

How to justify an intervention

The Saudi Arabian arguments for military intervention in the
Yemen Civil War

Abstract

In 2015, a coalition comprised of Saudi Arabia and its allies, conducted a military intervention in Yemen to protect the internationally recognized government. This study aims to analyse how Saudi Arabian officials has justified the intervention to fight against the Houthi rebels through three principles of just war theory. The study uses these principles as analytical tools in an argumentative analysis based on Stephen Toulmins model. The analysis of various statements during the period of 2015–2017, show that Saudi Arabian officials highlight a couple of areas of why an intervention is legitimate; to protect Yemen sovereignty; compliance with international institutions; an alleged involvement of Iran amongst the rebels; and their humanitarian efforts to reconstruct Yemen. The results show that Saudi Arabia employs the language of just war in their campaign to justify their military efforts. This study serves a purpose of understanding on what grounds military intervention can occur. Further research on how military interventions are constructed by arguments in the 21st century will be important.

Key words: Yemen, military intervention, Saudi Arabia, just war theory, jus ad bellum, legitimacy

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1 Introduction

Since 2011, Yemen has been struck by political turmoil and violent conflict (Perkins 2017, 300). Dissatisfaction between differing groups has led to full-scale civil war between the government and the Houthi separatist group, as well as an influx of terrorist groups like Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula [AQAP], and the Islamic State [IS]. The starting point of the current civil war was the attempted coup by the Houthi-rebellion of the capital Sana'a in late 2014 (Ruys & Ferro 2016, 63–5). The current internationally recognized President Abdo Raddo Mansour Hadi fled Yemen and requested international support to counter the rebellion, according to principles of self-defence (Ruys & Ferro 2016, 67). International support came when Saudi Arabia along with cohorts in the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] and other countries, began an intervention campaign in March 2015, named Operation Decisive Storm. It was after three weeks renamed to Operation Restoring Hope with focus on seeking a political solution, based on past peace agreements and initiatives (Ruys & Ferro 2016, 62–3). However, the bombings continue and the civil wars' effects on the population has been severe, creating humanitarian disaster (ICG 2017).

Military intervention is a precarious subject within international relations theory as well as in the sphere of global politics. As such, every event which it occurs becomes an interesting field of study since every event adds to the overarching narratives and discussions of whether wars are a viable option and how they occur.

1.1 Purpose and research questions

This purpose of this study is to analyse how state actors, in this case Saudi Arabia, justify their actions when they decide to go to war, or to use the means of military intervention. Since Saudi Arabia does not need to be an active part in a civil war, research on this topic would help understand how actor reason when they view this

action as appropriate. What the main reasons are to why an intervention is deemed necessary is something which always needs to be ethically evaluated, seeing as to go to such lengths could set dangerous precedents. As such, it is important to investigate how these efforts are deemed to be legitimate, so a fuller understanding of why states go to war can be acquired. My research intends to answer these questions:

- *How has Saudi Arabia argued for the justification of military intervention in Yemen in the years 2015–2017?*
- *What does Saudi Arabia argue as being the main reasons to why an intervention is deemed necessary?*

The main objective of the research is to analyse whether Saudi Arabian arguments regarding the Yemen interventions fits into cohesive and reasoned policy and how the conflict is framed as a situation deserving an intervention. The study will also decipher what the main reasons and arguments are. I will only focus on the Saudi Arabian narrative and to what extent it fits into prevailing concepts of justification of war, meaning I will not be focusing on aspects of the war itself. Questions such as causalities, military conduct, unfolding events and so fourth will not be included in the scope of the study, as it is not object of analysis.

1.2 Structure and limitations

Foreign interventions are usually part of an effort to change the nature of a conflict and to aid a side or fight for a justified cause (Piiparinen 2017, 160). However, its existence is highly controversial given that it increases the violence in a conflict and could potentially lengthen it indefinitely. Therefore, this study will explore the nature of justification for war in the theoretical world and in global politics.

The ethics and moral reasoning behind starting wars is highly controversial and for a good reason. Mainly, it stems from an apprehension to approach war in a fashion which could regard it as a legitimate option at all, as military aggression ultimately leads to some form loss of integrity or life. This is why the United

Nations [UN] Charter forbids the use of violence against any sovereign state and stresses the importance of non-interference (Österdahl 2004, 70–1). As a foundational principle of international law and order, it structures the international system accordingly; as a world of sovereign states who have an unmovable right to self-perseverance (Hurd 1999, 397–8). However, these notions of forbidding warfare have loopholes, reserved for self-defence or if military action is enforced by the United Nations Security Council [UNSC] (Radueca 2017, 169). In addition to the legal loopholes, there are traditions of regulating warfare if it occurs anyway.

This study will use the theoretical framework of *just war theory* as to why a state chooses military action as a method and the means of doing so. Just war theory is a theoretical tradition which revolves around when warfare can be determined to be an acceptable form of policy. War is a terrible thing in itself, but just war suggests that it could be an option (Toner 2010, 82–4). However, it is a deeply fragmented tradition, as just war theory doesn't have a definite structure. Instead, it is constantly argued about amongst scholars in terms of applicability, structure, and morals. With that said, I intend to use what I see as the main components of just war theory's criterion for *jus ad bellum* as analytical components. As part of the just war framework, *jus ad bellum* refers to the rationale to why a war is reasonable before it starts, while *jus in bello* refers to the actions in the conflict itself (Shapcott 2010, 151–2).

Since I am to analyse Saudi Arabia's reasoning based on their arguments, their position is best exemplified by *jus ad bellum* principles. Despite them having to do with the occasion of going to war, *jus ad bellum* principles do not disappear as ethical guidelines as soon as the conflict begins. As just war emphasizes that the principles themselves require a peaceful solution and a positive outcome, there is reason to argue that *jus ad bellum* should be analysed during the warfare too (McMahan 2005, 1–3). Although this is not common among just war theorists¹ as they like to separate the categories, given the aim of the research, *jus ad bellum* principles will be analysed during the 2015–2017 period. Seeing as *jus in bello* is mostly concerned with targeting, tactics, soldier conduct etc. it does not fit in the scope of the study.

¹ This is mostly due to the inconsistency of topics for just war theorists, which will be discussed in the next section.

Furthermore, since I will be analysing the arguments made by Saudi Arabia in the selected time period, I will employ the method of argumentative analysis, specifically the structural model designed by Stephen Toulmin. The ‘Toulmin model’ is a concept where arguments are based on specific reasoning and require justifications based on specific building-blocks (Bergström & Boréus 2012, 106–7). To understand the arguments, one needs to analyse more than just the initial assertions. In the context of war which has to be justified, the Saudi Arabian case becomes apt for this type of analysis since all interventions occur in the sphere of pre-existing conditions of international law and practice. Therefore, the just war principles will be guiding the analysis because I aim to show how the arguments are made for specific topics.

Finally, this will be a single-case study where I only intend to understand the case at hand (Stake 1995, 4–9). I feel that especially using the theoretical framework of just war principles, which is in itself a question of judgement on a case-to-case basis, the single case study should not be a problem for obtaining knowledge of the field.

2 Theoretical background

Since this study revolves around the nature of arguing for interventions, it requires a theoretical background about the nature of ethics of war and how to justify them. If we are to subscribe to the idea that war is a continuation of politics as described by Clausewitz, the concept of starting war has to be judged as a political action with appropriate legitimate reasoning. Therefore, it is worth understanding the background of which these actions rest upon in the international system.

2.1 War in International Law

Since the creation of the UN Charter, international law as it stands serves as a function within the international system and the system depends upon its continuance (Hurd 1999, 392–3). What is often termed ‘Westphalian sovereignty’² is the foundational principle of international law, in which the sovereign state is the main arbiter of authority and legitimacy. Hurd (1999) writes that the principle of sovereignty is so fundamental because it protects the right to have mutually exclusive states and that it is rarely challenged as a principle. Eventual challenges that come to this principle often revolves around creating new boundaries and contesting borders of states – not to the principle itself (Hurd 1999, 393).

While it arguably creates stability, it opens questions of whether the sovereign principle can stand on its own if the people of the states are suffering. The concept of sovereignty is directly related to the concept of self-perseverance and the right to control ones on affairs (Lee 2012, 113). Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter explicitly forbids the use of force against another state and highlight the principle of ‘non-intervention’ as essential. Legally, this can only be overridden by the UN itself,

² Based upon the Treaty of Westphalia signed by the European powers in 1648, ending the Thirty-Year War and creating the “first” state system which we know today.

specifically the Security Council under Chapter VII of the charter, whose task is to provide security for the international system. The other expectation is the right of self-defence against an armed attack outlined in Article 51 (Österdahl 2004, 70–1). War, or external aggression as such is therefore clearly forbidden according to international law. However, in the past decades these firm notions have been questioned, specifically questioning the principle of non-intervention in certain cases (Lee 2012, 109).

