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Ruthless Murderers and Justified Defenders:
Toulminian Approach to the Social Media War Rhetoric of
the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War

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Abstract:

In 2020, Azerbaijan attacked the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region that was under control of Karabakh Armenians. This war lasted for little under two months and resulted in an Azerbaijani victory. While there was no day to day reporting of the conflict, the articles written from it sparked interesting and intense conversations in social media.

This study aimed to inspect the social media war rhetoric found on these discussions. The methodical approach for achieving this goal was to do an argumentation analysis, more precisely a Toulminian argumentation analysis. The research data consisted of 48 comments – 24 of which supported Armenia and 24 of which supported Azerbaijan – taken from a comment section of a Facebook post by The Economist.

The main argument by both sides was that the other side is more guilty to the war than their own side. The differences between the two opposing factions were the commitments that they made in their arguments. Azerbaijanis mainly leaned on international law, justice, and Armenian war crimes, while Armenians claimed to defend their land by arguing for their heritage in the region, and also accusing Azerbaijanis of war crimes and even genocide.

The main difference between the more traditional war rhetoric of political and military leaders, which has been the focus of past studies on war rhetoric, and the results of social media rhetoric from my study, was the audience targeted. Traditional war rhetoric has mainly been targeted for the people of one's own side, with the intention to galvanise support. The rhetoric in this research data was targeted more towards the international audience to gain their support or sympathy. Otherwise, there were no major differences, with a bit more radical sentences being a minor difference.

Keywords: Toulmin model, Nagorno-Karabakh, war rhetoric, social media, new rhetoric

Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
2	History of Nagorno-Karabakh	3
2.1	From Russian Empire to Soviet Union	3
2.2	Post-Soviet Era and the First War.....	5
2.3	Today and Why Peace Is Not Within Sight.....	6
3	Theories, Methodology and Data.....	8
3.1	Rhetoric.....	8
3.1.1	Classical Rhetoric	9
3.1.2	New Rhetoric	11
3.1.3	War Rhetoric.....	14
3.2	Toulmin’s Model of Argumentation.....	17
3.2.1	Theory of Argument	17
3.2.2	Critique on the Toulmin model.....	20
3.2.3	Prior Research Application.....	22
3.3	Data Selection and Anonymisation Processes	24
4	Structure of the Arguments.....	26
4.1	From Toulmin’s Theory to Methodology: Creating an Analysis Tool.....	26
4.2	A Quick Word on Hashtags, Emojis and Terminology	28
4.3	The More Guilty Party	29
4.3.1	Whose Land	31
4.3.2	War on Terror	33
4.3.3	Path to Peace.....	35
4.4	Grounding the Claims.....	36
4.4.1	Laws, Norms and Regulations	37
4.4.2	Heritage.....	40

4.4.3	Past Issues	41
4.4.4	Ethics	43
4.5	From Data to Conclusion	45
4.5.1	Warranting the Step	45
4.5.2	Backing the Step	50
4.6	Conditions of the Argument	54
4.6.1	Qualifiers	54
4.6.2	Rebuttals	55
4.7	Bringing It Back Together	56
5	Conclusions.....	59
5.1	What Was Learned?	59
5.2	Relevancy of the Results.....	63
5.3	Room for Critique.....	64
	Bibliography	66
	Attachments.....	71

1 Introduction

27th of September 2020. My 23rd birthday. Also, the day that Azerbaijani forces launched a military operation in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The next day I was walking on the streets of my hometown where I was visiting my parents. I had previously that day read a news article, which I had ran across when mindlessly scrolling Facebook, that shortly dealt with the start of the war. I remember the article itself not being anything special, but it was the comment section that I, for some unknown reason, had opened that really drew my interest. The flares of accusations flying around from what I estimated of being Armenians and Azerbaijanis towards each other really got me interested. In this era of ever flowing information making the world a more reachable place, how would the behaviour of people from two nations at war with each other be reflected on social media. I dug up a few more articles and their comment sections. Whilst I was not blind to the horrors of war, the discussion was really fascinating. I just knew that I had to do my master's thesis on this topic, because at the time I felt it was so unique to see two nations with somewhat free social media usage to fight a military conflict and observe the effects on social media discussion. The only thing I had to figure out was what exactly to research.

