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Master's Thesis Proposal

Humanitarian Crisis and Foreign Policy: The Complex

Role of U.S. Involvement in Yemen.



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Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

Prague, July 20, 2024

Nicole Dominique Scorziello

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I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my mother, father, grandmother, and sister for their unwavering support throughout this incredible journey. Their encouragement and love have helped me not only overcome the challenges but also cherish the beautiful moments along the way. Therefore, I dedicate this thesis to them.

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the specific impacts of U.S. involvement in the Yemen conflict on food security and healthcare access, alongside the broader implications for international security and stability. The central research question guiding this study is: *How has U.S. involvement in the Yemen war specifically impacted food security and healthcare access, and what are the broader implications for international security and stability?* Using a qualitative research design, this study analyzes data from primary sources, such as U.S. government documents and coalition communications, and secondary sources, including reports from international organizations and NGOs. The research is structured around five case studies: the blockade's impact on food security, airstrikes on civilian infrastructure, the collapse of the healthcare system, challenges in humanitarian aid access, and the Hodeidah offensive. These cases are examined through the lenses of humanitarian impact, legal and ethical considerations, and regional security implications. The theoretical frameworks employed—Just War Theory, Humanitarian Intervention, and International Humanitarian Law—provide a structured approach to assessing the morality and legality of U.S. actions in Yemen. Key findings reveal that U.S. involvement has exacerbated food insecurity and public health crises, led to the destruction of civilian infrastructure, and hindered humanitarian aid. These outcomes conflict with U.S. strategic objectives, highlighting contradictions and ethical challenges in foreign policy. The thesis calls for a more coherent and ethically consistent approach to U.S. foreign policy, emphasizing the need for adherence to international humanitarian law and greater accountability in military interventions. This research contributes to the broader discourse on the ethics of international intervention, state actor responsibilities in armed conflicts, and the complexities of humanitarian assistance in war-torn regions.

The motivation behind choosing the topic of U.S. involvement in the Yemen conflict lies in the pressing need to understand and critically assess the complex interplay of military intervention, humanitarian crises, and international law. Yemen represents one of the most severe humanitarian crises of the modern era, with widespread food insecurity, a collapsing healthcare system, and significant civilian suffering. The involvement of major global powers, particularly the United States, in supporting the Saudi-led coalition adds a critical layer of complexity, raising questions about the ethical and legal implications of foreign intervention. By focusing on this topic, the research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impacts of such involvement, contribute to the discourse on ethical foreign policy, and propose recommendations for more responsible and humane international interventions. This study is relevant for policymakers and humanitarian organizations and serves as an important academic contribution to understanding the broader implications of international military and humanitarian engagements in conflict zone

Introduction

The Yemen conflict, which erupted in 2015, has become one of the most devastating humanitarian crises of the 21st century. (Amnesty, 2015) It involves a complex interplay of local, regional, and international actors, each with their own strategic interests and influences. Central to this crisis is the involvement of the United States, which has played a dual role as both a significant military supporter of the Saudi-led coalition and a major donor of humanitarian aid. This paradoxical position raises critical questions about the consequences of U.S. actions, particularly concerning food security and healthcare access. (Montgomery, 2021) The United States' involvement in Yemen has been characterized by substantial military support to the Saudi-led coalition, including arms sales, logistical support, and intelligence sharing. Scholars such as Sharp (2019) and Byman (2017) have extensively documented these aspects, highlighting how U.S. military aid has been

pivotal in sustaining coalition operations. This support is often justified by the U.S. government as part of a broader strategy to maintain regional stability and counter Iranian influence. However, the unintended consequences of this involvement have been severe, exacerbating the humanitarian situation for millions of Yemeni civilians.

The humanitarian impact of the conflict is staggering, with reports from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Save the Children highlighting widespread malnutrition and a collapsing healthcare system (OCHA, 2019; Save the Children, 2018). The blockade imposed by the coalition, with U.S. backing, has particularly contributed to these crises by restricting the flow of essential goods, including food and medical supplies. The World Food Programme (WFP) and other NGOs have reported on the dire state of food security in Yemen, where millions are on the brink of famine. In summary, this thesis not only explores the multifaceted impacts of U.S. involvement in the Yemen conflict but also seeks to inform future policy and international law. It underscores the need for a coherent and ethically consistent foreign policy approach that aligns military objectives with humanitarian principles, ensuring that international interventions do not exacerbate the suffering of vulnerable populations.

Literature Review

U.S. Military Support to the Saudi-led Coalition

The involvement of the United States in the Yemen war, particularly through military support to the Saudi-led coalition, has been a focal point in many academic and policy discussions. Sharp (2019) provides a comprehensive overview of U.S. military aid, highlighting arms sales, intelligence sharing, and logistical support. This aid has been crucial in sustaining the coalition's operations, which have been criticized for exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The

author argues that while the U.S. aims to maintain regional stability and counter Iranian influence, the unintended consequences include worsening the conditions on the ground for Yemeni civilians. Byman (2017) expands on the motivations behind U.S. support, situating it within a broader context of strategic interests. He discusses the rationale of supporting foreign interventions, including the maintenance of alliances and the projection of power. However, Byman also notes that such support can have adverse effects, including fostering anti-American sentiment and contributing to prolonged conflicts. Sharp (2019) and Byman (2017) provide comprehensive insights into the strategic rationale behind U.S. military support for the Saudi-led coalition, emphasizing the maintenance of regional stability and countering Iranian influence. However, this support has led to significant humanitarian consequences in Yemen, raising questions about the ethical and legal implications of such involvement. Sharp's overview of arms sales and logistical support underscores the critical role of U.S. aid in sustaining coalition operations, which have been widely criticized for exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. This critique aligns with the Just War Theory, which necessitates a just cause and proportionality in military interventions. Sharp's analysis suggests that the unintended consequences of U.S. actions—worsening conditions for Yemeni civilians—may challenge the just cause and proportionality principles, as the harm to civilians arguably outweighs the strategic benefits.

Byman's broader context of strategic interests highlights the complex motivations behind U.S. support, including alliance maintenance and power projection. However, Byman also cautions against the adverse effects of such support, such as fostering anti-American sentiment and prolonging conflicts. This critical perspective supports the relevance of Humanitarian Intervention Theory, which questions whether the U.S.'s actions are genuinely aimed at alleviating suffering or primarily serve strategic interests. The juxtaposition of military aid and its humanitarian impact

necessitates a nuanced analysis of U.S. involvement, challenging the ethical legitimacy of the intervention

Humanitarian Impact on Food Security

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen, particularly concerning food security, is well-documented by various international organizations. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports emphasize the dire state of food insecurity, with millions facing severe malnutrition. The blockade imposed by the coalition, supported by U.S. intelligence and logistical capabilities, has been particularly damaging. OCHA's reports suggest that these actions have significantly disrupted the food supply chain, making it difficult for aid to reach those in need. Save the Children's (2018) report, "Yemen: A War on Children," provides a poignant account of the crisis, focusing on the impact on young children who are the most vulnerable. The report highlights how malnutrition and starvation have reached alarming levels, exacerbated by the conflict's ongoing nature. The World Food Programme (WFP) has also provided extensive data on food supply disruptions, pointing to a systematic collapse of local agriculture and market systems due to the war. These reports collectively underscore the severe impact of the conflict on Yemen's food security, which is further compounded by the involvement of external actors like the United States.

The reports from OCHA and Save the Children (2018) highlight the severe food insecurity crisis in Yemen, exacerbated by the coalition-imposed blockade. These reports emphasize the blockade's role in disrupting food supply chains, significantly impacting the civilian population's ability to access essential goods. This situation raises serious legal and ethical concerns under International Humanitarian Law (IHL), which prohibits the use of starvation as a method of warfare. The blockade, supported by U.S. logistical and intelligence capabilities, calls into

question the legality of these actions, particularly concerning the principles of necessity and proportionality.

Save the Children's report, focusing on children as the most vulnerable victims, underscores the moral responsibility of the U.S. and its allies to mitigate harm to civilians. The World Food Programme's data on food supply disruptions further supports the argument that U.S. involvement, despite its strategic intentions, complicates the humanitarian landscape. These perspectives are crucial for evaluating the ethical and legal dimensions of U.S. support, as highlighted by Just War Theory and Humanitarian Intervention Theory. The literature suggests a need for more stringent adherence to international norms, ensuring that military strategies do not disproportionately impact civilian populations.