2.2 Ethics of war & previous research

To find moral righteousness in war, means to make a difference between legality and legitimacy (Aggestam 2004, 18). With the NATO intervention of Kosovo 1999, the resulting discussion revolved around moral principles where it could be acceptable but the means to do so broke international law; it was ‘illegal but legitimate’ (Lee 2012, 112; Aggestam 2004, 18–19). This concept of legitimacy is not awarded but a concept which gains significance in context. Indeed, to be legitimate invokes an ethical consideration of what value is placed in what area and how it is justified (Mulligan 2005, 351).

The question of ethics in war is inherently controversial since it awards legitimacy and justification to a concept which takes human life and is destructive by nature. Humanitarian intervention means to act militarily on behalf of the people in another state, against an oppressive government as an example (Walzer 1992, 104). For example, Nicholas Wheeler (2002) advocates for what he terms a *solidarist* view on the concept of military intervention. As a guiding principle, states have an obligation to help save lives if they have the means to, as the moral justification to do so is inherent (Aggestam 2004, 15). Wheeler means that the solidarist framework places emphasis on the humanitarian motives that states ought to aspire to, and the moral responsibility of protecting those in need (Wheeler 2002, 51–3). Furthermore, the principle known as Responsibility to Protect deconstructs the sovereign principle and sees it as a normative concept based upon how the state treats its population, rather than a foundational function (Bellamy 2006 145–6, 155). It views “sovereignty as responsibility”, where another state can be right in

intervening to end human suffering (Moses 2013, 114; Bellamy 2008, 618). That being said, it also opens up for a relativist interpretation of what is a righteous act. If ethics are what guide decisions as these, there needs to exist certain parameters for when and how military means are acceptable.

2.2.1 Just War Theory

What the discussion of ethical warfare shows is that there exists moral apprehension to ignore human suffering, as well as breaking from the laws of the international system. This is based in an evolving language of war, where although it is a terrible thing, it might be useful under the right circumstances. A prevalent school of thought concerning the ethical limitations of war is the *just war* tradition. As a theory, it invokes principles of both legality and legitimacy, as to what is an acceptable situation to use war as method, as a necessary evil (Shapcott 2010, 152). Just war claims to contradict the realist notion of state self-perseverance being the highest moral order, and instead invokes war as a tool of justice beyond the constraints of the sovereign state order (Walzer 2004, 6).

Conditions of just war determines whether a war effort could be act as a responsibility for actors to combat injustice (Shapcott 2010, 152). It is not merely a set of rules that must be proved, but rather a continuous reflection on the ethics involved with going to war (Megoran 2008, 478). According to Michael Walzer (2004), one of the main scholars in the field, just war claims are not only constructed through the arguments beneath it; it is also the language of how war is spoken about. In any situation of war, the resulting discussion revolves around whether it was a justified effort. As such, just war helps to make these discussions more substantial, as well as introducing considerate moral reasoning (Walzer 2004, x).

Despite the theoretical aim to provide principles for acceptable conditions of war, there is disagreement about which ones are the most important for *jus ad bellum* (prior reasoning why war can be acceptable) and *jus in bello* (regulatory principles in the war itself). The theoretical tradition is fragmented with regards to what actually constitutes a just war and what does not (McMahan 2005, 2). Although just war principles have institutional roots in humanitarian apprehension

based in the Hague and Geneva conventions, it is always an ethical consideration what actually is important (Megoran 2008, 479–80).

Furthermore, scholars who write of the theory often formulate the principles in different ways and define them differently as well³ (Toner 2010, 82–3; Hurka 2005, 38). Some examples of *jus ad bellum principles* are; just cause; right intention; proper authority; proportionality; last resort; reasonable hope of success⁴. These are often the most commonly used definitions.

<i>Jus ad bellum principles</i>	Common definition
<i>Just cause</i>	A justified reason to why a war is necessary to correct an unjust situation
<i>Right intention</i>	War is conducted for the right reasons and to have a just outcome
<i>Proper authority</i>	The war effort is handled by a legitimate actor
<i>Proportionality</i>	The goods that come from war outweigh the bad.
<i>Last Resort</i>	War is the last option to correct a situation
<i>Reasonable hope of success</i>	The war effort must lead to a positive outcome

Figure 1. Principles of *jus ad bellum* and respective definitions

Regulation of war does in some sense actively accept war as a method, but problematizes intentions behind it (Lindholm Schulz 2004, 97). Despite the warnings of de-problematizing war, it is clear that the foundational aim of just war is not to advocate war as such but to diminish its costs in a world where war exists (Walzer 1992, 14–5). There needs to be a provoked situation of injustice, or wrong, from the receiving part in order for the military option to materialize (McMahan 2005, 18). Walzer brings up a pacifist contention, claiming just-war theory disarms the meaning of war “by the (theoretically) simple method of calling unjust wars

³ A great example of this can be found in Toner’s (2010) article on the topic, “The Logical Structure of the Just War Theory”, where he lists different principles of what constitute *jus ad bellum*. Toner shows by comparing four different scholars of the field, that all of them have their own different principles. See p. 82–3

⁴ These examples are taken from Toner (2010).

‘crimes’ and just wars ‘police actions’” (Walzer 1992, xxii). However, Walzer sees the world as being without global authority but of decentralized organization of principles (Walzer 2004, 172). In such a world, war is a reality which will happen and therefore actors involved have to employ a language that can prove it is reasonable.

2.3 Theoretical framework & Operationalisation

As previously discussed, scholars are undecided to what components of just war are the most important ones. The principles themselves still serve a purpose of analysis since they touch upon different qualities in how war can be justifiable. However, that requires some motivations as to why and how. This study suggests that *jus ad bellum* criteria have to be applied during the conflict itself – not just the lead up to the conflict. If the act of military intervention is to be legitimate, the principles to why it is legitimate in the first place, cannot disappear as soon as the conflict starts (McMahan 2005, 2–4). The components themselves are judged how they relate to the actor, and that is something that needs constant evaluation. As the Saudi-led intervention is still ongoing as of writing, this means that the period of conflict as a whole must be judged to whether arguments made by Saudi Arabia hold up to the just war criteria. Also, since I will only focus on the Saudi Arabian arguments of why the conflict is righteous and not the conduct of the war itself, *jus ad bellum* criteria are the ones that apply.

With that said, I will use what I judge to be the three main principles that are of interest in this study, with corresponding definitions. First, *just cause* will be defined as the moral reasoning to why the intervention is justified. In order for a just cause to exist there needs to be an unprovoked wrong (McMahan 2005, 18). A military response to that unjust situation must be a valid method. Second, *proper authority* will be defined as the reason why the actor conducting the war is the right actor to do so. As this is the position held by UN authority, the existence of interventions outside this sphere must have good reasons to occur. There needs to exist foundations as to why the actor is able to make the decision. Finally, *right*

intention will be defined as the why a military intervention is the correct method to be used for the objectives defined by the actor. Not only must the intervention occur with moral apprehension, but the positive goals that are intended to materialize must be clearly stated. Analytically, this can be broken down into claims; the cause is legitimate; the actor is legitimate; the aim(s) are legitimate. These are the principles that will be operationalised in the argumentative analysis

Why I choose these three principles instead of the others is based on a couple of reasons. Toner (2010) means that the mentioned principles have priority over the others, as they are essentially guiding the other ones. He terms just war principles as *primary* and *secondary*, in how they serve to guide war as a ‘good’ recourse to take (Toner 2010, 91–3). For example, to determine whether the good outweighs the bad in the *proportionality* principle, or that there must be *reasonable hope of success*, must come after the proper conditions of cause, authority, and intention are met (Toner 2010, 93). Also, it would be hard to argue for war as a *last resort*, without first determining the just cause; it is already included in the preceding principles. One could argue even that the secondary principles could conform to simply one principle, as they require the other principles to be included; they can therefore not stand as independent components⁵. If they are hard to separate, they are hard to operationalise as isolated variables. This could hinder proper research and would make any conclusion difficult to determine.

