

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

FRAMING THE YEMEN WAR: UNITED NATIONS  
SECURITY COUNCIL DYNAMICS BETWEEN 2014-2021

by  
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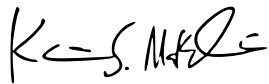
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# AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

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# ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

Hiba Mohamad Farhat for Master of Arts  
Major: Public Policy and International Affairs

Title: Framing the Yemen War: United Nations Security Council Dynamics Between 2014-2021

The armed conflict in Yemen has been ongoing since 2014 with no end in sight. The attempts to reach a political solution and mediation efforts by the United Nations Security Council and member states failed. The complexity of this war, including the involvement of competing interests and claims of the regional and international, state, and non-state actors, explain this failure. The power and role of the United Nations Security Council in legitimizing certain discourses rather than others push each member to present its own narrative and press towards legitimizing it. Using a content analysis approach, this paper first maps the different narratives by the Security Council's permanent five members (P-5), relevant Arab states, Yemen, and United Nation Secretary General Special Envoy for Yemen during UNSC meetings on Yemen war between January 2014 to August 2021. The paper then uses framing and securitization theories to analyze the themes and claims adopted in these competing state narratives. This analysis reveals how in the case of the Yemen war, narratives presented at the Security Council meetings attempted to legitimize a certain discourse and actions and delegitimize another through presenting the situation as a security threat. The dominant Western and Gulf side framed the war as part of Iran's regional project and labeled the Houthis as "terrorists," blaming them entirely rather than the other side as the responsible for the humanitarian crisis. The paper concludes that UNSC would only be able to implement the protection of civilians in armed conflict agenda through ending impunity and ensuring accountability of all parties involved directly or indirectly in this war. There are crucial steps and reforms that should be done, including but not limited to having the ability to end impunity on all states equally, even the P5, whenever evidence show their involvement in international laws violations.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNSG</b>	United Nations Secretary General
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>UNSCR</b>	United Nations Security Council Resolution
<b>UN OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs
<b>HRW</b>	Human Rights Watch
<b>IHL</b>	International humanitarian law
<b>IHRL</b>	International human rights law
<b>P5</b>	The five permanent members at the United Nations Security Council
<b>GCC</b>	Gulf Cooperation Council
<b>IS</b>	Islamic State
<b>AQAP</b>	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
<b>PoC</b>	Protection of civilians in armed conflict
<b>UNMHA</b>	United Nations Mission to support the Hodeida Agreement

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past seven years, war has been raging in Yemen with no end in sight. Local, regional, and international actors have been directly and indirectly involved in this war including government-aligned forces, Houthi forces, Saudi-led military coalition, UAE-backed Joint Resistance Forces, the Southern Transitional Council (STC), Hadramawt Elite Forces, Islamic State, and al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (see Appendix). Fighting parties in Yemen have been accused of violating International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and International Humanitarian Law (IHL). All parties to the Yemen armed conflict, according to the Human Rights Watch (HRW) World Report 2021, have committed violations of the laws of war, many of which amount to war crimes. For its part, Amnesty International has found that “all parties to the conflict in Yemen continued to commit violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses with impunity. The Saudi Arabia-led coalition, supporting the internationally recognized Yemeni government, and Huthi forces continued to carry out attacks that unlawfully killed and injured civilians and destroyed civilian objects” (Amnesty International, 2021, p. 397).

The humanitarian impact of these clashes is massive. More than seven years of war have led to the collapse of the healthcare system, destruction of the economic infrastructure, growth of food insecurity and malnutrition, and displacement and migration of millions of Yemenis. Described by UN as the world’s “worst humanitarian crisis,” the war in Yemen has caused more than 230,000 deaths including “131,000 from indirect causes such as lack of food, health services and infrastructure” (UN OCHA, 2021,

p. 111). According to the “Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021” report published by the United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), 80% of Yemenis now live below the poverty line (UN OCHA, 2021, p. 6) and “more than 10 million people across the country” receive monthly humanitarian aid from the UN (UN OCHA, 2021, p. 22). Human Rights Watch documented violations by the Houthis and the Saudi-led coalition include unlawful airstrikes; indiscriminate artillery attacks; targeting children and using child soldiers; landmines; detentions, torture and enforced disappearances; attacks on civil society without legal basis; obstruction of aid and impeding humanitarian access; violence and discrimination against women and girls; and detention and abuse of migrants (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Although international humanitarian law prohibits warring parties “from withholding consent for relief operations on arbitrary grounds and requires them to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded impartial aid to civilians in need” (Human Rights Watch, 2021), the aid delivered by different UN agencies has been obstructed by parties to the conflict. The obstruction of such aid impacted the funding of the UN-led humanitarian projects for Yemen. Donors voiced their concerns about the obstruction of aid during UNSC meetings. In result, the “donor support to UN aid agencies collapsed in June 2020, particularly from Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States, which channeled over half of its aid to southern Yemen. As of August 28, aid agencies had received only 24 percent of the \$3.4 billion they had requested for the year” (Human Rights Watch, 2020, p. 2).

As of December 2021, attempts to reach a political settlement continue to fail. This “entirely man-made catastrophe,” as described by UN Human Rights Report in 2017 (“Yemen: An “entirely man-made catastrophe”-UN human rights report urges

international investigation", 2017), has become one of the toughest challenges for the United Nations Security Council's primary responsibility to "maintain international peace and security." This, as per Article 1 of the UN Charter, shall be achieved by taking "collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of peace." The failure to put an end to the sufferings of Yemenis has raised many questions about the role and effectiveness of the Security Council in conflict prevention and resolution.

One of the factors contributing to the complexity of Yemen's case is the multiple number of local, regional, and international, state, and non-state actors, participating or intervening in the conflict. The multiplicity and diversity of actors indicate the presence of different positions and narratives on the conflict. These positions are reflected in the narratives shared during the Security Council meetings on Yemen war. The primary goal sought by political actors or states through these narratives is to maintain their hegemonic power through different means including discourse (Reyes, 2011, p.783). Thus, in most cases, states seek legitimization of their narratives which provides a strong base for any unilateral or multilateral actions taken by them. The primary source for legitimacy in today's international order is the United Nations and the Security Council in particular. In this context, it would be interesting to explore the different narratives presented at the Security Council meetings on Yemen and how these narratives influenced the response of the Security Council and translated to the actions taken by different political players involved in this war.

### **1.1. Aim and research questions**

This paper focuses on narratives by members during UNSC meetings on Yemen and how these narratives influenced decision making and actions. The aim of this paper is to map the narrative of the Security Council's P-5, relevant Arab states, Yemen, and UN Secretary-General (UNSG) Special Envoy for Yemen, during UNSC meetings on Yemen war between January 2014 and August 2021. The paper analyzes the development and significance of these narratives. This paper seeks to answer the following research questions:

- i. What were the narratives by the P-5, relevant Arab states, Yemen, and UN Secretary-General Special Envoy for Yemen during Security Council meetings on Yemen war from January 2014 to August 2021?
- ii. How do these narratives frame Yemen war and legitimize specific discourses and actions and delegitimize others?

### **1.2. Structure of the paper**

The paper starts with a brief historical overview about the Yemen war and the involved actors. This paper does not intend to address the legality of the external intervention in this war, but rather focuses on exploring the different approaches to Yemen war at the Security Council. It also addresses the important role the Security Council has in legitimizing certain discourses. This paper presents a content analysis methodological approach that identifies the main positions at the Security Council and explore how this war has been contextualized by the Security Council. The third chapter includes the concepts and theoretical frameworks used in this study. It then presents the Security Council's response to this war through its resolutions and actions taken to

enforce protection of civilians in armed conflict. Following that, the paper presents the findings of the study based on the framework of framing theory and the securitization theory.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides the reader with background knowledge that is necessary for this paper. It presents a historical overview on the Yemen war and the main actors involved, followed by a review of literature on UNSC legitimizing role and its protection of civilians in armed conflict agenda.

#### **2.1. Historical overview on the Yemen war**

Ruling Yemen was once described by former President of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh as “dancing on the heads of snakes” (Edroos, 2017). Saleh ruled Yemen from 1990 upon its unification until 2017. The situation in Yemen started to escalate mainly in 2011 when uprisings stormed several Arab countries as Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya against the ruling regimes. Yemenis struggled with widespread poverty, unemployment, and inflation, with 40% of Yemenis back then living on less than 2\$ per day (Edroos, 2017). The protests aimed at ousting Saleh, and were endorsed by “Houthis,” one of the main opposition groups to Saleh’s government. The Houthi movement was founded by Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi in the 1990s representing the Zaidi Shia minority in Yemen (McKernan, 2018). On November 23, 2011, and after 11 months of protests, Saleh signed an initiative proposed by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Saleh handed over his power to Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, his deputy of nearly two decades, and a unity government including prime minister from opposition was formed. The opposition was not happy with this transition and since then the situation in Yemen has been rapidly deteriorating. In February 2012, Hadi inaugurated as a president, however he failed to

counter Al-Qaida attacks on the capital Sanaa ("Yemen Profile - Timeline", 2019). Houthis, as one of the revolutionary groups with military experience, took over the capital in September 2014. Upon this, Hadi resigned and fled to Saudi Arabia. In 2015, the Islamic State carried out one of its first attacks in Yemen in which 173 people were killed. As Houthis advanced in Yemen, several Arab states launched a military campaign to back the internationally approved<sup>1</sup> government of Hadi against Houthis with the aim of ending their movement, as per Hadi's request. This campaign was led by Saudi Arabi and included Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, Egypt, Qatar, Sudan, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates. This coalition was backed by the United States of America (US), Germany, France, and the United Kingdom (UK). Despite supporting an internationally approved government, many concerns were raised regarding the legality of this military intervention, but this paper will not address any of the debates on this matter.

## **2.2. The legitimizing role of the United Nations Security Council**

The United Nations Security Council is one of the United Nations six main organs and is mainly responsible for maintaining international peace and security. As per the UN charter, the purpose of UNSC in addition to retaining peace are to develop friendly relations among nations, cooperate in solving international problems and promoting respect for human rights, and to become the center for harmonizing the actions of the nations ("What is the Security Council?," n.d.). The Security Council is composed of 15 members, five of which are permanent with veto power (China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Security Council supported the GCC initiative and welcomed the political transition of Yemen. S/RES/2140. (2014)

of America), whereas the remaining 10 members are non-permanent and five of which are annually elected for a two-year term by the United Nations General Assembly. According to UN Charter, the Security Council has the exclusive authority to determine any threat to or breach of peace or act of aggression and decide the measures that should be taken to maintain or restore international peace and security (United Nations, 1945).

The Security Council has a “substantial authority” (Caron, 1993, p. 562), and given the wide range of powers and duties under the United Nations Charter its decisions can legitimate and legislate. The term legitimization refers to the process by which speaker accredit a certain behavior (Reyes, 2011, p. 782). The Security Council legitimates actions by others because it can purport to authorize these actions on behalf of the UN and it legislates because its resolutions and decisions are legally binding on all UN members (Caron, 1993, p. 562).

