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The Myth of the Red Line

An International Relations Analysis of the Obama Administration's
Argumentation For and Against a Military Intervention in Syria

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Abstract - English

This paper aims to examine the arguments proposed by the Obama administration regarding a U.S. military intervention in Syria due to the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime in 2013. During his presidency, Obama stated that he draws a 'red line' at the use of chemical weapons against civilians, but the threat proved to be empty a year later when thousands of people were killed in a chemical weapons attack in a Damascus suburb and the Syrian regime were found guilty of the deed. Obama firstly suggested and tried to legitimize a limited military operation in Syria, but then shifted his stance entirely and instead, tried to delegitimize his own former stance. By collecting arguments from speeches, interviews and such made by the former president Barack Obama and some of the closest people in his staff, the research aims to recognize what kind of arguments were being used. The arguments are extracted and structured according to Arne Naess' argumentation analysis, followed by a set of research questions to apply the theoretical framework. The theories consists of international relations theories as well as Aristotle's three types of arguments - ethos, pathos and logos. The results of the research are then discussed and concluded and eventually finds what a noticeable shift of the arguments' nature was made.

Keywords: International relations, International relations theories, Barack Obama, The Obama administration, Military intervention, Syria, Argumentation analysis, Ideological analysis

Abstract - svenska

Svensk titel:

Den röda gränsen som aldrig drogs -

En analys med internationella relationer av Obama-administrationens argumentation för och mot en militär intervention i Syrien

Denna uppsats syftar till att undersöka de argument som Obama-administrationen uttryckte angående ett amerikanskt militärt ingripande i Syrien till följd av den syriska regimens användning av kemiska vapen år 2013. Under sin tid i Vita huset uppgav Obama att USA drar en "röd linje" vid användandet av kemiska vapen mot civila, men hotet visade sig vara tomt ett år senare när tusentals människor dödades i en förort till Damaskus och den syriska regimen befanns vara skyldig i gärningen. Obama föreslog och försökte först argumentera för att legitimera en begränsad militär operation i Syrien, men ändrade sedan sin ståndpunkt helt och argumenterade mer eller mindre mot sin tidigare hållning. Genom att samla argument från tal, intervjuer och liknande gjorda av den före-detta presidenten Barack Obama och några av de närmaste personerna i hans stab, syftar denna uppsats till att identifiera vilken typ av argument som användes. Argumenten utvinns och struktureras enligt Arne Naess argumentationsanalys, följt av en uppsättning forskningsfrågor för att tillämpa den teoretiska ramen. Teorierna består av teorier inom internationella relationer samt Aristoteles tre typer av argument - etos, patos och logotyper. Resultaten av forskningen diskuteras och avslutas sedan och i kommer fram till att en märkbar förändring av argumentationen och dess natur gjordes.

Nyckelord: Internationella relationer, Internationella relationsteorier, Barack Obama, Obama-administrationen, Militär intervention, Syrien, Argumentationsanalys, Ideologisk analys

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1 Introduction

As the demonstrations in Syria started to escalate into a full blown civil war in the years of 2011-2012, American ambassadors and diplomats were withdrawn from the country. When Assad threatened to use chemical weapons if outside forces invaded, then president Barack Obama made the following statement in late August 2012:

“We have been very clear to the Assad regime, but also to other players on the ground, that a red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized. That would change my calculus. That would change my equation.”¹

When evidence was found that the Assad regime used chemical weapons in a suburb right outside of Damascus a year later, Obama suddenly seemed to have backed out of his previous statement - his calculus did not change. A lot of people started to fear what a stance like that may do to the credibility of the U.S. and maybe to try to somewhat salvage the damage that had been done, Obama proposed a limited military action. To get the American people onboard, many arguments were proposed by Obama and his closest staff in favor of a military action, but before anything could happen Obama changed his mind. A military action, no matter how limited, was no longer an option. To legitimize the decision, Obama and his staff once again went out to the public arguing why a military action was not a viable plan.² During the span of less than a month, the administration managed to argue against their previous arguments, creating a somewhat confusing situation that shows the real face of high stakes politics in practice.

¹ ‘Remarks by the President to the White House Press Corps’, The White House: President Barack Obama, 2012-08-20
(<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/08/20/remarks-president-white-house-press-corps>)

² ‘Obama’s Red Line, Revisited’. Politico Magazine, 2017-06
(<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/07/obama-syria-foreign-policy-red-line-revisited-214059>)

It is not a coincidence that this is the subject I choose to write my bachelor thesis about - with both my parents being Kurds from Syria, I have followed the development of the conflict with great discomfort. When the war in Syria broke out, I was old and wise enough to understand some of the underlying causes of the conflict, but still too young to understand the magnitude of them. The Arab Spring brought with itself a string of hope about a better future and long-sought-for freedom, but those dreams were soon to be shattered by a regime with no thought about giving up power and a surrounding world with no courage or willingness to lend a hand. The first bomb fell the day after one of my cousins wedding, but 7 years later I still struggle to apprehend the magnitude of the conflict which has caused over 500.000 casualties and forced millions of people to flee their homes.

As seen in the title, this thesis aims to examine the story about the red line that never existed - a line that was drawn for the whole world to see, but ended up being one of the largest faux pas of the Obama administration.

1.1 Thesis statement, purpose and research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how a major power state acts upon humanitarian crises by studying the case of the United States under the Obama administration, where the administration firstly argued to legitimize the decision to do a limited military intervention in Syria, and later argued against said intervention. With the help of various public statements by key personnel in the Obama administration, I will examine the arguments made regarding the possibility of an American intervention in the Syrian war and the changes in point of views.

I have chosen to use speeches and interviews from essential staff within the Obama administration between the years of 2013-2017. To better understand the context of which these statements are made, the theoretical framework to be used in this thesis is

based on the classic theoretical perspectives in the field of international relations. I will use the different theories to examine the positions taken in the Obama administration to see how they connect as well as divide from each other. The discipline of international relations theorizes the political world and how it does and does not connect, and by recognizing what perspective the individuals use to conceptualize an issue and situation such as Syria I will thereby have a clearer view of the arguments used by Obama and his staff.

The research questions

- What arguments did Obama and his staff use for and against a limited military intervention in Syria?
- On what ideological and rhetorical grounds were these arguments made?

1.2 Primary material and limitations

To examine the arguments made about an intervention in Syria I have chosen to study different official statements made by staff in the Obama administration during a time interval of the years 2013-2017. The limitation is based on a noticeable shift in the rhetoric used about Syria from different parts of the administration due to the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons in 2013, and the departure of the administration from the White House.

While researching to determine the scope of the primary material for this paper, my aim was to base the material on public speeches, interviews, White House press statements and other types of public announcements from specific individuals within the administration, but because of the various positions within the administration the type of statements varies in terms of text genre. Because of the amount of information accessible I have also determined to not limit scope of my material exclusively on particular people, but instead view them all as a part of the administration and treat the material as the views of an administration as a whole, not as from different individuals.

As the analysis is based on the arguments made for and against the issue of an American military intervention in Syria after the chemical attack on August 21st, the collected material consists of interviews and speeches made to explain and argue for the administration's stance. The material is based on words spoken by the staff themselves and is therefore in forms of transcripts and direct quotes. I started out with a number of 16 different sources which included statements from President Barack Obama, then United States Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power, Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes, National Security Advisor Susan B. Rice and United States Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, but after going through the material I found that all of it does not contain arguments related to the issue of an military intervention in Syria. I have therefore scaled the proportions of my primary material down to 10 pieces with Obama, Power, Rhodes and Rice.

The most extensive part of my material is 'The Obama Doctrine', a commentary-like form of interview reportage. The writer, Jeffrey Goldberg, is the National Magazine Award for Reporting winner editor in chief of *The Atlantic* and has through compiled interviews, comments and other sources from Obama and parts of his administration during his entire time in the White House created the piece where the hardest decisions during his presidency are dissected and examined.³ Goldberg has covered the foreign policy of four presidencies and does so to show what it takes for a commander in chief to be an influence in world politics and act upon their own, constantly evolving worldview.⁴ Because of the nature of this source and the author's ability to select which quotes to use and how to present them, the importance of careful consideration while extracting the arguments from the material became apparent to me. However, Goldbergs' record of following different presidents and the given aim to explain the thoughts and reasoning behind important foreign policy decisions gives a credibility to his work and this particular source.