Another reason to why I choose the ‘primary’ principles is due to the lack of proper coherence in the just war theory debate. With this being the case, criticism of an omission, or inclusion, of a principle will come regardless of whose initial formula is chosen. Instead, the principles are chosen based on the importance they have in this particular case of military intervention. While I do not intend to create a new theoretical framework, it would too much of a laborious task to define every possible component and include them in an argumentative analysis. It would prove to be difficult for the reader as well as the author. The difference of the three main principles makes it possible to properly apply to different arguments.

⁵ Toner brings up Hurka’s discussion of the *proportionality* principles, where he says that a war without hope of success simply cannot be proportional. The full discussion of this can be found in the Hurka (2005) article.

3 Method

This study will be a qualitative single-case study of how Saudi Arabia has argued for the intervention in Yemen and what those main arguments are. Since warfare requires justification according to principles of just war, that justification needs to be reasonable and legitimate. This section will handle the methodological framework, which will guide the application of the principles of just war and how they will be presented.

3.1 Argumentative analysis

Choosing to use means of military intervention, always needs a reason as to why it is the right decision. Leaders need to advertise why their actions are made to the international public, especially when it deals with matters of conflict and war (Lindholm Schulz 2004, 112). Thus, if something is to be justified, it has to be argued for. This is where the use comes in analysing actor's *raison d'état* and their supporting argumentations when it comes to dilemmas of war.

The argumentative analysis is mostly concerned with the *logos* of arguments, rather than its' *ethos* and *pathos* (Bergström & Boréus 2012, 92–3). This is due to the ability of tracing the way arguments get constructed and how they interact with the environment for which they are uttered or stated. The point is not necessarily to analyse whether an argument is convincing, but if it makes logical sense (Bergström & Boréus 2012, 126–7) It can be used to pinpoint what the arguments are, how it relates to surrounding rules and norms, to research whether the argument holds for example (Bergström & Boréus 2012, 92–3).

3.1.1 The 'Toulmin Model' & research design

I will be using the structural model designed by Stephen Toulmin as my method of analysing the Saudi Arabian claims for righteousness. In his seminal work *The Uses of Arguments* first published in 1958⁶, Toulmin suggests that arguments often have to be viewed in their context. As such, logical analysis cannot be constrained by universalist notions where formal logics hold practical applications hostage (Toulmin 2003, 109). It can also lessen the understanding of why arguments are made and how they actually have been constructed in the mind of the utterer.

Toulmin describes an argument as being “like an organism” with a multitude of functions and components, and thus has to be understood accordingly (Toulmin 2003, 87). To understand the logical basis of arguments means to break them down, in order to grasp their validity and reliability. If an assertion is made in an argument, the justification of its validity becomes all the more important if it were to be challenged (Toulmin 2003, 90). For the practical purpose of analysis, Toulmin has created six building blocks that comprises an argument:

1. *Claim*: The initial assertion which is made in an argument (Toulmin 2003, 89–90).
2. *Data*: Underlying facts which the claim is based upon. To make sure the argument holds up, there needs to lie underlying facts to support the evidence of the *claim* (Toulmin 2003, 90).
3. *Warrant*: the rationale that makes sure there is a connection between the *claim* and *data*. The point is to provide implicit and authoritative reasons to establish why the data and claim are connected, based on rules or principles for example. (Toulmin 2003, 91–2).
4. *Backing*: The *backing* of an argument shows, through perhaps other examples, the general reasons why the *warrant* carries weight and is valid as a basis of argumentation (Toulmin 2003, 95–6).
5. *Qualifier*: Used sometimes as a explicit reason, as to why the *warrant* is justified in a particular case (Toulmin 2003, 93).
6. *Rebuttal*: The arguments against the proposition of why the *warrant* is valid in this particular case.

⁶ Note: For this research the Updated version of *The Uses of Arguments* will used. Published 2003

The point of the Toulmin model is to imagine an opponent to the argumentation, where the components stand as answers to questions that a counterpart could have against the proposition (Toulmin 2003, 89–90). To show how the Toulmin model works is exemplified graphically, to show the connection between the different components. It could be imagined like this (lacking the *rebuttal* and *qualifier*):

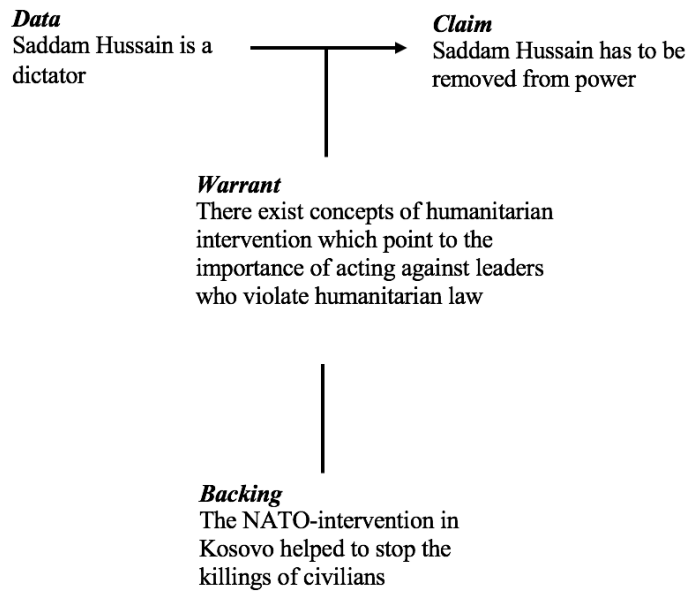


Figure 2. Example of a Toulmin Scheme using a hypothetical argument for the forced removal of Saddam Hussain from power in Iraq.

In the analysis, the Toulmin model will be used to assess the validity of the Saudi Arabian arguments about whether the intervention in Yemen was justified during the 2015–2017 period. As such, the analysis will use Toulmin's components as a way of structuring different statements, explaining what they mean, and adding them together in a graphic model. Regarding which arguments that are to be assessed, the initial *claim* of Saudi Arabia is that military intervention is a justified action. These claims will be divided into the three argumentative *jus ad bellum* principles of just war; just cause, proper authority, and rightful intention. As argumentative analysis places value in the underlying validity of arguments rather than only initial assertions and facts, it is important to fully analyse statements and the implicit knowledge which they contain (Bergström & Boréus 2012, 107–9). This does not mean that entire transcripts will be in print in the analysis; only statements that concerns the specific methodological components

3.2 Case study

Research within peace and conflict studies take many forms, depending on the usability and value the method has to the research area (Höglund & Öberg 2012, 2–4). As for the research in this study, it will be a case study of Saudi-led intervention in Yemen. The point of just war is to judge each action on a case-to-case basis, to see if the principles hold up to the supposed righteousness of a war effort. Thus, the case study is the apt form of conducting the type of research which I aim to do.

3.2.1 The single-case & criticism

To George & Bennet, case studies are useful in identifying specific connotations where theories are applied, and therefore become quite intuitive in how knowledge is obtained (George & Bennet 2004, 6, 19). As for selecting cases, there will always come criticism of selection bias, especially in single-case research. Case studies are criticised because the researcher could potentially expect results beforehand since cases are chosen (George & Bennet 2004, 22–3). This does not necessarily need to be a real problem, since the rationale of case study research is to understand the case itself and to test if the theoretical angle works (George & Bennet 2004, 30; Stake 1995, 4). Indeed, as Stake (1995) writes, cases become apparent based on its qualities, not by the choice of the researcher (Stake 1995, 134).

Naturally then, the single-case is under more scrutiny since it doesn't have a comparative reference to back results. However, Flyvbjerg (2006) is critical of this view because according to him, it is built upon misunderstandings of what the case study means (Flyvbjerg 2006, 219–221). According to him, absolute theories are very difficult in the social sciences because most research subjects are contextual. This makes the single-case useful for obtaining specific knowledge (Flyvbjerg 2006, 221–3).

Concerning the subject at hand, it makes sense to conduct a single-case study since the objective is to analyse how Saudi Arabia has argued for their intervention. As mentioned, this is always done in each case, and thus have to be evaluated each time a situation occurs. Although it would be theoretically possible to do

comparatively, it would be difficult to find actual patterns as each conflict is different and will therefore be argued for differently.

3.3 Material

The gathered material consists of various official texts and statements made by the Saudi Arabian government and relevant officials in the period 2015–2017. As this is a matter of international relations, I will analyse statements made for the international public. However, the arguments will not be limited to any specific podium. I do not want to miss a specific argument simply because it is stated in an overlooked area. It is in the best interest of the study to try to get a complete argumentation, so possible misunderstandings do not occur.