Over the past decades, UNSC has faced several challenges, and has been criticized for its performance. There are five challenges to the legitimacy of the Security Council’s use of its authority outlined by Caron (1993, p. 566) based on two perceptions. There are challenges that come from the perception of dominance of the Security Council by a few states because of the (i) power of these states in international affairs; (ii) capabilities of these states within the Security Council and (iii) disproportionate representation of these states in the Security Council (Caron, 1993, pp. 566). The other two challenges result from the perception of unfairness surrounding the veto because of the (iv) possibility of a double standard in governance and (v) disabling effect of the veto on the sense of participatory governance (Caron, 1993, p. 566).

Some scholars call for the reform of the veto. From a realist approach, the veto power turns the Security Council to an instrument the P-5 may use to legitimize certain

actions in their favor. The veto power makes the P-5 equal and thus weakens the sense of legitimacy of the Security Council which would become a tool for these countries “to hold the monopoly on legitimate power” (Özev, 2019, p. 10). In this context, Papalia (2017, p. 55) argues that while the veto would unlikely be abolished, it needs to be subject to a set of qualifications. There are several reasons that support such arguments on the veto power according to Papalia (2017). First, although the veto power makes the P-5 equal, it creates a gap between them and the non-permanent members. This power gives each one of the P-5 the privilege to stop the Security Council, the UN’s most important decision-making body, from taking decisions that do not serve their national interests (Papalia, 2017, p. 56). For instance, the United States has used its veto power more than 40 times against UNSC drafted resolutions that are critical of Israel. One example is the draft UNSCR S/2018/516<sup>2</sup> by Kuwait on protecting civilians in Gaza, which condemns Israel’s use of force against Palestinian civilians. Second, the veto is making the UN undemocratic, and many of its members oppose the existence of the veto as it fundamentally clashes with and undermines the principle of sovereign equality of states (Mahmood, 2013, p. 129). Third, the veto power is seen as a shield for the P-5 from the governance of the Security Council and thus creating inequality among members, because this power subjects’ non-permanent members to the law while placing the P-5 above it (Papalia, 2017, p. 57). Thus, this veto power gives the permanent members freedom from the governance of the Security Council (Caron, 1993, p.565). Fourth, the ineffectiveness of the Security Council in responding to several conflicts is another argument for

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<sup>2</sup> The draft resolution could be accessed on the following link:  
<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/draft-security-council-resolution-on-protecting-civilians-in-gaza-s2018516-vetoed/>

qualifying the veto (Papalia, 2017, p. 59). The example given above about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict also supports in this argument.

Despite these challenges, debates and calls for reforms of the UN and its Security Council, this organization continues to be one of the much needed in today's order. The power of the United Nations comes from the fact that today the only way to be recognized as a state and build relations with other state and non-state actors is through having a membership at the UN and that no state has ever left after joining it (Özev, 2019, p. 12). Since the Security Council has the power to decide what is a threat to peace and security, the participation in its meeting implies the participation in identifying who/what the threat is. As a platform where different positions on different political issues meet, UNSC may witness attempts of presenting some issues as threat and security ones. The actor in this case seeks to legitimize its discourse which according to Reyes "implies an attempt to justify action or no action or an ideological position on a specific issue" (Reyes, 2011, p. 783).

### **2.3. UNSC and protection of civilians in armed conflicts**

To better understand the response of the Security Council to the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Yemen, it is important to address the agendas adopted by UNSC to ensure the protection of civilians during armed conflicts. Since the establishment of the Security Council, the world has witnessed armed conflicts with high costs. The highest cost is the number of civilians of total casualties which has been increasing dramatically over the past decades. According to a report by the Humanitarian Policy Group (Adamczyk, 2019, p. 2), the percentage of civilian casualties ranged from 10%-15% a century ago, it increased to around 50% by World War II and had risen to 80%-

85% by the 1990s. The report emphasizes that civilians are “not simply being caught up in fighting but are increasingly directly targeted” by warring parties (Adamczyk, 2019, p. 2). As a result of globalization, a modern armed conflict and its effects go beyond the country and borders as well as regions and the concept of sovereignty is eroding (Schotten & Biehler, 2008, p. 309). Therefore, protection of individuals becomes increasingly an international concern, and the Security Council can only maintain international peace and security when it takes IHL and international human rights law (IHRL) into account (Schotten & Biehler, 2008, p. 309). The nature of modern armed conflict and the huge numbers of civilian casualties pushed the Security Council to put the protection of civilians in armed conflict front and center.

Upon a decade of bloody events as the Rwanda genocide and the Balkan war crimes, the Security Council held the first open debate dedicated to the protection of civilians (PoC) in February 1999. Following this open meeting, the Security Council requested from its Secretary-General to provide recommendations to strengthen the protection of civilians in armed conflicts physically and legally. Seven months later, the Secretary-General sent a report of recommendations on action at all stages of conflict to UNSC including: (i) ratification and implementation of international instruments as IHL, IHRL and international refugee law (IRL), which are essential tools for legal protection of civilians in armed conflicts; (ii) implementation of national and international accountability for war crimes and enforcement of respect for IHL and IHRL through ratifying the Statute of the International Criminal Court; and (iii) protection of humanitarian personnel, internally displaced persons, and children from recruitment in wars (UN OCHA, 2019, p. 10). Following that, UNSC adopted Resolution 1265, a milestone in its history affirming the inclusion of the protection of civilians (PoC) in

armed conflicts as an item in its agenda. The resolution asserts the States' obligation to implement applicable international laws as IHL, HRW and IRL. Protection of civilians according to this resolution includes activities that help or prevent or limit and minimize the impacts of an armed conflict on civilians through compliance with, implementation of and accountability for breaches and violations of IHL, HRL and IRL (UN OCHA, 2019, p.10). Since then, UNSC has affirmed its willingness to “respond to situations of armed conflict, where civilians are being targeted or humanitarian assistance to civilians is obstructed” as stated in a statement by UNSC President while addressing “protection of civilians in armed conflict” (UNSC, 2019). The protection of civilians thus became among the most critical and core issues on UNSC's agenda.

The Security Council continued to hold open debates on PoC and in 2002 it adopted the Aide Memoire as a practical guide to facilitate its consideration of PoC issues (UNSC, 2015, p. 3). Since 2009, the Aide Memoire editions has become more detailed and effective not only in addressing PoC issues but also recommending actions for UNSC and has proven as one of the useful tools for the Security Council (UN OCHA, 2019, p. 13). Later in 2015, UNSC requested in 2015 the Secretary-General to have the PoC report annually. As part of its efforts on PoC, the Security Council established the Informal Expert Group on PoC in 2009 as recommended by the Secretary General in 2007 PoC report, in which he called to create “a dedicated, expert-level working group to facilitate the systematic and sustained consideration and analysis of protection concerns, and to ensure consistent application of the aide-memoire for the consideration of issues pertaining to the protection of civilians” (In Hindsight: The Informal Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians, 2016). This Group has met around 100 times and been active in advising and updating UNSC on country-specific developments on the ground against the

main existing protection concerns (UN OCHA, 2019, p. 13). In 2007, Switzerland established the Group of Friends of PoC of 23 members: Switzerland, Sweden, UK, Poland, Norway, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Ireland, Italy, Belgium, Germany, France, Canada, Australia, Austria, Japan, Cote D'Ivoire, Uruguay, Portugal, Liechtenstein, Brazil, Indonesia, and Kuwait (UN OCHA, 2019, p. 13). This Group is an informal forum with the purpose of mobilizing political and financial support for PoC related matters among members of the Security Council and has proven effective in providing a platform through which to advance the PoC agenda (UN OCHA, 2019, p. 13).



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1. Methodology

The paper tabulates the different positions taken during the Security Council meetings on the Yemen war from January 2014 to August 2021. The goal is to analyze through a content analysis methodology the different narratives and positions of the P-5, Arab states, Yemen, and the UN Secretary-General Special Envoy for Yemen over the course of seven years. Content analysis reviews forms of human communication including books, newspapers, and films as well as other forms to identify patterns, themes, or biases (Williams, 2007, p. 69). This method involves document analysis to uncover meaning, develop understanding and discover insights relevant to the research question (Bowen, 2009, 29). I seek through this analysis to understand how the actors deployed certain frames and attempted to legitimize a certain discourse. This analysis was conducted based on a set of themes which, I assume, reveal how each actor perceived Yemen events and framed actors involved in the conflict. I studied the pattern in which the following themes were used in statements by the previously specified actors:

- (i) Actor addresses the humanitarian crisis and the violations to international laws
- (ii) Actor calls for a political solution for the Yemen war
- (iii) Actor calls for humanitarian intervention and assistance in Yemen
- (iv) Actor accuses Houthis of violating international laws, threatening security and/or causing/worsening the humanitarian crisis

- (v) Actor accuses Saudi-led Coalition of violating international laws, threatening security and/or causing/worsening the humanitarian crisis
- (vi) Actor uses the term terrorism/terrorists without referring to any of the fighting parties in Yemen
- (vii) Actor refers to Houthis and/or actions by them as terrorists and terrorism
- (viii) Actor refers to Yemen events as regional and/or international security threats
- (ix) Actor names an external regional or international actor as supporter or sponsor of one of the fighting parties

The complexity of Yemen war makes it hard to get unbiased information on what is really happening among the countries of interest. For this reason, this paper refers to publications by the United Nations Security Council which are open to the public and available on UN website<sup>3</sup>.

One of the limitations is that there were informal consultations and meetings held by the Security Council after the formal meetings but there are no official records of these meetings. In this case there is no way to conduct an extended analysis on these informal meetings because no records exist. However, the statements made by the States during the official records should be enough in conveying the states' understanding and position toward Yemen war.

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<sup>3</sup> Meeting Records of the Security Council on the Yemen war are available on: [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un\\_documents\\_type/security-council-meeting-records/?ctype=Yemen&cbtype=yemen](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un_documents_type/security-council-meeting-records/?ctype=Yemen&cbtype=yemen)

## **3.2. Theoretical Framework**

This paper analyzes the meeting records based on the concept of securitization and framing theory. This section presents the frameworks the analysis in this paper will be based on.

### ***3.2.1. Framing Theory***

In disputes, different parties have different perceptions and understanding of the situation as well as different interests and principles. These differences generate unique “interpretations of events, paint parties into negative characters, yield mutually incompatible issues, and focus attention on specific outcomes that impede exploration of alternatives” (Shmueli et al., 2006, p. 2). The development of a specific conceptualization of a particular setting is defined as framing (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 104). Frames can have two different functions as suggested by Shmueli et al. (2006, p. 1): interpretive and strategic. “As interpretive lenses, frames help us make sense of complex situations in ways internally consistent with our world views, giving meaning to events in the context of life experience and understandings. As strategic tools, frames help rationalize self-interest, persuade broader audiences, build coalitions, or promote preferred outcomes” (Shmueli et al., 2006, p. 1). The major concept of framing theory is that the same issue can have different interpretations and that it can be understood as having implications for several values or considerations (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 104).