³Jeffery Goldberg', *The Atlantic*, fetched 2018-06-01
(<https://www.theatlantic.com/author/jeffrey-goldberg/>)

⁴'Portrait of a Presidential Mind', *The Atlantic*, 2016-04
(<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/portrait-of-a-presidential-mind/471528/>)

The other parts of my primary material consists of transcripts of different speeches and interviews made during the time of the events and were acquired through the White House page for the Obama administration, through big news sites such as CBS and various talk show and radio hosts. Below, a list of the material is provided in chronological order.

‘Statement by the President on Syria’⁵

Transcript of a speech given by Barack Obama to the nation. Published on the White House page through the Office of the Press Secretary August 31st 2013.

‘Samantha Power’s case for striking Syria’⁶

Transcript of a speech given by Samantha Power at the Center for American Progress. Published on the website of The Washington Post by Ben Fisher, September 7th 2013.

‘Diane Sawyers Interviews President Obama’⁷

Transcript of an interview with journalist Diane Sawyers given by Barack Obama. Published on ABC news September 9th 2013.

‘Remarks As Prepared for Delivery by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice’⁸

Transcript of a speech given by Susan E. Rice. Published on the White House page through the Office of the Press Secretary September 9th 2013.

‘Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Syria’⁹

⁵ ‘Statement by the President on Syria’, The White House: President Barack Obama, 2013-08-31 (<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/08/31/statement-president-syria>)

⁶ ‘Samantha Power’s case for striking Syria’, The Washington Post, 2013-09-07 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/09/07/samantha-powers-case-for-striking-syria/?utm_term=.df02c3921794)

⁷ ‘Diane Sawyers Interviews President Obama’, ABC News, 2013-09-09 (<https://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/diane-sawyers-interviews-president-obama-20206427>)

⁸ ‘Remarks As Prepared for Delivery by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice’, The White House: President Barack Obama, 2013-09-09 (<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/09/remarks-prepared-delivery-national-security-advisor-susan-e-ric>)

⁹ ‘Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation of Syria’, The White House: President Barack Obama, 2013-09-10 (<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/10/remarks-president-address-nation-syria>)

Transcript of a speech given by Barack Obama to the nation. Published on the White House page through the Office of the Press Secretary September 10th 2013.

‘What Worries Ben Rhodes About Trump’¹⁰

Interview with Ben Rhodes in Politico Magazine by Michael Crowley. Published on Politico’s website in January 2017.

‘Obama Adviser Susan Rice Cites Syrian War As Biggest Disappointment’¹¹

Transcript of interview with Susan Rice for NPR by Rachel Martin. Published on NPR’s website on January 16th 2017.

‘U.S. Must Have ‘Clear Policy’ On Syria, Ex-Obama Senior Adviser Says’¹²

Transcript of interview with Ben Rhodes for NPR by Rachel Martin. Published on NPR’s website on April 11th 2017.

‘Samantha Power: ‘Trump? He’s just a hack, an actor, a performer’¹³

Interview with Samantha Power in The Irish Times by Suzanne Lynch. Published on The Irish Times’ website on October 28th 2017.

¹⁰ ‘What Worries Ben Rhodes About Trump’ Politico Magazine, 2017-01

(<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/01/obama-foreign-policy-legacy-ben-rhodes-donald-trump-china-iran-214642>)

¹¹ ‘Obama Adviser Susan Rice Cites Syrian War as Biggest Disappointment’, NPR, 2017-01-16

(<https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2017/01/16/510047606/obama-adviser-susan-rice-cites-syrian-war-as-biggest-disappointment>)

¹² ‘U.S. Must Have ‘Clear Policy’ On Syria, Ex-Obama Senior Adviser Says’, NPR, 2017-04-11

(<https://www.npr.org/2017/04/11/523381959/u-s-must-have-clear-policy-on-syria-ex-obama-senior-adviser-says>)

¹³ ‘Samantha Power: ‘Trump? He’s just a hack, an actor, a performer’’, The Irish Times, 2017-10-28

<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/samantha-power-trump-he-s-just-a-hack-an-actor-a-performer-1.3267090>

2 Context

To better understand America's role and presence in the Middle East, this chapter aims to give a relevant context to the conflict in Syria and the United States' role in it. The different sections explain the importance of the region where Syria is located and the U.S. involvement in the area, as well as the history of the war in Syria.

2.1 The Importance of the Middle East

The Middle East is and has been an important region since the establishment of the Silk Road and continuum of East-West land and sea trade routes, not only because the unique geographic location as a hinge plate of three continents, but also because of its religious significance as the heart of all of the world's largest Abrahamic religions. The tensions between the different religions go far back in time and has as a result created another dimension of historic cultural conflicts in the region that still is topical. Another factor that strengthen the importance of the region is the discovery of energy sources consisting of natural gas and oil reserves, incomparable to any other place on earth, that have secured the region's strategic value as a result.¹⁴ The instability and violence within the Middle East has always been characterized by international involvement and interventions, mostly because of the worlds dependency of the region's natural resources and need for free access and transit through the region.¹⁵ The political instability in the area begun after the defeat and fall of the Ottoman Empire during the first World War and has despite efforts of creating a regional security arrangements failed to create a plausible collective strategy. Internal disputes and lack of joint

¹⁴ Tucker, Spencer C. *The Encyclopedia of Middle East Wars: The United States in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq Conflicts [5 volumes]: The United States in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq Conflicts*. ABC-CLIO, 2010 s. 33

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, s. 33-34

alliances against common threats and the understanding of them, combined with different religious divisiveness conflicting with modernization and secularism within the cultures and involvement from the West in terms of failed peace agreements and offensive policies, has made the Middle East a hotbed of violence and conflict.¹⁶

2.2 U.S. Involvement in the Middle East

The United States' turbulent relationship with the Middle East can be traced back to the end of World War II when previous colonial powers withdrew from the area and the U.S. interests got them to assume the role of international police in the region. During such as the establishment of an Israeli state, the rise of militant Islamic ideologies and groups, Cold War superpower competition and American dependency on Middle Eastern oil, the U.S. found itself involved in numerous conflicts in forms of confrontation, intervention and war in the region. A U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) was set up in the region 1983 by President Ronald Reagan through a joint task force in the area that was appointed by President Jimmy Carter three years earlier to preserve and protect the national interests from the Soviet Union. The CENTCOM was thought to be superfluous after the Union's collapse in 1991, but has since then expanded and seen more conflict since its creation than any other Central Command during the same time frame.¹⁷

The 9/11 Attacks and the War on Terror

The 9/11 attacks that are usually pointed out as the start of the War on Terror are in fact not the first time American soldiers were sent to the Middle East to fight terrorists, but the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York 2001 were the first to be caught in the media's attention.¹⁸ The first dangerous terrorist attack was in fact a truck bomb that detonated under the World Trade Center building, followed by a surge in killing of American citizens overseas. Many of the attacks were traced to and blamed on the terror

¹⁶ Tucker, Spencer C, 2010 s. 34

¹⁷ Ibid., s. 33

¹⁸ Ibid., Ruschmann, Paul & Marzilli, Alan, *The War on Terror*, Infobase Publishing, 2008 p. 11

organization commonly known as Al-Qaeda, whose leader, the wealthy Saudi businessman Osama Bin Laden, moved the organization's operations to Afghanistan after they had been expelled from Saudi Arabia and Sudan. The organization were in the protection of the Taliban regime able to run training camps for terrorist, and Bin Laden even commanded the world's muslim community to kill American citizens with religious proclamation, which was followed through the 9/11 attacks.¹⁹ The response from the Bush administration was to label the attacks as 'acts of war', and shortly after the attacks on September 18th the congress authorized the President to use 'all necessary and appropriate force'. Two days later, the nation was at war with terrorists and according to president Bush, all nations that did not side with the U.S were siding with the terrorists.²⁰ By open and covert military operations, efforts to block financing to terrorists as well as new security legislation such as the Patriot Act, the worldwide war on terror began.²¹ President Bush demanded the Taliban to close down the training camps and hand over the Al-Qaeda leaders, and sent in an anti-taliban supported American led military force who launched an invasion that killed and captured thousands. It was promised to be different than earlier military interventions such as the ones in Iraq and Kosovo - it would instead of consisting of one single battle, become a longer campaign.²² A decade later, the country decided that the war would be over - terms like 'global war', 'war on terrorism' and fighting the 'jihadists' was removed from the list of accepted words within the administration during Obama's presidency, but the U.S. was during his term of office very much involved in a war with no visible ending in sight.²³