As for the actual sources of the material, I will gather official transcripts primarily from the websites of the US Saudi Arabian embassy and SUSRIS [Saudi-US Relations Information Service]. The main reason for this is the large catalogue of texts in English. Lastly, I will only analyse texts that concerns ‘Yemen’, the conflict, and the corresponding intervention.

3.3.1 Time period

As stated, the time period from where I will gather material will be the years 2015–2017. Since I intend to get a full view of the Saudi Arabian arguments for the intervention, including all the years of the intervention seems reasonable. Previously I mentioned that *jus ad bellum* criteria are often reserved for the build-up to the war. However, these principles need to be reasonable throughout the conflict since they judge why the actions is taking place. Although I will not judge the outcomes themselves, an actor always needs to constantly reassure the audience that their actions are valid. Thus, this creates a need to analyse over a longer period of time than the initial conduct, since I might miss important arguments that could strengthen or invalidate Saudi Arabia’s claims. To avoid eventual misunderstandings, the period of 2015–2017 as a whole is going to be analysed.

Finally, the year 2018 will not be included for obvious reasons that the study will be made in that year.

3.3.2 Language

A point of concern regarding gathering of material is naturally the language barrier. As I do not speak Arabic, the material which I analyse will not consist of attempted translations which have not been done officially. That being the case, only textual material officially translated, or originally in English will be analysed. I feel however, that this will not constitute a real problem for the validity of the research as the aim is to analyse how Saudi Arabia argues for their actions. The point is to address the international audience and explain the reasons as to why an intervention is justified. This makes sure that sufficient material exists in English.

3.3.3 Bias

Bergström & Boréus (2012) say that an interpretive analysis requires some form of previous understanding of the subject area, so the analysis itself can materialize. As such, there lies issues of possible lack of intersubjectivity (Bergström & Boréus 2012, 30–1, 42). In other words, the reliability of textual analysis is sometimes questioned on the conditions of whether a different researcher could come to the same conclusions. For this study in particular, criticism could be aimed the researcher for having prior knowledge and might make connections easily (Bergström & Boréus 2012, 116). However, I feel that the Toulmin model solves some of these issues as it shows how arguments are constructed. Furthermore, as the just war principles serves as analytical guidelines, any other form of prior knowledge will not be required. It guides the analysis in being transparent as to what actually is being researched. Lastly, knowledge of the Yemen conflict is not required either, since it is only Saudi Arabian arguments that will be analysed – not the conflict itself.

4 Analysis

With the theoretical basis and the method formulated, this section will handle the analysis of the Saudi Arabian arguments concerning their stance on the intervention in Yemen against the Houthi rebellion during 2015–2017 period. The arguments will be held to account out of the principles of just war which I previously determined to be the essential: *just cause*, *proper authority*, and *rightful intention*. These three principles of justification will be used as analytical components in assessing Saudi Arabia's claim of legitimacy. The building blocks of the argumentative analysis will consist of quotations of statements along with referrals to events in the conflict. I will judge how these arguments stack up logically by constructing a model after each just war principle that is to be analysed.

The material will be handled chronologically, and each section will only focus on the principle at hand. Since many different points are made in the same transcripts, they will be used more than once. To not confuse myself or the reader, everything from the selected material will obviously not be included. Only that which actually revolves around the topic will be included.

4.1 Just Cause arguments

In May 2011, the US, Saudi Arabia and the GCC announced that a mediation initiative was agreed upon, which described the conditions for how then- Yemen president Saleh would leave power in favour for President Hadi in exchange for immunity (Perkins 2017, 311). The GCC initiative⁷ was followed by an implementation mechanism for how the reformation of the political landscape is to take place and how the power transfer will happen (Transfeld 2016, 150–1). It was

⁷ Note: will be here on out be referred to as the 'GCC Initiative'

signed by Saleh in November of that year, Hadi became president and a conciliation process named the National Dialogue Conference [NDC] was initiated. This process turned out to be a failure and the Houthi movement, disappointed with the process, ended up seizing the capital Sana'a in November 2014 – initiating a civil war between the Yemeni government and Houthi rebels by this time aligned with Saleh⁸ (Perkins 2017, 311–2). These were the conditions of which Saudi Arabia, GCC allies and others stepped in.

On March 25 2015, Operation Decisive Storm was launched, and a bombing campaign began (Ruys & Ferro 2016, 91). Adel Bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir, who was the Saudi Arabian United States ambassador at the time, made the initial statement of the beginnings at a press conference in Washington D.C. He stated that “the objective is to defend the legitimate government of President Hadi from the takeover attempts by the Houthi militias in Yemen”, and that Saudi Arabia “...will do whatever it takes in order to protect the legitimate government of Yemen... from an outside militia” (Al-Jubeir 2015a). This *claim* was made with its partners in the GCC as they were, excluding Oman, part of the military coalition. Al-Jubeir continued to say that the Houthis have overtaken the armed forces and “are in control of ballistic missiles, heavy weapons, as well as military bases and ports” (Al-Jubeir 2015a). Further *data* points to the Houthis “...who have rejected every agreement that they entered into and...have always chosen the path of violence” (Al-Jubeir 2015a). The intention seems to be to point to the violent results created by the Houthis, as they are not interested in political solutions.

A communique on the Yemen situation was released by the GCC on May 5 2015, which details the official stance of the regional organisation. It details that Operation Decisive Storm, as well as Operation Renewal of Hope, was launched...”in order to strengthen the legitimacy of the government and resume the political process in accordance with the GCC Initiative” (GCC 2015b). Since this was a response to the plea of help from President Hadi, the GCC approves of the decision of intervention as it was an invitation with reference to self-defence and affirms their support for the Saudi-led effort (GCC 2015b)

⁸ The ‘Houthi-Saleh alliance’ is an interesting historical development, as they traditionally have been enemies. Further reading on their history can be found in Brandt (2017).

Indeed, Al-Jubeir continued the just cause *claim* in an interview on March 29 2015, stating that they “came at the invitation of the legitimate Yemeni government” (Al-Jubeir 2015b). Making the case for upholding the legitimacy of the government of Yemen, suggests that Saudi Arabia has paid attention to who is the legitimate part to support. As a *warrant* for intervention, it is very important that it is done correctly and for the right reasons, in this case for the sake of protecting the legitimate leadership of the state.

In a 2015 October 1st speech to the UN General Assembly Al-Jubeir – by this time Minister for Foreign Affairs⁹ – noted the importance of showing “...respect for the principles and provisions of international law, especially the respect of the sovereignty of each state” (Al-Jubeir 2015d). Al-Jubeir also finds a *warrant* for the intervention in securing their own state, not only Yemen, by mentioning that they have to “...protect our borders and find a political solution based of the Gulf Initiative” (Al-Jubeir 2015d). The speech makes note of referring to the treaty of Westphalia and the function of sovereignty, which “...set the foundation of the contemporary international system” (Al-Jubeir 2015d). This mere mention serves as the foundational *backing* as to why sovereignty is to be protected. This is within the context of a proclamation for Saudi foreign policy, and clearly relates to the positions which they have taken in international matters. To emphasize such a concept is an interesting point to make. Furthermore, in the speech the cause gets a *backing* from the request of the Yemen government “...in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter” (Al-Jubeir 2015d). As previously mentioned, Article 51 specifically recognizes the right of self-defence against an aggressor – individually or collectively. This exception to non-interventions sets the guidelines of upholding sovereignty further as it grants those who are willing to protect a state the legal means to do so, earning that the warranted cause of intervention.

In a January 2016 press conference alongside the GCC Secretary General, Dr. Abdullatif Bin Rashid Al Zayani, Al-Jubeir seemingly points out an accomplice to the Houthis – Iran. As to why an intervention is needed, Al-Jubeir suggested that “the crisis that was provoked by Iran’s aggression is not going to change our view...” (Al-Jubeir 2016a). Later at the 2016 Munich Security Conference, al-

⁹ Al-Jubeir became Foreign Minister for Saudi Arabia on April 29, 2015. He served as ambassador to the United States from 2007–2015.

Jubeir more explicitly links the *data* of Houthi aggression with being "...allied with Iran and Hezbollah" (Al-Jubeir 2016c). Merely by mentioning that Iran has an alleged stake in the conflict, Saudi Arabia has affirmed their stance as righteous in their intervention; they support the state, Iran supports the illegitimate rebels. Along with the previously mentioned commitment to sovereignty of each state, Saudi Arabia can make their *claim* for a just cause more sound, as there is another illegitimate player in the conflict who support excessive violence.