The Nagorno-Karabakh war was not that long lasting from the aforementioned September 27th until the ceasefire agreement negotiated through Russia was signed on the 10th of November which marked the end of all hostilities in the region. The war might have been short, but it was most definitely bloody. Over 1,400 confirmed casualties including dozens of civilians with the true death toll estimated of being much higher. (Bar 2020.) Both sides accused each other of multiple war crimes. Amnesty has analysed numerous videos that show soldiers of both sides executing civilians and prisoners of war desecrating their bodies. Armenia was also accused of shelling Azerbaijani city with illegal cluster bombs while Azerbaijan and Turkey were accused of deploying Syrian mercenaries in the region. (Hincks 2020.) Both sides have also accused each other of bombardment of civilians with intent (BBC 2020).

The current situation in the region has been brewing since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan, but 95 percent of the population was ethnically Armenians that have tried to secede from Azerbaijan before the start of the war. (Global Conflict Tracker 2022.) Azerbaijan went pretty much from

victory to victory, sweeping through the southern part of the region and capturing the second biggest city of Shusha. This prompted the governments of the de facto state of Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia to sign the armistice that saw a lot of territory to be given to Azerbaijan. Armenian people in the country proper were furious of this development with rioting breaking out immediately after the announcement of the ceasefire. (BBC 2020.)

The conflict is frozen again but actual solution does not seem likely at least for now. This is the background from where I will start to analyse the argumentation of these Facebook commenters that are either citizens of one of the nations or have declared their support for one or the other.

This study aims to illuminate and compare the structures of political social media argumentation in the context of war between two nation states. It will seek to do so via Toulminian analysis of arguments and the reflection of results on previous war rhetoric research and scientific discussion, which has been mainly focusing on the rhetoric of great men in their respective states instead of those of the layman. While I will recognise that my study may be affected by so-called trolls on the internet, I still maintain that this study will shed new light on the research of war rhetoric, especially on today's world when it seems to be back on the lips of people of various European nationalities. This study does not, however, seek to find to which extent the contents of these various comments are truthful or not, since I am neither a scholar of law nor do I seek to write a list of accusations on these sides. I will simply seek to provide new information on war rhetoric in these unfortunate times when it is such a close part of our everyday lives.

I have drawn inspiration for this work from David Patrikarakos (2017) who has done a lot of field work on how social media is employed in today's war. He has spoken to actors that employ social media in different for the benefit of their side in an armed conflict. His work has taken him to conflict zones of Israel and Ukraine, but he has also interviewed those who work from afar in countries such as the United Kingdom, France, and Russia. His interviews and observations of how few people can influence a lot just through keyboard and internet connection is ground-breaking on the study of how social media links to modern armed conflicts.

At this point I feel obligated to mention that I was already hard at work with this study when, at the end of February 2022, Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, and my topic became a lot less unique and social media behaviour of at least the western world was at

least for a while thrown out of its regular tracks. However, I feel that my topic is still worth of research because the prevalent social media discussion differs a lot from the Ukrainian war. I hope that someone in the future will either take inspiration of my work or find their own way to the topic and investigate the same questions I will with the context of the Ukrainian war.

2 History of Nagorno-Karabakh

In this chapter I will go over the history of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the smouldering conflict that exists between the ethnic Armenians and Azerbaijanis from its historical starting points until the start of the 2020 war. My summary of the conflict will only be a rather brief and I am forced to simplify some rather complicated aspects. For further information on the historical background and reasons of the conflict, I would highly recommend the works of Askerov, Lütem and Geukjian, the same ones I will be using in my summary.

2.1 From Russian Empire to Soviet Union

Ömer Engin Lütem (2009) gives an excellent historical overview of the region. He points out that Karabakh and Nagorno-Karabakh do not mean the same thing in geopolitical context. The region of Karabakh is a much larger area, while Nagorno (mountainous) Karabakh is a smaller area within the region that is the point of the conflict of today. (Lütem 2009, 267.)