Contrary to popular belief, the American interests did not change much after the 9/11 attack or the war in Afghanistan. Although the War on Terror presented a new challenge, it only added a new dimension to the primal issue of maintaining and

¹⁹ Ruschmann, Paul & Marzilli, Alan, 2008, p. 11

²⁰ Ibid., p. 11

²¹ Goldman, Jan, *The War on Terror Encyclopedia: From the Rise of Al-Qaeda to 9/11 and Beyond: From the Rise of Al-Qaeda to 9/11 and Beyond*, ABC-CLIO, 7 Oct 2014 p. 15

²² Ruschmann, Paul & Marzilli, Alan, 2008 p. 11-15

²³ Goldman, Jan, 2014, p. 15

protecting the access to the world's key energy supplies in the region, securing communications and supporting Arab and Israeli allies.²⁴

2.3 The War in Syria

In the wake of the mass protests across the Middle East and Northern Africa known as the Arab Spring, an uprising in Syria started in the early beginning of 2011. The protesters who demanded civil rights, political reforms and an end to the state of emergency that had been initiated since 1963, were met with violence and arrests and hundreds were killed. In an attempt to calm the situation down, the government released some political prisoners in March despite Assad's objection, and the state of emergency was lifted in April after being in force for 48 years.²⁵ In the end of May, the death toll had reached 1000 and countless others were injured or had disappeared. A unified opposition is created under the name Syrian National Council in October, and one month later the Arab League votes to suspend Syria for failing to implement an Arab peace plan. By December 2011, more than 5000 people have been killed and multiple resolutions in the U.N. Security Council have been vetoed by Russia and China.²⁶ As the conflict went on in 2012, the protests and demonstrations became more widespread and lead to major casualties on both the regime and the rebels, and the number of refugees flowing into neighboring countries rose up to 30.000. With an opposition that was deeply conflicted and divided from the inside and a lack of support from the westworld, the need for international help was crucial for the Syrian people.

²⁴Cordesman, A. H. "THE US MILITARY AND THE EVOLVING CHALLENGES IN THE MIDDLE EAST." *Naval War College Review* 55.3 : 72-112, 2002 p. 72

²⁵Charles River Editors, *The Middle East Then and Now: the History of Israel, Iran, Syria and Afghanistan*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, [e-book] October 26, 2013, location 4932/6529

²⁶ *Ibid.*, location 4953-4976/6529

3 Theory and Methodology

In this chapter, the theories and methodology for this paper are presented and explained. The paper will be using three theories in the field of international relations, as well as two methods - an argumentative analysis and an ideological analysis - to answer the research questions correctly.

3.1 Theory

3.1.1 International Relations

International relations treats and discusses the decisions made within a country that affects the relationships with other countries by asking questions such as following²⁷;

- Who makes the decisions?
- Why do they make the decisions?
- How are the decisions made?
- Who is affected by the decisions?
- What are the likely responses to the decisions?²⁸

The discipline focuses on interaction between countries or among countries and other actors in the international system to see who makes the decisions - irrespective of whether the decision is made by an individual, government or other form of organization - and how they affect people, societies, cultures and even individuals.²⁹ The discipline does therefore not examine a specific political process within nation-states or across different political systems, but can for example examine an actor on a macro

²⁷ Kaufman, Joyce P. *Introduction to International Relations: Theory and Practice*, Rowman & Littlefield, 9 Feb 2018, p. 2

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6-7

level to find out the effects of their decisions on major decisions on a nation-state level.

³⁰ International relations uses different ideological perspectives that all are assumed from the same but can be more or less advanced and progressive, and to keep my research at a reasonable level I therefore have chosen to use the most fundamental versions of each perspective.

Realism

Realism is one of the classic theoretical perspectives and a part of the foundation that international relations is built upon. As stated by Jackson and Sørensen, realist perspective upholds the military power as the key requirement for nation-states survival in the fight for power and finds that international conflicts can only be solved by war.³¹ According to political scientist Paul Wilkinson, realism is of the same beliefs as Thomas Hobbes and Niccolo Machiavelli who both perceived that human beings in their nature are motivated by their own self-interests and lust for power, and they firmly believe that international politics consists of the constant struggle for power between individuals who through their nation-states enforce their interests.³² Jackson and Sørensen explains how the leading classical realist thinker of the 20th century Hans Morgenthau embraces this view of the human nature and reckon men and women as carrying an urging will to power, and upholds power as the ultimate goal of politics.³³ Wilkinson claims that according to the realist perspective, it is always a necessity to be ready for war, because of the world always being in a state of anarchy due to the constant struggle for power. To enforce this, all the wealth from commerce and industry in the state should be provided to the military power.³⁴ A modern realist would emphasize the role of the state as the key military actor as well as the importance of alliance building, and contrary to the liberal perspective, refuse to confide in and rely on international organisations and agreements concerning state security. Because of these ideals, realism can often appear

³⁰ Kaufman, J, 2018 p. 7

³¹ Wilkinson, Paul, *International relations [Elektronisk resurs] : a very short introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007 p. 2
Jackson, Robert & Sørensen, Georg. *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*. Oxford University Press, 2016 p. 62

³² Wilkinson, Paul, 2007 p. 2

³³ Jackson, Robert & Sørensen, Georg., 2016 p. 62

³⁴ Wilkinson, Paul, 2007 p. 2

as very pessimistic and conservative because of its lack of faith in liberal institutions and view on human nature.³⁵

Liberalism

The liberalist perspective is not to be confused with the aspects of the political ideology of liberalism - although it can be connected with the emerge of the modern liberal state, the liberalist view developed during the 19th-20th century to find a way to understand international economics as well as the politics.³⁶ In states with freedom for the individual the liberalist finds that both the modern civil society as well as capitalist economy can flourish and serve as a great potential for human progress. While they recognize the self-interest within each individual that is emphasized by the realist, the liberalist believe that many of these interests are shared and therefore can provide potential for collaboration and cooperative social actions because of the fact that humans are reasonable and rational beings which can trump the fear and will to power.³⁷ Liberalism believes in policies for the common good, rather than what is good for the individual state and implies that wars can be avoided altogether if countries work cooperatively. As suggested by Kaufman, looking both within nation-states and the international system as a whole, the liberalist theory covers far more levels than realism.

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Constructivism

Constructivism is a newer theoretical approach in the field of international relations and is often referred to as the main challenger to the established theoretical perspectives. By examining relationships between larger political and social context, the constructivist sets its focus on international issues. Constructivism implies the ways of how states socially constructs realities that they then act upon, something that is strongly reasserted by Alexander Wendt, one of the first political scientists to define the approach.³⁹ Depending on their view of themselves as well as their views of other states or actors, a

³⁵ Wilkinson, Paul, 2007 p. 3-4

³⁶ Kaufman, J, 2018 p.. 55, Jackson, Robert & Sørensen, Georg., 2016 p. 97

³⁷ Jackson, Robert & Sørensen, Georg., 2016, p. 97

³⁸ Kaufman, J, 2018 p. 55-56

³⁹ Kaufman, J, 2018 p.. 62

state will act accordingly in response to the actions of other states or actors. States does in this manner have multiple personalities which are dynamic and changes contingent upon their views - depending on their perception of the other actors, a state may change and have different responses to two presumably identical actions from two different actors.⁴⁰ Even though constructivists much like realists sees the state as the primary actor in the international system, they also see the context - the environment with other actors surrounding them, that influences and changes the course of their actions. Similarities with liberalism in focusing on analysing the state differs too, where constructivism tends to analyze more within the state and assumes that ideas and situations happening on a individual or domestic level can change the values and doings of the entire state.⁴¹

By using these three central theories, I will be able to cover the basic need of the research without having too many different theories to handle.

3.2 Methodology

For this paper, two different methods will be presented and used to answer both parts of the thesis statement, as well as applying the theoretical framework. The first part of the thesis will examine the arguments presented, and the second part is aimed to determined the different international relations perspectives to see how these changed. I will therefore use an argumentation analysis developed by Arne Naess, as well as a ideology analysis presented by Jonathan Leader Maynard.