Considering the role and influence of the Security Council, speeches delivered by a member state reflect the states’ perception of a particular conflict and convey its national interests. Using framing at UNSC meetings allow the actors to highlight a specific issue as a security threat and label specific actor as the enemy and the side to be blamed for the

threat. Giving a party of the conflict a specific label rather than the other aims on one hand at legitimizing the speaker's perception and actions and on the other hand at delegitimizing this party's voice and actions. One of the major concepts that are usually addressed during the Security Council meetings is "terrorism." In case of armed conflicts as Yemen, especially with the presence of Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and Islamic State, I think it is important to explore if this concept was used in narratives by the specified actors and how it was used. This paper also looks at how different narratives framed the Yemen events or labelled a specific party as a terrorist or framed its actions as terrorism. This helps us understand the legitimization and delegitimization attempts by the states and the Security Council.

### **3.2.2. *Securitization Theory***

There is massive amount of literature and debates among scholars on the concept of security. Securitization emerged in the 1990s mainly in writings by a group of scholars: Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde and others at the Conflict and Peace Research Institute (COPRI) in Copenhagen (Stritzel, 2014, p. 11). The concept of securitization was introduced and mostly developed in articles by Wæver in 1989 "*Security, the speech Act*" and the 1990s as "*Concepts of Security*," "*Securitization and Desecuritization*" and "*A New Framework for Analysis*" (Stritzel, 2014, p. 11). Wæver says that through using the term 'security', a state claims a right to use the necessary means to block the threat's development (Santos, 2018, p.231). In the same context, Buzan et al. agree that through presenting an issue as a threat and security issue, political actors justify the use of extraordinary measures to handle them (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 26). Securitization is defined by Buzan and Wæver as: "the discursive process through which an intersubjective

understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object, and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat” (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, p. 491). Today, this theory continues to evolve considering the criticism it faced and present a controversial theory in security studies.

During UNSC meetings, member states seek to legitimize their narratives and delegitimize that of their opponents. As said earlier, this may be done through presenting an issue as a security threat and framing the opponents. This would justify and provide a legitimacy coverage for any action taken by these states towards the addressed issue.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE RESPONSE OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL TO THE YEMEN WAR

Throughout the history of Yemen, UNSC adopted 20 resolutions only two of which date back to 1947 and 1967<sup>4</sup>. Ever since protests stormed the streets of Yemen along with other Arab countries in 2011, the topic of Yemen has been addressed in UNSCRs annually. From January 2014 to August 2021, the Security Council held fifty-two meetings and adopted seventeen resolutions on Yemen war. Table 1 shows the resolutions adopted from January 2011 to August 2021 by UNSC and the summary of each resolution ("UN Documents for Yemen: Security Council Resolutions," 2021)<sup>5</sup>. This section presents the actions taken by UNSC in its resolutions based on the information supported by the Security Council Report on their website ("Yemen Chronology of Events: Security Council Report," 2021).

#### **4.1. Resolutions adopted by the Security Council from January 2011 to August 2021**

The anti-government protests started on February 3, 2011. The situation escalated quickly pushing the Security Council to adopt UNSCR 2014, in which it expressed its concern at the worsening security and humanitarian situation and urging all parties to

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<sup>4</sup> The two UNSCRs 243 and 29 were adopted by the Security Council in 1967 and 1947 respectively. UNSCR 243 was adopted unanimously and recommended the admission of the People's Republic of Southern Yemen to membership in the United Nations. UNSCR 29 is on the admission of Yemen and Pakistan to membership in the United Nations.

<sup>5</sup> UN Documents for Yemen: Security Council Resolutions. Securitycouncilreport.org. (2021). Retrieved from [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un\\_documents\\_type/security-council-resolutions/page/1?ctype=Yemen&cbtype=yemen#038;cbtype=yemen](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un_documents_type/security-council-resolutions/page/1?ctype=Yemen&cbtype=yemen#038;cbtype=yemen)

refrain from violence and join efforts to reach a political settlement based on the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative. Upon this, President Saleh signed the GCC initiative as a first step for the political transition in Yemen and later the Government of National Unity was born. In June 2012, UNSC adopted resolution 2051 calling all parties to stay committed to the political transition and expressing its support to President Hadi and the Government of National Unity. The Security Council in this resolution took a further step towards the conflict and expressed ‘its readiness to consider further measures, including under Article 41 of the United Charter’ if actions aimed at undermining the Government of National Unity and the political transition continue. In this case, according to Article 41 under Chapter VII of the Charter: “the Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon the members of the United Nations to apply such measures. These may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations” (U.N. Charter art.41). In this context, two years later in February 2014, the Security Council adopted resolution 2140 in which it voiced its support for the political transition and established a sanctions regime including travel bans and a sanctions committee. One year later, the Security Council adopted three major resolutions: (i) UNSCR 2201 (February 15) that condemned for the first time directly Houthis’ attempts to dissolve the parliament and as previously adopted resolutions, called to join efforts in order to resolve the political deadlock in the country; (ii) UNSCR 2204 (February 24) extended the sanctions and the mandate of the Panel of Experts; and (iii) UNSCR 2216 (April 14) which imposed embargos on the Houthis and other military forces loyal to Saleh, the former President of Yemen. March 24 of the same year is a

turning point in the case of Yemen as it marks the day President Hadi sent a letter to the Security Council requesting the adoption of a Chapter VII resolution and calling all countries to intervene and deter Houthis from advancing in the clashes. In response to this invitation, Saudi Arabia along with other Arab countries launched a military campaign against Houthis.

In the following three years the Security Council adopted four resolutions only, three of which renewed the sanctions regime and extended the mandate of the panel of experts on Yemen: UNSCR 2266 in 2016, UNSCR 2342 in 2017 and UNSCR 2402 in 2018. It is noteworthy that in 2018, Russia vetoed a draft resolution targeting Iran based on a report by UN experts that accused Iran of violating the UN arms embargo on Houthis. This draft resolution was submitted by the UK and backed by the United States and its allies. It said Iran failed to “take the necessary measures” to prevent missiles and drones supply to Houthis, and thus is non-compliance with the UN 2015 embargo on Yemen (Lederer, 2018). The voting on the draft resolution was as following: 11 countries approved, Bolivia rejected, and China and Kazakhstan abstained from voting. The draft resolution was followed by the previously mentioned unanimously approved UNSCR 2402 in which no reference to Iran was made. In December 2018, a meeting was held in Stockholm bringing together Houthis and the government of President Hadi. This meeting was held with aim of hindering the deterioration of the humanitarian and political situation in Yemen and resulted with an agreement between the parties to the conflict. This agreement is composed of three parts: (i) The Hodeida Agreement, (ii) the Taiz Understanding, and (iii) the Prisoners’ Deal. In response to Stockholm agreement, the Security Council adopted resolution 2451 on December 21, 2018, endorsing it and authorizing the Secretary-General to establish and deploy a team to monitor and facilitate



the implementation of the agreement. The Security Council then established a UN Mission to support the Hodeida agreement (UNMHA) for six months as a start through adopting resolution 2452 on January 2019. Two other resolutions were adopted in 2019: UNSCR 2456 which extended the sanctions regime on Yemen and renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts, and UNSCR 2481 which renewed the mandate of UNMHA until January 15, 2020. In 2020, the Security Council adopted three resolutions, one of which is resolution 2511 adopted on February 25, 2020, and it renewed the Yemen sanctions regime for one year. The other two resolutions 2534 and 2505 extended the mandate of UNMHA. Similarly, this year the Security Council adopted UNSCR 2586 extending the mandate of UNMHA until July 15, 2022, and UNSCR 2564 renewing the Yemen sanctions regime for an additional year. In the latter however, the Security Council condemned violations to IHL and IHRL committed by Houthis and expressed its concern about violations to the imposed arms embargo through smuggling of arms and other related materials.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Resolution No. and Date</b>	<b>Decisions and summary of resolutions</b>	<b>Voting Results</b>
2011	Resolution 2014 Adopted on October 21	This was the resolution endorsing the GCC initiative for a peaceful transition of power.	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstentions: 0 Non-voting: 0
2012	Resolution 2051 Adopted on June 12	This resolution focused on the second phase of the transition and expressed the Security	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstentions: 0

		Council's readiness to consider further measures, including under Article 41 of the Charter.	Non-voting: 0
2014	Resolution 2140 Adopted on February 26	This resolution expressed the Security Council's strong support for the next steps of the political transition and established sanctions against those threatening the peace, security or stability of Yemen.	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstentions: 0 Non-voting: 0
2015	Resolution 2201 Adopted on February 15	This was a resolution that strongly deplored the Houthis' actions to dissolve parliament on 6 February and take over government institutions and urged the acceleration of negotiations to reach a consensus solution regarding the political impasse.	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstentions: 0 Non-voting: 0
	Resolution 2204 Adopted on February 24	This was a resolution renewing the assets freeze and travel ban until 26 February 2016 and extending the mandate of the	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstentions: 0 Non-voting: 0

		Panel of Experts until 25 March 2016.	
	Resolution 2216 Adopted on April 14	This resolution demanded the Houthis to withdraw from all seized areas and to relinquish all seized arms and established an arms embargo on the Houthis and forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh.	Yes: 14 No: 0 Abstentions: 1 (Russia) Non-voting: 0
2016	Resolution 2266 Adopted on February 24	This was a resolution renewing the Yemen sanctions measures until 26 February 2017, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 27 March 2017.	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstentions: 0 Non-voting: 0
2017	Resolution 2342 Adopted on February 23	This resolution renewed the Yemen sanctions regime.	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstentions: 0 Non-voting: 0
2018	Resolution 2451 Adopted on December 21	This resolution endorsed the agreements reached by the parties during the consultations held in Sweden, and authorized the Secretary-General to	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstentions: 0 Non-voting: 0

		establish and deploy, for an initial period of 30 days an advance team to begin monitoring and facilitate implementation of the Stockholm Agreement.	
	Resolution 2402 Adopted on February 26	This was a resolution extending the Yemen sanctions regime.	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstentions: 0 Non-voting: 0
	Draft Resolution by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and it was vetoed by Russia Adopted on February 16		
2019	Resolution 2452 Adopted on January 16	This established the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) for an initial period of six months.	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstentions: 0 Non-voting: 0
	Resolution 2456 Adopted on February 26	This resolution extended for an additional year the Yemen financial, and travel ban	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstentions: 0

		sanctions, reaffirmed the provisions of the targeted arms embargo, and renewed the mandate of the committee's Panel of Experts.	Non-voting: 0
	Resolution 2481 Adopted on July 15	This resolution renewed the mandate of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement for six months until 15 January 2020.	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstentions: 0 Non-voting: 0
2020	Resolution 2505 Adopted on January 13	This resolution extended the mandate of the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement until 15 July 2020.	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstentions: 0 Non-voting: 0
	Resolution 2511 Adopted on February 25	This resolution renewed the Yemen sanctions regime for one year.	Yes: 13 No: 0 Abstentions: 2 (China, Russia) Non-voting: 0
	Resolution 2534 Adopted on July 14	This renewed the mandate of the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement until 15 July 2021	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstentions: 0 Non-voting: 0

2021	Resolution 2564 Adopted on February 25	This resolution renewed the Yemen sanctions regime for one year, condemned the ongoing escalation in Marib and stressed the Houthis' responsibility for the situation of the FSO Safer.	Yes: 14 No: 0 Abstentions: 1 (Russia) Non-voting: 0
	Resolution 2586 Adopted on July 14	This extended the mandate of UNMHA until 15 July 2022.	Yes: 15 No: 0 Abstentions: 0 Non-voting: 0

Table 1. Resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council on Yemen from January 2011 to August 2021.