The problem of Nagorno-Karabakh dates back to the time of the Russian Empire. Lütem gives an excellent summary of the start of the problem:

At the outset of the 19th century, Turkic peoples, especially Azerbaijanis, were in the majority and Armenians were in the minority in the regions that comprise today's Karabakh and Armenia. Most of the Armenians lived in the Ottoman Empire and Iran. ... After gaining control of the Caucasus, the Russian Empire followed a policy of increasing the Armenian population in the region, as it was convinced that this would ease the administration of the area. With this

aim, the Russian Empire especially tried to move those Armenians living in Iran and the eastern part of the Ottoman Empire to the Caucasus. Parallel to this, a part of the Muslim population of Karabakh was forced to migrate to the other regions of Azerbaijan and to the Ottoman territories. (Lütem 2009, 267.)

Armenia and Azerbaijan first gained their independence in 1918. There was also a brief war for the Nagorno-Karabakh region in 1920. Later both countries dissolved and joined the Soviet Union, bringing the region under Moscow's authority. (Harutyunyan 2017, 70.) Nagorno-Karabakh was made an autonomous region and incorporated to Azerbaijan as Stalin practiced the idea of divide and rule in the region in order to create and feed discontent between the various nationalities and thus tie them more towards Moscow. (Lütem 2009, 268.)

The expulsion of Azerbaijanis from Armenia started already in the Stalin era, with the main wave of deportations taking place in 1948–1953. This mass deportation continued until the very late Soviet era but only because it was completed in 1988. These deportations affected a lot into the later political developments of the region. (Askerov 2020, 57.)

After the death of Stalin, there were some rather minor clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the region. Armenians wanted to make the region part of Armenia and Azerbaijanis wanted to do away with the autonomy and tie the region officially to Azerbaijan. Moscow denied both requests frequently and diligently. However, things changed in the era of Gorbachev and his reform policies. Violent clashes increased between ethnicities and Soviet government was forced – after the initial neglect – to clamp down harder. Few months of peace ensued but then the situation got out of control. The on and off violence lasted from 1988 until autumn of 1991 when a ceasefire agreement was attempted, demanding that all armed groups should withdraw from the region and leave only Soviet troops to keep the peace. Approximately 800 people died during these years of violence. (Lütem 2009, 269–272; 274.) This attempt, however, came to an end when the Soviet Union officially dissolved (Askerov 2020, 61).

2.2 Post-Soviet Era and the First War

As the Soviet Union collapsed on 21st of December 1991, former Soviet republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan had already declared their independence in September and October, respectively. The Armenians holding autonomic power in Karabakh also declared their independence in December and held parliamentary elections, but these were boycotted by the Azerbaijanis in the region. In response to this, Azerbaijani government “placed the region under direct Presidential rule” in January 1992. (Lütem 2009, 275–276.)

The conflict escalated into a full scale war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Other countries scrambled to begin mediation processes with Iran being the first to attempt and actually succeeding to bring the parties into talks. However, during these talks, Armenians managed to capture Shusha, the most important Azerbaijani controlled city in the region. As the Armenians continued to push their initiative in the battlefield, Iran’s mediation attempts collapsed. (Askerov 2020, 61.)

As Iran’s mediation was going on, the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe agreed in its foreign ministers meeting to set up a peace conference in Minsk between Armenia and Azerbaijan, with the Karabakh government having an observational delegation in the talks. These talks would also have had many large European countries, USA, and Turkey to participate. The peace conference never took place, however, since the Armenian government of Karabakh did not accept the observer status. The countries that were supposed to take part in the conference agreed to commit to the peace process and formed the Minsk Group that is still the primary party to seek a lasting resolution in the conflict. (Lütem 2009, 278.)

Armenians kept up their victories and finally in April 1994 took back the last villages it had lost in an Azerbaijani counterattack and started pushing into Azerbaijan proper. This prompted the parties to sign the Russian brokered ceasefire in May 1994. As a part of this ceasefire, all three parties – Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the Independent Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh – accepted peacekeeping forces to monitor and maintain the ceasefire in the region. (Geukjian 2012, 204–205.)