3.2.1 Argumentation Analysis

For the first part of the study, an argumentation analysis created by Arne Naess is used. The analysis consist of a list of pro and contra arguments, which itself consists of a structural and a descriptive part. If the analysis is utilized to find a conclusion, it is

⁴⁰ Kaufman, J, 2018 p. 62-63

⁴¹ Kaufman, J, 2018 p. 64-65

referred to as a “pro aut contra” and weighs arguments against each other to adduce someone for or against a certain claim. If the analysis such as in this thesis, is not used to find a conclusion in the argumentation, it is a so called “pro et contra”, whereas the aim of the analysis is to provide a overview of the arguments to be understood by an outside observer.⁴² By not only pick out the arguments made in the material, but actually connect the arguments to each other and map out how they relate to one another, the analysis provides a structured outline of the entire debate.

The first step in this method is to identify the thesis, an assertion that is not intended to undermine or support any other statement in the text, but instead should be the plea that other claims in the text undermine or support. An argument, on the other hand, is to undermine or support the thesis, and depending on which of these two, Naess denotes it as a pro or counter argument, which are denoted with the letters P and C respectively in the chart. The next step is to structure the arguments according to their order, which refers to the statements in the text that are not intended to undermine or support the actual thesis, but instead undermine or support other arguments in the text. An argument of the first order is one that relates directly to the thesis, an argument of the second order is one that relates to an argument of the first order, and so on. The arguments of the first order are denoted as P1, P2, P3 ... or C1, C2, C3 ... by Naess, and arguments of the second order are also denoted by one letter and number, respectively, followed by the designation of that argument they relate to. An argument of the second order can be both for or against the argument it relates to, and depending on this, they are also designated by a P or C.⁴³

To demonstrate, I have composed a list step by step on how to use Naess’ method which can be found below.

Step 1: Find the thesis and denote it as ‘F’:

⁴² Naess, Arne. ‘Surveys of Arguments for and Against a Standpoint’ Dregson A. (eds) *The Selected Works of Arne Naess*. Springer, Dordrecht, 2005 p. 79

⁴³ Bergström, Göran & Boréus, Kristina (red.), *Textens mening och makt: metodbok i samhällsvetenskaplig text- och diskursanalys*, Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2012. p. 100

F: Thesis that the argumentation supports or refutes.

Step 2: Find arguments for and against the thesis, and denote them as P respectively C. These are arguments of the first order.

P1: The first argument supporting the thesis.

C1: The first argument against the thesis.

Step 3: Pick out the arguments that supports other arguments, not the thesis.

These are labeled by whether it is a pro or contra argument of the second order to the chosen argument of the first order, and that label is put before the label of the chosen argument. Here is an example of multiple arguments of the second order to an argument of the first order:

P1P1: First argument supporting argument P1

P2P1: Second argument supporting argument P1

C1P1: First argument against argument P1

C2P1: Second argument against argument P1

The same principle is used for the contra arguments:

P1C1: First argument supporting argument C1

C1C1: First argument against argument C1

In this particular paper the argument relate to each other in such a way that it is not entirely necessary for the reader to understand the complexity of the argumentative analysis, but to provide an example it at least gives a chance to understand the vast majority of it.

3.2.2 Ideological Analysis

To access the basis in the primary material and being able to apply the theoretical framework of this thesis, a method of ideological analysis is to be used. An improved method for ideological analysis for political theorists, sociologists and psychologists is presented by Jonathan Leader Maynard in his paper “Ideological Analysis” where he introduces the meaning of ideology and argues for why and how an analysis like this should be utilized. Leader Maynard does among other points present a suggested list of

structured questions to be modified and used to isolate the ideology of the speaker or author.⁴⁴ The list presented by Maynard have been used more as a source of inspiration than a actual method in this thesis, but I believe that it still is relevant to account for his analysis framework to show what my method is based on.

- 1) What has the speaker seemed to say, and what do they seem to be doing in saying this?
- 2) What are the concepts and terms that make up the speaker's expressions, and what are the most plausible meanings of those concepts and terms that the speaker would attach to them? (In interview methods, such meanings might be solicited by further questioning.)
- 3) What beliefs, arguments or other ideas do these concepts and terms together seem to express?
- 4) Are there reasons to believe that the speaker does not sincerely hold those beliefs/arguments or other ideas? On all available evidence, does it seem fair (it will never be certain) to assume that these reflect the speaker's own views? If not, why are they being said – and what might this tell us, if not about the speaker's own ideology, about the broader ideologies of others in the context in which they are speaking?
- 5) What possible ideas, not explicitly expressed by the speaker (a) might lend comprehensibility and consonance to their overall ideological system and (b) might there be good reasons to believe the speaker held consciously or unconsciously?
- 6) What appears to be the ideological structure of the speaker's ideas? By this I mean the relationships between the various ideas – relationships which might be logical (presupposition, inference, entailment, etc.), semantic (connotation, inclusion, exclusion, clarification, is a subset of), emotional (attraction, antipathy, felt association), causal (producing, requiring, precluding, encouraging) or something else?⁴⁵

To be able to apply the analysis on the chosen material, I have modified the list to fit ideological arguments instead of ideological ideas, and altered the aim of the questions to fit the purpose of the paper. The framework for my analysis is presented below.

⁴⁴ Leader Maynard, J. 'Ideological Analysis', in Adrian Blau (ed.), *Research Methods in Analytical Political Theory*, Cambridge University Press, 2016 p. 14

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 14

- 1) Where on the timeline does the argument present itself?
- 2) What international relations perspective does the argument seem to express?
- 3) What appears to be the structure of the argument? Meaning, what argumentative appeal is the argument built on?

As the first question is aimed to map the argument is used to gain a more apprehensive understanding of the nature and context of the argument, the second is rudimentary to my analysis and to be able to apply the theoretical framework. The third question is built on Aristotle's three appeals of argument - ethos, pathos and logos. The appeals are as Aristotle himself suggests “modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word” and depends on a underlying meaning and perception from the speaker, the audience and the message.⁴⁶ The ethos emphasizes the moral character of the speaker, while the pathos seeks to appeal to the emotions of the audience. Logos refers to the logic and reason behind the argument through persuasive language and rational reasoning.⁴⁷ The reason why I have chose to include the third question is to get a better understanding of how the specific arguments change their appeal to the public. As the method presented by Maynard is created to provide tools for a more effective and balanced use of ideology in the course of analysis, it offers an assured amount of freedom when it comes to altering and customizing the entity and core of the method for the benefit of the thesis. While this certainly provides a strength in the purpose of my paper, the fact that the method is so easily customized can lead to a harshly controlled and canalized study. However, I find that the use of this analysis is to be used in a way where the primary material is not in any way forced to be interpreted into any specific direction.

⁴⁶ Shabo, Magedah E., *Rhetoric, Logic, & Argumentation: A Guide for Student Writers*, Prestwick House, Inc. July 1, 2010 p. 8

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8

4 Literature Review and Previous Research

In the previous research done for this paper, I have focused on a few specific subject to both gain an intellectual context and in other ways inspire or contribute to my thesis. A lot of research, articles and such can be found within the field of not only American foreign policy and war but also regarding Syria and the international legal context of the matter in hand. To limit the scope of literature I firstly and foremost have searched to find a more comprehensive understanding of Obama's foreign policy during his time in the White House. I have also chosen articles where the issue of legality and what framework the president may act within are discussed or accounted for. In the following chapter, four articles which have served as previous research for the purpose of this paper are presented.

One of the articles used is 'Intervention in Libya, Yes; Intervention in Syria, No: Deciphering the Obama Administration', written by the Israeli-American professor Amos N. Guiora. It was published in the *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* in 2011 and deals with the Middle East policy of the Obama administration and the issues created when expectations and actual proceedings don't relate to each other.⁴⁸ In the article, Guiora goes through the history of Western intervention in the Middle East, how it has been characterized by imperialism and religion and largely ruled by national and economical interests. He also provides a background to the current situation in the Middle East, how Obama's policy for the region is different in the cases of Syria and Libya, the humanitarian intervention laws and, finally, what it may look like in the future. The article was very favorable as it provides a very relevant background to the history of the region and the United States' prior involvements, as well as how Obama

⁴⁸ Guiora, AN. Intervention in Libya, Yes; Intervention in Syria, No: Deciphering the Obama Administration [article]. *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*. Issues 1 and 2, 251, 2011

already resonated in the escalation of the conflict in Syria. However, a very noticeable problem with this source is that it was written in 2011, which was before the chemical attack and other important turning and breaking points in the conflict, but despite that it provides a decent background and a source of inspiration for my own research.