Humanitarian Impact on Healthcare Access

The healthcare system in Yemen has been another casualty of the ongoing conflict, as highlighted by reports from Human Rights Watch and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). Human Rights Watch documents numerous attacks on healthcare facilities, often resulting from coalition airstrikes. These attacks not only cause immediate harm but also deter aid organizations from operating in these areas, leaving many without essential medical services. MSF's reports detail the challenges faced in providing medical care amidst the conflict, including shortages of medical supplies, damaged infrastructure, and threats to healthcare workers. These challenges are exacerbated by the coalition's blockade and restrictions, which limit the import of medical supplies. UNICEF also emphasizes the critical healthcare needs of children and pregnant women, noting severe shortages in medical supplies and services.

The critical examination of healthcare infrastructure destruction by Human Rights Watch and MSF illustrates the dire consequences of coalition airstrikes and blockades. These actions not only

violate IHL by targeting medical facilities but also raise ethical questions about the responsibility of supporting states, such as the U.S., in ensuring compliance with international law. The reports highlight the severe shortages of medical supplies and personnel, exacerbated by the blockade, which further restricts humanitarian aid delivery. UNICEF's emphasis on the healthcare needs of children and pregnant women adds a layer of urgency, illustrating the broader public health implications of the conflict. The literature critically examines the dual role of the U.S. as a military supporter and a humanitarian aid provider, suggesting a dissonance between these roles. This dichotomy challenges the ethical underpinnings of the intervention, as outlined by Humanitarian Intervention Theory, questioning whether the primary intention of U.S. actions aligns with the humanitarian imperative to alleviate suffering.

Policy Analysis and Regional Security Dynamics

The policy analysis provided by Gordon and Indyk (2019) in "The End of U.S. Involvement in Yemen" critically examines the shifts in U.S. policy towards Yemen. They argue that the initial support for the Saudi-led coalition was driven by a desire to counter Iranian influence in the region. However, as the humanitarian costs have become more apparent, there has been growing domestic and international pressure to reevaluate this support. Lischer (2015) in "Dangerous Sanctuaries" discusses the broader dilemmas of humanitarian aid in conflict zones, using Yemen as a case study to illustrate the complexities of delivering aid in politically sensitive environments. Phillips (2016) and Salisbury (2015) provide broader analyses of the regional security dynamics. Phillips discusses the perpetuation of Yemen's "permanent crisis" and the role of external powers, including the U.S., in shaping this dynamic. Salisbury focuses on the instability in Yemen and its implications for regional security, particularly concerning the rise of non-state actors and the fragmentation of the Yemeni state. These works collectively highlight the broader geopolitical stakes involved and the long-term implications of U.S. involvement in the conflict.

While much of the literature criticizes U.S. involvement in Yemen, some arguments and analyses present a more favorable view, particularly concerning efforts to address food security. The analyses by Gordon and Indyk (2019) and Lischer (2015) provide critical insights into the shifts in U.S. policy and the broader regional implications of the Yemen conflict. These works suggest that initial U.S. support was driven by strategic interests, such as countering Iran and maintaining regional stability. However, the increasing humanitarian costs have led to domestic and international pressure to reassess this support, highlighting the ethical and legal dilemmas associated with continued involvement. Phillips (2016) and Salisbury (2015) expand on the regional security dynamics, suggesting that U.S. actions may perpetuate instability rather than resolve it. This perspective aligns with the Just War Theory criterion of last resort, questioning whether military intervention remains the most ethical and effective means of achieving policy objectives. The literature thus critically evaluates the role of external powers, including the U.S., in exacerbating or mitigating the conflict, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that considers both humanitarian and strategic dimensions.

Humanitarian Aid Contributions

Some scholars and reports emphasize the role of the United States as a major donor in humanitarian aid, including significant contributions to mitigating food insecurity in Yemen. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been a critical player, providing millions of dollars in food assistance. USAID reports highlight that despite the conflict, U.S. aid has helped to deliver food supplies to millions of Yemenis, thereby alleviating some of the severe food shortages caused by the war. This aid includes funding for the World Food Programme (WFP), which distributes food in the most affected areas. Scholars and reports often highlight the role of the United States as a significant donor in humanitarian aid, particularly in alleviating food insecurity in Yemen. The United States Agency for International Development

(USAID) has been instrumental, providing substantial food assistance. USAID reports suggest that U.S. aid has helped deliver food supplies to millions of Yemenis, mitigating some of the severe food shortages caused by the war. However, this perspective can be critiqued for potentially overstating the effectiveness of aid without sufficiently addressing the underlying structural challenges that exacerbate food insecurity, such as ongoing conflict and logistical barriers (Bellinger, 2019). Furthermore, while the U.S. provides significant aid, its simultaneous military support for the coalition complicates the narrative, raising questions about the coherence of its policy approach in Yemen.

Diplomatic Efforts and Pressure for Access

The U.S. has also played a diplomatic role in advocating for humanitarian access. According to a report by the U.S. Department of State, American diplomats have consistently pushed for ceasefires and negotiated terms that allow humanitarian aid to flow into besieged areas. (Coppi, 2018) This diplomatic pressure has, in some cases, resulted in temporary cessations of hostilities, enabling aid agencies to deliver food and other essential supplies. The U.S. has played a diplomatic role in advocating for humanitarian access, with American diplomats pushing for ceasefires and negotiating terms to allow aid into besieged areas (U.S. Department of State, 2020). While these efforts are commendable, they must be critically examined in the context of the broader U.S. military involvement in Yemen. This dual role as both a humanitarian aid provider and a military supporter of the coalition raises ethical and practical questions. It illustrates the complexities and contradictions in foreign policy, where diplomatic efforts to alleviate suffering coexist with actions that may exacerbate the crisis, such as arms sales and logistical support for the blockade (Bellinger, 2019).

Support for International Organizations

The U.S. government's support for international organizations like the United Nations has been pivotal. A study by the International Crisis Group (2018) notes that U.S. contributions to the United Nations' humanitarian efforts, including those focused on food security, have been substantial. These contributions have funded various programs aimed at improving food distribution systems, supporting local agriculture, and providing emergency food aid. The U.S. government's support for international organizations, such as the United Nations, has been pivotal in addressing food security in Yemen. According to the International Crisis Group (2018), U.S. contributions have significantly supported programs that aim to improve food distribution and support local agriculture. While this support is critical, it should be analyzed in the broader geopolitical context. The U.S.'s involvement in these programs can be seen as part of a strategic effort to maintain influence and stability in the region, rather than purely altruistic humanitarianism. This raises questions about the motivations behind aid and the effectiveness of these programs in achieving long-term stability and food security in conflict zones (Al-Muslimi, 2020).

Critique of the Blockade Narrative

Some analysts argue that the narrative surrounding the blockade's impact on food security is overly simplistic and fails to account for the complexities of the conflict. For instance, Bellinger (2019) suggests that while the blockade has contributed to food shortages, the U.S. and coalition efforts have included exemptions for humanitarian aid. Bellinger argues that the coalition's naval blockade has been necessary to prevent arms smuggling to Houthi rebels, which poses a security threat. He contends that the U.S. has been instrumental in ensuring that humanitarian exceptions to the blockade are respected and enforced.

While significant literature exists on the U.S. involvement in the Yemen war, particularly its

impact on food security and healthcare, a notable gap remains in exploring the nuanced interplay between military aid and humanitarian assistance. Most studies either focus on the detrimental effects of U.S. military support or highlight its humanitarian contributions, often treating these aspects in isolation. There is a need for comprehensive research that integrates these dual roles, examining how U.S. policies and actions in Yemen simultaneously affect the conflict's humanitarian and security dimensions. This gap suggests a broader need for studies that address the complexities and contradictions of foreign intervention in conflict zones. Bellinger (2019) offers a nuanced critique of the common narrative surrounding the blockade's impact on food security, arguing that it oversimplifies the situation and overlooks complexities, such as exemptions for humanitarian aid. However, this view should be critically assessed alongside reports from humanitarian organizations that highlight the severe consequences of the blockade, including widespread malnutrition and restricted access to essential goods (WFP, 2020). The discrepancy between these perspectives suggests a need for more comprehensive data and analysis to understand fully the impact of the blockade and the extent to which humanitarian exceptions are being implemented and enforced.

Theoretical Framework

Just War Theory

Just War Theory offers a structured approach to evaluating the morality and justification of war and military interventions. It comprises two main components: *jus ad bellum* (the right to go to war) and *jus in bello* (the right to conduct within war). (Fitzsimmons, 2015) In the context of U.S. involvement in the Yemen conflict, *jus ad bellum* criteria, such as legitimate authority, just cause, right intention, probability of success, last resort, and proportionality, will be critically analyzed. The United States, as a state actor, must have legitimate authority to engage in military actions, and the cause must be just, such as responding to aggression or preventing significant harm. The

theory also requires that the intervention aims to achieve a good that outweighs the harm caused and that military force is used only as a last resort after all peaceful alternatives have been exhausted.

