis of the nature of the conflict, who is to blame for it, and how they view their own country's position within the conflict.

Both the Tehran Times and Saba News emphasize the need for dialogue, and specifically dialogue between the parties within Yemen. As these parties have negatively framed the Saudi intervention as an aggressive invasion into the internal, sovereign affairs of the Yemeni people, the diagnostic roots of this prognostic frame are clear. The Tehran Times in particular lays out a very clear solution; with their prognostic framing following Iran's 'four point plan.' This plan outlines the prognosis that for peace to be achieved in Yemen, the solutions must be sought through internal dialogue, humanitarian aid, political transition through an inclusive new government, and an immediate ceasefire, with minimal external involvement. In many ways, their prognostic framing has a dual effect of furthering the *blame game*, by continuing to frame Iran as a leader in the peace process, whilst simultaneously framing Saudi negatively, as they condemn the involvement of foreign powers in determining Yemen's future. Their prognostic framing strengthens Iran as the party deserving credit by labelling the points of their solution with language that highlights democracy, dialogue, peace and aid, whilst emphasising that the key to peace should be placed in the hands of Yemenis themselves – for example by labelling one step in the plan inter-Yemeni dialogue. Reports on the Saudi coalition breaching ceasefire agreements, preventing aid, and interrupting negotiations serve to further this dichotomy between the Saudis as the party to blame, and Iran as the leaders to guide Yemen out of its crisis.

On the other hand, the Saudi Press Agency has emphasized in their diagnostic framing the legitimacy and justification behind the coalition's military intervention in Yemen. In terms of a prognostic frame, their proposed solution balances the continued framing of the intervention as necessary to reinstate the legitimate government and return unity and stability to Yemen, whilst including reports which emphasize the need for dialogue and negotiation. However, the latter reports often tend to focus not on an actual plan for peace negotiations, but are used to highlight alleged instances of the Houthi breaching ceasefire agreements, and preventing the smooth running of negotiations. Nonetheless, to a certain extent the political process is framed as a

potential solution for the conflict, one for which they portray themselves as backing if the stage of military aggression has passed. However, the Saudi Press Agency's emphasis in their diagnostic frames on extremist and terrorist actions within Yemen – by both the Houthi and terrorist organizations – legitimized a more aggressive, military, interventionist approach. This framing, alongside that of the legitimacy that President Hadi's support provides them, strengthens their intervention as a just solution to the conflict. It is therefore unsurprising that most of the coverage by the Saudi Press Agency emphasises the aims and progress of these military operations over those of the peace negotiations.

Conclusion

In answer to the research question - *How do the contending narratives of Saudi, Iranian, and Yemeni news agencies frame the conflict in Yemen between March 2015 and May 2016?* – the results of this thesis conclude the following. The contending narratives of the Saudi Press Agency, the Tehran Times, and Saba News, were diagnostically and prognostically framed using the core concepts of regional conflict, terrorism, and humanitarian crisis. Each agency manipulated these concepts through their distinct framing of the conflict, and they served as the main points of contention between them. This counter-framing took place through the act of placing blame and justifying legitimacy, which was framed by the process of labelling the various actors in the conflict and their actions as either positive or negative; as either aggressors, leaders or victims. Furthermore, the use of proposed solutions served to further frame certain actors as leaders in the process of establishing peace and stability in Yemen, whilst others were condemned for disrupting this process.

From the theoretical framework, which outlines the role that narratives in the media play in shaping the audience's attitude, this thesis has highlighted the relevance of identifying and analysing how such narratives are framed. Rather than aiming to uncover facts, or truths, about the conflict in Yemen, its relevance lies in the results of highlighting and analysing the claims made by these news agencies, thus identifying the points of contention between them and serving as an alternative perspective through which to understand the battle of words and ideas that is taking place surrounding the conflict. An awareness of the framing processes that were used to shape the contending understandings of the conflict, and the solutions they proposed, allows for a more critical overview of the conflict as it unfolds. Furthermore, this research has highlighted how a set of core concepts was manipulated by each agency; using the same bank of concepts to frame their evaluation of, and proposed solution for, the conflict in Yemen.