Another article referring to the Obama's administration's use of force in Syria is a commentary piece written by James Uthmeier, 'Redrawing the Red Line: The Constitution's Limitations on President Obama's Ability to Use Military Force in Syria.'

⁴⁹ Uthmeier who is a Senior advisor at the U.S. Department of Commerce, discusses the authority between the president, constitution, legislature and executive body when it comes to warfare. In view of Obama's relatively conflicting statements and actions in relation to the conflict in Syria, one examines the constraints and opportunities that the President actually has to make an intervention in Syria and analyzes the presidential power of the United States with just Syria as a context. This article, or comment, has contributed to a more juridical background in my research as it gives a direct insight into the U.S. legal system and, above all, discusses the Constitution very well. However, it is a bit out of line with the research in this paper to do, and the author may also be a bit biased since he has worked for, among other things, Marco Rubio, who was a presidential candidate for the Republican party in the last election. The source were therefore more appropriate for the general knowledge about the subject, rather than something that contributed to the actual research.

The article 'Humanitarian Intervention Post-Syria: Legitimate and Legal?' is written by Professor Milena Sterio and discusses the vacuum that exists within the international system in order to intervene in conflicts, such as those in Syria, when you can not claim self-defense or compromise the Security Council's veto. In the article, Sterio discusses "use of force" and what expectations and limitations the ban creates in international law and the development of humanitarian interventions in relation to, for example,

⁴⁹ Uthmeier, J. Note: Redrawing the Red Line: The Constitution's Limitations on President Obama's Ability to Use Military Force in Syria [notes]. *Georgetown Journal of Law & Public Policy*. 2, 875, 2014.

Responsibility to Protect, as well as proposals for motivations for intervening military in Syria under current international law.⁵⁰ The article also discusses a proposed framework for humanitarian interventions and how this can be applied to the conflict in Syria. This article was besides very interesting, relevant to my investigation, partly because Obama and the U.S. are used as examples, but also because it provides a different perspective. The article provided a good juridical background and knowledge for the purpose of the paper.

The article 'Obama's Way' written by journalist Fred Kaplan, is more or less a statement of Obama's foreign policy from his entry into the White House, until the U.S. involvement in the conflict in Syria. Kaplan is an author and national security columnist for Slate magazine who has written five books, one of which became a New York Times bestseller. Among his Pulitzer Prize, Kaplan is known for his work as the chief of both the Moscow and New York bureau, as well as his role as the foreign and defence policy aide to Les Aspin in the U.S. House of Representatives.⁵¹

The article is relevant to providing a clear timeline of Obama's political actions, but also how this has changed over time and has helped to provide a better background for and to map important events during his time as president. By examining the mindset and attitude Obama had in the beginning of his term and how some of the biggest and toughest decision he was put in front of were handled as well as how they influenced the latter decisions during his time in the White House, the issue of Syria is contextualized and compared with the U.S. involvement and ambivalence in the case of Libya.⁵² I found this article to be very fruitful both for the previous research and understanding but it also gave a good input in the discussion of the paper.

⁵⁰ Sterio, M. HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION POST-SYRIA: LEGITIMATE AND LEGAL?. *Brooklyn Journal of International Law*. 40, 109, Jan. 1, 2014.

⁵¹ 'Fred Kaplan', Council on Foreign Relations, fetched 2018-07-10 (https://www.cfr.org/content/bios/Fred_Kaplan_bio_9-3-13.pdf), 'Fred Kaplan', Simon & Schuster, fetched 2018-07-10 (<http://www.simonandschuster.com/authors/Fred-Kaplan/82313291>)

⁵² Kaplan, F. Obama's Way. *Foreign Affairs*. 95, 1, 46-63, Jan. 2016

5 Analysis

The analysis consists of two parts - the first part where the argumentation analysis is used to find what arguments were made by the Obama administration to answer the first research question, and the second part, where the theoretical framework is applied with the help of the ideological analysis on the result of the argumentation analysis and the second research question is answered. To give an more clear overview, I have chosen to divide the two into separate parts in this section. Also note that the footnotes have been abbreviated in the whole analysis chapter to not take up too much space.

5.1 The Arguments

To get a clear view of the arguments made in favor of a limited military action as well as the arguments against any military action, I've chosen to conduct an argumentation analysis as presented in the methodology chapter. By mapping all the arguments made and categorizing them into only one chart instead of an individual chart for every interview, article or transcript, I've strived to collect the overall official views expressed and stated by the Obama administration. As many arguments where more or less alike, I have tried as far as possible to create categories or "main arguments" in which multiple similar arguments fit in.

The approach used to gain the result of this analysis was made in a few steps. Firstly, I went through the entirety of my primary material and carefully picked out arguments related to the issue of an military intervention in Syria. While picking out the arguments, I started to form a list to be able to categorize the arguments to make it easier to later on arrange them according to the pro et contra list. Since the pro arguments were mostly made before the turning point in the debate are placed first and

the contra arguments that were made afterwards comes last in the list, it might seem as if the arguments deliberately are placed in a chronological order but this is not the case.

F	The U.S. should act with a military response against Bashar al-Assad’s use of chemical weapons.
P1	Failing to respond to the act has more consequences than not acting at all. ⁵³
P1P1	Failing to respond will pose danger to american security. ⁵⁴
P2P1	A failure to stand against the use of chemical weapons would weaken prohibitions against other weapons of mass destruction. ⁵⁵
P3P1	A failure to enforce accountability in the face of this act may speak on U.S. resolve to stand up against others who flout fundamental international rules. ⁵⁶
P4P1	If able to stop children from being gassed to death and making our own children safe in the long run, action should be taken. ⁵⁷
P5P1	By not acting, the U.S are sending a signal that international norm and principles regarding chemical weapons doesn’t mean much. ⁵⁸
P1P2P1	Assad could continue to use chemical weapons and other regimes may seek to use chemical weapons as well. ⁵⁹
P2P2P1	A failure to respond may lead to more chemical attacks. ⁶⁰
P1P2P2P1	More chemical attacks leads to more refugees. ⁶¹
P1P1P2P2P1	The fourth largest city in Jordan is already a refugee camp. ⁶²
P2P1P2P2P1	Refugee camps fertile recruiting ground for violent extremists. ⁶³
P3P2P1	Weapons of mass destruction may get in the hands of the wrong people/terrorists. ⁶⁴

⁵³ Power 07-09-2013

⁵⁴ Obama 10-09-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

⁵⁵ Obama 10-09-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

⁵⁶ Obama 09-09-2013

⁵⁷ Obama 10-09-2013, Power 07-09-2013

⁵⁸ Obama 04-2016, Rice 09-09-2013

⁵⁹ Power 07-09-2013, Obama 10-09-2013, Kerry (Obama 04-2016), Rice 09-09-2013

⁶⁰ Power 07-09-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

⁶¹ Power 07-09-2013

⁶² Power 07-09-2013

⁶³ Power 07-09-2013

⁶⁴ Power 07-09-2013, Obama 10-09-2013, Obama 31-08-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

P4P2P1, P1P3P2P1	Poses a threat to U.S allies such as Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey as well as U.S military and diplomats, both in the Middle East and back at home. ⁶⁵
P1P1P2P1	Military action can make Assad and other dictators to think twice before using chemical weapons. ⁶⁶
C1P1	A military response is too big of a risk.
P1C1P1	UN inspectors on the ground could be at risk. ⁶⁷
P2C1P1	Assad might place civilians as human shields around obvious targets. ⁶⁸
C2P1	American soldiers' lives should not be put at risk in order to prevent humanitarian disasters, unless they pose a direct threat to the U.S. ⁶⁹

P2	The other alternatives are exhausted or simply unnecessary. ⁷⁰
P1P2	No results from talks with Syria through U.S, through Iran and Russia. ⁷¹
P2P2	No response or cooperation from Syria to U.N held diplomatic process for negotiations. ⁷²
P3P2	The diplomatic process can not continue when one side of the conflict is gassed. ⁷³
P4P2	A drawn out legal process won't affect the immediate calculus of the ones ordering the attack. ⁷⁴
P5P2	Same approaches that have been tried for the last year won't be effective. ⁷⁵