Jus in bello principles, including distinction and proportionality, are crucial in assessing whether the actions taken during the conflict, such as airstrikes and blockades, comply with ethical and legal standards. These principles dictate that combatants must distinguish between military targets and non-combatants, and any harm to civilians must not be excessive about the anticipated military advantage. Walzer's (2006) "Just and Unjust Wars" provides a foundational text for applying these principles, offering a critical lens to evaluate whether U.S. military strategies and actions align with just war criteria, particularly concerning their impact on Yemen's civilian population and infrastructure. For example, in the case of the blockade and its impact on food security, Just War Theory will be applied to evaluate whether the blockade—supported by U.S. logistical and intelligence assistance—was a necessary and proportionate means of achieving military objectives, considering the severe humanitarian consequences. The theory's principles will help assess whether such measures are justified considering the widespread starvation and suffering they have caused among Yemeni civilians.

Humanitarian Intervention

The concept of humanitarian intervention is grounded in the moral obligation to prevent mass atrocities and human suffering. This framework is particularly relevant to the Yemen conflict, where the humanitarian crisis has reached severe levels. According to Buchanan (2016) in "The Ethics of Intervention," legitimate humanitarian intervention requires that actions be driven by the primary intention of alleviating suffering, particularly when a state is either unable or unwilling to protect its population. This framework will be used to scrutinize whether U.S. involvement in

Yemen, including its support for the Saudi-led coalition, meets the ethical standards of humanitarian intervention.

This analysis will explore whether the U.S. intervention was genuinely aimed at protecting civilians and whether it has been effective in achieving its humanitarian objectives. The principle of proportionality in humanitarian intervention also necessitates that any action taken does not cause more harm than it prevents, a critical point of analysis given the extensive civilian casualties and infrastructure damage reported in Yemen. The concept of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which underscores the international community's duty to intervene when a state fails to safeguard its citizens, will also be explored in the context of the U.S. actions and their alignment with international humanitarian norms. This framework will be crucial in analyzing whether U.S. involvement, including its support for the Saudi-led coalition, aligns with the principles of humanitarian intervention. The analysis will focus on whether U.S. actions, such as supporting airstrikes or enforcing blockades, genuinely aimed at protecting civilians or primarily served broader geopolitical interests. This scrutiny is particularly pertinent in assessing cases like the airstrikes on civilian infrastructure, where the purported military objectives must be weighed against the resulting civilian casualties and destruction.

International Humanitarian Law

International Humanitarian Law (IHL), often referred to as the laws of war, provides a legal framework to regulate the conduct of armed conflicts, ensuring the protection of civilians and the humane treatment of combatants. (Gilliard, 2007) The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols form the cornerstone of IHL, setting out the rules that parties to a conflict must follow. This research will employ IHL to assess the legality and compliance of U.S. and Saudi-led

coalition actions in Yemen, with a particular focus on incidents involving civilian harm and the destruction of critical infrastructure.

IHL mandates that parties to a conflict must distinguish between military objectives and civilian objects, and refrain from attacks that may cause disproportionate civilian damage. This framework will help evaluate whether the coalition's military strategies, supported by the U.S., adhere to these principles, especially considering reported airstrikes on schools, hospitals, and food supply chains. The study will also examine the accountability mechanisms for violations of IHL, considering whether there have been efforts to investigate and address these breaches, and what implications they have for broader international legal and security norms. In the thesis, IHL will be applied to assess the legality and compliance of U.S. and Saudi-led coalition actions, particularly in incidents involving civilian harm, such as the healthcare system collapse and humanitarian aid access issues. This legal framework will help evaluate whether military strategies, such as targeting infrastructure critical for civilian survival, adhere to these principles and what implications such actions have for international legal and security norms.

Integrating Frameworks

These theoretical frameworks—Just War Theory, Humanitarian Intervention, and International Humanitarian Law—are interlinked and collectively provide a comprehensive lens to analyze the U.S. involvement in the Yemen war. They allow for a nuanced exploration of the moral, ethical, and legal dimensions of the conflict, highlighting the complexities of military and humanitarian interventions. The frameworks will be applied to assess not only the immediate impact on food security and healthcare access in Yemen but also the broader implications for international security and stability.

By employing these frameworks, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the ethical and legal responsibilities of state and non-state actors in conflict zones. It also seeks to inform future policy and international law by identifying best practices and lessons learned from the Yemen conflict, particularly regarding the balance between military objectives and humanitarian considerations. This holistic approach is essential for addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by the conflict and for advancing the discourse on ethical and lawful conduct in international interventions. The integration of Just War Theory, Humanitarian Intervention, and International Humanitarian Law provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing U.S. involvement in the Yemen conflict. This approach highlights the moral, ethical, and legal dimensions of military and humanitarian interventions, offering a critical lens to evaluate the impact of these actions on Yemen's civilian population and infrastructure. By applying these frameworks, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the ethical and legal responsibilities of state and non-state actors in conflict zones. This analysis seeks to inform future policy and international law, identifying best practices and lessons learned from the Yemen conflict, particularly regarding the balance between military objectives and humanitarian considerations. Just War Theory and International Humanitarian Law provide critical lenses to evaluate U.S. actions, questioning the ethical and legal dimensions of military support versus humanitarian contributions. Meanwhile, the concept of Humanitarian Intervention helps scrutinize whether U.S. actions genuinely aim to alleviate suffering or serve broader geopolitical interests.

This comprehensive and critical approach is essential for addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by the conflict and advancing the discourse on ethical and lawful conduct in international interventions. The literature review, therefore, not only synthesizes existing knowledge but also critically engages with it, providing a robust foundation for the thesis's arguments and conclusions.

The theoretical framework outlined here serves as a vital tool for systematically analyzing U.S. involvement in Yemen. By critically engaging with these frameworks, the thesis aims to advance the discourse on ethical and lawful conduct in international interventions. This approach underscores the importance of balancing military objectives with humanitarian considerations, offering lessons learned and best practices for future international law and policy developments.

This detailed connection between the literature review and theoretical framework strengthens the thesis, ensuring that the analysis is both comprehensive and critically grounded.

Success Criteria

The success of this thesis will be measured by several key criteria. First, the comprehensiveness and depth of the literature review will be evaluated based on its ability to integrate and critically analyze diverse sources, providing a balanced view of the U.S. involvement in the Yemen war. Second, the application of the theoretical frameworks—Just War Theory, Humanitarian Intervention, and International Humanitarian Law—should demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the ethical, legal, and moral dimensions of the conflict. This includes accurately assessing the impact of U.S. actions on food security and healthcare access in Yemen. Third, the empirical analysis, including case studies and thematic analysis, must offer original insights into how U.S. military support has influenced the humanitarian crisis, while also considering the broader implications for international security and stability. The thesis should also propose well-supported policy recommendations, informed by the findings, that contribute to the discourse on ethical foreign intervention. Finally, the clarity and coherence of the argument, combined with rigorous academic research standards, will be crucial in establishing the thesis as a valuable contribution to the field of international relations and humanitarian studies. In this research, a qualitative methodology was chosen over quantitative or mixed method approaches due to the nuanced and

complex nature of the Yemen conflict, particularly concerning the role of U.S. involvement. The qualitative approach is particularly advantageous as it allows for a detailed and in-depth exploration of the humanitarian, legal, and geopolitical dimensions of the conflict, which are often interwoven in ways that are not easily quantifiable. Unlike quantitative methods that focus on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research provides a more holistic understanding by delving into the contextual factors and underlying reasons behind certain phenomena. This approach is critical in a conflict like Yemen, where the impacts of military actions, such as airstrikes and blockades, extend beyond measurable statistics to include profound ethical, legal, and social implications.

The thematic analysis employed in this study is a key component of the qualitative approach, allowing for the identification and examination of recurring themes and patterns across different case studies. This method is superior in this context because it facilitates a nuanced analysis of complex issues, such as the humanitarian impact of the conflict, the compliance with international humanitarian law, and the broader geopolitical consequences. The ability to categorize and interpret these themes provides a comprehensive understanding that is crucial for formulating informed and effective policy recommendations.

Additionally, the comparative analysis further strengthens the research by situating the Yemen conflict within a broader spectrum of international conflicts where U.S. military support has been significant. This comparison provides valuable insights into the unique and common factors influencing U.S. intervention strategies, offering a deeper understanding of the broader implications of these actions. By highlighting similarities and differences with other conflicts, this method provides a richer context for understanding the specific dynamics at play in Yemen. Moreover, the qualitative approach's focus on primary and secondary data sources, including

government documents, reports from international organizations, and expert analyses, ensures a well-rounded perspective that captures the multifaceted nature of the conflict. This comprehensive data collection strategy, combined with rigorous thematic and comparative analysis, allows for a more thorough and critical examination of U.S. involvement in Yemen than what could be achieved through quantitative methods alone. Quantitative approaches, while valuable in certain contexts, may overlook the subtleties of human experiences and the ethical complexities inherent in conflict situations. In contrast, the qualitative methodology chosen here is better suited to address the research questions' depth and complexity, providing a robust framework for understanding the intricacies of U.S. foreign policy and its humanitarian implications.

