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## LITERATURE, LINGUISTICS & CRITICISM | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The representation of Yemen War in ideologically-stuffed newspaper headlines: A critical analysis

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**Abstract:** The current study attempted to explore the representation of Yemen war in ideologically loaded composition of Western, Arab, and Iranian newspapers headlines. It is basically a qualitative study in its nature. Fifty-seven headlines constituted the corpus of study. Therefore, the corpus included three Iranian newspapers, five Arab newspapers, and three Western newspapers, respectively. The headlines were mainly selected between 30 October 2014 and 1 May 2019 and were from the Arabian Peninsula, Iran, the US, and the UK. Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model was applied to engage the themes put across in the course of participants—processes' representation regarding civilians casualties in particular in Yemen war. The findings of the study showed that both Western and Arab newspapers view the Houthis as rebels, and that the kingdom of Saudi Arabia claims to play a defensive role against Houthis (rebels) who are allegedly threatening its national security. In different circumstances, Iran does not only introduce the Westerners and Saudis as unwanted imperialists in the region, but also supports diplomatic means by criticizing the military actions and urging all conflict sides to find a diplomatic solution. Moreover, the probability of the conflicting discourses



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### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Language is employed to represent one's ideologies, personal beliefs, and stance towards a particular issue. The construction of speech structures, tweets, posts, or texts, newspaper headlines is linked to power agents and ideologies aimed at legitimizing them. Therefore, this study explores the portrayal of Yemen war in Western, Arab, and Iranian newspapers headlines. The findings of the research revealed that both Western and Arab newspapers view Houthis as rebels, whereas Saudi Arabia claims to play a defensive role against Houthis who supposedly threaten its national security. However, Iran not only presents the Westerners and Saudis as undesirable imperialists in the region, but also supports diplomatic means by criticizing the military actions and urging all conflict sides to find a solution. Moreover, the inconsistent discourses emerged in the region are attributed to the divergent ideological conceptions of Islam in the Middle East and in the Secular West.

emerged in the region are attributed to the divergent ideological conceptions of Islam in the Middle East (Arab World) and in the Secular West.

**Subjects: Sociolinguistics; Stylistics; Grammar, Syntax & Linguistic Structure**

**Keywords: Ideology; critical discourse; Houthis; Yemen war; newspapers; headlines; media**

### 1. Introduction

News is often criticized for manipulating and misleading the audiences. Just like other discourses, whatever is introduced in the news is selected according to a set of norms, criteria and values, which are carefully built and constructed so that a certain interest can be obtained. Therefore, news is never a manifestation of facts that are free from values (Fowler, 1991). The power hidden in ideology creates, constructs, directs and (re)shapes the understanding and perception of social subjects and awareness towards events. Hence, it is now widely held that ideology constructs reality (Ranciere, 1974).

Legitimizing the supremacy of the capitalist class is an influential tool in the manipulation of the ideological norms in language. The ideological formation of speech structures, social media tweets, posts, or texts, newspaper headlines in particular is inherently linked to power agents aimed at legitimizing them. The process of framing processes and participants, in news headlines, might be ideologically important and intended to validate definite opinions and perspectives (Fairclough, 1989). For example, war in Yemen is represented via numerous prejudicial perspectives and views, and such perspectives and views are controlled by certain ideologies. Considering the structure of ideological and political processes and participants, journalists continuously form articles by trying to interpret the realities of an issue or situation and thus highlighting or ignoring specific aspects that lead to an unequal distribution of concentration or awareness on an element (Gill et al., 2012).

Media affects and strengthens people understanding of what is right or wrong, real and false. Further, it is not always and necessarily an integral and honest representation of reality. Media's supposed job is to get things to roll and pave the way for organizations to achieve their goals (Alo & Orimogunje, 2013). The press world is not true and honest but it represents a distorted culture (Fowler, 1991). Deep investigation of news by key players' agencies reveals how and where ideologies typically show themselves in news' reports and articles. Moreover, media functions and operates not only in individual but also in global and local levels, and media's ideologies demonstrate objectiveness and sometimes rationality (Nawaz et al., 2013).

News about war and conflict often embraces the underlying connotation of the existence of two sets of rival claims, ultimately, fighting for victory. Lynch and Galtung (2010) explain that covering war and reporting conflict can track two roads, namely the high road or low road. Newspapers take either of these roads depending on the focus of the reports. When the focus is on the violence of the conflict and the parties involved are trying to impose only their views and only the messages they want to get crossed to the people, this is when the low road is taken. The low road becomes clearer when the conflict is seen as "us" versus "them" and "them" here is the other who is seen as evil and probably the cause of the conflict. Opposite is the high road where the focus is on the conflict and how it can be resolved. The concept of the high road is the resolution-oriented reporting of conflict or what is known as peace journalism.