The current conflict in Yemen reflects a history of complexities, and this research recognizes that any attempt to shape the situation through the use of a particular frame is an act of simplification. Understanding that the current conflict between the Houthi and the government is part of a history of contention, set against a background of further division between North and South, different tribes, and different religious sects, is understanding that there is no single frame which can encompass all of these issues into a coherent or complete picture. Add the narratives

of external actors, and the framing of the conflict as regional in its nature, and you are left with a great variety of contending stories. This research has highlighted how the act of focusing on certain concepts within the conflict, and manipulating them into frames through which the situation in Yemen can be understood, reflects an often conscious decision to portray the situation in a certain light. Be it to justify or condemn military intervention, to call for internal negotiations or international mediation, the ways in which the conflict is framed reflect an intended outcome or solution for the conflict. This combination of diagnostic and prognostic framing used by the news outlets perpetuated a certain version of events, emphasising the justifications for the behaviour of certain actors whilst condemning that of the other.

This research has sought to emphasize the importance of critical analysis when it comes to viewing news outlets as a source of information. Whilst this is not exactly groundbreaking within the academic sphere, in situations such as the conflict in Yemen where very little academic research is being done due to the current nature of the crisis, the news and official reports are often the only source of current and up-to-date information. Moreover, there seems to be a relation between the views perpetuated by the media and those investigated by academics, such as the emphasis on the conflict as a proxy war. The amount of coverage this understanding of the conflict receives, both in the news and in academic literature, has seemingly emphasized its role in the conflict itself, at the very least lending legitimacy to narratives based on the concept of a regional conflict. The literature review already highlighted this idea that framing the conflict in Yemen as a proxy war could lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy (Petrou 2015) (Abdo & Grinstead 2015). Further investigation into this possible relationship would be very interesting, particularly if it takes into consideration the role of narratives in the media in perpetuating this narrative of Yemen as a proxy war.

Further implications of this research lie in the role these actors have to play in the peace negotiations and efforts towards the resolution of this conflict. Having identified and analysed the diverse and contesting narrative frames that have been used to portray the conflict in Yemen, the research identifies the need to critically consider the various understandings of the conflict. If the concept of regional conflict is emphasized, the claims made by all actors concerning who the aggressors are, and who has been guilty of committing war crimes, should be considered. Conversely, the framing of the conflict in terms of the internal divisions at the root of the conflict should be taken into account when parties are brought to the negotiating table. The longer the

conflict continues, the more important it will be that the process towards peace addresses the stakes each actor has in the conflict, by giving voice to their understanding of the conflict. This idea of a self-fulfilling prophecy in which the expectation of a Saudi-Iranian face-off over volatile areas within their spheres of influence has not only justified, but to a certain extent required their involvement in the conflict, giving legitimacy to their framing of the situation and the solutions they propose. Perhaps the solution lies with the argument that these regional interests should be put aside, in order to focus instead on the internal root causes of the conflict.

The limitations of this research lie mostly with the time constraint of the thesis period, the problems of access and language, and the necessity of limiting the volume of data for analysis. Firstly, the conflict in Yemen is still ongoing. As outlined in the methodology, the research collected data in the time period between March 2015 and May 2016. This limited time period was necessary in order to complete the collection and analysis of the data, as it already represented a significant volume of articles to be organized, codified, and analysed – 482 to be precise. However, as the conclusions made by this thesis only apply to this time period, they do not go back to the very start of the conflict – particularly if that is defined as prior to the Houthi takeover in September 2014 – and cover only just over a year of the conflict. This decision was justified, as the starting point chosen reflects the moment in which the conflict significantly pulled Iran and Saudi Arabia into the discourse surrounding it; however a more accurate and detailed investigation would look back into this early period in order to make a more significant analysis. For example, such an investigation could serve to highlight whether or not news coverage surrounding the conflict from Saudi Arabia and Iran increased after the coalition's intervention, and any changes in the narrative before and after this point. Moreover, a further investigation that follows the current peace negotiations and this new stage of the conflict for a longer period of time will again be able to make more significant statements concerning any changes in narratives. Secondly, the investigation was limited by the problem of finding and accessing news from Saudi Arabia, Iran and Yemen. Whilst in the end internet news sources offered fully in English were found for each, this posed a challenge, and in the case of Iran and Yemen the relative scarcity of online news media limited the options even further. In the case of Yemen in particular, Saba News was presented as the main news agency in the country providing consistent English news coverage. When I realised that the agency had been taken over by the Houthi I first considered that this would mean discarding Yemeni news as a point of analysis