Although Saudi Arabia has argued for their cause, the intervention was not something which was a matter of choice according to a February 2016 interview with Al-Jubeir. He says that "this was a war of necessity", to protect the integrity of Yemen (Al-Jubeir 2016d). The unjust situation, that has been created by the Houthi rebellion is something which, according to Saudi Arabia, cannot be overlooked. As a *backing* to the cause to protect the sovereignty of Yemen as a state, the *warrant* of an intervention is not something which has come as a wish for Saudi Arabia. A main tenant of the just cause is that warfare a viable alternative amongst several different options, as the point of just war is apprehension to war, not to excuse it. Even if the cause could be valid, other options could be a better solution. This proposition is mentioned in the 2017 Munich Security conference in which Al-Jubeir says that they "...didn't start this war" and "didn't want this war" (Al-Jubeir 2017a). Thus, the *qualifier* for the cause of war is not on Saudi Arabia, but rather the situation in which they have entered. Against the *rebuttal* of war perhaps being excessive, Al-Jubeir makes note that it is the civil war itself that determines their actions. Saudi Arabia can only do what they can to protect the Yemeni government from unlawful aggression and the intervention was the only liable option, since the war itself was not started by them.

4.1.1 Application of the model

With the material coded using the guiding analytical node of the *just cause* principle, we can see how this turn out graphically by example of a Toulmin model. The underlying *claim* is that military intervention was a necessary and righteous action to take, so most of the analysis focuses on the surrounding argumentation.

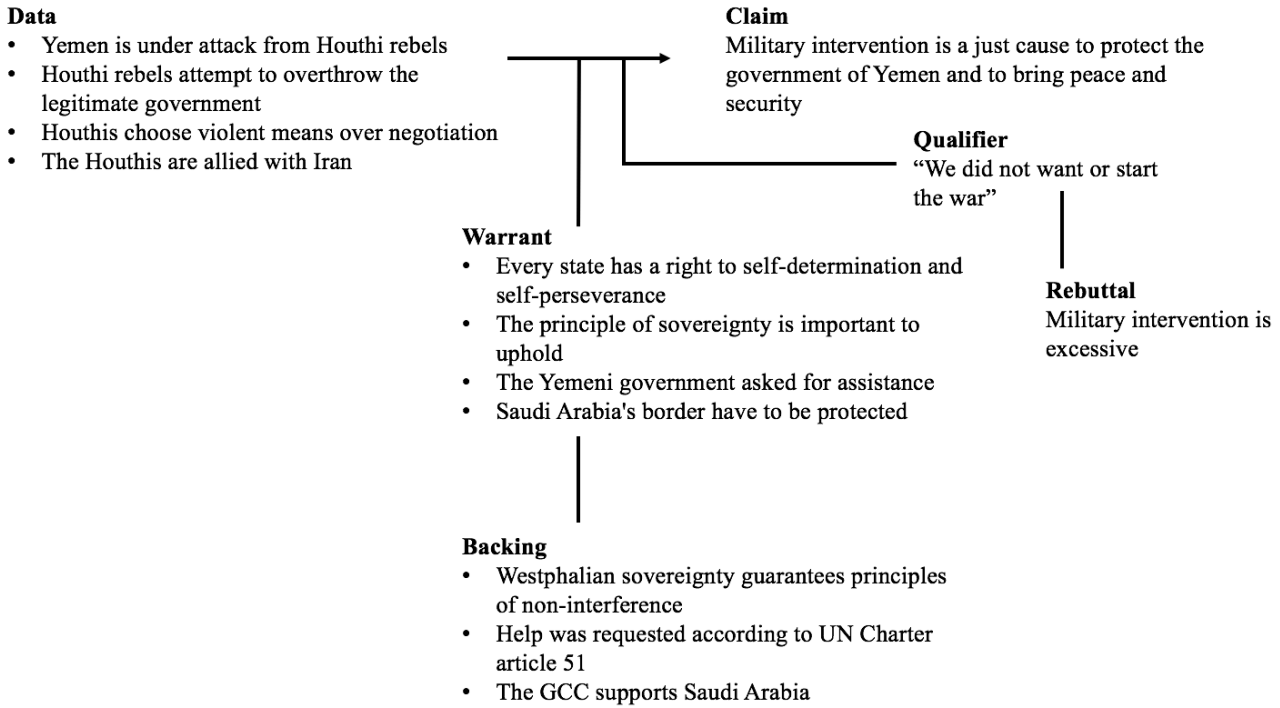


Figure 3. A Toulmin model visualising the Saudi Arabian arguments concerning why military intervention is necessary due to the principle of just cause

The just cause *claim* is the intervention itself being necessary to save the Yemeni government from an unwarranted threat. This threat (*data*) is the Houthi rebels that has rejected the peace negotiations, the GCC initiative, the NDC and have chosen violence as a method instead. How this evolves into an intervention is based on the *warrant* of which sovereignty of each state and the perseverance of international stability is important for Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the world at large. Additionally, they were asked by Yemen to intervene. *Backing* comes in the form of international norms of the sovereign principle, upholding the international system and Article 51, specifying the right of self-defence. Against the *rebuttal* of military force being excessive, the *qualifier* is that the war itself was not the will of Saudi Arabia as it is an ongoing civil war. Their efforts are needed to stabilise and bring peace, not to bring more violence.

4.2 Proper Authority arguments

In this decade, the GCC – of which Saudi Arabia is a member – have been very active in formulating their agenda and taking part in inflammatory political situations in the region. Not only by expressing opinions on regional matters, but influencing processes within its member countries and neighbours, where Yemen is one of them (Colombo 2017, 54–5). While it would be wrong to equate policy of the GCC and Saudi Arabia, their views on foreign policy matters often align notably in the Yemen case. This is exemplified by a communiqué released in March 2015, in which the GCC concerned themselves with the growing escalation of conflict in Yemen and applauded efforts by their member states to hinder it (GCC 2015a).

Hettne & Söderbaum (2006) advocate for regional organizations to take more responsibility in handling local conflicts, instead of waiting for UN delegation of authority. They argue that a regional organisation can better understand and share responsibility to the conflicts in their area (Hettne & Söderbaum 2006, 230–1). Through this practice, Colombo says that the Yemen crisis was an example of Saudi Arabia expanding its influence to reinforce their role as a legitimate actor in Middle Eastern affairs (Colombo 2017, 61). Since Yemen is not part of the GCC, Saudi Arabia have been keen to utilise the GCC as a mediator and sign of authority (Transfeld 2016, 164).

Even though this intervention did not come with instruction from the United Nations, Saudi Arabia has still argued that they are a legitimate actor to deal with the crisis in Yemen. The *claim* that military intervention was needed is backed by *data* claiming that their mediation with the GCC Initiative and the NDC have not been realised. The 2015 March press conference by Al-Jubeir brings up a request from president Hadi to have a conference in Riyadh earlier that year, where all parties in the conflict could come to a solution. However, Al-Jubeir makes note that “the Houthis once again rejected this initiative” (Al-Jubeir 2015a). Earlier in the speech, Al Jubeir pointed out that the Yemeni government has tried time and time again and Houthi resort to violence “...rather than engage in peaceful dialogue and...a peaceful transition” (Al-Jubeir 2015a).

As such, President Hadi asked neighbouring countries for assistance and the Saudi-led coalition did so accordingly, as Hadi had “...based his decision on the

Arab League Charter’s collective self-defence Mechanism” (Al-Jubeir 2015a). As an actor, Saudi Arabia’s *warrant* for being a legitimate actor has the *backing* of a common regional principle of collective self-defence, similar to that of the NATO article 5, detailing their principle of collective defence¹⁰. Therefore, not only are Saudi Arabia invited, their actions are supported by pre-existing conditions. This previous ‘good-will’ and compliance with previous peaceful agreement was also mentioned in a September 4 2015 press briefing by Al-Jubeir after a meeting between King Salman and then-US President Obama. He mentioned that the two leaders’ discussion revolved around creating a political dialogue in Yemen “...based on UN Security Counselor [sic]¹¹ Resolution 2216 and the GCC initiative and the outcome of the national dialogue... (Al-Jubeir 2015c).