P3	The action will be limited and not open-ended. ⁷⁶
P1P3	The promise of no boots on the ground and ending unnecessary wars will be upheld. ⁷⁷

⁶⁵ Power 07-09-2013, Obama 31-08-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

⁶⁶ Obama 10-09-2013

⁶⁷ Obama 04-2016

⁶⁸ Obama 04-2016

⁶⁹ Obama 04-2016,

⁷⁰ Power 07-09-2013, Obama 10-09-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

⁷¹ Power 07-09-2013

⁷² Power 07-09-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

⁷³ Power 07-09-2013

⁷⁴ Power 07-09-2013

⁷⁵ Power 07-09-2013

⁷⁶ Power 07-09-2013 Obama 10-09-2013, Obama 31-08-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

⁷⁷ Power 07-09-2013 Obama 10-09-2013, Obama 31-08-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

P2P3, P1P2P2	A limited action can strengthen diplomacy and energize the efforts made by the U.N. ⁷⁸
C1P3	Limited action will not solve the entire Syria problem. ⁷⁹
P1C1P3	Various groups armed and supported by external actors require a large commitment of forces - not a quick and small one. ⁸⁰
P2C1P3	Without the U.S. military forces on the ground, the situation won't change much. ⁸¹
P1P1C1P3, P1P2C1P3	The ground forces in Syria are backed by allies such as Iran and Russia. ⁸²
P3C1P3	U.S missiles would not be fired at chem-weapon depots in fear of them sending poison into the air, but only strike military units that deliver the weapons and only disable their use for a few hours. ⁸³
P1P3C1P3	If the U.S went ahead with bomb strikes, the weapons would still be there but they would be fighting ISIS over them instead. ⁸⁴
P4C1P3	A military conflict with Assad cannot be started if the aim is not to finish by taking him out. ⁸⁵
P1P4C1P3	The aim is eliminating the use of chemical weapons, not overthrowing a dictator. ⁸⁶
C1C1P3	The limited strike is for reinforcing larger strategy for addressing the crisis. ⁸⁷
C1C1C1P3	The strategy that the strike was part of was (and is still) unclear. ⁸⁸

P4	Because of the "red line" being drawn, America's credibility is at stake. ⁸⁹
P1P4	By not acting, the U.S. sends a signal that indicates that they cannot back up their threats and promises. ⁹⁰

⁷⁸ Power 07-09-2013

⁷⁹ Rhodes 11-04-2017

⁸⁰ Obama 04-2016

⁸¹ Obama 04-2016

⁸² Obama 04-2016

⁸³ Obama 04-2016

⁸⁴ Obama 04-2016

⁸⁵ Rhodes 01-2017

⁸⁶ Obama 09-09-2013

⁸⁷ Power 07-09-2013

⁸⁸ Rhodes 11-04-2017

⁸⁹ Rice 09-09-2013

⁹⁰ Rice 09-09-2013

P5	The international support for the cause was substantial. ⁹¹
P1P5	The Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and NATO has urged international action in response to the chemical attack. ⁹²
P2P5	Partners in Europe, Asia and the Middle East joined together in a statement declaring the Assad regime responsible for the attack and supporting U.S. military action against it. ⁹³
C1P5	The cause lacks support internationally. ⁹⁴
P1C1P5	The only country prepared to join military action was France. ⁹⁵

C1	The U.S is not the world's policeman. ⁹⁶
C2	The U.S have a history of unnecessary wars with severe consequences. ⁹⁷
P1C2	Last time the U.S removed a dictator with force, they had to take responsibility for what came after. ⁹⁸
P2C2	When U.S. intervened in Libya, they ended up making the situation worse. ⁹⁹

C3	A political solution with non-military tools are the best way to reduce all forms of threat. ¹⁰⁰
P1C3	Military action destroyed an airfield for a few hours, diplomatic action removed over a thousand tons of chemical weapons. ¹⁰¹

C4	The use of force is not supported or approved by the Security Council. ¹⁰²
P1C4	The action would be against international law. ¹⁰³

⁹¹ Rice 09-09-2013

⁹² Power 07-09-2013

⁹³ Rice 09-09-2013

⁹⁴ Rhodes 01-2017

⁹⁵ Rhodes 01-2017

⁹⁶ Power 07-09-2013

⁹⁷ Power 07-09-2013, Obama 09-09-2013, Obama 04-2016

⁹⁸ Obama 10-09-2013

⁹⁹ Obama 04-2016, Power 10-28-2017

¹⁰⁰ Power 07-09-2013, Rhodes 11-04-2017, Obama 04-2016

¹⁰¹ Power 2015-03-22, Rhodes 01-2017, Obama 04-2016, Rhodes 11-04-2017, Rice 16-01-2017

¹⁰² Obama 04-2016

¹⁰³ Obama 04-2016

C1C4	The Security Council is paralyzed and cannot act like it is supposed to, and has therefore not lived up to its promise. ¹⁰⁴
P1C1C4	When the Council is paralyzed, states have to act outside to prevent disregard of international laws and norms. ¹⁰⁵
P2C1C4	Russia and China has blocked nearly every statement and resolution concerning the conflict in Syria. ¹⁰⁶
PIP1C1C4	In Kosovo, the Security was paralyzed but the world acted outside it. ¹⁰⁷
PIP2C1C4	It is naive to think that Russia would change their stance. ¹⁰⁸

C5	The cause lacks support in Congress and in public opinion. ¹⁰⁹
P1C5	If there is no support or recognition from congress or the american people, the strikes may be less effective. ¹¹⁰
P2C5	If action would be taken without congressional authorization, the president could face impeachment. ¹¹¹
C1C5	When airstrikes were launched during the Bosnian genocide by President Clinton, the public opinion and congress were consistently oppose before and after, but it stopped the war. ¹¹²

As presented above, these are the arguments occurring in the primary material, divided along with the arguments they refer to according to the argumentation analysis. The connections made between the arguments are the ones that appeared more naturally in the material even though they might fit as easily with another annotation, and I therefore find it necessary to point out that many of the arguments may relate to more than the one pointed out in the chart. Although many of the arguments are connected to finding an end to the usage of chemical weapons in Syria and argues that it is important for the U.S to put their foot down and marking the importance of ending the use of chemical

¹⁰⁴ Obama 31-08-2013, Power 07-09-2013

¹⁰⁵ Power 07-09-2013

¹⁰⁶ Power 07-09-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

¹⁰⁷ Power 07-09-2013

¹⁰⁸ Power 07-09-2013

¹⁰⁹ Obama 09-09-2013, Rhodes 01-2017

¹¹⁰ Obama 09-09-2013

¹¹¹ Rhodes 01-2017

¹¹² Power 07-09-2013

weapons, many others refer to the scope of the attack to ensure those who argue that the American people are tired of going to war that the attack will be limited and with a specific purpose. Other pro arguments state that other options are useless at the point and that the U.N. has its hands tied behind its back, and that it is therefore crucial to, as the U.S. has done several times before, go around the framework that is international law and the Security Council to ensure the safety of others. Some counter arguments claim that the cause of action has no support whatsoever in neither international law, nor in the international community or by the American people.

5.2 The Ideologies

To apply the theory to my analysis I have chosen to use an ideological analysis which is essentially comprised by three questions that each argument is inquired to.

For the first question, I separate each argument, and due to some arguments being made at different times, try to build a somewhat chronological timeline where the arguments are made before and after the breaking point in mid-September 2013. For the second question which has the aim to apply the international relations perspectives that each argument relates to, I chose to color code each argument depending on which perspective they were most identifiable with. For the third question, I will either underline, bold or italic the argument depending on which argumentative appeal is used. I applied all three questions separately, but in this section I will introduce the final results instead of showing them step for step. Below, two charts are presented to explain the meaning of each color and style.

Realism	Liberalism	Constructivism
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Ethos	<i>Pathos</i>	<u>Logos</u>
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For the first part of the ideology analysis, the arguments were to be separated chronologically as far as possible. As many of the arguments can be fit into multiple different dates, this partition has been made in the most fundamental manner. After this separation was made, I conducted the second question presented in the ideological analysis. As this was applied, I went on with the last part of my analysis by applying the third question to each of the arguments. The results of all three parts can be found below.