entirely, however upon reflection it seemed that the inclusion of a news agency controlled by the Houthis was actually an interesting aspect to the research. As the scope of the research was limited to the analysis of only one news agency from each country, in order to keep the volume of data manageable, the aim was never to come up with a narrative that represented the views of the governments of Saudi Arabia, Iran or Yemen. As such, the research focused on the narratives of news agencies themselves, and the influence these had on their audiences. Future research in which multiple sources from each country are analysed could build upon the narratives and frames identified in this research, in order to make more general claims concerning the framing of the conflict by their governments.

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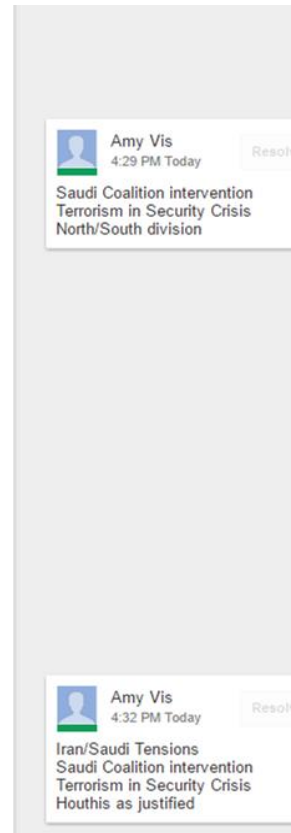
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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Initial Codification of Data

- [help resolve outstanding issues and bring the end of this prolonged conflict closer](#). Ban's spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.
- Any failure of the talks is likely to stoke intensified fighting between the Iran-allied Houthis and their partner Saleh on the one side, and Hadi supporters, backed by a Saudi-led Arab coalition, on the other.
- [nen peace talks delayed by fighting despite announced truce](#) - April 18
- Talks to end a civil war and Saudi-led intervention in Yemen will not begin on Monday as planned, the warring sides said as fighting persisted despite an announced ceasefire.
 - Delegations representing Yemen's Houthi group and the party of ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh - Saudi Arabia's main antagonists - have yet to head to Kuwait for the peace talks, citing heavy combat and Saudi-led air operations.
 - Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdul-Salam said it has been the movement's demand from the start that dialogue took place "in an atmosphere of peace and stability." Unfortunately, "aggression" had not stopped and air strikes were continuing in different areas, he said.
 - The U.N.-brokered truce went into effect on April 11.
 - Saudi Arabia and some Gulf Arab allies joined the war in March last year to back Yemen's government after it was pushed into exile by forces loyal to Saleh and the Houthi movement, also called Ansarallah.
 - Previous United Nations-mediated talks in June and December failed to end the Arabian Peninsula war.
 - The U.N. envoy to Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, urged the two parties remaining in Sanaa to commit to the talks and travel to Kuwait. "The next few hours are crucial ... I hope that Ansarallah and the General People's Congress do not miss this opportunity that could save Yemen the loss of more lives and put an end to the circle of violence that has engulfed the country."
 - Peace talks face an array of obstacles, from [the proliferation of weapons](#) to the deepening of a security vacuum that has allowed al Qaeda fighters to seize territory and opened a path for Islamic State militants to launch attacks.
 - Unrepresented in the Kuwait talks, Yemen's once-independent south is rife with secessionist fervor, and tens of thousands of protesters rallied for independence in the port city of Aden for a second day on Monday.
- [nen's warring sides signal optimism for Kuwait peace talks](#) - April 17
- Yemen's warring parties are sending conciliatory signals ahead of U.N.-backed talks starting on Monday, in a rare sign of mutual willingness to end a year-old conflict that has caused one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.
 - A deal may help defuse tensions between regional powerhouses Iran and Saudi Arabia, who are allied to opposing sides in Yemen and whose rivalry has helped fuel wars and political struggles across the volatile Middle East.