Not only is GCC Initiative and the NDC mentioned, but an UN resolution as well. Although approved in April 2015, after the initial intervention, Security Council Resolution 2216 could be viewed as a formal approval of the intervention if one wishes. Attached to this resolution is a letter from the President Hadi, detailing a plea for international assistance (Ruys & Ferro 2016, 85). Res. 2216 makes note of viewing President Hadi as the legitimate leader and that his sovereignty is to be respected (S/RES/2216). It fully condemns the Houthis and calls upon them to stop undermining the political process initiated by the GCC, as it disrupts the security of the state. Although not explicitly mentioning the Saudi-led coalition, as a *backing* it serves an institutional purpose in reaffirming support for the GCC Initiative and Saudi Arabian involvement in acting on behalf on the Yemen government (S/RES/2216). Interesting to note is that this resolution is used as an argument to legitimize Saudi Arabia as a rightful actor, using Security Council resolutions ‘post-factum’. The intervention itself is not called for in the resolution, but situations like this have used this tactic before (Österdahl 2004, 85–8). Although creating a strange legal and political situation, its use points to the urgency in having to constantly support an effort which needs to be justified.

Despite the proposed calls for legality, the fact that Saudi Arabia is a rightful actor to judge what is right and wrong is of course controversial. As a state without much political or democratic rights, to claim a moral high ground to the world could

¹⁰ Article 5 can be viewed in its entirety at: https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics_110496.htm

¹¹ Note: This is a typo in the transcription. Should be ‘Council’

be viewed as problematic. Similarly, the call for self-defence could be ethically problematic if they do not abide by substantial moral considerations (Hutchings 2010, 147). Thus, the *rebuttal* is that violence should not be proposed by actors with ethically ambiguous actors. At the Munich Security Conference in 2016, Al-Jubeir thoroughly outlined their perceived role in their region and the way in which they are a defining actor willing to make a positive change. Saying that they (Saudi Arabia) "...are a country that is seeking security, peace, and stability in our area and...the world", Al-Jubeir stresses that they are to be trusted as a righteous player (Al-Jubeir 2016c). Additionally, Al-Jubeir contrasts Saudi Arabia against the rest of the world in how crises and challenges are dealt with and how his own country are the only ones taking matters into their own hands. In the speech he mentions that they have dealt with problems "...in ways the world maybe is not used to...because, frankly, there was a vacuum..." (Al-Jubeir 2016c). Furthermore to this *qualifier*, he brings up apprehension in the face of challenges saying "...if nobody's willing to do something", then "...Saudi Arabia and its allies had to step in and do something" (Al-Jubeir 2016c). Noticeable in this excerpt is that Al-Jubeir not only outlines the just efforts of Saudi Arabia, but of their allies as well. Clearly, Al-Jubeir makes the case of authority out of the apprehension of the world to act in situations which requires them to. It is similar to theoretical arguments regarding the need to act in situations despite criticism that may come, simply because the to act comes from the bad situation itself. Indeed, Saudi Arabia and the coalition argue that they are right to act so because they are the only ones taking their 'responsibility'; a *warrant* based on the weakness of the world.

Al-Jubeir further stressed their *warrant* and *data* in acting on behalf of the government "...to prevent a legitimate government from collapsing and from the country being taken over by a radical militia allied with Iran and Hezbollah, which was in possession of heavy weapons, ballistic missiles, and an air force..." (Al-Jubeir 2016c). Again, mentioning Iran along this their unjust efforts to bring down a government and ally, Saudi Arabia has to make their stance clear in acting in situations of injustice, especially when Iran is backing the rebels.

King Salman held a speech USA-Saudi Arabia Summit 2017 detailing the Saudi ambitions for the region in the coming years ahead. In this speech, he made clear to condemn hatred, violence and terrorism. The threat of terrorism was exemplified by ISIS, Al-Qaeda and the Iranian affiliated group Hezbollah. Included in this list

were also the Houthis. The King of Saudi Arabia himself took the stand of condemning Iran for “...its hostile practices and interventions, as we have seen in Yemen” (King Salman 2017a). As Saudi Arabia has previously argued to be a force of good in the world, acting when no one dares to, the case of Yemen is a prime example of when they can perceive themselves as doing good in the world. Dismantling the Houthi rebels and condemning their supporters, are what justify Saudi Arabia as a legitimate actor, according to their arguments

4.2.1 Application of the model

With the arguments made regarding proper authority, we can begin to structure a model of how this looks. The *claim* is that Saudi Arabia have the right to conduct this operation and are a legitimate actor to do so.

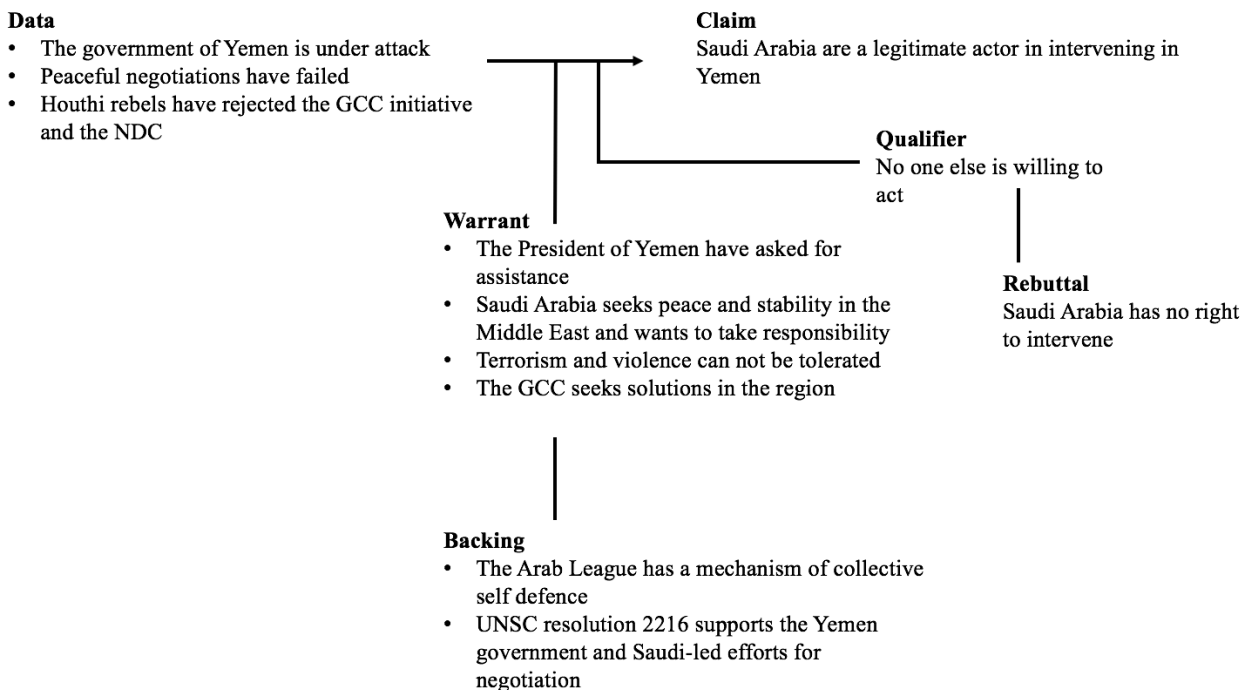


Figure 4. A Toulmin model visualising the Saudi Arabian arguments concerning why military intervention is necessary due to the principle of proper authority

The proper authority *claim* is that Saudi Arabia as an actor are legitimate to use force by intervening in the Yemen civil war. This is based on *data* that the government is under attack by violent Houthi rebels. Furthermore, the rebels have denied Yemen a peaceful transition and rejected the GCC initiative and the NDC,

of which Saudi Arabia were a negotiator. The *warrant* for military action stems from the fact that violence and terror must be stopped for the sake of it, something which is coordinated with the GCC. Saudi Arabia was also asked by president Hadi to act. Institutional *backing* comes from the Arab League's mechanism of collective self-defence. Also, UNSC resolution 2216 supports mediation efforts, the Hadi government and are highly critical of the Houthis. Against the *rebuttal* of why Saudi Arabia are ethically correct in advocating violent methods, comes a *qualifier* that Saudi Arabia are the only ones willing to act. As such, their legitimacy comes from their ambition to act in the face of unjustified aggression.