### 2. Background about the conflict in Yemen

The Yemeni crisis is more a globalized dispute (with local and national component parts) than a clear-cut war between two sides. It is above all the product of an increasingly dysfunctional and fragile central state that terribly has become unable to implement the rule of law and unable to integrate new actors. This dispute has been depicted as a regional conflict, pitting against Saudi adversaries by an Iran-backed side. However in reality, the coalition of the Houthis' and Saleh's forces—which is one of the strongest military parts in the country—and the anti-Houthi coalition

are both internally diverse, and have conflicting desires and goals. Participants agreed that there is little loyalty among the anti-Houthi bloc in practice towards President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi. Those on the Houthi side are more anti-Saudi than they are pro-Houthi.

Horrible abuses like arbitrary killing and bombing civilians were committed by all parties of the war in Yemen. According to a panel of international experts, conflicts in Yemen caused suffering, inflicted heavy civilian casualties and worsened and deepened the country's dire humanitarian crisis. Just as Houthis' violations and war crimes, indiscriminately bombing civilian areas, targeting civilians with snipers, imposing siege and recruiting children to fight, Saudi-led coalition air strikes target residential areas and hit marketplaces and witnesses report indiscriminate shelling in several densely populated areas. These horrible facts urge not only the international community but also researchers, academicians and social activists to stop keeping silent and turning a blind eye to these violations, crimes and the intolerable humanitarian situation in Yemen. Therefore, what is really required here is to recognize the causes and consequences of changes in power relationships and to research and analyze various participants' representations and processes and patterns conducted by dominant states through media reports and headlines that tend to be an efficient and insightful practice.

With respect to the Yemen war, in comparison with other genres, news headlines are more likely to be ideologically stuffed. Headlines are likely one-sided and do not offer readers a clear picture and a detailed understanding of a phenomenon; rather they are slightly misleading and prejudiced manifestation of truth. Ranciere (1974) argues that ideologies do not necessarily exemplify the exact reflections of reality; however they offer people an ambiguous picture of the society as a means to involve them in class exploitation processes. Generally, ideology is not truly a faithful demonstration of reality; further it is recognized as prejudiced and biased. Ideology is based on creating imaginary relations that link people in the society (Althusser, 1971). For Van Dijk (1998), ideologies normally provide power with legitimate scheme and increase inequality in the society. The negative functions of ideology include hiding, distorting the true reality or the interests and the objective, material condition of existence. Moreover, Van Dijk (1998) believes that positively ideologies give more power to dominated groups, generate solidarity, systematize struggle and sustain opposition.

### 3. Literature review

In a globalized world, media has become a crucial platform from which political discourses and news are circulated and contested. A variety of powers have realized the importance of media in war and crises especially in constructing, promoting and challenging certain ideologies. This is highlighted by Fawcett (1998) when he argues that "individuals and institutions, throughout the centuries, have applied their own beliefs to the production of certain effects in translation" (p. 107).

According to Fairclough (1992), discourse can be considered as a linguistic text; written or spoken, and discourse activities and practices (text consumption and production). Discourse analysis in policy is rendered to be a knowledgeable field that focuses on the study of society's political communication, whether by discourse, text, signs, images, marks or other symbols. It constantly tries to answer some crucial questions, including, how political discourse works, and how functions work together which are often related to the acquisition, legitimization, and retention of power. Accordingly, analyzing political discourse pays attention to the analysis of its performance, linguistic structure, distribution, reception, influence, and responsiveness. Wodak (2001) indicated that political discourse is so powerful and an influential tool as it deals with various texts, political decisions and policies related to regional and international relations of those in power within the state.

With respect to how Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) works, Alrefaee et al. (2019) explains that the invisible meanings of texts in printed media are social structures. Herman and Chomsky (1988) introduce the propaganda model having roots in Walter Lippmann's theories on how the media influence the public through propaganda, Herman and Chomsky go one step further to explain how propaganda works in modern democracies today. Propaganda model elaborates that free press serves the purpose of "brainwashing under freedom". In other words, spreading terror and

fear in a totalitarian system is what propaganda is in a democracy. In terms of policy making, Chomsky (1987) labels the system of ideas that uses media as their platform to spread propaganda, as a “state religion”. State religion has two main principles- the first one being that the Holy State (nation-state) is good in its core. In other words, policymakers of the state are always portrayed to have noble intentions. Logically, the second principle states that any violent act committed by the Holy State is always defensive in its nature at least that is how it is portrayed. Therefore, one may conclude that policy makers use media as a tool to spread their ideologies regarding international and domestic relations and/or issues.