Methodology

Research Design

The data collection process involves an extensive review of both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include official U.S. government documents, Congressional Research Service reports, and coalition communications, which provide direct insights into the policies and strategic considerations of the U.S. and its allies. Secondary sources consist of reports from international organizations such as the United Nations and various NGOs, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). These sources offer critical perspectives on the humanitarian and legal implications of the conflict, supplemented by scholarly articles and expert analyses that provide a broader contextual understanding.

To ensure a thorough and robust analysis, the research employs a thematic analysis framework, which involves coding and categorizing data into key themes that align with the study's core focus areas. This approach facilitates the identification of patterns and trends across different cases,

enabling a comprehensive understanding of the impacts of U.S. actions. The thematic analysis is complemented by comparative analysis, which contextualizes the findings within the broader landscape of international conflicts and interventions, drawing parallels and highlighting unique aspects of the Yemen conflict.

The research is organized around three analytical pillars: Humanitarian Impact, Legal and Ethical Considerations, and Regional Security and International Implications. The Humanitarian Impact pillar examines the immediate and long-term effects of the conflict on Yemen's civilian population, including issues of food insecurity, health crises, and displacement. The Legal and Ethical Considerations pillar assesses compliance with international humanitarian law, particularly concerning the protection of civilians and the legality of military strategies employed by the coalition and supported by the U.S. The Regional Security and International Implications pillar explores the broader geopolitical consequences of the conflict, including the strategic objectives of the U.S. and its allies, and the implications for regional stability and global security.

This research design is well-suited to address the complex and interrelated aspects of the Yemen conflict, providing a multi-dimensional perspective that captures the depth and breadth of U.S. involvement. By integrating diverse data sources and analytical frameworks, the study aims to contribute to a more informed understanding of the conflict and to support the development of policies that consider both humanitarian needs and geopolitical realities. The qualitative approach, with its emphasis on context and detail, is particularly valuable in uncovering the nuanced impacts of military and political strategies, offering insights that are critical for scholars, policymakers, and humanitarian practitioners.

Case Selection

The selection of the case studies—The Blockade and its Impact on Food Security, Airstrikes on Civilian Infrastructure, Healthcare System Collapse, Humanitarian Aid and Access, and The Hodeidah Offensive—was driven by several critical factors that underscore their relevance and insightfulness for the research on U.S. involvement in the Yemen conflict. These cases were chosen because they represent key elements of the conflict that directly affect the humanitarian situation and illustrate the multifaceted nature of U.S. participation.

The Blockade and its Impact on Food Security was selected because the blockade is a central element of the Saudi-led coalition's strategy, significantly supported by U.S. logistics and intelligence. It directly impacts Yemen's food supply and access to essential goods, making it a crucial factor in the humanitarian crisis. This case provides an opportunity to explore the direct correlation between military strategies and widespread food insecurity, highlighting the broader implications for civilian populations. Additionally, it offers clear examples of how U.S. support, in terms of intelligence and logistical backing, plays a role in the coalition's strategies, providing insights into the ethical and legal dimensions of such support. Airstrikes on Civilian Infrastructure were chosen due to the controversy surrounding the use of U.S.-supplied munitions in these attacks. This case study allows for an in-depth exploration of the direct impact of military actions on non-combatants and critical infrastructure, which has profound implications for international humanitarian law and ethical wartime conduct. It also allows the research to scrutinize the role of U.S. military support and the broader consequences of arms sales, offering a perspective on the responsibilities of external actors in conflicts.

The Healthcare System Collapse case study is crucial for understanding the compounded effects of military actions and blockades on public health. This focus highlights the long-term consequences for civilian well-being, emphasizing the critical state of Yemen's healthcare system.

It provides a platform to evaluate the effectiveness of U.S. humanitarian aid efforts in mitigating these impacts, offering a balanced view of the U.S. role in both contributing to and alleviating the crisis. Humanitarian Aid and Access was selected to examine the complexities surrounding the delivery of humanitarian aid in Yemen. The logistical and security challenges faced by aid organizations, exacerbated by the conflict and blockade, are crucial for understanding the operational realities on the ground. This case is vital for evaluating the dual role of the U.S. as both a military ally of the Saudi-led coalition and a major humanitarian aid donor, exploring the tensions and synergies between these roles.

Lastly, The Hodeidah Offensive case study was chosen due to the battle's pivotal role in the Yemen conflict, particularly its strategic importance as a humanitarian lifeline. This analysis allows for an understanding of how military objectives intersect with humanitarian needs, especially concerning the control of access to essential goods and services. It provides a critical viewpoint on the broader geopolitical strategies of the coalition and their supporters, including the U.S., while assessing the international response to such military actions. These case studies collectively provide a comprehensive picture of the Yemen conflict, encompassing critical issues such as military strategy, humanitarian impact, legal and ethical considerations, and geopolitical implications. They are indispensable for a thorough analysis of the conflict and U.S. involvement, offering a multi-dimensional understanding necessary for informed policy recommendations. The case studies selected for this research—focusing on the blockade, airstrikes on civilian infrastructure, healthcare system collapse, humanitarian aid, and the Hodeidah offensive—are crucial for comprehensively understanding the role of U.S. involvement in the Yemen conflict. According to Sarah Leah Whitson, U.S. military support, including arms sales and logistical assistance, has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Yemen by enabling coalition airstrikes on civilian targets and enforcing a blockade that restricts essential supplies, contributing significantly

to widespread food insecurity (Whitson, 2019). Bruce Riedel elaborates on the strategic motivations behind U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition, emphasizing how this involvement shapes regional security dynamics and intensifies the humanitarian crisis, particularly through significant military operations like the Hodeidah offensive (Riedel, 2018).

Farea Al-Muslimi highlights the complex dual role of the U.S. in Yemen, noting that while the U.S. provides substantial humanitarian aid, its military support for the coalition also escalates the conflict, creating a challenging ethical landscape (Al-Muslimi, 2020). This duality complicates the U.S.'s position and underscores the ethical dilemmas inherent in international intervention. Gregory D. Johnsen further explores this complexity, focusing on how U.S. actions—driven by strategic and security interests—impact humanitarian conditions, particularly concerning the blockade and the collapse of Yemen's healthcare system (Johnsen, 2019). Johnsen emphasizes the unintended yet profound humanitarian consequences that often accompany such military support. These perspectives collectively provide a detailed and nuanced analysis of U.S. involvement in Yemen, highlighting the critical intersections of military strategy, humanitarian outcomes, and ethical considerations. They underscore the necessity of critically evaluating U.S. actions within the broader framework of international humanitarian law and ethical foreign policy.

These cases were chosen because they prominently feature the role of the United States, whether through direct military support, such as intelligence sharing and the supply of munitions, or through humanitarian aid and diplomatic efforts. The blockade, supported by U.S. logistical and intelligence assets, exemplifies how U.S. involvement has significant humanitarian implications, particularly concerning food security. Similarly, the airstrikes on civilian infrastructure often involve U.S.-supplied weapons, raising critical questions about the responsibilities and ethical considerations of the U.S. as an arms supplier. The collapse of Yemen's healthcare system is

exacerbated by the conflict dynamics in which the U.S. plays a part, either directly or indirectly. Humanitarian aid and access highlight the dual role of the U.S. in providing relief while also being a key ally of the coalition enforcing the blockade. The Hodeidah Offensive, a major military operation with substantial U.S. backing, illustrates the complex interplay between strategic military objectives and humanitarian needs. By focusing on these cases, the research aims to provide a nuanced analysis of U.S. actions and policies, exploring their broader implications for international humanitarian law and global security dynamics.

In conclusion, the selection of these case studies, with a focus on U.S. involvement in the Yemen conflict, allows for a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted impacts of humanitarian efforts. By examining these cases, the research can critically assess the ethical, legal, and geopolitical dimensions of the conflict, providing valuable insights into the broader implications of U.S. actions and policies in Yemen. This approach not only highlights the direct consequences on the civilian population but also underscores the complex responsibilities and challenges faced by external actors in conflict zones.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this research was conducted using a comprehensive qualitative approach, incorporating a variety of data sources to ensure a thorough and nuanced understanding of the U.S. involvement in the Yemen conflict. Data was collected from a combination of primary and secondary sources, including official government documents, reports from international organizations such as the United Nations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic journals, and expert analyses. These sources provided a diverse range of perspectives and insights, which were crucial for triangulating information and verifying the accuracy and reliability of the data. The primary data sources, such as U.S. government statements, Congressional Research

Service reports, and official coalition communications, offered direct insights into the official narratives and policy positions of the involved parties. Secondary sources, including reports from Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), provided critical assessments of the humanitarian impact of the conflict, particularly in relation to the blockade, airstrikes on civilian infrastructure, and the collapse of Yemen's healthcare system.