#### 4.2. UNSC and protection of civilians in Yemen

The Security Council can activate different means for the protection of civilians: (i) peace operations; (ii) sanctions regime; (iii) monitoring and reporting; and (iv) responding to violations by fighting impunity and promoting accountability (UN OCHA, 2019, p. 6). In the case of this study, the Security Council has used the second and third tools. UNSC uses sanctions to impose its decisions related to protection of civilians. In 2014, the Security Council established financial, and travel ban sanctions against individuals and entities “threatening the peace, security, or stability of Yemen” (Security Council Report, 2020). Then in 2015, it established a full arms embargo on different armed groups including Houthis. Ever since this sanctions regime was established, it has

been renewed year after another and is now valid until February 2022. Accurate, timely and reliable information on casualties and IHL/IHRL violations allow the Security Council to promote and implement its PoC agenda and it helps in defining priorities and informing decisions (UN OCHA, 2019, p. 55). In this regard, the Panel of Experts on Yemen was formed under UNSC resolution (UNSCR) 2140 (2014) and mandated by UNSC resolution 2342 (2017). It was initially comprised of four experts and was expanded to five experts by resolution 2216 (2015) and its current mandate extends through 28 March 2022 ("Panel of Experts Work and Mandate," n.d.).

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section addresses the results of the content analysis conducted based on nine themes and the significance of these themes in statements made by each of: (i) UNSG Special Envoy for Yemen, (ii) Yemen, (iii) relevant Arab states, (iv) US, (v) UK, (vi) France, (vii) Russia and (viii) China.

The Security Council held a total of fifty-two meetings on Yemen from January 2014 until August 2021. As figure 1 shows, the Security Council convened up to 11 times to discuss Yemen war in 2019, and then its meetings dropped despite the ongoing clashes and humanitarian catastrophe. During these meetings, as figure 2 shows, the actors did not make statements at every single one. In some, the attendees were only addressed by Yemen's representative or maybe the UNSG Special Envoy for Yemen. Statements addressing the situation in Yemen were made by the following actors in a decreasing order: Yemen's representative (42 times); UNSG Special Envoy for Yemen (35 times); US and UK (30 times); France and China (29 times); and Russia (27 times).

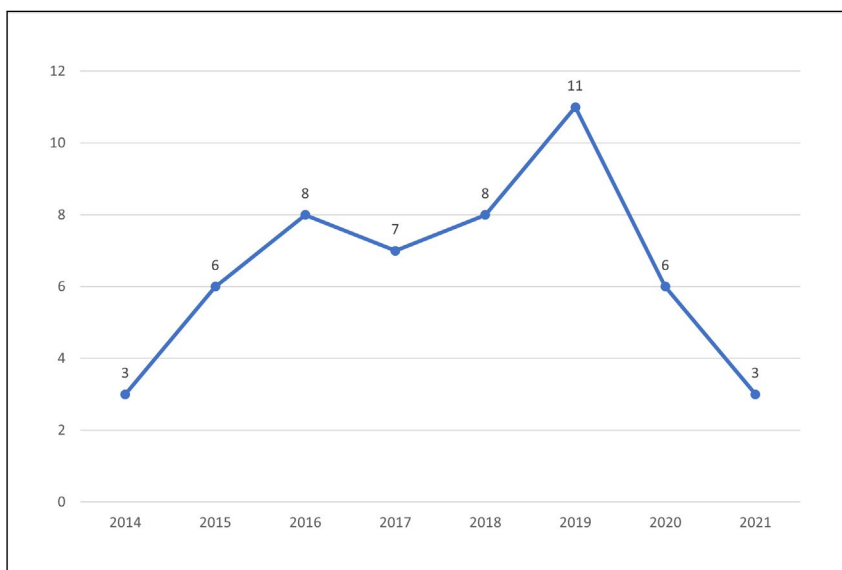


Figure 1. Number of UNSC meeting on Yemen from January 2014 to August 2021



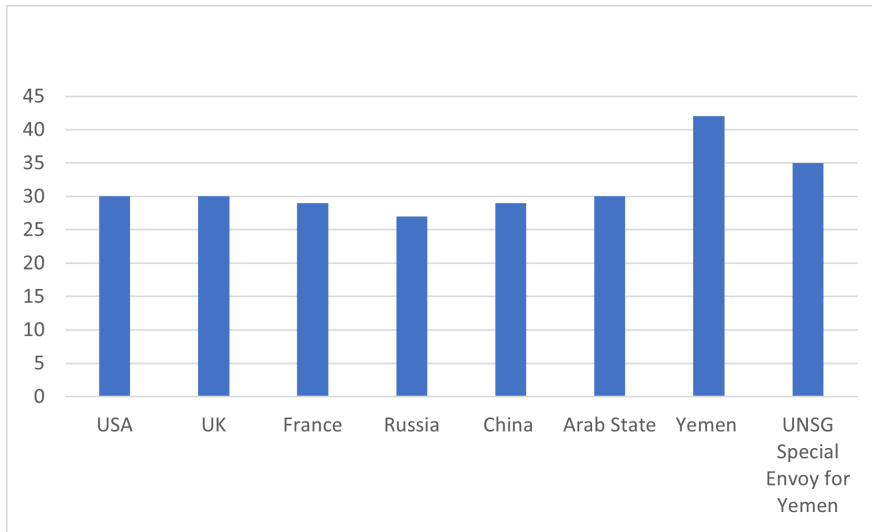


Figure 2. Actors' appearance in UNSC meetings on Yemen

## 5.1. Findings

### 5.1.1. Actor Addresses the humanitarian crisis and the violations to international laws

All actors have addressed in most of their statements the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen and the violations to IHL, IHRL and HRL. Figure 3 below presents the number of times actors expressed their concern about the humanitarian situation.

### 5.1.2. Actor calls for a political solution

I have also found that all actors have been keen to ensure that there is no military solution and that all efforts should be joined for a political settlement between warring parties. This is reflected in numbers shown in figure 4.

Ever since the clashes began in 2014, the Security Council has been trying to bring warring parties together and hold talks between them with the aim of having a political settlement. Although these mediation attempts by the international community have not led to a political settlement, they have helped ease the situation at different points

throughout the years. In some instances, the UN succeeded in bringing together the parties and reaching an agreement, however the hard part was in implementing it. One example on this is the “Stockholm agreement” which was reached in December 2018 and brokered by the UN. This agreement has not been fully implemented until today. Such initiatives were also proposed by Saudi Arabia, one of the major warring parties, and other Arab countries as Kuwait. The statements made by these actors on finding a political solution, contradict with their involvement in and support of the military operations on the ground.

### ***5.1.3. Actor calls for humanitarian intervention and assistance in Yemen***

The calls made for humanitarian intervention and increasing the donations to UN humanitarian programs for Yemen witnessed larger gaps among the actors from the previous two themes as figure 5 shows. This is mainly because of the obstruction of aid on the Yemeni land. All parties to the conflict impeded access to humanitarian aid” (Amnesty International, 2021, p. 400). According to Mercy Corps, around 80% of the population are in desperate need of humanitarian aid and protection (2020). However, parties to the conflict increased bureaucratic restrictions and interfered in aid projects, including blocking needs assessments (Amnesty International, 2021, p. 400). In March, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), suspended US\$73 million of the US\$85 million pledged to NGOs who were delivering aid to Houthi-controlled areas (Amnesty International, 2021, p. 400). In May, Houthi forces blocked containers belonging to the WHO and shipments of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the COVID-19 response (Amnesty International, 2021, p. 400). The response of some countries to the funding problems is interesting. For instance, Saudi Arabia, has donated millions of dollars for aid while it continues to lead the military operations in Yemen.

Meanwhile, other countries as the United State, United Kingdom, France, Canada have been supporting the UN aid funds on one hand, while selling arms for the Saudi-led coalition on the other hand, thus contributing to fueling the war and worsening the humanitarian crisis.

***5.1.4. Actor accuses Houthis of violating international laws, threatening security and/or causing/worsening the humanitarian crisis***

Figures 6 and 7 show the pattern the actors accused one of the warring parties of international laws violations and held them the responsibility of the humanitarian crisis. As figure 6 shows, in all his statements, the representative of Yemen pointed the fingers at Houthis and held them responsible for the deteriorating humanitarian situation of the Yemenis, whereas he did not point out to any of the violations made by the Saudi-led coalition. The Arab states in their turn also blamed Houthis in 21 out of their 30 statements made on Yemen. As for the P5, the division among them on the Yemen issue is quite reflected in the graph below. While US, UK and France managed to mention the violations of international laws and blame Houthis for threatening security and worsening the humanitarian crisis in almost half of their statements, this theme was only mentioned once in statements made by each of Russia and China.

***5.1.5. Actor accuses Saudi-led Coalition of violating international laws, threatening security and/or causing/worsening the humanitarian crisis***

Figure 7 shows that out of 52 meetings, the actors only voiced their concern about violations made by the Saudi-led coalition six times only. The pattern is as follows: Russia and US addressed this theme twice whereas UK and UNSG Special Envoy for

Yemen addressed it only once. The results presented in figure 6 and figure 7 reflect the actual stance of the actors from the ongoing events in Yemen and their significance is highly linked to the results of the themes that follow in this analysis.

#### ***5.1.6. Actor uses the term terrorism or terrorists without referring to any of the fighting parties in Yemen***

While going over the meeting records on the Yemen crisis, I noticed the use of one of the most controversial terms, which until today lacks a clear definition, by some actors. The below graphs show the frequency the actors used the terms “terrorism/terrorist” throughout the years. Some of the actors used the term without referring to any party while others used it to frame one of the warring parties. In addition, in some meetings the actors expressed their concern regarding the presence and activity of Al-Qaida and Islamic State in Yemen. These organizations were mentioned 25 times in total during speeches made by US (3), UK (1), France (2), Russia (2), Yemen (5) and Arab states (2) as well as UNSG Special Envoy for Yemen (10). Figure 8 presents the frequency the actor used the term terrorist/terrorism without referring to any of the fighting sides in Yemen or to Al-Qaida and Islamic State. For instance, Russia stated in the meeting held on March 10, 2017 “obviously the winners of the Yemeni Conflict are the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula [...] Also winning are other terrorists and extremist groups that control the entire region in the south and East of Yemen<sup>6</sup>.”