Media management or “spin” is one of the most popular techniques of foreign policy makers to spread their ideology through media. The spin is achieved by allowing coverage that is censored or by selecting journalists that are supportive of the government. This technique is usually used to promote peace policies or in times of war and conflict. In that case, foreign policy makers have a couple of tactics within their strategic framework. They could ignore the media; develop a focus on a media-oriented policy which means focusing the media to publish stories that require political claims.

Rhee (1997) explores how the forms and frames of news in war coverage influence the interpretation of war and conflict by individuals. Results indicate that print news stories containing strategies and issues are powerful and effective in influencing interpretation.

Studies by Fahmy and Johnson (2005, 2007) show that, for example, the 2003 U.S.-Iraq war not only gave media incentives and provided them with unparalleled access to military intervention via an integrated programme, it also created a remarkable opportunity to investigate whether British and American newspapers, working under radically different media structures and at varying rates of public consent for military intervention in Iraq, disapproved or encouraged their attitudes towards the war.

Numerous studies and researches have scrutinized the political reporting and coverage of military conflicts in some areas in the Middle East. According to a report by Griffin and Lee (1995) about the First Gulf War, out of the total images, only 2% depicted the war events and portrayed the images of American soldiers who were wounded or killed. In a similar context, a study by Behnam and Mousaie (2012) investigated two groups of news reports about the Gaza crisis in two prominent Iranian and American newspapers. However, both groups of news reports demonstrated the crisis differently because the news reporters’ personal interests, interpreters’ perceptions and ideologies could affect and manipulate the depiction of reality leading to antagonism among groups regarding what is to be considered the right or favored depiction of the sociopolitical context in which the discourse has been produced.

Schiller (1992), and Shaw and Carr-Hill (1992) find that the reportage avoided describing the US and British casualties and female workers, and Iraqi victims of air strikes, the coverage highlighted the physical destruction of the war instead, and eventually depicted the real conflict as a bloodless issue. Whereas other studies have discussed what is behind news process for some countries. There have been concentrations on whether media constructs and interprets worldwide news in support or in favor of the policy of their nations.

Entman (1991) examines two air accidents: the Flight 007 in the Korean AirLine which was targeted by a Soviet fighter plane in 1983 and the Flight 655 in Iran air which was targeted in 1988 by a surface-to-air missile fired by the US navy. Although the two incidents are considerably similar, he finds the coverage of the US press denying responsibility and depicting the accident of the Iranian plane as “a technical problem” and later as an act of self-defense in international water, and described what happened to the Korean flight as “a moral outrage”.

In the same vein, Fahmy and Johnson (2007) examines news framing differences between some Arab and western newspapers in depicting September the 11th incidents and the Afghan War. The

propensity to report news according to national benefits was also illustrated and indicated in other countries' media

In the military conflicts of the last few years across the world, scholars and researchers have found that national press and media coverage varied considerably. For example, Yang (2003) finds that air strikes of NATO in former Yugoslavia were portrayed in the US media as a responsibility, duty and "humanitarian aid" for Albanians in Kosovo, whereas the top two newspapers in China portrayed the incident as an "intervention" against the sovereignty of Yugoslavia. The study came to the conclusion that the political strategies of the government and national political interest exercised procedures and considerable influence on media coverage. Bennett (2003) highlights the US media coverage and observes that the media in the US remarkably ignored the international calls for not launching the war on Iraq in 2003 and turned a blind eye to the international disagreement to that war in a commonly ethnocentric and patriotic storytelling.

#### **4. Research question**

In this vein, this study aims to examine 57 news headlines regarding Yemen war crisis along with its repercussion discourses. Thus, this study tries to find an answer for the following question:

How do key players react to the war in Yemen as represented in the targeted newspapers headlines?

#### **5. Methodology**

##### **5.1. Sample**

This present study adopted a corpus that consists of 57 headlines selected from eleven newspapers. Five of them were Arabic newspapers: Al-sharq Al-awsat, Gulf Times Qatar, Saudi Gazette, Arab News, and Aseer News. Three were taken from Iranian newspapers: Tehran Times, Iran daily, and IRAN. Finally, the last three ones were selected from the Western newspapers: Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, and The Guardians.

The three categories of the sample newspapers were chosen deliberately for some reasons. First of all, the Arabic newspapers (first category) were printed in the Saudi-led Coalition countries (Arabian Peninsula) which ideologically view Houthis as rebels against the legitimate government of Yemen. Furthermore, Houthi rebels threaten their national security as they have been supported by the Iranian regime. However, the Iranian newspapers (second category) have always been in favor of Houthi rebels because they both have the same ideology of Shia and are simultaneously opposing ideologies against the legitimate government of Yemen. Moreover, they consider the Saudi-led coalition military actions in Yemen as aggression on the country. On the other hand, the Western newspapers (third category) have a neutral perspective but they also demonstrate Houthis as rebels, criminals, thieves and killers.