The data was analyzed using a thematic analysis strategy, which involved coding and categorizing the data into key themes relevant to the research questions. This methodology allowed for the identification of recurring patterns and themes, such as the humanitarian impact, legal and ethical considerations, and the broader geopolitical implications of U.S. involvement. The thematic analysis was complemented by a comparative analysis approach, which involved comparing the Yemen conflict to other similar conflicts where U.S. military support played a significant role. This comparative perspective provided additional context and helped identify unique and common factors influencing the humanitarian impact of U.S. intervention strategies. The choice of a qualitative methodology was particularly suitable given the complex and multi-faceted nature of the conflict, as it allowed for an in-depth exploration of the nuanced interactions between military strategies, humanitarian outcomes, and international legal and ethical standards. This comprehensive data analysis strategy ensured a robust and well-rounded examination of the U.S. involvement in Yemen, providing valuable insights for policymakers, humanitarian actors, and scholars.

2. Data Analysis

In analyzing the five case studies—The Blockade and its Impact on Food Security, Airstrikes on Civilian Infrastructure, Healthcare System Collapse, Humanitarian Aid and Access, and The Hodeidah Offensive—the application of the three analytical pillars is critical. These pillars—

Humanitarian Impact, Legal and Ethical Considerations, and Regional Security and International Implications—provide a structured framework for evaluating the multifaceted consequences of U.S. involvement in the Yemen conflict.

Humanitarian Impact

The pillar of Humanitarian Impact is crucial for understanding the direct and indirect effects of the conflict on Yemen's civilian population. This pillar focuses on assessing the scale of human suffering resulting from military actions, such as the blockade, which has led to widespread food insecurity and malnutrition, and airstrikes on civilian infrastructure, which have caused significant casualties and destroyed vital public services. By systematically analyzing the humanitarian data, this pillar helps highlight the immediate needs of the population, the extent of displacement, and the broader public health crises, such as the collapse of the healthcare system and the spread of diseases like cholera. Understanding these impacts is essential for evaluating the effectiveness and humanitarian implications of international intervention and aid efforts.

Legal and Ethical Considerations

The pillar of Legal and Ethical Considerations provides a critical lens through which to evaluate the actions of the U.S. and the Saudi-led coalition. This pillar assesses compliance with international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians, the prohibition of starvation as a method of warfare, and the principles of distinction and proportionality in military operations. By applying these legal frameworks, the analysis can identify potential violations and ethical breaches, providing a basis for accountability and policy recommendations. This pillar is particularly relevant in cases involving airstrikes on civilian infrastructure and the enforcement of the blockade, where questions of legality and morality are paramount. It also explores the ethical

implications of balancing military objectives with humanitarian concerns, especially in complex conflict environments.

Regional Security and International Implications

The pillar of Regional Security and International Implications examines the broader geopolitical and security dimensions of the conflict. This pillar is crucial for understanding how U.S. involvement, through military support and diplomatic actions, influences regional stability and international relations. It considers the strategic motivations behind U.S. actions, such as countering Iranian influence and maintaining regional allies, and how these strategies intersect with humanitarian outcomes. This analysis is particularly important in understanding the implications of the Hodeidah offensive and the blockade, both of which have significant consequences for global trade routes and international diplomacy. By exploring these dimensions, the research can provide a comprehensive view of the conflict's impact on regional and global security, as well as the international community's response.

Together, these three pillars offer a comprehensive analytical framework that not only assesses the immediate humanitarian effects but also considers the legal, ethical, and geopolitical contexts of the U.S. involvement in Yemen. This multi-dimensional approach is essential for a nuanced understanding of the conflict and for developing informed and effective policy responses.

Analysis

The Blockade and its Impact on Food Security

Historical Background

The blockade on Yemen, imposed by the Saudi-led coalition and significantly supported by the United States, began in March 2015 as a strategic measure in the ongoing conflict against the Houthi rebels. (Browne, 2015) The coalition aimed to weaken the Houthis, who had taken control of large parts of Yemen, including the capital Sana'a, by cutting off their access to arms and other

supplies, which they allegedly received from Iran (Riedel, 2018). The blockade was enforced both on land and sea, with a particular focus on Yemen's primary ports such as Hodeidah, which handles a substantial portion of the country's imports. Hodeidah is critical for the delivery of food, fuel, and medical supplies to the Yemeni population. The blockade's comprehensive nature has significantly exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, transforming a complex political conflict into a catastrophic humanitarian disaster (Whitson, 2019).

Humanitarian Impact

The blockade's impact on Yemen's food security has been severe and far-reaching, contributing to what the United Nations has termed the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The restriction of imports has led to acute shortages of food and fuel, with dire consequences for the civilian population. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), over 16 million Yemenis are food insecure, with nearly half of them in emergency or crisis levels of hunger (WFP, 2020). The blockade has disrupted the supply chains crucial for food distribution, leading to skyrocketing prices and making basic food items unaffordable for most of the population. This situation has been particularly devastating for children, with UNICEF reporting that approximately 2 million children under five are acutely malnourished, including nearly 400,000 suffering from severe acute malnutrition, which is life-threatening without urgent treatment (UNICEF, 2019).

The blockade's impact extends beyond food insecurity. The restriction on fuel imports has crippled essential services, including water and sanitation systems, which rely on fuel to operate. This has exacerbated the public health crisis, contributing to outbreaks of diseases such as cholera. The lack of medical supplies and the destruction of healthcare infrastructure have further compounded the crisis, leaving millions without access to essential medical care. The humanitarian situation is

worsened by the blockade's interference with humanitarian aid deliveries, which are crucial for alleviating the suffering of the affected populations.

Legal and Ethical Considerations

The blockade raises significant legal and ethical issues, particularly concerning international humanitarian law. Under the Geneva Conventions, the use of starvation as a method of warfare is prohibited, as is the targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure. The comprehensive nature of the blockade, which includes restrictions on food and medicine, can be viewed as a form of collective punishment, a practice banned under international law (Whitson, 2019). This raises questions about the legality of the blockade, especially considering the severe humanitarian consequences. Furthermore, the role of the United States in supporting the blockade, through logistical and intelligence assistance, implicates it in the broader ethical and legal considerations of the conflict. The U.S. involvement has been criticized by various human rights organizations and international bodies, which argue that supporting actions that contribute to a humanitarian crisis violates both international norms and ethical standards (Amnesty International, 2018).

Regional Security and International Implications

The blockade also has significant regional security and international implications. It is a component of the broader geopolitical struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran, with Yemen serving as a proxy battleground. This aspect of the conflict highlights the complex interplay of regional powers vying for influence, with the blockade serving as a tool to limit Iranian influence in Yemen and the broader Gulf region. The enforcement of the blockade, particularly around the Red Sea and Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, which are vital maritime routes, has raised concerns about the security of international shipping lanes and the potential for broader conflict (Riedel, 2018).

The United States' role in supporting the blockade complicates its international relations and its standing as a proponent of human rights and international law. The involvement has strained U.S. relations with European allies and international organizations, which have called for an end to the blockade to alleviate the humanitarian suffering in Yemen. The U.S.'s actions in Yemen are often contrasted with its stated commitment to humanitarian principles and international norms, leading to criticism and calls for a reassessment of its foreign policy in the region (Al-Muslimi, 2020).

In conclusion, the blockade on Yemen, with substantial support from the United States, has had devastating humanitarian impacts, raising serious legal and ethical questions and complicating regional and international security dynamics. This case study highlights the profound consequences of military strategies that do not adequately consider humanitarian principles and the broader implications for global governance and international law.

Analysis Airstrikes on Civilian Infrastructure

Historical Background

The Saudi-led coalition, with substantial support from the United States, has been conducting airstrikes in Yemen since the onset of the conflict in 2015. The coalition's air campaign, aimed at countering the Houthi rebels and restoring the internationally recognized government, has frequently targeted infrastructure critical to civilian life, including markets, schools, hospitals, and residential areas. These actions have been widely criticized for their devastating impact on Yemen's civilian population and have raised significant concerns about violations of international humanitarian law. U.S. involvement in the air campaign includes the supply of precision-guided munitions, logistical support, and intelligence sharing, making it a key player in the conflict's aerial component (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

Humanitarian Impact

The humanitarian impact of airstrikes on civilian infrastructure in Yemen has been catastrophic. These strikes have resulted in significant civilian casualties and the destruction of vital infrastructure, further exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. Notable incidents include the bombing of a funeral hall in Sana'a in October 2016, which killed over 140 people and injured hundreds more, and repeated strikes on medical facilities, such as the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) hospital in Abs, which was hit in August 2016, killing 19 people (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2019). The destruction of hospitals and clinics has severely disrupted healthcare delivery, leaving millions without access to medical care. The targeting of markets, water facilities, and transportation infrastructure has similarly devastated local economies, disrupted food supply chains, and hindered humanitarian aid distribution, contributing to widespread food insecurity and disease outbreaks.