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<sup>6</sup> U.N. SCOR, 7897th mtg., U.N. Doc. S/PV.7897 (March 10, 2017), available from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/862117?ln=en>

All actors voiced their concern about terrorism and extremists in Yemen at least once in their statements except for China. On October 23, 2015, the UNSG Special Envoy for Yemen expressed his concern about how “extremist groups are taking advantage of the situation.” Below are some examples of statements made on extremism by France and UK.

“The longer the instability persists in the country [...] the greater the risk of terrorism which threatens not only Yemen but, as we know, the entire world”  
– France on October 31, 2016

“The ongoing conflict in Yemen [...] has also created ungoverned spaces in which terrorist can operate” – United Kingdom on February 27, 2018.

#### ***5.1.7. Actor refers to Houthis and/or actions by them as terrorists and terrorism***

While Yemen has the highest frequency per statements compared to other actors under the previous theme, it also retains the highest frequency in referring to Houthis and their actions as terrorists/terrorism. It is noteworthy that none of the remaining actors labelled Houthis as terrorists, except for the Arab states once as per figure 9. Through adopting this theme, the actor labels Houthis as a threat and puts them in the same category as AQAP and the Islamic State.

#### ***5.1.8. Actor refers to Yemen events as regional and/or international security threats***

One of the major themes tackled in statements made by these actors is describing the ongoing events in Yemen as regional and/or international security threats. As per figure 10 this theme was mentioned the most by Yemen (30 times), followed by Arab states (15 times) and UNSG Special Envoy for Yemen (10 times). The P5 except for China mentioned this theme as follows: US (7 times), UK (6 times), France (6 times) and

Russia (5 times). This security threat was justified by many factors including the presence of terrorist groups and the external intervention by regional powers in the conflict. Below are examples on statements framing the ongoing events in Yemen as security threats by different actors.

“Yemen has made it very clear that the deterioration of the security situation in that country is a serious threat to the region in general”- Jordan on December 22, 2015.

“The situation in Yemen is not only a regional threat but an international one”- France on December 22, 2015.

“The military escalation will continue to provide opportunities for the spread of terrorist groups [...] the absence of the state in many parts of Yemen, in addition to the chaos created by the wars will continue to facilitate the expansion of these terrorist groups which represent a real threat to the region”- UNSG Special Envoy for Yemen on August 31, 2016.

#### ***5.1.9. Actor names an external regional or international actor as supporter or sponsor of one of the fighting parties***

Statements by P3, Yemen, and Arab states have also named a regional power, specifically Iran, for either intervening in the Yemen’s affairs, or supporting Houthis with weapons, and thus not complying by the arms embargo imposed by the Security Council on some groups in Yemen, or even using Houthis as a tool to serve its expansion agenda in the region. The actors criticized Iran’s intervention and expressed their concern over its plans for Yemen and the region. The actors that accused Iran of sponsoring Houthis and supporting them in the fight against Yemen’s government and the Saudi-led coalition as per figure 11 are Yemen (35times), US (13 times), UK (6 times), France (3 times) and Arab State (3 times). Below are some examples on such statements.

“Houthi aggression, with the support of Iran, threatens the stability in the region, and terrorist groups as Dae’esh and Al-Qaida have exploited this opportunity to pursue their twisted agendas”- United States on February 27, 2018.

“That’s a clear proof that Iran is a state that sponsors terrorism and seeks to destabilize all the countries of the region” – Yemen on April 17, 2018.

“In Yemen we can either accept the rule of Houthi militias and the imposition of a Hezbollah like model, or face death and destruction as well as the spread of instability and tension in the region [...] The political will of the Houthis is being held hostage by outside forces that do not hope for security and stability in Yemen or the region”- Yemen on October 10, 2017.

“The UK is deeply concerned about the fact that Iran failed to take necessary measures to prevent the direct or indirect arms supply”- UK on February 26, 2018.

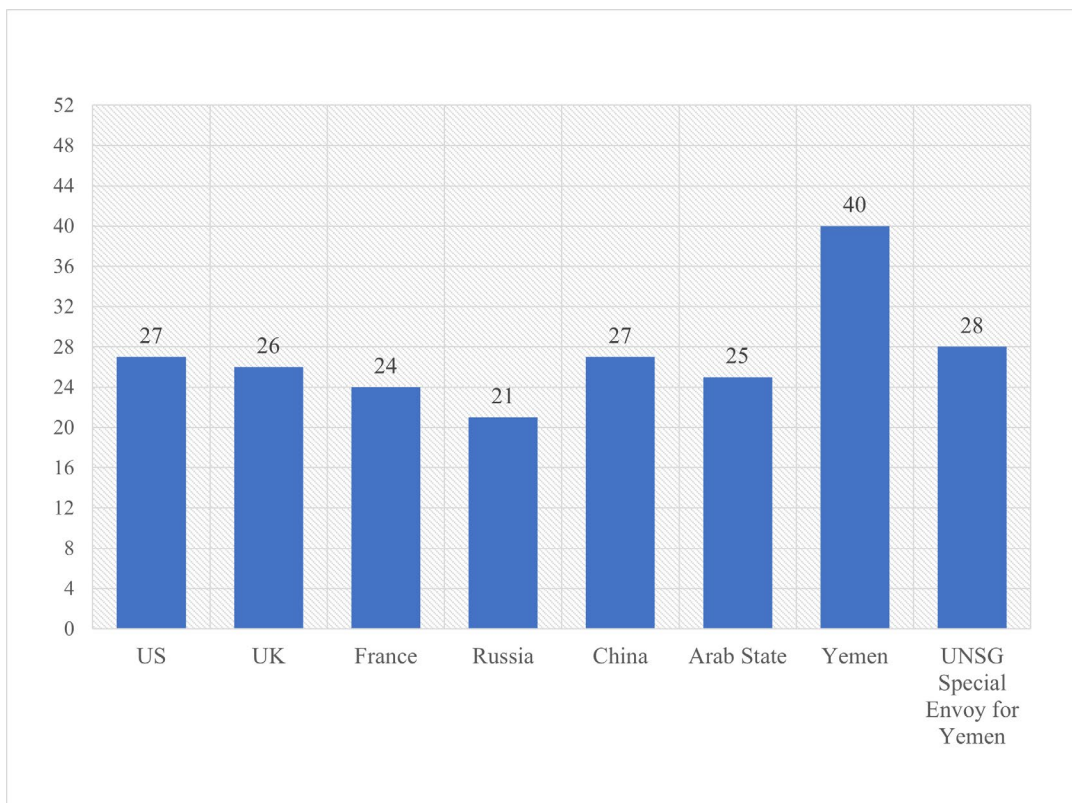


Figure 3. Actor addresses the humanitarian crisis and violations to international laws