Concerning the period of the newspapers, they were mainly selected from the period between 30 October 2014 and May 1st, 2019. This period has witnessed the war between the legal, coalition-backed government and the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels.

##### **5.2. Data collection and instrumentation**

In the data collection process, news archive of the selected newspapers was the main source to have the required data in hand. Starting from online search with the key word like Yemen war. Selecting the headlines centered on their special illustration of participants and processes. In this research, we have followed and considered the order of three major types of sentences provided by Fairclough. Fairclough's (1989) argued that there are three major types of sentences that most usually describe the three primary process forms: acts (SVO), events (SV), and attributions (SVC), respectively.

According to Fairclough's three-dimensional model, there is a relationship between texts, interactions, and contexts as discussed below:

- (1) The description is the stage which is concerned with the formal properties of the text.
- (2) Interpretation is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction—with seeing the text as a product of a process of production, and as a resource in the process of interpretation.
- (3) The explanation is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context with the social determinants of the processes of production and interpretation, and their social effects (Fairclough, 2015, pp. 58–59).

Data were analyzed based on the three-dimensional approach to CDA by Fairclough: description, interpretation, and explanation or clarification. As a methodological style, the three dimensions of analysis are indispensable for discourse analysis. This model of Fairclough is a very helpful framework for experimental studies and practical research on communication and society. The analysis in which the three dimensions applied should focus on the text linguistic features, its production and consumption processes on the one hand, and on the extensive social practices of the text on the other.

## 6. Data analysis and discussion

The data were examined, in this section, using Fairclough's approach (CDA) that includes the three stages: "Description", "Interpretation" and "Explanation". The three levels are explained in the following parts:

### 6.1. Level of analysis

#### 6.1.1. First: Description

Having analyzed the selected Iranian newspapers' headlines, we have discovered that they frequently center around the military intervention and operations of Saudi Arabia in Yemen. However, the chief emphasis is given to the portrayal of suffering instigated by foreign military interventions. For example, through the headline '*Death toll in Saudi war on Yemen hits 100,000*', it has been shown that the deadliest number of victims in the war and the number of civilian casualties is rising considerably as the headline highlighted.

According to the headlines, "*The U.S. Senate's role in the killing of Yemeni children*", "*Hatami: West to blame for massacre in Yemen*", here, the west is introduced as responsible for selling advanced arms to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates during the war period. It is also implicitly indicated in the headlines that the west is to be blamed for arms assistance which somehow contributes in the crimes committed by Saudi and other allies in Yemen. The use of Western weapons by alliance countries in the war on Yemen points the finger at the negative role of the west in Yemen crisis. The headlines also attract the attention of how Americans kept silent on what the newspaper labeled as massacre and bombing of civilians including children.

The above [Table 1](#) clearly shows Saudi as main causer of atrocious war crimes as killing 279 children, massacre in Dhamar, and killing of Yemeni civilians. The number of casualties and losses is shown at the beginning through the death toll of victims which is obviously tended to indicate the rate of violence and atrocity that Yemenis experience. Through the words "civilians" and "aggression" used in the above headlines, Saudi Arabia's atrocious actions are magnified. The word "aggression" is mainly used in relation to the victims and casualties of Saudi's airstrike attacks. According to the headline, "*Saudi Arabia aggression on Yemen kills 279 children*", shows that Saudis are held responsible for killing Yemeni children. Therefore, the use the words "children" and "aggression" and the number of victims, it is typically meant to point out the horrific and dark side of Saudi's involvement.

**Table 1. Headlines from Iranian newspapers highlighting targeting civilians by Saudi military**

No	Headlines
1	Death toll hits 100,000 in Saudi war on Yemen
2	Hatami: West to blame for massacre in Yemen
3	The U.S. Senate's role in the killing of Yemeni children
4	Zarif urges end to killing of Yemeni civilians
5	Air strike on Yemen detention centre marks newest Saudi war crime
6	Saudi war crimes record in Yemen: Massacre in Dhamar
7	Saudi aggression against Yemen kill 279 children
8	Saudi warplanes target areas in Yemen
9	180 injured in latest Saudi airstrikes on Yemen

As seen in Table 2, the first headline stated that seven Yemenis including the bride were killed by Saudi air strike which targeted a wedding party, the intensity of atrocity and violence is stressed. Grammatically, the noun phrase “wedding party” is placed as the direct object of the verb, “targeting”, and the full clause states that Saudi air forces on purpose target civilians in wedding parties. Moreover, what is crucial in the headline is the consequences of the attack, killing the bride and other six civilians, which is mentioned at the end of the clause and separated by comma to attract more attention. Further, it strongly states the involvement of Saudi Arabia as an agent in using banned arms in Yemen. It can be assumed from the headlines given in Table 2 that Iranian newspapers believe that Saudi Arabia has enforced war on Yemen. The headlines, however, show the deadliest number of victims in the war and the number of civilian casualties is increasing considerably as this headline highlighted, “Death toll hits 100,000 in Saudi war on Yemen”.