The psychological toll on the civilian population is also profound, as communities live in constant fear of airstrikes. (Souidi, 2020) The destruction of educational facilities has deprived thousands of children of their right to education, compounding the long-term socio-economic impacts of the conflict. The cumulative effect of these airstrikes is a humanitarian disaster that has made everyday life extraordinarily difficult for the Yemeni people, particularly the most vulnerable, including children, the elderly, and those with disabilities.

Legal and Ethical Considerations

The airstrikes raise serious legal and ethical concerns, particularly in relation to international humanitarian law. The principle of distinction, which requires combatants to distinguish between military targets and civilians, appears to have been frequently violated, as evidenced by the targeting of clearly civilian sites like hospitals and schools. The principle of proportionality, which

prohibits attacks that cause excessive civilian harm relative to the anticipated military advantage, also comes into question, particularly in cases where the military necessity of targeting certain sites is dubious (Amnesty International, 2018).

The involvement of the United States in these airstrikes, through the provision of munitions and targeting intelligence, implicates it in these legal and ethical issues. There is significant debate over the extent of U.S. responsibility for these actions, particularly concerning the adherence to laws governing the conduct of hostilities and the ethical implications of supporting a campaign with such severe humanitarian consequences. This involvement raises critical questions about the accountability of external actors in armed conflicts and the measures that should be taken to ensure compliance with international norms.

Regional Security and International Implications

The air campaign has broader regional and international implications, affecting not only Yemen but also the stability of the surrounding region. The destruction wrought by these airstrikes has fueled anti-coalition and anti-U.S. sentiment, potentially radicalizing local populations and exacerbating regional tensions. The extensive use of U.S.-supplied weapons in these strikes has also raised concerns among international observers and human rights organizations, leading to calls for more stringent controls on arms sales and military assistance (Riedel, 2018).

Furthermore, the airstrikes have attracted widespread international condemnation, straining diplomatic relations between the coalition countries and other nations, including U.S. allies in Europe, who have expressed concerns over the humanitarian impact of the conflict. This dynamic complicates the United States' foreign policy objectives and its position as a global leader in human rights advocacy. The ongoing conflict and the coalition's air campaign contribute to broader instability in the Middle East, with potential implications for global security and

international trade, particularly concerning the security of the Red Sea and the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, vital maritime chokepoints.

In summary, the airstrikes on civilian infrastructure in Yemen, supported by U.S. military assistance, have had devastating humanitarian impacts, raised serious legal and ethical questions, and carry significant regional and international implications. This case study highlights the critical need for adherence to international humanitarian law and the careful consideration of the humanitarian consequences of military strategies.

Analysis of Healthcare System Collapse *Historical Background*

The collapse of Yemen's healthcare system is one of the most tragic consequences of the ongoing conflict, which escalated dramatically in 2015 with the intervention of the Saudi-led coalition, supported by the United States. (Day, 2021) Yemen's healthcare infrastructure was already fragile before the war, but the conflict has significantly exacerbated its decline. The coalition's airstrikes, blockade, and ground fighting have damaged or destroyed many hospitals and clinics, severely limiting access to medical care. The blockade has restricted the import of medical supplies and fuel, which are essential for powering healthcare facilities and transporting patients. This situation has been further worsened by the exodus of healthcare professionals, many of whom have fled the country or have been unable to work due to the conflict (WHO, 2018).

Humanitarian Impact

The collapse of the healthcare system in Yemen has led to severe humanitarian consequences. The lack of access to basic healthcare services has resulted in high mortality rates from otherwise treatable conditions. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that less than 50% of health facilities in Yemen are fully functional, and there are severe shortages of essential medicines and

medical supplies (WHO, 2018). The situation has led to widespread outbreaks of preventable diseases, such as cholera, which has affected over a million people, and diphtheria, a resurgence of which has been noted after decades of control. Malnutrition, particularly among children, exacerbates these health crises, as weakened immune systems are more susceptible to infection.

The healthcare collapse also affects maternal and child health. UNICEF reports that a Yemeni woman dies in childbirth every two hours due to the lack of skilled birth attendants and emergency obstetric care (UNICEF, 2019). Additionally, vaccination programs have been severely disrupted, increasing the risk of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles and polio. The destruction of healthcare infrastructure, coupled with the shortage of healthcare professionals, has left large segments of the population without any medical care, leading to a humanitarian disaster with long-term consequences for Yemen's human capital and development.

Legal and Ethical Considerations

The targeting of healthcare facilities and the blockade's impact on medical supplies raise serious legal and ethical concerns. International humanitarian law, particularly the Geneva Conventions, explicitly protects medical facilities and personnel from attack, recognizing their crucial role in providing care to the wounded and sick. The deliberate or indiscriminate targeting of such facilities constitutes a violation of these laws and can be classified as a war crime. The blockade's restriction on medical supplies also violates the principle of providing relief to civilian populations in distress, a cornerstone of international humanitarian law (Amnesty International, 2018).

The United States' support for the Saudi-led coalition, including logistical support and arms sales, implicates it in these legal and ethical issues. There is a growing debate about the responsibility of external actors, like the U.S., to ensure that their support does not contribute to violations of international law. Ethical considerations also focus on the moral responsibility of these actors to

mitigate the humanitarian impacts of their actions, particularly in the context of a healthcare system collapse those results in unnecessary suffering and death.

Regional Security and International Implications

The collapse of Yemen's healthcare system has broader implications for regional security and international relations. A public health crisis of this magnitude, characterized by widespread disease outbreaks and high mortality rates, poses a threat not only to Yemen but also to neighboring countries. The potential for diseases to spread across borders, especially in a region already facing significant health challenges, underscores the need for a coordinated international response. The situation also complicates the geopolitical landscape, particularly in the context of international humanitarian aid. The blockade and ongoing conflict have hampered humanitarian access, leading to international condemnation and call for accountability. This has strained relations between the coalition members, including the U.S., and other global actors who advocate for the protection of civilian lives and adherence to international law. The healthcare crisis in Yemen thus serves as a critical test of the international community's commitment to humanitarian principles and the rules of war (Al-Muslimi, 2020).

In conclusion, the collapse of Yemen's healthcare system, exacerbated by the conflict and blockade, highlights the severe humanitarian, legal, and ethical challenges in the region. The role of external actors, including the United States, in this context, raises important questions about accountability and the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The case study underscores the need for immediate and coordinated international action to address the healthcare crisis and prevent further deterioration of Yemen's public health situation.

Analysis of Humanitarian Aid and Access

Historical Background

The Yemen conflict, which began in earnest in 2015 with the intervention of the Saudi-led coalition supported by the United States, has resulted in one of the most severe humanitarian crises in the world. The coalition's blockade and airstrikes have not only contributed to food insecurity and healthcare collapse but have also severely hampered the delivery of humanitarian aid. Yemen, which was already the poorest country in the Middle East before the conflict, relies heavily on international aid to meet the basic needs of its population. The blockade has complicated logistics for aid agencies, reducing the flow of essential supplies such as food, medicine, and fuel, and exacerbating the suffering of civilians (OCHA, 2019).

Humanitarian Impact

The obstruction of humanitarian aid has had devastating consequences for Yemen's civilian population. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), approximately 80% of Yemen's population, or around 24 million people, require some form of humanitarian assistance (OCHA, 2019). The blockade and ongoing conflict have made it exceedingly difficult for aid agencies to operate, with restrictions on port access, bureaucratic impediments, and security concerns all contributing to the challenges faced in delivering aid.

The World Food Programme (WFP) has reported that millions are on the brink of famine, with humanitarian access being a critical issue. Food distributions are often delayed or blocked, and nutritional supplies for children and pregnant women are insufficient. The health sector also suffers significantly from the blockade, as medical supplies, including vaccines and life-saving medications, are often delayed or prohibited from entering the country. These barriers have exacerbated public health crises, such as the cholera outbreak, which has affected over a million

people, and the resurgence of diseases like diphtheria and measles, which were previously under control (WFP, 2020).