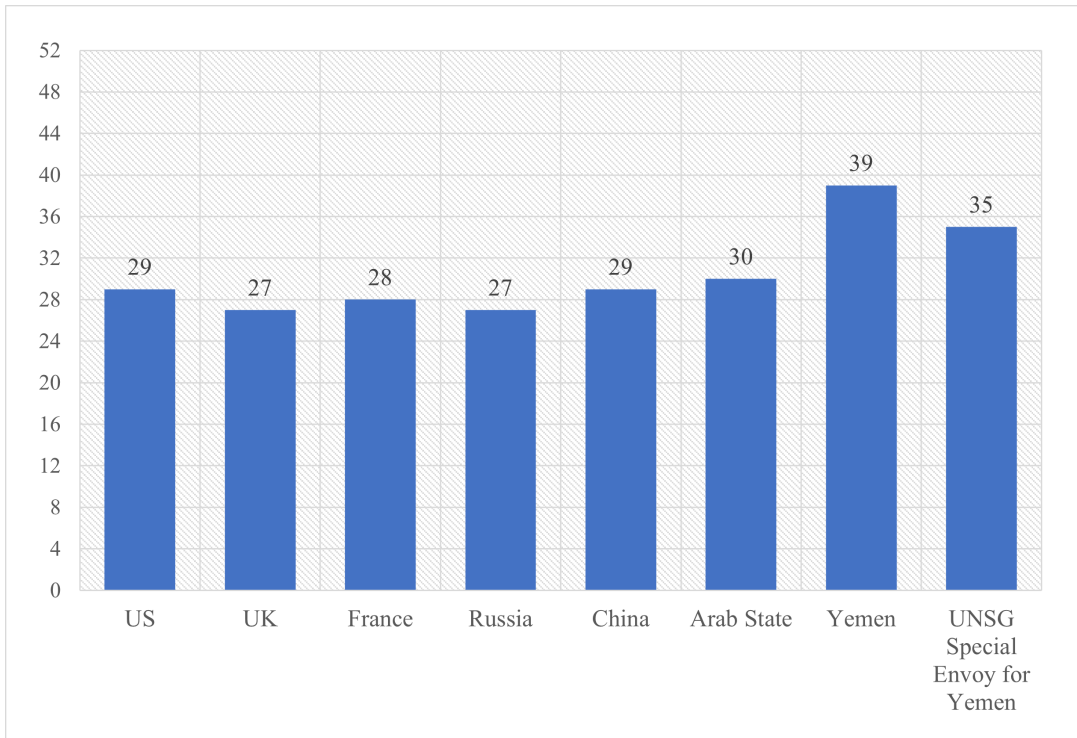


Figure 4. Actor calls for political solution to the ongoing events in Yemen

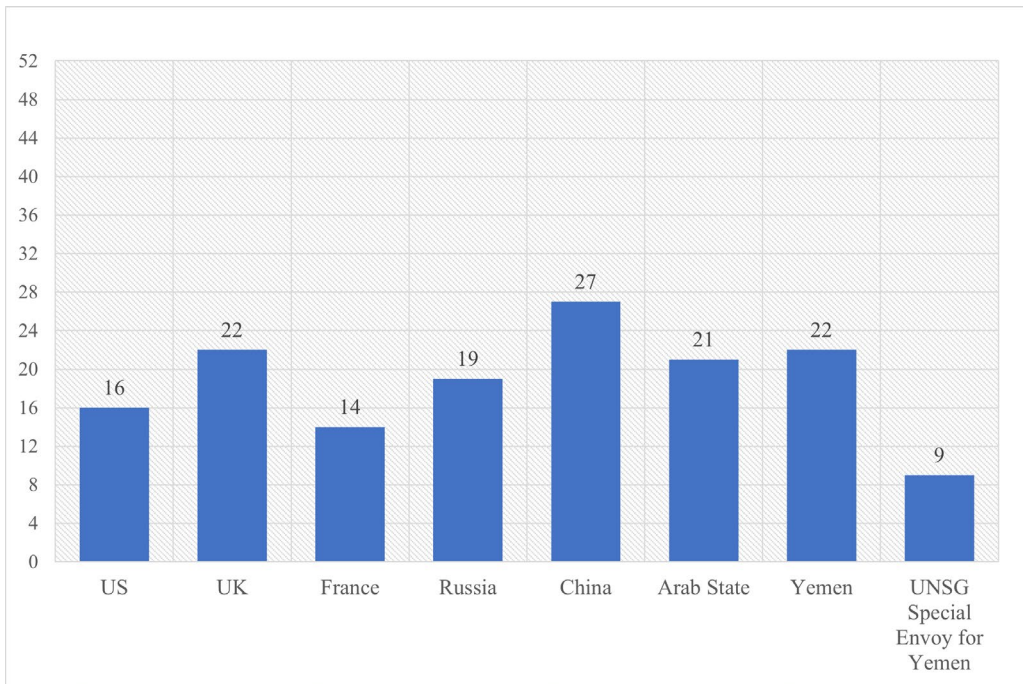


Figure 5. Actor calls for humanitarian intervention and assistance in Yemen



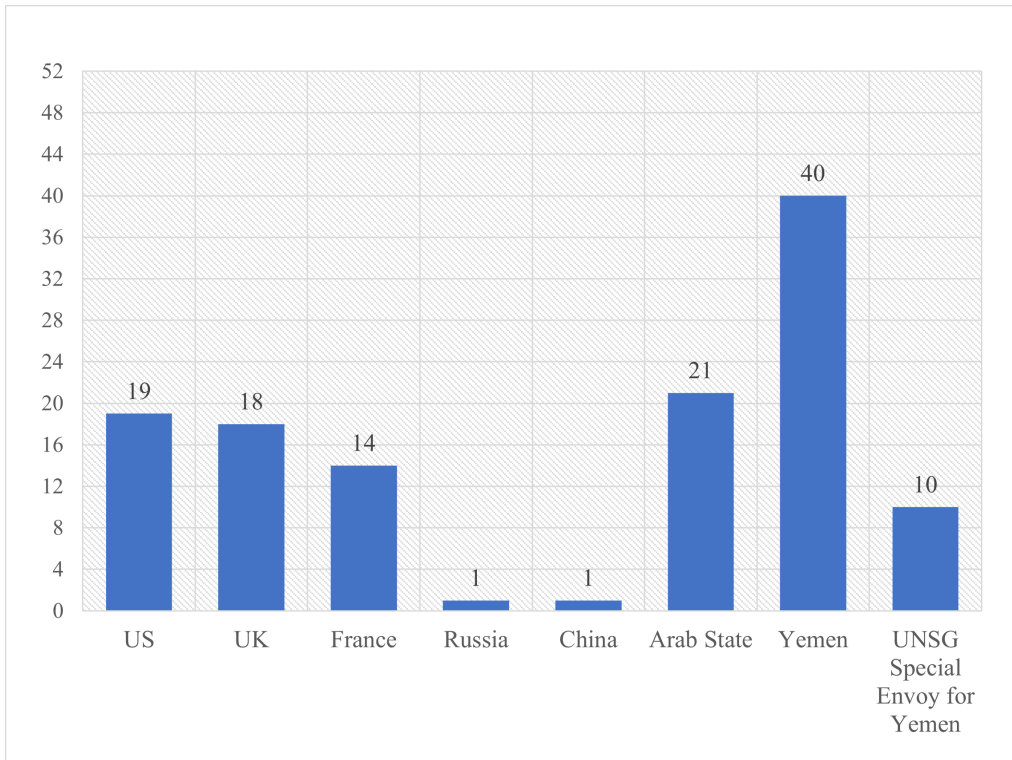


Figure 6. Actor accuses Houthis of violating international laws, threatening security and/or causing/worsening the humanitarian crisis

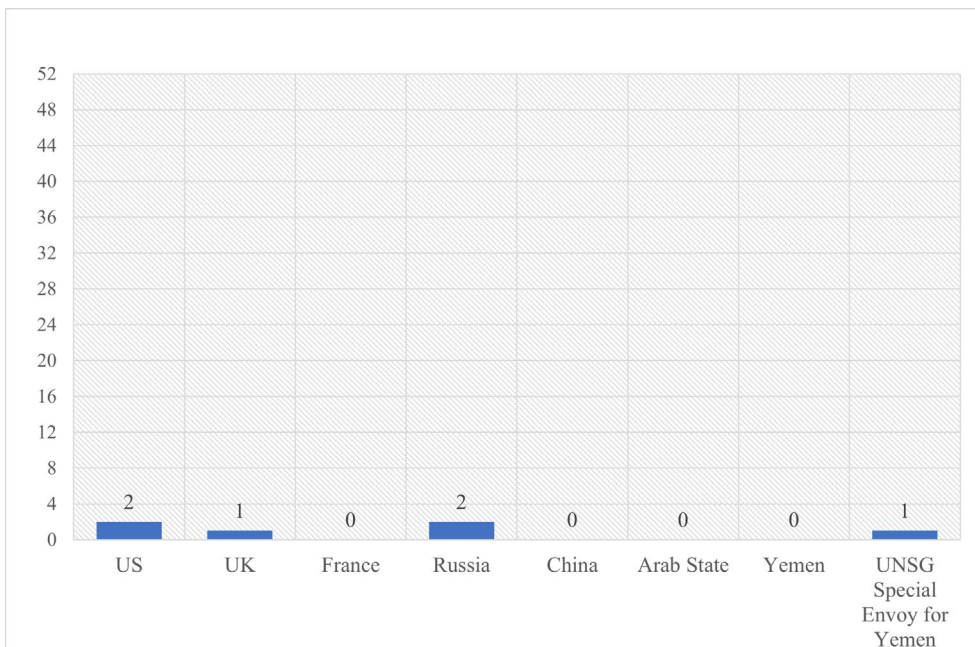


Figure 7. Actor accuses Saudi-led Coalition of violating international laws, threatening security and/or causing/worsening the humanitarian crisis

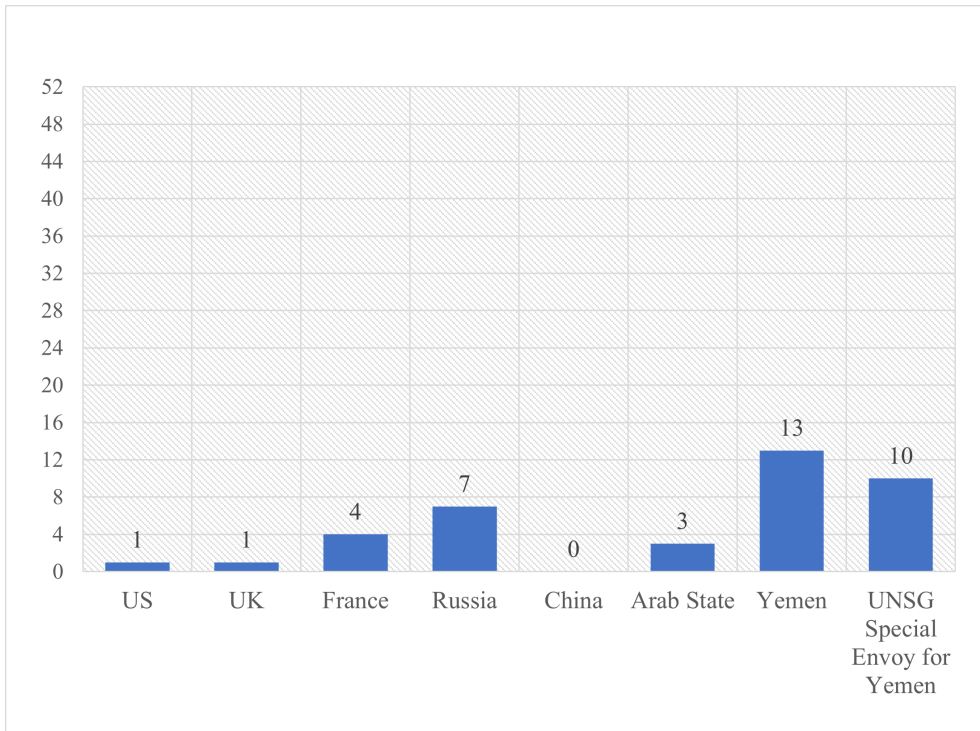


Figure 8. Actor uses the term terrorism/terrorists without referring to any of the fighting parties in Yemen

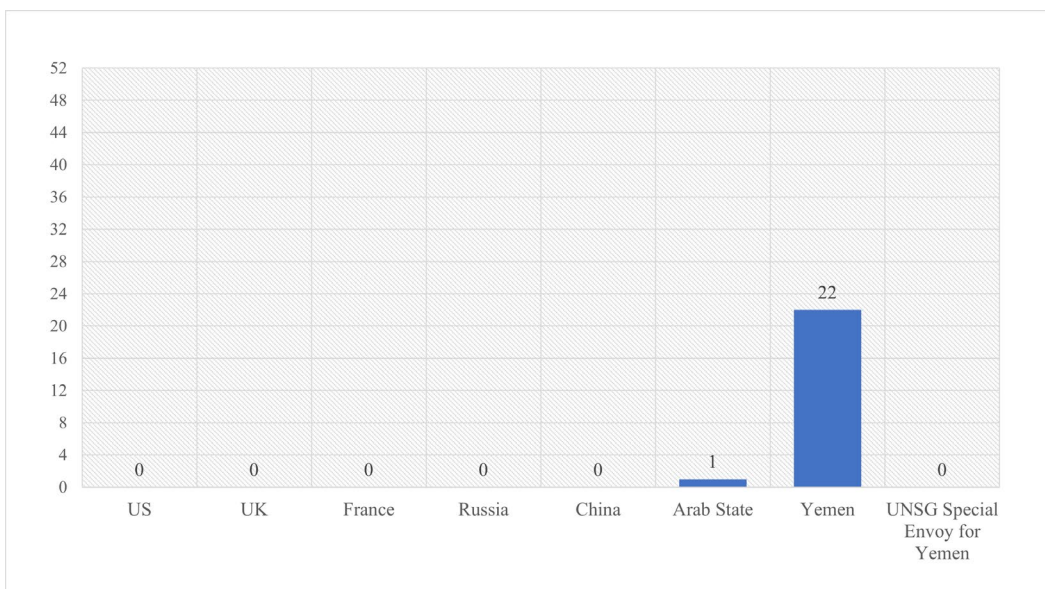


Figure 9. Actor refers to Houthis and/or actions by them as terrorists and terrorism