Iranian newspapers introduced Iran as defender of human rights and critic violations committed in Yemen by Saudis. In fact the Iranian newspaper has focused not only on Saudi Arabia as the only actor involved in the crisis in Yemen. But, they even emphasize Iran’s role in the Yemen crisis in a positive way. This role was represented as a wise and rational one. According to the headlines given in Table 3, Iran is presented as an advocate for peace talks and it not only pays efforts to create a solution to the war in Yemen but also prompts other Islamic countries to think of and produce solutions to Yemen crisis. Therefore, the headlines in Table 3 show Iran’s efforts to settle the war conflict and the crisis tactfully. The following headline, “Zarif welcomes peaceful solutions to Yemen crisis” displays Iran as a mediator or a negotiator on behalf of Yemen and sees it is of no avail to keep war and siege on Yemen, and appreciates any solutions that bring about peace

On the other hand, coverage of Arab newspaper headlines presents the agency of two opposite sides that are antagonistic to each other: the Houthis and Coalition led by Saudi. All the above headlines have conspicuously portrayed Houthis as insurgents and rebels. The main point that deserves considering and seems ideologically important is the collocation of the term “rebel” with Houthis. According to the headlines in Table 4, Houthis are introduced as rebels as

**Table 2. Headlines from Iranian newspapers presenting Saudi Arabia as an Aggressive country**

No	Headlines
1	Saudi warplanes kill seven including, bride after targeting wedding party in Yemen.
2	Banned arms used by Saudi in war on Yemen
3	Saudi war on Yemen part of US plot to dominate Muslim world
4	44 killed, 200 injured in Saudi airstrikes on Yemen
5	Saudi-led strikes on Yemen continue despite UN called for peace

**Table 3. Iranian newspaper headlines showing the positive role of Iran in Yemen war**

No	Headlines
1	Zarif welcomes peaceful solutions to Yemen crisis
2	Will Riyadh end its invasion into Yemen?
3	Iran urges Islamic states to take moves to resolve Yemen crisis
4	Zarif urges end to killing of Yemeni civilians
5	Tehran strongly condemns Saudi air raid on Yemen
6	Iran says ready to resolve Yemen crisis
7	Iran sends officials to Riyadh for Yemen talks
8	No choice other than dialogue to solve Yemen crisis
9	Iran, Oman voice pleasure as hopes rise over cession of war in Yemen

**Table 4. Headlines from Arab newspapers introducing Houthis as Rebels and Militia that targets civilians**

No	Headlines
1	Dozens of rebels killed in Hodeida
2	Saudi Arabia coordinating with allies to deter Houthi militia:
3	Prince Khalid: Iran brazenly exploiting Yemen for its own interests
4	Saudi Arabia, UAE condemn Houthi attack on mosque that killed more than 100
5	Houthi Militias Trigger Gas Crisis to Revive Yemen's Black Market
6	Houthis All Female Militia Granted Military Ranking
7	MASAM Removes 4000 Houthi Mines Explosives in 3 Weeks
8	Houthis Abduct More Yemeni Women Girls
9	Saudi Arabia intercepts two missiles fired by Houthis on Jizan
10	Air raids hit rebel supply lines around Yemen's Hodeidah
11	Houthis Have Targeted 76 Mosques in Yemen

well as agents of spreading violence across the country, Yemen and causing unrest. The headlines in Table 4 clarify how the Houthis conduct horrific activities as targeting 76 mosques, abducting more Yemeni women, killing more than 100 in a mosque, and so on. Arab newspapers represent Houthis' agency for different actions and violations. These actions are primarily military and non-humanitarian such as spreading mines in 3 Weeks, triggering gas crisis, and firing missiles.

These headlines collected from Arab newspapers designate the coalition headed by Saudi as the agent of attacking the Houthi rebels. Therefore, Saudi coalition is determined to take protective measures and target Houthis through launching airstrikes. For example, the headline, "Saudi help in mine clearance allows Yemenis to return home", sheds light on how Saudi Arabia sets projects for landmine clearance and this project includes teams to defuse mines laid by Houthis.