Legal and Ethical Considerations

The blockade and restrictions on humanitarian aid access raise serious legal and ethical issues. International humanitarian law mandates that all parties to a conflict must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need, which is protected under the Geneva Conventions. The deliberate obstruction of humanitarian aid can be considered a violation of these laws and may constitute a war crime if it leads to unnecessary suffering or starvation of the civilian population (Amnesty International, 2018). The role of the United States in supporting the coalition, including through military and logistical assistance, places it in a position of responsibility concerning these humanitarian impacts.

Ethically, there is a profound obligation for the international community, including the U.S., to ensure that humanitarian principles are upheld, even in the context of armed conflict. This includes ensuring that aid reaches those in need and that civilian populations are protected from the effects of warfare, including starvation and disease. The U.S. has provided significant humanitarian aid to Yemen, yet this assistance is often at odds with its military support for the coalition, raising questions about the coherence and morality of its foreign policy approach in the region.

Regional Security and International Implications

The restrictions on humanitarian aid access have broader implications for regional security and international relations. The humanitarian crisis in Yemen has fueled instability, which can spill over into neighboring regions, contributing to broader regional insecurity. This instability can lead to increased migration, economic disruption, and the potential for radicalization as desperate populations turn to extremist groups for support or as a reaction against perceived external

aggressors. Internationally, the handling of humanitarian aid in Yemen has drawn significant criticism from various quarters, including human rights organizations and foreign governments. This criticism has implications for the global reputation of the United States and its allies, impacting diplomatic relations and complicating international cooperation on broader issues of peace and security. The situation in Yemen has become a focal point for debates on the ethics of arms sales, military intervention, and the responsibilities of nations in mitigating humanitarian crises (Al-Muslimi, 2020).

The obstruction of humanitarian aid in Yemen, exacerbated by the blockade and conflict, has severe humanitarian, legal, and ethical implications. The role of the United States in this context highlights the complexities and contradictions of its involvement in the region, underscoring the need for a more coherent and ethically consistent approach to international conflict and humanitarian intervention.

Analysis of The Hodeidah Offensive *Historical Background*

The port city of Hodeidah has been a crucial battleground in the Yemen conflict, given its strategic importance as a major entry point for goods, including food and medical supplies, into the country. The Hodeidah port handles approximately 70% of Yemen's imports, making it a vital lifeline for the civilian population, especially in the context of the ongoing blockade and humanitarian crisis. In June 2018, the Saudi-led coalition, supported by the United States, launched a major offensive to capture Hodeidah from the Houthi rebels, who had controlled the city since 2014. The coalition argued that control of the port was necessary to prevent the smuggling of weapons to the Houthis, which they claimed were supplied by Iran (Riedel, 2018). The offensive sparked significant

international concern due to the potential humanitarian implications, particularly regarding the disruption of aid deliveries and the exacerbation of the already dire humanitarian situation in Yemen.

Humanitarian Impact

The Hodeidah offensive had significant humanitarian consequences. The fighting around the port disrupted the flow of goods into Yemen, worsening the food security situation and pushing millions closer to famine. According to the United Nations, the offensive risked cutting off food supplies for millions of Yemenis, as the port is the entry point for around 70% of the country's imports, including 90% of its staple foods (OCHA, 2018). The violence and insecurity also hindered the operations of humanitarian organizations, limiting their ability to deliver aid to those in need. The offensive led to the displacement of tens of thousands of people, adding to the already substantial number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Yemen.

The fighting around Hodeidah also damaged critical infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and water facilities, which are essential for the delivery of aid and the basic functioning of daily life. The port facilities themselves were at risk, and any damage to these would have catastrophic implications for the entire country, which relies heavily on imported food and fuel. The offensive further compounded the public health crisis, as disrupted supply lines affected the availability of medical supplies and exacerbated the spread of diseases like cholera, which thrive in conditions of poor sanitation and limited access to clean water (UNICEF, 2019).

Legal and Ethical Considerations

The Hodeidah offensive raises critical legal and ethical questions, particularly concerning the laws of war and the protection of civilians. International humanitarian law requires that all parties to a conflict distinguish between military targets and civilian objects and take all feasible precautions

to avoid harm to civilians. The scale of the Hodeidah offensive, in a densely populated urban area and a crucial humanitarian hub, posed significant risks to civilian life and infrastructure. The potential for mass displacement and the disruption of vital food and medical supplies highlighted the offensive's disproportionate impact on the civilian population, challenging the principles of distinction and proportionality under international law (Amnesty International, 2018).

The involvement of the United States, through the provision of intelligence, logistical support, and arms to the coalition, implicates it in the legal and ethical considerations of the offensive. There is an ongoing debate about the extent of U.S. responsibility for the actions of its allies, particularly in terms of ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law and mitigating the humanitarian impact of military operations. The ethical implications are profound, as the offensive not only risks exacerbating the humanitarian crisis but also undermines the credibility of international norms and the global human rights framework.

Regional Security and International Implications

The Hodeidah offensive has broader implications for regional security and international relations. Strategically, control of Hodeidah is seen as crucial for influencing the outcome of the Yemen conflict and for countering Iranian influence in the region. However, the offensive also risks destabilizing the broader Middle East, particularly by escalating tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and by potentially disrupting maritime trade through the Red Sea, a vital global shipping route (Riedel, 2018). The offensive has drawn significant international scrutiny and condemnation, with many countries and international organizations expressing concern over the humanitarian implications and calling for a ceasefire.

The situation in Hodeidah highlights the complexities of international involvement in Yemen, particularly the challenges of balancing military objectives with humanitarian imperatives. The

international community's response, including calls for negotiations and increased humanitarian access, underscores the importance of a coordinated and principled approach to conflict resolution. The offensive has become a focal point for broader debates on the ethics of arms sales, military intervention, and the responsibilities of external actors in conflict zones (Al-Muslimi, 2020).

In conclusion, the Hodeidah offensive, heavily supported by U.S. involvement, underscores the profound humanitarian, legal, and ethical challenges of military strategies in conflict zones. The offensive has significant implications for regional stability and international relations, highlighting the need for careful consideration of the humanitarian impacts of military actions and the critical role of international law in protecting civilians during armed conflict.

Discussion: U.S. Implications in Yemen

The U.S. involvement in the Yemen conflict, as illustrated by the five case studies, reveals a complex and multifaceted role that has significantly influenced the humanitarian situation in the region. This discussion explores the implications of U.S. actions, particularly about the blockade, airstrikes on civilian infrastructure, the collapse of the healthcare system, challenges in humanitarian aid access, and the Hodeidah offensive. The analysis draws on various perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of the ethical, legal, and geopolitical dimensions of U.S. involvement.

The Blockade and its Humanitarian Consequences

The blockade, enforced by the Saudi-led coalition with substantial U.S. support, is perhaps one of the most controversial aspects of the conflict. The blockade has severely restricted the importation of essential goods, including food, fuel, and medical supplies, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. According to the World Food Programme, millions of Yemenis are on the brink of famine due to these restrictions (WFP, 2020). The U.S. role, particularly in providing logistical and

intelligence support, has been critical in maintaining the blockade, which raises significant ethical and legal questions. The United Nations and various human rights organizations have criticized the blockade as a form of collective punishment, a potential violation of international humanitarian law (Whitson, 2019). This involvement complicates the U.S.'s position, as it balances its strategic interests in the region against its international humanitarian obligations.

Airstrikes and the Destruction of Civilian Infrastructure

The coalition's air campaign, heavily supported by U.S.-supplied weaponry and intelligence, has had devastating effects on Yemen's civilian infrastructure. Incidents such as the bombing of a funeral hall in Sana'a and repeated strikes on hospitals and schools highlight the severe humanitarian impact of these operations (Human Rights Watch, 2017; Médecins Sans Frontières, 2019). These actions not only result in immediate civilian casualties but also disrupt essential services, contributing to the broader humanitarian crisis. The legal implications of these airstrikes are profound, with many scholars and international bodies questioning their compliance with international humanitarian law, particularly concerning the principles of distinction and proportionality (Amnesty International, 2018). The ethical considerations are equally critical, as the use of U.S. weapons in these strikes implicates the United States in potential violations of the laws of war.

The Collapse of the Healthcare System

The degradation of Yemen's healthcare system, exacerbated by the conflict and blockade, underscores the broader humanitarian disaster. The World Health Organization reports that less than 50% of health facilities are fully operational, and there is a severe shortage of medical supplies and personnel (WHO, 2018). The U.S.'s support for the coalition, which includes enforcing the blockade, has directly impacted the ability to deliver medical supplies and aid,

further worsening the public health crisis. The ethical implications of this are significant, as the failure to facilitate humanitarian access and medical relief violates the fundamental principles of humanitarian law, which mandate the protection and care of the sick and wounded. This situation raises questions about the accountability of the U.S. and other coalition partners in ensuring that their actions do not exacerbate humanitarian suffering.