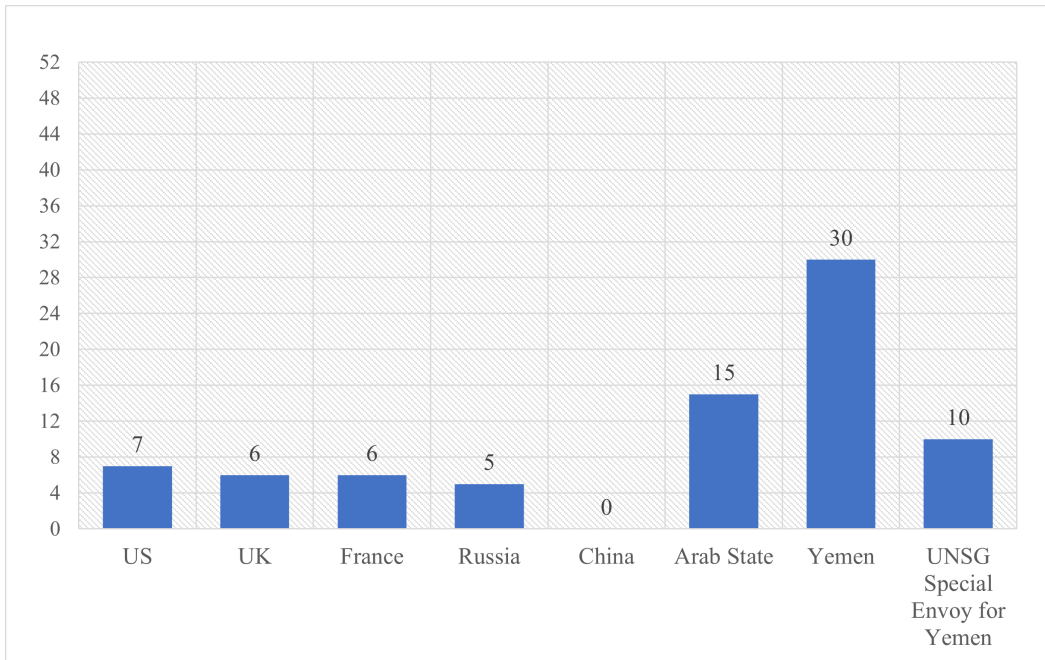


Figure 10. Actor refers to Yemen events as regional and/or international security threats

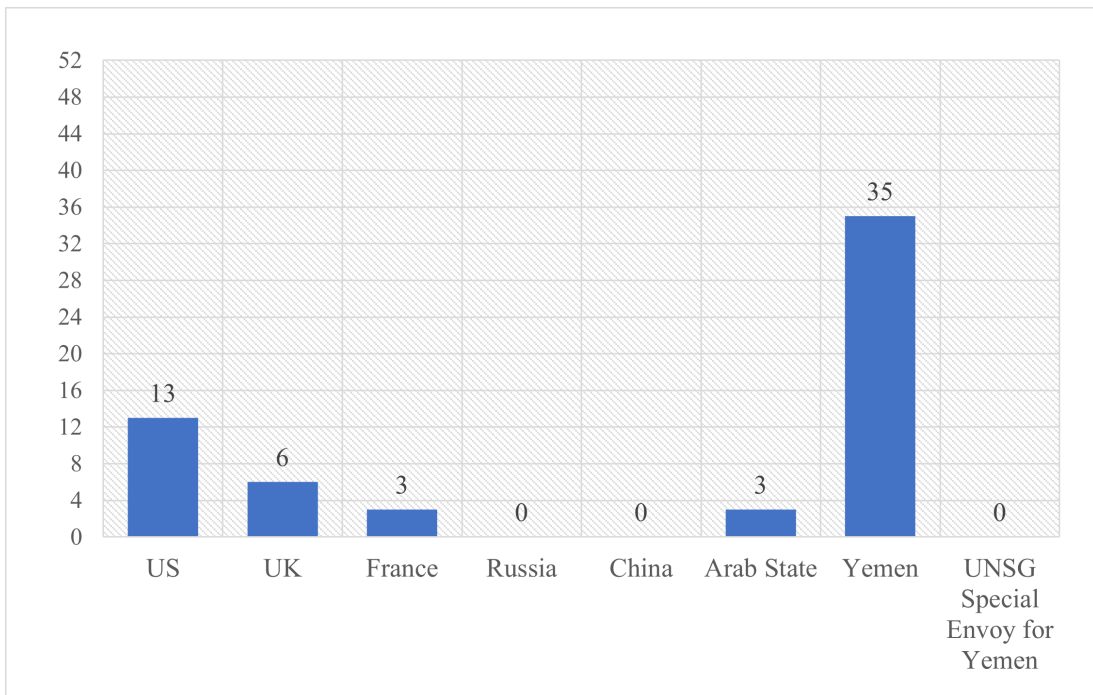


Figure 11. Actor names an external regional or international actor as supporter or sponsor of one of the fighting parties

## 5.2. Analysis

To better understand the significance of these nine themes pattern in statements of the selected actors, tables 2, 3 and 4 give an insight on the deployment of three major themes in the actors' narratives over the course of years. As the graphs above show, all actors in almost all their statements have assured that the ongoing war in Yemen could not be solved through military means and that the only solution is an inclusive dialogue and a political agreement. Actors have also called for humanitarian assistance and intervention in Yemen while voicing their concern about the safety of humanitarian personnel and other problems on the ground as obstruction of aid.

The narrative by Yemen has been quite assertive and inclusive of all the themes except for holding or condemning violations to international laws by the Saudi-led coalition. This is predictable because the military intervention was initially launched to support Yemen's internationally approved government against Houthis. In addition to calling for a political solution and addressing the deteriorating humanitarian situation, Yemen's agenda during the Security Council meetings included holding Houthis responsible for the humanitarian catastrophe and pointing out violations by them only, without referring to other parties which are also guilty for violating international laws as per reports by many international organizations. Yemen also attempted to frame Houthis as external tools for regional players to serve their interests as table 4 shows, especially in years 2016-2017-2018-2019-2020. The representative accused Iran of supporting Houthis and said at several instances that Houthis are like Hezbollah project in Lebanon by Iran and are part of Iran's expansion attempts in the region to maintain its hegemony. In addition, Yemen expressed its concern about terrorist groups in general, and sometimes

mentioned organization as AQAP and Islamic State, but also labelled Houthis as terrorists and framed the ongoing situation in Yemen as a regional and international security threat.

Over seven years, four Arab countries were appointed for the Arab State non-permanent seat: Jordan (2014-2015), Egypt (2016-2017), Kuwait (2018-2019) and Tunisia (2020-2021). The highest number of statements on Yemen was made by Kuwait (18) followed by Tunisia (7) then Jordan. Although the Arab states have made almost the same number of statements as the P5, the most repetitive themes over the years are: the only solution is political, the humanitarian crisis and humanitarian assistance, Yemen events as a regional and international security threat, Houthi's violations to international laws and their responsibility for worsening humanitarian crisis. These Arab states only referred to terrorism three times in 2015, described Houthis as terrorists only once in 2015, and stated that Houthis are sponsored and supported by external actor three times in 2015 and 2018. The narratives of these Arab states are highly influenced by the relations and mutual interests between them and each of the warring parties. While Kuwait attempted to host peace talks between the fighting parties in Yemen in 2016 and failed, it was involved with the military campaign led by Saudi Arabia on Houthis. This support for the Saudi-led initiative reflected in themes adopted during meetings on Yemen. While these Arab states viewed the situation in Yemen as a security threat and blamed Houthis for the humanitarian crisis (as in tables 2 and 3), their statements mentioned few times, but did not focus on, naming an external actor as a sponsor or supporter of one of the fighting groups (table 4). This may be because these countries share interests or ties with one of the regional powers as Iran and don't want to risk them.

The analysis reveals the different narratives among the P5. The division among them is not new to international politics and have been witnessed in previous similar

situations and conflicts as Syria. The position of US, UK and France on Yemen war is quite similar. Since 2014, these states supported the military campaign led by Saudi Arabia against Houthis. These three states have made almost the same number of statements over the years. While Yemen and the Arab states did not condemn or point out violations made by the Saudi-led coalition, US addressed this issue twice in 2016 and 2018 and UK once in 2016. The major themes in the narratives of these three countries are: Houthis' violations to international laws and responsibility for humanitarian crisis, sponsorship, and arms support for Houthis by external actors, and the situation as a security threat. Although these states did not directly label Houthis or their actions as terrorists/terrorism, they expressed their concern regarding the terrorist's activity and expansion of terrorism in Yemen. Most of the statements made by US, UK and France were in 2018-2019-2020-2021. Among all three, US mentioned the most that Houthis are supported by an external group and named Iran. Beside sending arms to Houthis, US accused Iran, based on evidence provided to the Security Council, of attacking Saudi Arabia with missiles as in meetings held on September 16, 2019, and February 18, 2020. Also on September 15, 2019, US representative labelled Iran as a "sponsor of terrorism<sup>7</sup>." There is an interesting increase in the adoption of all three themes in the tables below by US especially after 2018. This could be the result of the policy changes after former US President Donald Trump won the presidential elections in 2016 and inauguration in January 2017. The withdrawal from the nuclear deal with Iran in 2018 was one of the major turns in US foreign policy in the region. This could explain the narrative adopted by US towards the situation in Yemen through framing Houthis as the party responsible for the sufferings of Yemenis, expansion of terrorism in Yemen and the security threat in

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<sup>7</sup> U.N. SCOR, 8757th mtg. U.N. Doc. S/PV.8757 (September 15, 2020), available from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3883408?ln=en>

the region and globally. US also framed Iran as the sponsor of a group that is responsible for the humanitarian catastrophe and described it as a sponsor of terrorism in the region. Thus, implying and labelling Houthis as a terrorist group. Houthis were enlisted by Trump as a “foreign terrorist organization” just days before the end of his presidency (Stepansky, 2021). Moreover, in 2019 Trump vetoed a legislation to end the US support to the Saudi-led coalition (Stepansky, 2021). The US approach to Yemen war has however witnessed a huge shift after electing Joe Biden as the new President. As a first step, Biden officially delisted the designation of Houthis as a “foreign terrorist organization” and announced in February 2021 an end of US support for the Saudi-led coalition military operation in Yemen (Stepansky, 2021). According to Biden “this war has to end. And to underscore our commitment, we’re ending all American support for offensive operations in the war in Yemen, including relevant arm sales,” (“Biden ends support for Saudi’s Yemen war in foreign policy shift,” 2021). The big question remains to be whether the US has stopped supporting Saudi Arabia and risked the relations with one of its key partners in the Middle East.

Arms sale to Saudi Arabia is one of the most controversial issues when addressing the Yemen situation. Although the Security Council have imposed an arms embargo on some groups in Yemen, some states continued to fuel the war by selling arms and providing military support to parties involved in the clashes. The UK and France have been supporting the Saudi-led coalition with arms despite the controversy surrounding that. Amnesty International in its 2020/21 report found that despite the human rights violations committed in Yemen, irresponsible arms transfers and sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates has continued. The report adds “Western Europe, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France and the UK were among those permitting arms sales to Saudi

Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, despite the high likelihood that these arms would be used to commit human rights violations in the conflict in Yemen” (Amnesty International, 2021, p. 48). This reflects the double standards these countries have when dealing with such a humanitarian catastrophe. While voting for a resolution that imposes arms embargo on Yemen, these countries continue to transfer arms to one side knowing that this side is contributing, as per statements by international organizations, to the worsening humanitarian crisis and committing unlawful attacks on civilians and violating IHL and IHRL.

On the other hand, China’s narrative was focused on calling for a political solution, raising alarms on the humanitarian situation and calling other members to act and increase donation for humanitarian intervention in Yemen. China accused Houthis of contributing to the humanitarian crisis and threatening security once only. Over the years, it never addressed terrorism, external intervention, or framed the situation in Yemen as a security threat. In this context, we can say China has chosen to take a neutral stance on the Yemen war.