In Table 5, the headline, "Yemeni army kills Houthi commander in Al-Dhale province", presents the Yemeni army as an agent for taking action against the Houthis. Hence, the Houthi insurgents are not only targeted by Saudi coalition, but by the Yemeni army and the legitimate government as well. That means the Yemeni army together with the coalition countries are waging war against Houthis. In the meantime, like Arab newspapers, the Western newspapers observe Yemen's war as

**Table 5. Headlines from Arab newspapers representing Saudi forces as the agent of protective plans**

No	Headlines
1	Arab coalition jets renew strikes on Houthis in Yemen
2	Saudi Arabia coordinating with allies to deter Houthi militia
3	Saudi help in mine clearance allows Yemenis to return home
4	Yemen war imposed on us, says Al-Jubeir
5	Yemeni army kills Houthi commander in Al-Dhale province
6	Houthis Officially Admit “Military Cooperation” With Iran

a crisis that quickly escalated into a multi-sided war, between Houthi rebels from one side and neighboring Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni internationally-recognized government from another.

According to the Western newspapers, war actions in Yemen are being undertaken by two main agents: Saudi-led coalition and the Houthis. Similar to Arab newspapers, the Western media also introduces Houthis as war criminals. The headlines in Table 6 clearly describe, on one hand, the Houthis as rebels and as agents firing missiles, killing more than 100, diverting food aid from the hungry, and launching drone strikes. The most famous term used in Western media reports is the term “rebel” referring to the armies of the Houthi. The emergence of a party as a “rebel” can lead to multidimensional problems. Moreover, Houthi rebels are considered as “a terrorist group” according to the headline, “*Trump administration considers naming Yemen’s Houthi rebels a terrorist group*”.

In the headline, “*Yemen peace talks at risk after several killed in Houthi drone attack*”, it is indicated how Houthi forces are still launching attacks that threaten peace talks in Yemen. Such actions by Houthis expose the bilateral constructed trust between the parties of the war which hinders the process of peace talks. Moreover, Western media also portrays Houthis as criminals and rebels and accuses them of inhumane acts such as looting UN food aids, stealing food supplies and rejecting calls to restore order. On the one hand, the reports in Table 7 depict the Houthis as rebels, insurgents, thieves and criminals for stealing humanitarian aid, killing hundreds of civilians and rejecting the U.N. Security Council’s call for peace.

**Table 6. The Western newspapers headlines portraying Houthis’ horrific violations and introducing them as Shia Rebels**

No	Headlines
1	UN experts: Yemen’s rebels getting weapons similar to Iran’s
2	Saudi Arabia and Yemen’s rebels were making rare progress in peace talks. Then new violence flared.
3	US gives evidence Iran supplied missiles that Yemen rebels fired at Saudi Arabia
4	Houthi rebels kill at least 80 Yemeni soldiers in missile attack on mosque
5	Yemen’s Houthi rebels accused of diverting food aid from hungry
6	Yemen and Houthi rebels agree to withdrawal deal
7	Saudis begin airstrikes against Houthi rebels in Yemen
8	Saudi-led airstrikes on Yemen rebel-run prison kill more than 100
9	Trump administration considers naming Yemen’s Houthi rebels a terrorist group
10	Yemen Houthi rebels kill former president Ali Abdullah Saleh
11	Major Saudi Arabia oil facilities hit by Houthi drone strikes

**Table 7. Western media headlines underlining Houthis particular actions in the war**

No	Headlines
1	UN food agency says aid looted in Yemen's Houthi-held area
2	Yemen food aid being stolen in Houthi-run areas
3	Yemen peace talks at risk after several killed in Houthi drone attack
4	Airstrikes on Houthi insurgents kill scores near Saudi border
5	Yemen's Houthis reject U.N. Security Council call to restore order
6	In Yemen, takeover by Houthis leaves nation's future unclear

### 7. Second: Interpretation

Analyzing the headlines of the selected newspapers shows how tricky it is to identify the members engaged in the process of news production. News agencies, on one hand, represent one side and the newspaper participants or commonly the public, on the other hand, represent the other side. It is likely that placing these two extremes as the only ones engaged in the processes of producing and consuming news will be an unsophisticated assumption, especially that which produces and issues news.

Obviously, News media is a powerful device in the hands of the ruling class that shapes and reforms popular views, ideas and viewpoints in order to be a hegemonic illustration in a society's discursive atmosphere (Gill et al., 2012; Conboy, 2010; Taiwo, 2007). Press and news organizations work as the agents of new production or distribution. Presumably, press or media system is owned and operated up to the interests of the policy players; hence various news agencies only follow the enacted rules of those ruling or in power. Mass media exclusively serves politics. In other words, politics is the power that sets particular parameters and boundaries for mass media. Therefore, power is the major contributor to news production. Most considerably, the power relations that are formed in the discourse of the mass media are not always obvious, and there are reasons to see it as involving secret power relations (Fairclough, 1995).