5.2.1 Arguments made before mid-September 2013

P1	<i>Failing to respond to the act has more consequences than not acting at all.</i> ¹¹³
P1P1	<i>Failing to respond will pose danger to american security.</i> ¹¹⁴
P2P1	<i>A failure to stand against the use of chemical weapons would weaken prohibitions against other weapons of mass destruction.</i> ¹¹⁵
P3P1	<i>A failure to enforce accountability in the face of this act may speak on U.S. resolve to stand up against others who flout fundamental international rules.</i> ¹¹⁶
P4P1	<i>If able to stop children from being gassed to death and making our own children safe in the long run, action should be taken.</i> ¹¹⁷
P5P1	<i>By not acting, the U.S are sending a signal that international norm and principles regarding chemical weapons doesn't mean much.</i> ¹¹⁸
P1P2P1	<u>Assad could continue to use chemical weapons and other regimes may seek to use chemical weapons as well.</u> ¹¹⁹
P2P2P1	<u>A failure to respond may lead to more chemical attacks.</u> ¹²⁰
P1P2P2P1	<u>More chemical attacks leads to more refugees.</u> ¹²¹
P1P1P2P2P1	<u>The fourth largest city in Jordan is already a refugee camp.</u> ¹²²

¹¹³ Power 07-09-2013

¹¹⁴ Obama 10-09-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

¹¹⁵ Obama 10-09-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

¹¹⁶ Obama 09-09-2013

¹¹⁷ Obama 10-09-2013, Power 07-09-2013

¹¹⁸ Obama 04-2016, Rice 09-09-2013

¹¹⁹ Power 07-09-2013, Obama 10-09-2013, Obama 2016-04, Rice 09-09-2013

¹²⁰ Power 07-09-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

¹²¹ Power 07-09-2013

¹²² Power 07-09-2013

P2P1P2P2P1	<u>Refugee camps fertile recruiting ground for violent extremists.</u> ¹²³
P3P2P1	<u>Weapons of mass destruction may get in the hands of the wrong people/terrorists.</u> ¹²⁴
P4P2P1, P1P3P2P1	<i>Poses a threat to U.S allies such as Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey as well as U.S military and diplomats, both in the Middle East and back at home.</i> ¹²⁵
P1P1P2P1	Military action can make Assad and other dictators to think twice before using chemical weapons. ¹²⁶

P2	<u>The other alternatives are exhausted or simply unnecessary.</u> ¹²⁷
P1P2	<u>No results from talks with Syria through Iran and Russia.</u> ¹²⁸
P2P2	<u>No response or cooperation from Syria to U.N held diplomatic process for negotiations.</u> ¹²⁹
P3P2	<i>The diplomatic process can not continue when one side of the conflict is gassed.</i> ¹³⁰
P4P2	<u>A drawn out legal process won't affect the immediate calculus of the ones ordering the attack.</u> ¹³¹
P5P2	<u>Same approaches that have been tried for the last year won't be effective.</u> ¹³²
P3	The action will be limited and not open-ended. ¹³³
P1P3	<i>The promise of no boots on the ground and ending unnecessary wars will be upheld.</i> ¹³⁴
P2P3, P1P2P2	<u>A limited action can strengthen diplomacy and energize the efforts made by the U.N.</u> ¹³⁵

¹²³ Power 07-09-2013

¹²⁴ Power 07-09-2013, Obama 10-09-2013, Obama 31-08-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

¹²⁵ Power 07-09-2013, Obama 31-08-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

¹²⁶ Obama 10-09-2013

¹²⁷ Power 07-09-2013, Obama 10-09-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

¹²⁸ Power 07-09-2013

¹²⁹ Power 07-09-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

¹³⁰ Power 07-09-2013

¹³¹ Power 07-09-2013

¹³² Power 07-09-2013

¹³³ Power 07-09-2013, Obama 10-09-2013, Obama 31-08-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

¹³⁴ Power 07-09-2013, Obama 10-09-2013, Obama 31-08-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

¹³⁵ Power 07-09-2013

C1C1P3	<u>The limited strike is for reinforcing larger strategy for addressing the crisis.</u> ¹³⁶
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P4	<i>Because of the “red line” being drawn, America’s credibility is at stake.</i> ¹³⁷
P1P4	<i>By not acting, the U.S. sends a signal that indicates that they cannot back up their threats and promises.</i> ¹³⁸
P5	<u>The international support for the cause was substantial.</u> ¹³⁹
P1P5	<u>The Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and NATO has urged international action in response to the chemical attack.</u> ¹⁴⁰
P2P5	<u>Partners in Europe, Asia and the Middle East joined together in a statement declaring the Assad regime responsible for the attack and supporting U.S. military action against it.</u> ¹⁴¹

C1C4	<u>The Security Council is paralyzed and cannot act like it is supposed to, and has therefore not lived up to its promise.</u> ¹⁴²
P1C1C4	<i>When the Council is paralyzed, states have to act outside to prevent disregard of international laws and norms.</i> ¹⁴³
P2C1C4	<u>Russia and China has blocked nearly every statement and resolution concerning the conflict in Syria.</u> ¹⁴⁴
P1P1C1C4	<u>In Kosovo, the Security Council was paralyzed but the world acted outside it.</u> ¹⁴⁵
P1P2C1C4	<u>It is naive to think that Russia would change their stance.</u> ¹⁴⁶

C1C5	<u>When airstrikes were launched during the Bosnian genocide by President Clinton, the public opinion and congress were consistently oppose before and after, but it stopped the war.</u> ¹⁴⁷
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¹³⁶ Power 07-09-2013

¹³⁷ Rice 09-09-2013

¹³⁸ Rice 09-09-2013

¹³⁹ Rice 09-09-2013

¹⁴⁰ Power 07-09-2013

¹⁴¹ Rice 09-09-2013

¹⁴² Obama 31-08-2013, Power 07-09-2013

¹⁴³ Power 07-09-2013

¹⁴⁴ Power 07-09-2013, Rice 09-09-2013

¹⁴⁵ Power 07-09-2013

¹⁴⁶ Power 07-09-2013

¹⁴⁷ Power 07-09-2013

5.2.2 Arguments made after mid-September 2013

C1P1	<i>A military response is too big of a risk.</i>
P1C1P1	<u>UN inspectors on the ground could be at risk.</u> ¹⁴⁸
P2C1P1	<i>Assad might place civilians as human shields around obvious targets.</i> ¹⁴⁹
C2P1	<i>American soldiers' lives should not be put at risk in order to prevent humanitarian disasters, unless they pose a direct threat to the U.S.</i> ¹⁵⁰

C1P3	<u>Limited action will not solve the entire Syria problem.</u> ¹⁵¹
P1C1P3	<u>Various groups armed and supported by external actors require a large commitment of forces - not a quick and small one.</u> ¹⁵²
P2C1P3	Without the U.S. military forces on the ground, the situation won't change much. ¹⁵³
P1P1C1P3, P1P2C1P3	<u>The ground forces in Syria are backed by allies such as Iran and Russia.</u> ¹⁵⁴
P3C1P3	<u>U.S missiles would not be fired at chem-weapon depots in fear of them sending poison into the air, but only strike military units that deliver the weapons and only disable their use for a few hours.</u> ¹⁵⁵
P1P3C1P3	<u>If the U.S went ahead with bomb strikes, the weapons would still be there but they would be fighting ISIS over them instead.</u> ¹⁵⁶
P4C1P3	<u>A military conflict with Assad cannot be started if the aim is not to finish by taking him out.</u> ¹⁵⁷
P1P4C1P3	<u>The aim is eliminating the use of chemical weapons, not overthrowing a dictator.</u> ¹⁵⁸

¹⁴⁸ Obama 04-2016

¹⁴⁹ Obama 04-2016

¹⁵⁰ Obama 04-2016, Rhodes (Obama 04-2016)