In addition to the three themes of political solution, humanitarian crisis and humanitarian intervention, Russia raised its concern regarding terrorism in Yemen without referring to any party (7 times) more than US and UK (1 time) and France (4 times). Unlike these three members, naming Houthis and blaming them for the humanitarian crisis in Yemen was only mentioned once. Like US, it mentioned violations by the Saudi-led coalition twice. Russia also did not mention any regional power for intervening in the Yemen conflict at all. It was against accusing Iran of supporting Houthis and vetoed a resolution proposed by UK against Iran as table 1 shows. Russia and Iran ties and mutual interests justifies Russia’s response and narrative in these



meetings. This however did not prevent Russia from expressing its concern about the security threat Yemen war imposes.

The narrative by United Nations Secretary-General Special Envoy for Yemen is mainly focused on highlighting the disastrous situation and calling parties to find a political solution. While it does not refer to any external intervention, the narrative does blame Houthis for the situation (10 times), frames the situation as a security threat (10 times) and voices concern about terrorism in the country (10 times). The Special Envoy also called countries for humanitarian intervention in Yemen.

Table 2. Actor blames Houthis for the humanitarian crisis and threatening security, annual frequency from January 2014 to August 2021

	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>
<i>US</i>	0	1	1	0	3	5	6	2
<i>UK</i>	0	1	1	0	4	5	5	2
<i>France</i>	0	0	0	0	4	6	2	2
<i>Russia</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<i>China</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<i>Arab State</i>	0	3	1	1	7	7	0	2
<i>Yemen</i>	0	3	5	5	7	11	6	3
<i>UNSG</i>	0	2	1	2	1	4	0	0
<i>Special Envoy for Yemen</i>								

Table 3. Actor refers to Yemen events as security threats, annual frequency from January 2014 to August 2021

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<i>US</i>	0	0	1	0	4	0	2	0
<i>UK</i>	0	1	0	0	3	1	1	0
<i>France</i>	0	1	1	0	2	0	2	0
<i>Russia</i>	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	0
<i>China</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Arab State</i>	0	3	1	0	6	3	0	2
<i>Yemen</i>	0	2	5	4	7	7	4	1
<i>UNSG</i>	0	1	4	4	1	0	0	0
<i>Special</i>								
<i>Envoy for</i>								
<i>Yemen</i>								

Table 4. Actor names an external actor as supporter of one of the fighting groups, annual frequency from January 2014 to August 2021

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<i>US</i>	0	0	0	0	5	4	4	0
<i>UK</i>	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0
<i>France</i>	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0
<i>Russia</i>	0	0	0		0	0	0	0
<i>China</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Arab State</i>	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0
<i>Yemen</i>	0	1	3	5	7	11	6	2
<i>UNSG</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Special</i>								
<i>Envoy for</i>								
<i>Yemen</i>								

### 5.3. Discussion

Now that we have an idea about the major themes addressed by each actor over the years, we need to bring all these pieces together. Although all actors except for China view the situation in Yemen as a security threat, the adoption of other themes would reveal more about the approach of these countries to the conflict. The narratives during Security Council meetings on Yemen war by Yemen, US, UK, France, and the Arab States have intended to frame the humanitarian catastrophe as the responsibility of Houthis and the result of their violations to international laws. This an attempt of delegitimizing their enemy, Houthis, through framing them. While Russia and China view the conflict as an internal fight between Yemenis and frame the movement of Houthis as part of Yemeni people, UK, US, France, Yemen, and the Arab States framed Houthis as tools for an external project by Iran and accused the latter of sponsoring the Houthi movement and supplying it with arms.

Despite the controversy over the arms transfer to Saudi Arabia by these actors, these narratives validate their support to the Saudi-led coalition. In this case and as per the framing definition by Shmueli et al. (2006), framing of Houthis as others or the guilty side and placing them in the same category with Al-Qaida and Islamic State allows these actors to form a coalition and makes it more feasible to support the Saudi-led military intervention. Evidence on how framing influence the countries' approach to this conflict, is how listing and delisting Houthis as a terrorist organization by US influenced the arms transfer to the Saudi-led coalition.

These narratives by the US, UK France, Yemen, and the Arab states have nevertheless influenced the narrative of UNSG Special Envoy for Yemen, who as we found earlier deployed the same framing of Houthis and expressed at several instances its

concern about the security threat the situation in Yemen forms. Thus, UNSG Special Envoy provided a sense of legitimacy for these narratives, which strengthens the position of US, UK, France, Yemen, and Arab States

One example on how the Security Council decisions were influenced and legitimized the narratives by P3 and Yemen, is when UNSG Ban Ki-Moon and Antonio Guterres decided in June 2016 and 2020 respectively to remove the Saudi-led Coalition from the “list of shame” annexed to UNSG 2016 and 2020 annual report to UNSC on children in armed conflict despite the grave violations for rights of children ("UN Chief's 'List of Shame' Drops Saudi-Led Coalition," 2020). Later, former UNSG Ki-Moon publicly announced that Saudi Arabia threatened to defund UN programs for Palestinian refugees among others if it was not removed from the list of shame ("UN Chief's 'List of Shame' Drops Saudi-Led Coalition," 2020).

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

The analysis reveals the actors' attempts to legitimize their own narratives through framing and labelling the situation in a way that serves their national interests. The narratives by US, UK, France, Yemen, and Arab states framed Houthis as the responsible party for the humanitarian crisis and international laws violations and as external means for Iran's regional project. They also presented Houthis in the same frame as AQAP and IS. Knowing that all parties in Yemen have committed violations to international laws, there was a clear attempt at holding one party of the conflict responsible for the humanitarian crisis rather than the other. These narratives attempt at delegitimizing the opponents' narratives and presents the situation in Yemen as a security threat that requires intervention, which would justify actions by the P3 and Saudi-led coalition. One of the main factors behind these attempts to delegitimize a specific actor could be the mutual political, economy, and military interests between the P3 and relevant Arab states involved and supporting the Saudi-led coalition.

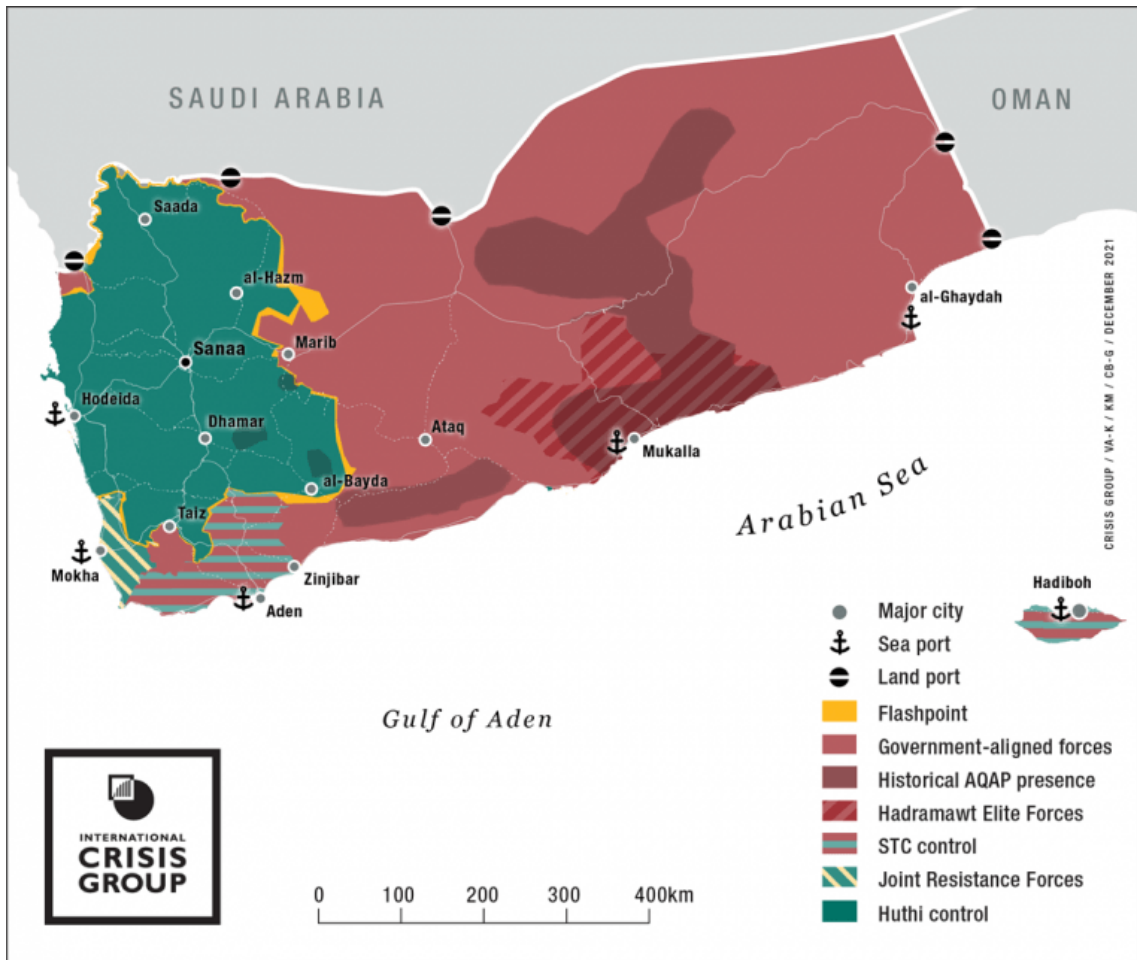
Although the Security Council was focused more on the mediation efforts, its stance towards the warring parties and response to each of them is a bit of concern. To protect civilians, the Security Council should remain at an equal distance from all parties and activate the third tool which is responding to violations by fighting impunity and promoting accountability. This could only be reached by standing firmly at an equal distance from all warring parties and resisting all forms of political pressure by these parties to avoid accountability for their actions and violations of international laws. The Security Council would not succeed in implementing its agendas including the protection

of civilians in armed conflict agenda if it acted impartially towards the situation in Yemen.

The response to the war in Yemen has revealed several issues of concern regarding the protection of civilians in armed conflict agenda and internal dynamics at the Security Council. In addition, it raises questions about the Security Council's power considering the multilateral agreements made by its members in spite the evidence that these agreements further exacerbate one of the worst humanitarian crises. In the case of Yemen war, some states have a multifaced approach to the situation. While the analysis has shown that all members voiced their concern about the civilians and the humanitarian situation, some of them have been involved in and transferring arms to one of the warring parties. Evidence have been provided by the US on the arms support Houthis are receiving from Iran. However, this does not justify the huge contribution by the P3 to fueling this war. The support of humanitarian programs on one hand is weighed out by the infrastructure destruction, civilian casualties, and international laws violations committed by the coalition the P3 are transferring arms to. The response of the Security Council is crippled by the veto power and the funding problems. The question is whether UNSC would be able to implement the protection of civilians in armed conflict agenda. The Security Council should end impunity and ensure accountability of all parties involved directly or indirectly in this war. There are crucial steps and reforms that should be done that include but not limited to having the ability to end impunity on all states equally whenever evidence show they're involved in international laws violations, even the P5.

# APPENDIX 1

## MAP OF POLITICAL CONTROL IN YEMEN AS OF DECEMBER 2021



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