After the ceasefire, the parties began to find a lasting resolution through peace talks. However, these talks were also participated by many foreign actors, including but not limited

to Russia, Turkey, and Iran, who all had differing interests in the region and thus wanted different resolutions for peace. (ibid., 205.) Not all of the fault falls on the regional powers. Many plans for peace and the status of Nagorno-Karabakh have been put forward by the Minsk Group over the years but none of them have been agreed upon by all parties of the conflict. While lasting peace has not been achieved, the Minsk Group managed to keep the parties at the table for a long time and managed the violence in the border region. (Lütem 2009, 286–288.) Not all good things can last, however, and the violence began to slowly intensify in the 2000’s and 2010’s (German 2012, 217).

United Nations Security Council adopted multiple resolutions during the war concerning the events taking place. In these resolutions, many points strive for peace process and humanitarian aid, but there are some key points made on the nature of the emerging occupation of Azerbaijani territories by Armenia. In resolution 822, the United Nations Security Council “Demands ... immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces from the Kelbadjar district and other recently occupied areas of Azerbaijan”. (United Nations Security Council 1993, 2.) Later, in resolution 853, the Security Council “Condemns the seizure of the district of Agdam and of all other recently occupied areas of the Azerbaijani Republic” (United Nations Security Council 1993, 1). Further resolutions 874 and 884 reaffirmed the previous resolutions but further straight condemnations towards Armenian occupation were not added (United Nations Security Council 1993). However, the reaffirming of prior resolutions means that these resolutions can be counted towards condemnation of occupation as well.

2.3 Today and Why Peace Is Not Within Sight

The conflict has been smouldering ever since the cease-fire of 1994. There were numerous exchanges of fire in the region along the truce line in the late 2000’s. The arms race and inflammatory discourse between the two sides has drawn a lot of criticism from the EU. In 2010, both sides were spending approximately 4 percent of their GDP on military expenditures. This ‘balance’ – Azerbaijan’s GDP is a lot higher than Armenia’s – has since however changed with Azerbaijan raising its defence budget to approximately 6 percent of GDP in 2011. (German 2012, 217–218.) All of this points to the fact that Azerbaijan most likely did not want to seek peaceful resolution to the conflict at any point at least in the 2010’s and were merely biding their time for the right moment to strike. This assumption is also raised

by Ani Harutyunyan (2017, 85–86) who formed a fascinating statistical model to analyse the risk of war between two states and intervening powers. Through her analysis, she deduced that since Azerbaijan is one of the fastest growing economies in the world, its military capabilities also rise in comparison to Armenia's, which leads to increased likelihood of Azerbaijan making demands towards Armenia. However, if Armenia's willingness to make concessions stays the same, the risk of war increases.

In 2016, the conflict caught fire with the 4-day war in April (Díyarkirlioglu 2020, 432). This conflict was quickly mediated by Russia (Askerov 2020, 75). However, in September 2020, the fighting started again and lasted for six weeks in total. Both sides blame each other for starting the conflict. Even though there was a humanitarian cease-fire negotiated on October 10th, the fighting did not stop until a month later on November 10th. Both sides used missiles to target civilian population and many settlements turned into ghost towns. Azerbaijan undoubtedly won this war as it had a lot more sophisticated military technology acquired from Turkey and Israel, but it did not manage to liberate all the regions under Armenian occupation. (Modebadze 2021, 103; 106.) The conflict, however, did not escalate into a major war of attrition of a power play between the two great powers – Turkey and Russia – supporting their sides as was feared previously (German 2012, 216).

There are numerous reasons why peace attempts have failed. Lütem (2009, 288–292) maintains the general idea that peace attempts between the states of Armenia and Azerbaijan have failed because none of the peace talks have either presented, or have been agreed upon, a plan for Nagorno-Karabakh. Ali Askerov (2020, 75) thinks that the peace process is hindered by the mediating countries of Russia, United States, and France. He views that because Russia was a covert part of the conflict and because United States and France have a lot of ethnic Armenians, the mediators are not necessarily considered impartial. Valeri Modebadze (2021, 108) also considers that since Russia sees Southern Caucasus to be part of its sphere of influence, it wants to keep the conflict frozen to keep Armenia's and Azerbaijan's focus out of the West. Heiko Grüger (2010, XII) points out that to date, the international community and third countries maintain that the region is an occupied part of Azerbaijan, not independent or part of Armenia. Tracy German (2012, 217) also holds that Azerbaijan had little interest in peace with pre-war borders since up to 500,000 people were refugees from the disputed region living all over Azerbaijan in temporary accommodations. She suggests that due to this situation in Azerbaijan, the people will not support any peace.