In Iranian newspaper headlines, the dominant discursive practices that contribute in forming meaning by presenting the subject, Saudi Arabia, with the support of the west, has imposed a war against Yemeni people and committed war crimes against civilians. Through the scope of this point, the number of victims and casualties and the agency of West and the Saudi-led coalition in violence and vicious actions are not only centralized, but are also negatively highlighted and magnified.

From the Iranian newspaper headlines, it can easily be understood that civilian's casualties have both Saudi and the US fingerprints in Yemen crisis. Besides, Saudi and America are referred to as united allies who launched a war with the maximum savagery. More headlines also point to how the war went worse piling misery upon misery just to achieve the war goals of the real imperialist sponsors in the west, the US as particular, and that is the cause why these two agents severely hit Yemen.

In the headlines, "Will Riyadh end its invasion into Yemen?", "Saudi war on Yemen part of US plot to dominate Muslim World", it is indicated that forming a league against Yemen, Saudi aims not to resolve Yemen crisis, but rather seeks to control Yemen and steal the sovereignty of the country, and what is worse, to dominate Western states' discourse so as to expand the scope of the interventions. To prove this idea, Iranian media regularly concentrates and points to the casualties of the war and the humanitarian disaster that is prolonged by the deliberately unwinnable

conflicts and the agency of Saudi Arabia's destructive acts and violations. By shedding light on the scope of losses and damage caused by the Saudi coalition under strict inspection, Iran's media, newspapers in particular, tries to exploit the notion that there might be some mysterious and hidden agendas and planned imperialist programs shared by both Saudi Arabia and the West, especially U.S.A. In addition to indicating the dark side of the hidden intention of the coalition and representing Saudis and the West's shared agency in the war, Iran media has also pointed out to Iran's agency. However, the agency of Iran in Yemen is not similar to that of the Saudis. Further, Iran does not seem to be interested in military acts and attempts to give a peace-loving face, and proposes diplomatic approaches to the cases of Yemen and Syria. To achieve that goal, Iran is sending envoys through diplomatic resolution to settle this crisis.

Unlike Iran, the Western and Arab newspapers present the scenes of war from a different perspective. In both sides' representations both religious and political reasons count. These parts' visible discursive activities put great importance on the role of the Houthis as the key agents in the war in Yemen.

Both the Arab and the Western newspapers also disapprovingly focus on the Houthis, and apparently want to present them as the major cause of troubles that thwart any attempt or step in establishing peace in Yemen. The headlines of both newspapers show similar perception concerning the other key actors in the war, the Houthis. As a matter of fact, in the headlines of these two parts, the over-emphasized theme is to highlight the Houthi agency and the war crimes they have committed against civilians in Yemen. Saudis need to win the public approval and legitimize what they have intended to do to wage a war against Yemen.

These influential procedures of news production, at the very least, may win the public consent to some extent and let the power agendas succeed to obtain public approval in two stages. In the first stage, Houthis are displayed as rebels through the headlines of the Arab and Western newspapers; condemning and accusing them of targeting civilians, attacking people, recruiting children as soldiers. All these violations and atrocities ascribed to "Houthis" are meant to provoke the other adjacent countries to participate in the defensive action and join the Saudi-led coalition so that these states keep themselves safe and secure and to be away from the rebels' danger. In fact, introducing Houthis as a violent and military militia that causes instability and wages violence in the region routinely legitimates and requires military interventions from the neighboring countries. In the second stage of the task, Saudi Arabia launched war against the Houthis. U.S. played the supporting role against anti-Houthi forces in pursuit of this goal. Advertising in favor of Saudi and against Houthis encourages the public sentiment to embrace their regional policies and strategies.

The newspaper reports and headlines have obviously revealed that the relationships presupposed by the three directions of the triangle, Iran, the West and the Arab nations, have played a significant role. Nonetheless, each state's theoretical and ideological context plus its political goals have critically defined the discursive mechanisms by which the actors will be portrayed in the headlines.

### **8. Third: Explanation**

By analyzing how Yemen war is introduced in the media of the international policymakers, especially in the region, it seems that the frames used to present violence and abuses against civilians are controlled by certain powers. The analysis of the headlines has showed how ideologies determine discursive orders and structures and in addition, what influence ideologically-stuffed discursive orders and structures would have on socio-political orders. Debate has cumulative effects on society institutions and therefore it can maintain or alter them (Fairclough, 1989).

More importantly, observing the public constant passion for instant information, media framing plays a very important role in introducing events according to certain ideologies and politics of the key actors. Hence, how certain stories are portrayed on the news automatically can cause a switch

in the perception of the problem in the eyes of the public. If certain stories are of great importance to the political elite and the global powers, they are likely to become news. However, the events that are important to policy makers, as well as the media, will be framed according to the media. In other words, it would be introduced in a framework that is relevant to the event, issue and key actors involved in the event. Consequently, as the media will frequently be reporting on a certain event or issue, the foreign policy makers need to prevail on the support of the media. Therefore, foreign policy making takes process within the environment that was created by the media.