4.3 Rightful Intention arguments

The *rightful intention* claim concerns if Saudi Arabia's aims in this conflict are legitimate enough to justify an intervention. Going back to the March 29 2015 interview with Al-Jubeir, here he mentions that their *claim* to go to war against the Houthi rebels is that "...[Saudi Arabia] are there to protect the people of Yemen from an occupation by a radical group that is bent on turning Yemen towards more radicalism" (Al-Jubeir 2015b). This argument is based on *data* suggesting that Yemen is under threat from a existentially dangerous group that is "...allied and supported by Iran and Hezbollah", as a driving force for violence (Al-Jubeir 2015b). As Al-Jubeir mentioned, the aim is to protect the state and its people by taking a stance against ideology which is damaging. Furthermore, in the UN General Assembly speech from 2015, Al-Jubeir said that "the goal of military operations in Yemen is to reduce the risk of militias, protect our borders and find a political solution based on the Gulf Initiative" (Al-Jubeir 2015c). To justify their aims, Saudi Arabia points to the progress that could happen for Yemen, if the threats are removed. Not only does the *warrant* contain reference to protecting themselves, but the danger in letting radical militias gain ground. This passage contains the *backing* of how these aims came to be with referring to the GCC initiative for a political solution and UNSC Resolution 2216 – something that was argued to confirm their authority. These previous agreements have been guiding Saudi Arabia's policy, even when under attack. Al-Jubeir even makes mention of a specific situation where

a supposed Iranian boat had been spotted to deliver weapons, which was "...not the only case of Iranian attempt to smuggle arms to the rebels" (Al-Jubeir 2015c)

Outlining Iran as a main threat, guides Saudi Arabia's arguments to why they are continuing the intervention. As the rebels are supposedly funded by extremist ideology, it is of utmost importance that the main aim of the intervention is to rid Yemen of this negative influence. Al-Jubeir writes in the New York Times article that Saudi Arabia has goals with "...responding forcefully to Iran's acts of aggression", which as according to him "...has been consistent since the 1979 revolution" (Al-Jubeir 2016b). Mentioning the civil war in Yemen, Al-Jubeir connects Iran's support for the Houthi rebels as it "...helped cause the war that has killed thousands". Using the *warrant* of needing to stop aggressions, the *data* in Iran's responsibility for the deaths of civilians builds the argument for the aims being reasonable further.

The Munich 2016 speech by Al-Jubeir brings up the challenges of the Middle East highlighting that of "...underdevelopment...extremism...terrorism" and so fourth (Al-Jubeir 2016c). Outlining problems as a common story in the region the last couple of years, Saudi Arabia has responded by being active in trying stop these threats to their closest states. However, this is not to be confused with ambitions to control outcomes – only to assist those who need the help if they ask for it. As a reservation for criticism, Al-Jubeir wants to make it clear that they "...are a country that has no ambitions beyond its borders" (Al-Jubeir 2016c). All that is sought is a peaceful solution

Saudi Arabia do not want to act as if they act out of self-interest, which is a likely *rebutall* that comes to those choosing to intervene militarily, as mentioned in the theoretical discussion. This is why humanitarian assistance is frequently mentioned as means to improve the population and indeed to fulfil the claim of having the right intentions. Suffering that exists in Yemen is according to Al-Jubeir due to the Houthis "...hijacking their people and starving them" (Al-Jubeir 2016c). In the face of this, Prince Mohammed makes it clear in the 2016 UN Assembly speech that the operation in which they are a part of, is to be seen as humanitarian. A *qualifier* is used in that Saudi Arabia is a big humanitarian sponsor that reaches all parts of Yemen, totalling since 2015 to be "470 million US dollars" (Al-Saud 2016a). To stress the amount given in humanitarian assistance means to further their

warrant in playing an active part in Yemen, as it is simply to help the country prosper – not to only be a military actor.

The threat of Iran alongside worsening humanitarian conditions have thus far been explicitly linked by Saudi Arabia. At the 2017 Munich Security conference, Al-Jubeir re-addresses that Saudi Arabia will do whatever it takes to put Yemen “...on the path of economic development and reconstruction” (Al-Jubeir 2017a). This is to be achieved as soon as the civil war ends, and the legitimate government can return to full power. However, this process is said to be hindered by Iran’s interference in Yemen, as well as other countries in the Middle East. As previously mentioned, Saudi Arabia has earlier argued that their goal is to aid those in need which proves difficult as Al-Jubeir argues “...The Iranian do not believe in the principle of good neighbourliness or non-interference.” (Al-Jubeir 2017a). That being said, the Houthis themselves are recognized as a part of the future Yemen which is inclusive. According to Al-Jubeir “...the Houthis have a role to play in Yemen”, as long as they do not engage in violence (Al-Jubeir 2017a). But this violence, allegedly supported by Iran is the roadblock that keeping the country from coming together. Because the Iranians support the Houthis with missiles, they endanger the future of Yemen and therefore must be stopped.

Not only has Iran been accused of supporting Houthi rebels with missiles, but of possibly being active in Yemen as well. The Saudi Arabian ambassador to Yemen, Mohammed Al-Jabir accused Iran’s Revolutionary Guard and its allied group Hezbollah training Houthis, ruining the political process that had begun and “undermining the security and stability of Yemen...and international peace and security”. The *data* provided make the case clear for Saudi Arabia that through their presence, Yemen does not fall to violence and terrorism. Mentioning the humanitarian efforts, Al-Jabir stresses the importance of their role in the country as the main supporter of the Yemeni government (Al-Jabir 2017a). Their *warrant* to be there is backed by the international threat of Iranian influence – an influence which according to Saudi Arabia, is spreading. The justified aim is thus to thwart any and all aggression that Iran is bringing.

4.3.1 Application of the model

The previous section handled the just war principle of rightful intention and was the analytical component guiding the analysis. Going through the arguments made by Saudi Arabia, we can construct a model to graphically show how they are structured more clearly.

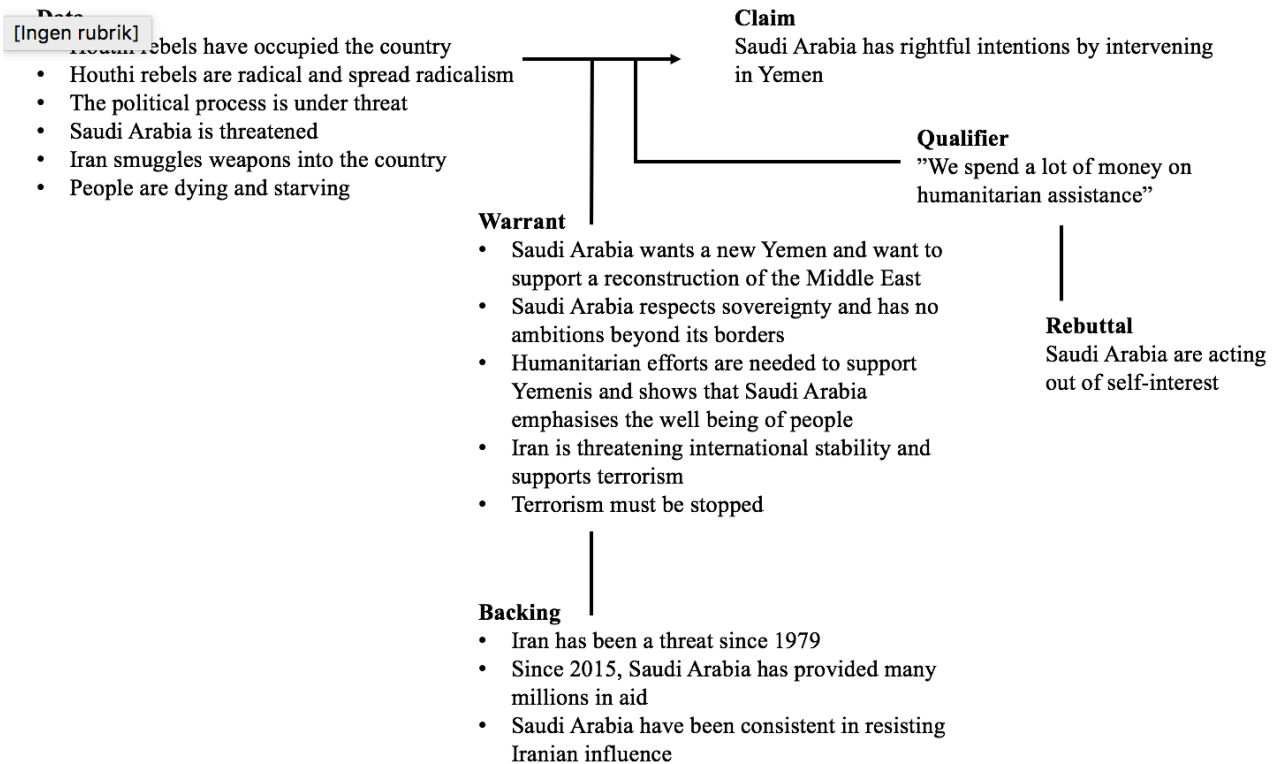


Figure 4. A Toulmin model visualising the Saudi Arabian arguments concerning why military intervention is necessary due to the principle of rightful intention

