

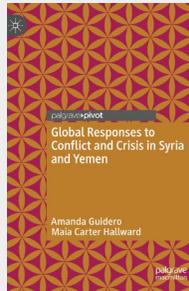
Global Responses to Conflict and Crisis in Syria and Yemen

By Amanda Guidero and Maia Carter Hallward

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Global Responses to Conflict and Crisis in Syria and Yemen focuses on the humanitarian crises and international intervention in the conflicts in Syria and Yemen. This book also endeavors to explain why the former has received more media attention, given the fact that the crisis in Yemen is equally severe and thus deserves the attention of the international public. In order to do so, the book compares the responses to each conflict through an examination of the coverage each conflict has received from the media, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations (IOs) (p. 2). At the outset, the authors subtly account for the reasons why the conflicts in Syria and Yemen differ both in scale and scope from the rest of the tensions in the region triggered by the popular upris-



ings known as the Arab Spring, which started in Tunisia in December 2010.

The conflicts in Syria and Yemen have led to the killing of hundreds of thousands of people and the displacement of millions. Both have become highly internationalized through the intervention of foreign actors. Despite these shared characteristics, the crises in Syria and Yemen have received different levels of global attention. A clear sign of this imbalance is revealed through the discrepancy in reporting on each conflict: “since 2010, much higher numbers of articles have been published about the conflict in Syria from many more countries than articles dealing with the conflict in Yemen” (p. 3). Putting aside the conventional wisdom and realist

theories of IR, which might suggest that this discrepancy has to do with great power interests, the book seeks to find alternative explanations by taking into consideration such other factors as identity politics, economic issues and the relative power and location of the Yemeni and Syrian diasporas.

The first chapter provides for the general reader a brief overview of the countries and their respective conflicts. The conflicts in Yemen and Syria have both inflicted huge and irrecoverable losses on each country and its people, resulting in a critical situation where more than half of the population in Syria (around 13 million people) are in dire need of humanitarian assistance and 8 million people in Yemen are at risk of famine. Therefore, the authors rightly argue that, despite the differences in death tolls and the varying roles of external actors in each country's conflict, the humanitarian crisis in each country is equally grim and deserves the same global attention.

The second chapter investigates how international humanitarian law (IHL) and its associated frameworks are referred to by states to justify their involvement in domestic conflicts and humanitarian crises. Highlighting three different explanations for differing state actions in the two countries, the authors deduce that international legal frameworks for humanitarian intervention are not frequently invoked in either conflict and that there are limitations in the international legal framework that prevent IOs from acting duly in humanitarian crises. Although the authors reveal which explanations the external actors resort to for their interventions in the conflicts in Syria and Yemen, which are mainly intervention by invitation and establishing peace and security, the implications of this pattern for the discrepancy in cov-

erage of the two conflicts is not thoroughly discussed.

The third chapter presents an evaluation of the different explanations given for the aforementioned discrepancy, answering from different perspective of IR theory why both crises have not received the same global attention. Stemming from Realist theory, the first and most compelling explanation refers to the interests of the great powers involved in the Syrian conflict as the source of the discrepancy. Other IR-related explanations dwell on Syria's central role and strategic position, both in the world order and in Arab politics, the threat posed by Syrian refugees against EU countries and the military involvement of external and regional actors in the Syrian civil war.

The fourth chapter is an empirical effort to understand why Syria receives more attention than Yemen in the media. The authors using data from Google's Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT) project for quantitative analysis, to no one's surprise, find that sources and articles reporting on Syria far outweigh those reporting on Yemen (p. 70). A significant finding, however, is that a greater number of articles report on the use of force by states in Syria and Yemen than on humanitarian issues (p. 70). As the authors themselves acknowledge, a mere statistical abundance does not mean in itself that one conflict is viewed as more significant than the other. Therefore, in the following chapter (5), the authors embark on analyzing the framing of specific events within the crises in Yemen and Syria. The framing analysis, later named correctly as a content analysis by the authors, covers the reporting of nine internationally known news sources on the conflicts and the press releases and news stories of IOs. The findings of the qualitative analysis in this chapter indicate that coverage of the two coun-

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tries is relatively similar, with articles on both Syria and Yemen giving limited attention to international law and IHL (p. 96), which does not answer the main question of the book.

The concluding chapter tries to relate the results of the data analysis to the explanations offered by international law and international relations for the central riddle of the book. Reiterating the results of the previous chapters, the final chapter points to the most significant finding of the analyses, which indicates that even in coverage of the humanitarian aspects of the crises in Syria and Yemen and the potential breaches of international humanitarian law, news reporting by the main international sources and IOS tend to evade any discussion

regarding the use of state and non-state force and the violation of law thereof.

Overall, despite its methodological shortcomings, *Global Responses to Conflict and Crisis in Syria and Yemen* is a timely effort to explain a limited aspect of the crises in Yemen and Syria. The book will benefit general readers as well as those who want to get a brief overview of the nature of the conflicts in Yemen and Syria. It will help citizens better address the many humanitarian crises that may occur around the world. The book can also be useful for students of Media Studies and International Relations, as it features a section in the final chapter providing recommendations for further research in the relevant fields.