What I found incredibly interesting is that the United Nations Security Council has not adopted any resolutions concerning the 2020 conflict or, for that matter, any resolutions concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict since those four resolutions in 1993 that I talked about at the end of the previous chapter. However, United Nations General Assembly in 2008 adopted resolution 62/243 in which it recalled the four previous Security Council resolutions but also reaffirmed Azerbaijan's internationally recognised borders, demanded an immediate withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories and called for setting up an opportunity for Armenian and Azerbaijani communities in Nagorno-Karabakh for building "an effective democratic system of self-governance". (United Nations General Assembly 2008, 2.) Despite the existence of this resolution, it does not change the fact that there are no resolutions concerning the 2020 conflict. I find this to be very interesting, considering that the United Nations has, for example, attempted to adopt numerous resolutions relating to the situation in Ukraine, but which have been blocked by Russia. There are no such blocked attempts relating to the Nagorno-Karabakh situation. This lack of action by the United Nations could just be attributed to having to deal with more pressing matters but it still raises questions.

3 Theories, Methodology and Data

3.1 Rhetoric

In this section, I will examine classical rhetoric and what is known as the new rhetoric and the aspects that it has brought into the study of rhetoric and argumentation. These new aspects make it possible to study argumentation and rhetoric more broadly than in the classical sense which understood rhetoric as something that is only fashioned in the spoken word. Then I will go over previous studies on rhetoric of war which I will use to compare my results to in my thesis. Previously the studies on the rhetoric of war have largely focused on the power figures of each side and one of my goals is to compare if the regular people in social media echo the same kind of rhetoric.

3.1.1 Classical Rhetoric

What even is rhetoric? Before opening any single book or article written on rhetoric, I would have said that it is about making the right choices of words, themes, and intonations of speech in order to persuade one or more people to accept your point of view on something. And I, perhaps, would have been on the mark with that statement, since Aristotle defines “rhetorical study, in its strict sense, is concerned with the modes of persuasion” (Aristotle 2004, 5). As most of classical rhetorical ideas are based on Aristotle’s concepts introduced in his multiple works, I decided, in this section, to employ the excellent summaries made by other writers, instead of just referring to Aristotle himself. This decision might not win me favour from some amongst the academia but I will stand behind it, as the discussion of classical rhetoric is only a minor part of this study, with the intention to set some background for rhetorical studies altogether.

Aristotle – while certainly not the first to write about rhetoric – can be considered the patriarch of Western rhetorical approaches. Such has his influence been to later orators and rhetorical theorists. He did not consider rhetoric a science, as it produces belief instead of knowledge, but rather a useful tool of the political community. Aristotle does admit that rhetoric can be used to manipulate emotions of the audience, but he defends its capability to solve issues by finding evidence-based arguments that inform decision making. (Olmsted 2006, 11–12.) He divides rhetoric into three distinct genres: “(1) the *genus iudiciale*, (2) the *genus deliberatium*, and (3) the *genus demonstratium* (van Eemeren et al. 1996, 42). Van Eemeren et al. proceeds to explain these three genres as follows:

The *genus iudiciale* relates to a juridical situation in which speeches are made in favor of a particular judgement. In most cases, the point at issue is whether a past act is to be regarded as lawful or unlawful, or just or unjust. The *genus deliberatium* relates to a political situation in which – as in a council of citizens – speeches are made for or against the expediency of a particular political measure or course of action. The *genus demonstratium*, finally, relates to a festive or ceremonial occasion at which a person or thing is praised or condemned. (ibid., 43.)

In all of these genres, the most important factor for an orator to consider is the audience, since the means in which the orator attempts to persuade the listeners, have to be

chosen by whom the audience is composed of (ibid). An orator who fails to understand the perception of the audience of the desired situation, will risk failure from speaking beside the point to looking utterly foolish. This is not to say that one cannot mix these styles, if skilled, but the main idea of the speech has to match the underlining stance of the audience. (Olmsted 2006, 14).