The discourses to which the two central key players of the Yemen war, the West and Iran belong will be addressed in events like targeting civilians and violations. Observers assumed that Iran, having an Islamic identity, has constructed two main discourses: the anti-Americanism discourse and production of radical discourses. Islamic Shia ideology may generate those major determining discourses of the Islamic republic and definitely these discourses are relevant to political and religious ideologies. Shia Islamism is the power and the main authority which decides the state's political main concern and priorities. Political system in Iran stands on the basis of religious norms and practices and all politics should be practiced accordingly; hence, in Iran, political perceptions are related to religion. So, the major goals of Islamic radical revolution were the anti-Americanism discourses and revolution proliferation. Therefore, the ideology of Shia Islamism establishes and generates discourses that serve the Islamic revolution ideals and objectives. Both discourses create power relations, and help the state exercise its policies in the region.

On the contrary, the discourses in some of the western newspapers are rather different. The West is constructed on the discourses of Anti-fundamentalism or the suppression of potential new power. This discourse is a feature of Western politicians and it is also constituted by social structures. Wodak (2001) sees that discourse composes and constitutes situations, social identities, things of knowledge, and relationships between people.

In our opinion, since the systems of politics in the west are established on the ideological idea of secularizing religion, the anti-fundamentalism discourse was born from that dispute between the two opposing ideologies. Therefore, the discourse of secularism is constructed by this ideology of the west's political system. When the discourse on secularism faces an empowering discourse based on the ideology of Islam in a place of the world where the largest quantity of gas and oil is stored, the discourse on anti-fundamentalism becomes sensible. Consequently, the more Islamic countries become involved in war, the more powerful the discourse on anti-fundamentalism would be. By exposing Islam world's atrocity and violence, Western policymakers introduce war to the Middle East as a serious and essential step to eradicate the jeopardy of religious fundamentalism.

Power speaks first when you intend to wage a war beyond the national borders. The power may be political, military, economic and probably ideological. Therefore, ideology is a basic source of influence, and power uses ideology for its own interests. Yet what is more important than political and economic strength to fight a war is the strength of persuasion to convince the public so as to win their consent. That is significantly required. Ideology can achieve this consent. A discourse can be propagated by the state according to a deep and mostly agreed-upon ideology. This discourse, then, allocates the preferred ideology of the state to reach approval. In this regard, it is clear by now that "ideological antagonisms" and "antagonistic polarizations" are manifested and portrayed through thematizing and centralizing the main participants involved in violations and targeting civilians incidents in the Yemen war. In fact, the shedding of light on the actions and war crimes of the participants in the war and the highlighting of the effects of their involvement lead to revealing political and ideological antagonism between States trying to obtain a larger share of the cake. As already pointed out, media represents partial and prejudiced facts about certain concerns; thus, in Yemen's context, power relations are influenced by the biased ideological exploitation of newspapers headlines.

## 9. Findings

The findings of the present research show how war key players deny responsibility for inflicting heavy civilian casualties and imply that polarized and antagonistic interactions between the region states might not lead to a settlement of the main issues that have worsened both the humanitarian and political situations. The relations of antagonistic powers between key players' policies not only soothe the severity of the circumstances in Yemen, but also intensify its inclemency. Such states of affairs and interests contribute to a state of constant war in which other key players exercise their advantages. Therefore, a common advantage has to be defined and exercised in order to arrive at a resolution that ends war in Yemen and creates lasting peace.

## 10. Conclusion

The job of the mass media is to render a more centered division, for example; it has to concentrate on the negative side of others' behavior. Moreover, it should illuminate the positive aspects. This point is observed in Iranian newspaper headlines focusing on the military interventions and operations of the Arabs and Westerners in Yemen; simultaneously, the same newspaper headlines also applaud Iranians' assertion to solve crisis through diplomatic means. On the contrary, Western and Arab newspaper headlines introduce such polarization and place Houthis on the opposing side and present them as rebels and terrorists, just as a means to legitimize their military intervention in Yemen.

Media in Iran along with its newspapers try to bring to light the matter that the West and Saudi Arabia have waged and imposed war on Yemen and are responsible for the death of thousands of civilians. At the same time, they lead peace seeker demonstrations concerning war in Yemen. On the contrary, the headlines of Western and Arab newspapers have introduced Houthi militia as insurgents who kill their own citizens and have paved the way for violence and terrorism in the whole country.

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### Competing interest statement

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