¹⁵¹ Rhodes 01-2017

¹⁵² Obama 04-2016

¹⁵³ Obama 04-2016

¹⁵⁴ Obama 04-2016

¹⁵⁵ Obama 04-2016

¹⁵⁶ Obama 04-2016

¹⁵⁷ Rhodes 01-2017

¹⁵⁸ Obama 09-09-2013

C1C1C1P3	<u>The strategy that the strike was part of was (and is still) unclear.</u> ¹⁵⁹
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C1P5	<u>The cause lacks support internationally.</u> ¹⁶⁰
P1C1P5	<u>The only country prepared to join military action was France.</u> ¹⁶¹
C1	The U.S is not the world’s policeman. ¹⁶²
C2	<u>The U.S have a history of unnecessary wars with severe consequences.</u> ¹⁶³
P1C2	<u>Last time the U.S removed a dictator with force, they had to take responsibility for what came after</u> ¹⁶⁴
P2C2	<u>When U.S. intervened in Libya, they ended up making the situation worse.</u> ¹⁶⁵
C3	<u>A political solution with non-military tools are the best way to reduce all forms of threat.</u> ¹⁶⁶
P1C3	<u>Military action destroyed an airfield for a few hours, diplomatic action removed over a thousand tons of chemical weapons.</u> ¹⁶⁷
C4	<u>The use of force is not supported or approved by the Security Council.</u> ¹⁶⁸
P1C4	<u>The action would be against international law.</u> ¹⁶⁹

C5	<u>The cause lacks support in Congress and in public opinion.</u> ¹⁷⁰
P1C5	If there is no support or recognition from congress or the american people, the strikes may be less effective. ¹⁷¹
P2C5	<i>If action would be taken without congressional authorization, the president could face impeachment.</i> ¹⁷²

¹⁵⁹ Rhodes 11-04-2017

¹⁶⁰ Rhodes 01-2017

¹⁶¹ Rhodes 01-2017

¹⁶² Power 07-09-2013

¹⁶³ Power 07-09-2013, Obama 09-09-2013, Obama 04-2016

¹⁶⁴ Obama 10-09-2013

¹⁶⁵ Obama 04-2016, Power 2017-10-28

¹⁶⁶ Power 07-09-2013, Rhodes 11-04-2017, Obama 04-2016

¹⁶⁷ Rhodes 11-04-2017

¹⁶⁸ Obama 2016-04

¹⁶⁹ Obama 2016-04

¹⁷⁰ Obama 09-09-2013, Rhodes 01-2017

¹⁷¹ Obama 09-09-2013

¹⁷² Rhodes 01-2017

6 Results & Discussion

This section of the paper attempts to conclude the results from the analysis made in the previous chapter and discusses the results with help from previous research to find a conclusion.

6.1 Results

In the first part of the study, I could confirm my hypothesis about the arguments changing over time, regardless of by whom the argument was made. All the arguments made before Assad agreed to turn over his entire chemical weapons stockpile in September 2013 were pro arguments, whereas the latter parts of the material consisted of con arguments. One could very easily see a connection between the arguments made, where the latter arguments contradicts the arguments made earlier on even though they sometimes were made by the same individuals.

Although the majority of the arguments made before mid-September 2013 were all either pathos or logos arguments, a few arguments distinct themselves. Realism was the most common international relations theory which indicates a view of war and military action as a necessity but other than that, the partition between the three theories were quite even. However, logos was the most common type of argument to appear, followed by pathos, while only two of the arguments were of the ethos' kind. This indicates that many of the arguments for a limited military action were appealing to logic but also emotion. One argument stood out as the only one made before mid September that could relate to both realism and liberalism.

The arguments made after mid-September 2013 were more or less evenly divided when it comes to what international relations theory they applied to, but in the same case as

the arguments made before mid-September 2013 there were some arguments that stood out. A vast majority of the arguments were logos arguments with only four pathos and three ethos arguments, meaning that a large portion of the arguments made against a limited attack was logically oriented. Just as the arguments made before mid-September 2013, there was also one argument here that stood out by being related to both realism and liberalism.

6.2 Discussion

To find and label arguments in the manner in which this research is done is not only a way to learn what arguments were made to legitimize to or not to go through with military action. There are many things within these arguments to be discussed and to compare with the former American interventions, and I have therefore attempted to initiate a few of them in the discussion.

An interesting note are the pro arguments that for instance suggests the fact that the administration, through breaking international law, upholds it. The sanctity of international law wins and loses its value throughout the changes in the argumentation, and is probably the biggest shift and contradiction between the pro and con arguments. There is for example arguments that are met with a simple reminder of the good outcomes of breaking international rules, and the overwhelming support from other countries and organization in favor of U.S. - not collective - action.¹⁷³ I believe that the non collective part is important to be stated, since many of both the pro and con arguments rest in a belief that the U.S. is a force in the world to be reckoned with when it comes to being in the frontline of humanitarian operations.¹⁷⁴ The same self image is expressed in American popular culture, for example in multiple TV-series and shows, and presents itself in different forms. A good example is the cartoon character Captain America, who upholds the frame of the what is the American national self image.

¹⁷³ Kaplan, F. Obama's Way. *Foreign Affairs*. 95, 1, 46-63, Jan. 2016 p. 48

¹⁷⁴ Guiora, AN. Intervention in Libya, Yes; Intervention in Syria, No: Deciphering the Obama Administration [article]. *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*. Issues 1 and 2, 251, 2011.

Captain America is presented as a hero of and for the nation, and is in a way the American identity embodied - a self image where America stands for freedom, power and constitutes a humanitarian power with the capacity to save the rest of the world.¹⁷⁵

Many arguments presented in this paper are about being a leading example for the rest of the world, and argues that other countries not only asks for help because of their disinterest in using their own resources, but also because they simply cannot measure themselves to the level that the U.S. holds. This self image is what I believe somewhat poses a danger to American foreign policy by dictating the moves the U.S. does both within the military and diplomacy, and even though this does not apply to the U.S. exclusively it creates a very unique problem for the particular country. With the great power that the U.S. historically have had and still has in the international gamefield, a lot of arrogance and complacency is to be expected and is probably the reason behind the courage to break international law and dictate their own order of right and wrong. In the case of humanitarian interventions, the law is not as clear as one might think and to do an intervention of such a kind is not possible without some level of disregard and disrespect of another state's sovereignty. In a case like Syria where another state cannot claim self defense and the UN Security Council does not provide a authorization, humanitarian aid cannot be given through an intervention without breaking a law or two.¹⁷⁶ In the case of Obama, he had two previous wars in the Middle East to handle even before the conflict even rose in Syria - it is fair to assume that the U.S. under the Obama administration did not have an interest in making hunches, even though it is for a different purpose.¹⁷⁷

Another rather interesting note is the fact that Obama is known for his realism stance in all things regarding foreign policy. He may have been elected for his liberal ideas and progressive reforms, but the view he has on the world can easily be described as realism, with a touch of constructivism when it comes to relations and conflicts with

¹⁷⁵ Jason, D , 'Captain America's Empire: Reflections on Identity, Popular Culture, and Post-9/11 Geopolitics', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, no. 3, 2005

¹⁷⁶ Sterio, M. HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION POST-SYRIA: LEGITIMATE AND LEGAL?. *Brooklyn Journal of International Law*. 40, 109, Jan. 1, 2014. p. 111

¹⁷⁷ Kaplan, F. Obama's Way. *Foreign Affairs*. 95, 1, 46-63, Jan. 2016 p. 46

other nations.¹⁷⁸ If one looks at the second part of the analysis, the realism perspective is somewhat abandoned even though the majority of the arguments are logos, meaning more rational, in a much higher extent. The arguments made before mid-September are on the other hand pathos, meaning emotional, which is interesting since more arguments are connected to realism perspective. These two does not cancel eachother out completely, but in keeping with the different perspectives it would be much more realistic if pathos was more occuring in the liberalism theory and logos in realism theory.

¹⁷⁸ Kaplan, F. Obama's Way. *Foreign Affairs*. 95, 1, 46-63, Jan. 2016 p. 46-47

7 Conclusion & Summary

This study concluded a very obvious shift in the arguments presented by the Obama administration. Even though it was somewhat clear that they had changed their stance from reassuring a military action is the right way to go, to arguing that any military action is a bad option, I am still confident that the result provided only has confirmed my original hypothesis. The way the arguments actually related to each other in an almost systematic stance highlighted the ambivalence often overlooked in American politics. The second part of the argumentation aimed to just find the theories the arguments were built on, but created an opportunity to also compare the pro and con arguments to see how two coins of the same thesis relate to each other.

In summation, this research has accounted for the noticeable shift in argumentation that happened just within a month in the Obama administration. Because of the limitations of this paper, I chose to keep the research questions on a very concrete level by only contracting the arguments and analyzing them as a whole. I may have not been able to analyze the results of the research as I would have liked, although I see a lot of potential to do a much deeper study in the subject. Hopefully, this paper has laid a foundation for future examination of how similar argumentations can be understood and compared.

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