The means in which audience can be persuaded is divided into inartificial and artificial. Inartificial persuasion does not depend on skill of the orator, but the factors of pre-existing material. In this, it is for example the legal statutes that persuade the audience to the side of the orator. Instead, in artificial persuasion, the audience is persuaded by how the orator is able to deliver the argument and thus persuade the audience. (van Eemeren et al. 1996, 43.) Artificial and inartificial are also sometimes known as artistic and non-artistic (Olmsted 2006, 13).

Aristotle's division of artificial persuasion into three further categories is explained thusly by van Eemeren et al.:

Among the artificial means of persuasion, Aristotle distinguishes three categories, depending on whether they make use of *ethos*, *pathos* or *logos*. *Ethos* (character) is being employed when it is being indicated, whether directly or indirectly, that the speaker exhibits practical wisdom, virtue, and good will. In Aristotle's view, this is the most effective means of persuasion, since once an audience trusts a speaker it will also be inclined to accept what the speaker says. *Pathos* (sentiment) is being used when the discourse plays on the audience's emotions. In connection with pathos, Aristotle notes that our judgement tends to be clouded by joy, sorrow, love, or hatred. When the speaker makes use of *logos*, persuasion is aimed for by way of arguments. (van Eemeren et al. 1996, 43.)

Aristotle himself was a staunch critic of ethos and pathos that in his opinion seemed to rule the rhetoric of the time. He heavily advocated for logos but he also acknowledged that ethos and pathos have their place in rhetoric and thus sought to find how logic and emotion could be intertwined in discourse. The result – simplified – is that in good rhetoric, the orator simply gives the decision maker(s) everything that is necessary for deciding in their favour. (Brandes 1987, 241–242.)

Further developments in rhetoric were made by Romans, following closely to Hellenistic ideas that sadly have been lost to us. These texts build around the concepts of ethos, pathos, and logos without actually using these terms. This Roman-Hellenistic rhetoric can be divided into two classifications of tasks, which describe the actions an orator has to perform prior to the speech, and components of the speech itself. (ibid., 46.) Both are further divided into subclassifications as follows:

Orators have five tasks to perform before delivering a speech. They must (1) decide what they are going to say (*inventio*), (2) arrange their subject-matter (*dispositio*), (3) choose the right wording or formulations (*elocutio*), (4) learn the speech by heart (*memoria*), and (5) provide the speech with the right intonation, facial expressions and gestures during delivery (*actio*). ... The discourse starts with an introduction (*exordium*) aimed at making a favorable impression on the audience and arousing their interest in the subject. Then an account is given of the subject or the facts of the case (*narratio*). The most important part of the speech, the argumentation (*argumentatio*), is often subdivided into two parts: giving evidence for the speaker's own opinion (*confirmatio*) and refutation of the arguments of the opponent (*refutatio*); there can also be a digression (*digressio*). The speech is concluded with a summary and peroration (*peroratio*). (ibid.)

From classical rhetoric, we can see that many ideas have prevailed unto this day. I find it funny that the Roman-Hellenistic rhetoric's structure of speech is very similar to the structure of scientific studies in general, from interest gripping introductions to the presentation of relevant facts, then the actual results of the analysis – the most important part – and finally, the conclusions of the study. This Roman-Hellenistic structure and Aristotle's divisions of how to argue in different situations, set up a background for comparison when I move to discuss the so-called new rhetoric.