The rightful intention *claim* is that Saudi Arabia wants to build a new and prosperous Yemen, something which has tried and denied by the unlawful aggression by the Houthis. Provided *data* is the danger that the Houthis pose to the country, where radicalism is spreading, and people are dying. Furthermore, Iran has smuggled weapons into the country and are acting unlawfully. As such, the *warrant* to intervene is based in Saudi Arabia's respect for the integrity of Yemen and to provide it with upmost support. The threat from Iran has a *backing* of them acting this way since the Iranian revolution, to which Saudi Arabia always have responded. Not only have they done this in the case of intervening in Yemen militarily, but have granted the people large amounts of humanitarian aid – a *qualifier* against the *rebuttal* of the intervention being done out of self-interest.

5 Results

Judging from statements made by Saudi Arabia regarding the intervention, the results point to several interesting arguments. In the operationalisation, I mentioned the three analytical guidelines for Saudi Arabia's claim of legitimacy and righteousness, using the just war principles of *just cause*, *proper authority* and *rightful intention*; the cause is legitimate; the actor is legitimate; the aims are legitimate. After letting these principles guide the argumentative analysis, Saudi Arabian statements boil down to a couple of principal arguments. First, stressing the importance of upholding the sovereignty of the Yemen state and to protect it from Houthi aggression. Secondly, compliance with the Arab League charter, authorization from the GCC and the UN with reference to Security Council resolutions, gives basis to Saudi Arabia's assertion of authority. Thirdly, the alleged involvement of Iran within the Houthi rebels serves as a threat to Yemen and international stability, which requires aims of removing their influence. Finally, stressing the importance of humanitarian assistance that would pave the way for a more prosperous Yemen. These arguments will be presented more thoroughly down below.

Just Cause - protecting sovereignty

While Yemen has an institutional right to self-perseverance and to defend themselves from rebellion, it does not answer why Saudi Arabia are right to intervene on their behalf. That being said, Saudi Arabia make the case that they do not consider the intervention as being a choice, but a necessity in correcting an unjust situation. This notion of the unjust situation, is as McMahan discusses in his effort to define the just cause, must clearly exist in order to abide by that principle, as otherwise the method of war cannot be an acceptable alternative (McMahan 2005, 18). Since Yemen's government, and therefore the sovereign principle, is under attack by rebels, it is every state's principal duty to support the integrity of the state. Al-Jubeir even makes reference to the principle of Westphalian

sovereignty in a UN speech, and their commitment to its perseverance. Although a western concept, its relevance and importance for state relations and the international system is deeply ingrained as a fact of the matter and a binding commitment for Saudi Arabia (Al-Jubeir 2016c).

The principle of sovereignty as the foundational aspect of international law is more than a source of authority, but also a resource for legitimacy (Hurd 1999, 379). To support the integrity of the state will almost always make you look good in the international arena, even still if is supported through military means. However, Ruys & Ferro (2016) are critical of how the intervention has been evaluated and find problems with the cause. They note that in order that ‘intervention through invitation’ can be a just cause, its needs to be proved that the right of self-determination is severely affected (Ruys & Ferro 2016, 89). Furthermore, acting in environments like these and supporting a state actor in a war, could hinder the righteousness of the cause of protecting the wellbeing of the state. Regardless, Saudi Arabia’s arguments show that their cause in protecting the state, is just.

Proper Authority – compliance with international institutions

As military intervention is highly regulated, even forbidden by international law in almost any circumstance, the authority to do so can apply to specific actors in specific situations. As it happens with Saudi Arabia, they along with their allies were invited to do so by President Hadi after the Yemen capital Sana’a was overtaken by the Houthis. Since they were invited, Saudi Arabia are acting on behalf of the government – whose sovereignty they highly value. Additionally, Saudi Arabia argues that since they were part of the mediation efforts with the GCC and the political transition after the Arab Spring, they have a stake in making sure those efforts are not wasted. By responding forcefully, their legitimacy comes from their aspirations to protect the previous agreements.

Despite their best efforts, there lies a problem in justifying the efforts of the intervention with referencing UNSC resolution 2216, as it was signed after intervention began. Even still, the resolution makes no explicit mention of military intervention being the right course of action to take, especially with regards to a third-party. Instead, it calls for all violence to come to an end (UN S/RES/2216). While it is true that the UN has consistently supported the Hadi government and the

political process instigated with the help of Saudi Arabia and the GCC, this is to exclusively to be a non-violent process.

Curiously enough, this shows a need for judging war efforts as they are going on through *jus ad bellum* criteria. The argument based on the UN resolution could not have been made before the intervention but is used as a point of legitimacy after the initial strike. All in all, Saudi Arabia makes the point of being a proper authority on the matter by pointing to their ‘good-will’ and respect for international conventions, as well as their previous efforts to make peace.

Rightful intention – Iranian aggression & humanitarian efforts

To legitimize the actions taken, Saudi Arabia point to an enemy that is a danger to the international community that needs to be fought. Iran is alleged to support the Houthi rebels with not only missiles and supplies, but to act as a proxy in the conflict as well. Since president Hadi is allied with Saudi Arabia and share common goals, to have another sovereign state involved on the ‘wrong’ side is dangerous

Al-Jubeir writes in the New York Times article that as a revolutionary regime, Iran cannot comply with international law, since he sees revolutionary as expansionary and therefore non-compliant with the shared values of the world (Al-Jubeir 2016b). It is an existential threat, outlined to act as a dangerous force wherever it exists. While there is some proposed evidence by the UN, that Iranian missile silos have been used in the conflict by the Houthis, this does not mean that Iran is controlling the narrative or are proxies to in the conflict (Juneau 2016, 647). Juneau (2016) notes that Iran’s ambitions are to make soft power gains against Saudi Arabia and aligns themselves with the Houthis for that reason. That does not mean proxy warfare.

Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia has ambitions to remove the influence of extremism and terrorism, of which the Houthi rebels exemplify, and the create peace for Yemen. By proclaiming that they have no ambitions outside of their borders, Saudi Arabia instead argues that through their efforts they show that they are serious with their intentions to protect Yemenis. This is also exemplified by their parallel efforts of providing humanitarian assistance to those in need.

6 Conclusion

Civil wars have been shown to last longer than other wars, and their complexities make peace very difficult. Involving a third party, can make these prospects even worse (Sawyer – Gallagher – Kathleen 2017, 1175). With that being the case, the case for a military intervention being a legitimate force for good needs evaluation, lest Yemen risks ending up a failed state (ICG 2017). Ruys & Ferro (2016) notes that ‘intervention through invitation’ have in recent times become more prevalent, as the legal standing of such operations are commonly acceptable in the international community. However, in the case of the Yemen intervention, they mean that it hasn’t been properly evaluated as to why their conduct is fully legal or indeed, just (Ruys & Ferro 2016, 61–2).

Going back to the research question of how Saudi Arabia has argued for the justification for military intervention, this study shows that the arguments used by Saudi Arabia, do follow the language of *jus ad bellum* principles. As presented in the results, Saudi Arabia argues for a *just cause*, *proper authority*, and *rightful intention* by using several different arguments. First, the respect for sovereignty; second, institutional backing; third, the alleged involvement of Iran; and finally, their humanitarian efforts to build a new Yemen. Although being a Western tradition, it seems just war paradigms guide Saudi Arabian foreign policy as well. This points to the importance of understanding the role of just war theory.

Despite the logical structure of arguments, the reasons to why an intervention is ever necessary is still not easy to conclude. As it seems, the violence in Yemen has turned into a humanitarian disaster, with Saudi Arabia making matters worse (ICG 2017). In conclusion, the Saudi Arabian intervention has a clear logical structure, and shows the importance of at least claiming legitimacy by proclamation. Further research of how arguments are made to justify interventions, as prevalent as they have become in the 21st century is needed. With that, we can gain a fuller picture of how states make the case for war, and why they award themselves that right.

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