Challenges in Humanitarian Aid and Access

The obstruction of humanitarian aid is another critical area where U.S. involvement has significant implications. Despite being a major donor of humanitarian aid, the U.S. has faced criticism for its role in supporting the coalition's actions that obstruct aid delivery (OCHA, 2019). The blockade and restrictions imposed by the coalition have complicated logistics and reduced the flow of essential aid, including food and medical supplies, to those most in need. This dichotomy between providing aid and simultaneously supporting actions that hinder aid delivery highlights the contradictions in U.S. policy. It raises ethical questions about the coherence and consistency of U.S. humanitarian and military strategies in conflict zones, emphasizing the need for a more integrated and principled approach to international intervention (Al-Muslimi, 2020).

The Hodeidah Offensive and Its Implications

The offensive on Hodeidah, supported by U.S. military and logistical assistance, further illustrates the complex role of the U.S. in Yemen. Hodeidah's strategic importance as a humanitarian and commercial lifeline made the offensive particularly sensitive, with widespread international concern over its potential humanitarian impact (Riedel, 2018). The U.S.'s involvement in this offensive highlights the tension between military objectives and humanitarian concerns, as the operation risked exacerbating the already critical humanitarian situation by disrupting food and medical supply chains. The ethical and legal implications are significant, particularly concerning

the proportionality of the military action and its impact on civilians. This case also underscores the broader geopolitical dimensions of the conflict, including U.S. interests in countering Iranian influence in the region and maintaining stability in a strategically vital area.

Conclusion

The U.S. involvement in Yemen, as explored through these case studies, highlights a range of implications that go beyond the immediate humanitarian impact. Legally, the support for actions that may violate international humanitarian law raises questions about the accountability of the U.S. and its allies. Ethically, the U.S. faces criticism for its role in exacerbating the humanitarian crisis, despite its substantial humanitarian aid contributions. Geopolitically, the U.S.'s actions in Yemen reflect broader strategic interests, including regional stability and countering Iranian influence, but also expose the risks of entanglement in complex conflicts with significant humanitarian costs.

In conclusion, the U.S. involvement in Yemen presents a complex interplay of humanitarian, legal, and geopolitical factors. The critical examination of these aspects reveals the challenges and contradictions inherent in balancing military and strategic objectives with humanitarian imperatives. As the international community continues to grapple with the Yemen crisis, the U.S.'s role will likely remain a focal point for debates on the ethics of foreign intervention, the responsibilities of states in armed conflicts, and the effectiveness of international humanitarian law in protecting civilian populations.

This thesis provides an in-depth analysis of the U.S. involvement in the Yemen conflict, with a focus on its impacts on food security, healthcare access, and broader humanitarian crises. By examining case studies such as the blockade, airstrikes on civilian infrastructure, the collapse of the healthcare system, challenges in humanitarian aid access, and the Hodeidah offensive, the

research highlights the significant consequences of U.S. military support for the Saudi-led coalition. The findings suggest that U.S. actions have exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, contributing to severe food insecurity, destruction of essential infrastructure, and a collapsing healthcare system. These outcomes raise critical questions about the compliance of these actions with international humanitarian law and the ethical responsibilities of the United States as a significant external actor in the conflict.

The literature review highlighted a diverse range of perspectives, including strategic motivations, humanitarian consequences, and ethical considerations surrounding U.S. military support and aid efforts. Theoretical frameworks such as Just War Theory, Humanitarian Intervention, and International Humanitarian Law were applied to assess the morality and legality of U.S. actions. These frameworks provided a structured lens through which to evaluate the complex interplay between military objectives and humanitarian outcomes. The analysis revealed significant contradictions in U.S. policy, where efforts to support regional allies and counter geopolitical adversaries have, in some instances, exacerbated the humanitarian crisis. This situation underscores the urgent need for a coherent and ethically consistent approach to foreign policy that aligns with international norms and prioritizes the protection of civilian lives. The findings emphasize that while strategic interests cannot be ignored, they must be balanced with a strong commitment to humanitarian principles and international law to ensure that foreign interventions do not cause undue suffering or instability. Overall, the thesis advocates for a reevaluation of U.S. foreign policy in conflict zones, highlighting the importance of integrating ethical considerations into strategic decision-making processes to foster a more just and peaceful international order.

The research question guiding this thesis—how has U.S. involvement in the Yemen war specifically impacted food security and healthcare access, and what are the broader implications

for international security and stability?—is addressed through a detailed analysis of case studies and theoretical frameworks. The findings reveal that U.S. military support for the Saudi-led coalition, including arms sales, intelligence sharing, and logistical assistance, has significantly contributed to the exacerbation of food insecurity and the collapse of healthcare infrastructure in Yemen. This involvement has led to widespread civilian suffering, including malnutrition and inadequate medical care, which are further aggravated by the coalition-imposed blockade. The analysis, grounded in Just War Theory and International Humanitarian Law, questions the legality and morality of these actions, particularly considering the disproportionate impact on civilians. Moreover, the U.S.'s dual role as both a military supporter and a humanitarian aid provider creates a complex and often contradictory policy stance, challenging its adherence to international norms and ethical standards. These findings suggest that U.S. actions have not only worsened the humanitarian crisis but also pose significant challenges to regional stability and international security, highlighting the need for a more balanced and humanitarian-focused foreign policy approach.

The analysis reveals a complex duality in U.S. policy, characterized by substantial humanitarian aid contributions alongside military support that undermines these humanitarian efforts. This dichotomy not only complicates the U.S.'s international standing concerning human rights and international norms but also highlights the inherent contradictions in its foreign policy. Furthermore, the thesis underscores the broader geopolitical implications of the U.S. involvement, particularly in relation to regional stability and the strategic objective of countering Iranian influence. These geopolitical considerations often overshadow humanitarian concerns, leading to policies that exacerbate rather than alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni population.

The research advocates for a reexamination of U.S. policies in Yemen and similar conflict zones, emphasizing the need for a more coherent and ethically grounded approach. Such an approach should prioritize the protection of civilian populations and adhere strictly to international humanitarian law. This thesis contributes to the broader discourse on the ethics of international intervention and the responsibilities of state actors in armed conflicts, urging a more balanced and responsible foreign policy.

Recommendations

To address the findings of this thesis, several key recommendations are proposed for U.S. policymakers and international actors involved in the Yemen conflict. The United States should critically reassess its military support for the Saudi-led coalition, particularly concerning arms sales and logistical assistance, to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law and avoid exacerbating civilian harm. Additionally, enhancing humanitarian aid delivery is crucial, which includes advocating for the lifting of the blockade to allow the free flow of essential goods such as food and medical supplies. Diplomatic efforts should be intensified to promote a negotiated settlement, involving all relevant parties in inclusive political dialogue aimed at achieving a sustainable peace. Strengthening accountability mechanisms is also vital, with support for international investigations into potential war crimes to ensure those responsible are held accountable. Lastly, U.S. foreign policy should integrate ethical considerations more consistently, prioritizing the protection of civilians and aligning military objectives with humanitarian principles in conflict zones. By following these recommendations, the U.S. and the international community can better address the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, foster regional stability, and uphold international legal standards.

In addition to the previous recommendations, further steps should be taken to mitigate the humanitarian impact and foster a more stable and peaceful environment in Yemen. The United States and its allies should prioritize the restoration and strengthening of Yemen's healthcare infrastructure, which has been severely damaged during the conflict. This can be achieved through targeted aid programs that focus on rebuilding medical facilities, training healthcare workers, and ensuring the continuous supply of essential medical equipment and medicines.

Furthermore, the U.S. should lead or support international efforts to establish humanitarian corridors that guarantee safe passage for aid deliveries and ensure that aid reaches those most in need, particularly in hard-to-reach areas. There should also be a push for comprehensive monitoring and reporting mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability in aid distribution, reducing the risk of aid diversion or misuse.

The U.S. government should also engage more actively with international partners to establish a cohesive and coordinated approach to peacebuilding in Yemen, emphasizing the inclusion of all major stakeholders in the peace process, including marginalized groups such as women and minorities. This inclusive approach is essential for fostering a durable peace and addressing the root causes of the conflict.

Lastly, there should be a sustained focus on addressing the underlying socio-economic issues in Yemen, such as unemployment, food insecurity, and poverty, which fuel instability and conflict. Long-term development aid and investment in infrastructure, education, and local economies are crucial for rebuilding the country's social fabric and providing Yemenis with the resources and opportunities needed to build a stable and prosperous future.

By implementing these additional recommendations, the international community can contribute to a more comprehensive and effective response to the crisis in Yemen, ensuring that efforts to resolve the conflict are not only focused on immediate relief but also on long-term recovery and stability.

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