Appendix 2 – Saba News: Aggression kills over 7,000 in Yemen so far¹⁰⁵

“SANA’A, Feb. 17 (Saba) – The acting ministers held here on Wednesday a press conference, reviewing the Saudi aggression crimes and the destruction it left in the public and private facilities. Over 325 days, the Saudi aggression has killed and injured thousands of innocent people and has affected all the life aspects in the country. The death toll of the aggression amounted to 7,018 martyrs, including 1,601 children and 1,161 women, and the number of wounded reached 16,551 people, including 2,247 children and 1,755 women, as well as 147 handicapped, the acting health minister Dr. Ghazi Ismail said in the press conference. Dr. Ismail stated that more than 340 medical facilities, including hospitals, medical centers and specialized

¹⁰⁵ Saba News Agency (17 February 2016) ‘Aggression kills over 7,000 in Yemen so far’ <http://www.sabanews.net/en/news419672.htm>

units were destroyed by the aggression. He also referred to the damage resulting from the lack of the oil products and medical materials due to the unjust blockade on the country, which led to the death of many patients with chronic diseases. The acting minister of human rights Ali Saleh Taiseer indicated that his ministry has issued recently its annual report on the crimes and violations committed by the Saudi aggression in Yemen, which fall within the war crimes and crimes against humanity. Those crimes include the deliberate murder through targeting civilians and populated areas, devastating the infrastructure and the service facilities and starving the people via the complete siege on the country and preventing the entry of foodstuffs and goods and bombarding ports, airports, roads and bridges, Taiseer explained. In the agricultural sector, three million workers have lost their jobs because of the Saudi aggression, which destroyed 4,817 sites, 19 water dams and barriers, 98 water pumps and irrigation networks and 20 agricultural buildings and facilities, according to the acting minister of agricultural and irrigation Dr. Mohammed al-Ghashm. The aggression also caused damage to 11 central markets for vegetables and fruits, 40 rural souks, two ports for agricultural exports, 300 livestock stables, 110 poultry farms, 19 cold storage stores and six agricultural cooperatives, as well as the damage resulting from the lack of the oil derivatives, which led to drought in large agricultural areas and crops spoilage. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has stopped presenting its services to more than 5.7 million beneficiaries, the acting minister said. The amounts paid via the social security network, estimated at 97 billion Yemeni rials (Y.R.) annually, have been suspended because of the situations being experienced by the country, he explained. He indicated to the damage suffered by the Handicapped Fund and the social care houses due to the Saudi aggression, which caused the stopping of 350 thousand workers in the private sector. The oil exportation has stopped and the production declined due to the aggression on the country, the acting minister of oil and minerals Yahya al-Ajam said. In addition, the aggression has destroyed 244 fuel stations, 189 oil trucks and 37 installations, including the Seismology Center and the Yemeni Petroleum Company branch in Dhamar province and Ras Isa oil facility, as well as the lay-offs in the oil companies. For his part, the acting minister of Telecommunications and information technology Musleh al-Ozair confirmed that the telecommunications sector has suffered massive losses estimated at tens of billions of rials because of the Saudi aggression.”

Appendix 3 - Letter from President Hadi, quoted by the Saudi Press Agency¹⁰⁶

“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

¹⁰⁶ Saudi Press Agency (26 March 2015) ‘Statement from The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait regarding latest developments in Yemen’

<http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1342487>

This letter is included directly as quoted in the article, and is therefore not translated from Arabic into English by the researcher. Any errors in translation, or in English grammar, are as quoted by the Saudi Press Agency.

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 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."