3.1.2 New Rhetoric

New rhetoric – as the classical rhetoric – is not one universal thing, but numerous theories, ideas and practices that formed in the 20th century as an attempt to revitalise the study of

rhetoric in the modern era. Pullman (2007, 17) notes that the first ideas to restructure and redefine the study of rhetoric came from I. A. Richards in 1936. Those ideas were followed by writers such as Fogarty, Burke, and Perelman in the following decades, but Pullman still critiques these ideas as not ‘new’ but as echoes with differing interpretations of the traditional rhetoric (ibid., 17–18). This critique is valid to an extent that these theories did not invent a new rhetoric but build something new upon the old structures that were already in place from Greek and Roman times. The difference, however, was that instead on focusing on preparing speakers with the best capabilities to persuade the audience, they sought to analyse and understand the variance of argumentation and how language itself can be used to persuade the audience. (Kuusisto 1999, 40–41.) So, the similarity is not in the ideas – as Burke (1969, 41) maintains that “the basic function of rhetoric” is “the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents” – but in the application of these ideas into science. Especially Perelman’s and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s, and Burke’s works are good examples of this with their ideas on written word and the role of the audience.

The theory of new rhetoric was formed primarily as a theory on argumentation, much similar but structurally different to Toulmin’s model. It follows the same theoretical ideas in the sense that it presents a theory on argumentation that can be successful in practice. It was developed by Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca. (van Eemeren et al. 1996, 93–94.) They view rhetoric as something not only occurring in public spoken word – as in the ancient concepts of rhetoric – but as something that can also occur in written texts. They also see the study of oratorical effects as irrelevant for rhetoric as those belong to the field of the dramatic arts. (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 6.) I will not go over all the fascinating differences that Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca create between their new rhetoric and the old rhetoric, but their ideas about the role of the audience is so critical to the interpretation of the results of this study that I will have to talk about it.

What is still needed, however, is an audience but this audience can also exist as readers of texts, not only as physical, listening audiences. Even more accurately, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca define the audience as “the ensemble of those whom the speaker wishes to influence by his argumentation”. (ibid., 6–7; 19.) It is this expanded concept of audience for written texts that allows me to examine the written social media comments that serve as the data for this study. As the audience can be anyone who merely reads the text written by the author, they are susceptible to the rhetoric of the author.

The role of the audience in relation to the author can be a number of things. The audience may be supportive, opposing, or neutral, or it can be a very heterogeneous mix of all of the above. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca compare the study of audiences into a sociological study. They argue that one's opinion can be formed by so many factors, such as one's social environment, their fellow humans and those they wish to associate themselves with. Due to the audience being always a varied mix of attitudes and opinions, the author can never be sure which of their arguments will be persuasive to the audience. (ibid., 20–22.)

In either the written or the spoken argument, it is the ability of the arguer to sway their audience that in the end defines the soundness of the argument. The arguer must try to find common ground with their audience in order to achieve the understanding between their arguments and the audience. (van Eemeren et al. 1996, 96.) In my opinion this does not mean that the argument is only successful if the audience supports the viewpoints of the arguer by the end of the argument. I would consider the argument successful if the arguer managed to gain a reaction from the audience. By reaction, I mean that a supportive part of the audience will support the stance of the arguer even further, the neutral part of the audience is made to ponder the stance of the arguer even further, and the opposing part of the audience is either made to question their stance or gain an understanding and thus lenience towards the arguer's stance. These are just examples of the reactions that I would consider the arguer's argument to be successful and I would also say that it is dependent on the nature of the argument. If the argument is meant to polarise, then it achieves success when it gains a polarising reaction from the audience, while an argument that aims to gain understanding is successful when it gains a reaction like the ones I described above.

Another theorist, who can be considered a pioneer of new rhetoric, is Kenneth Burke. He examines the audience in a different light than Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, as he notes that audience may be just an idea cultivated in the head of the speaker, or as he puts it: "A man can be his own audience, insofar as he, even in his secret thoughts, cultivates certain ideas or images for the effect he hopes they may have upon him". (Burke 1969, 38.) This creates quite a difference to classical rhetoric, where the concept of external audience was very critical, since the success of the speaker depended entirely upon the reaction of the audience. So, Burke is not dismantling the need of audience with this point, but instead expanding it to be directed into the speaker themselves. His point of view is that of a psychology one, where speaker's persuasion of themselves connects to the ideas of socialization and moralising (ibid., 39). In a sense, how we individually view morality and actions taken

in the name of morality, is – following the ideas of Burke – rhetoric where we persuade ourselves to do or not to do certain things. As my own example, how did Nazis working in concentration camps justify their own actions to themselves. Whatever the justifications were, it was an internal rhetoric discourse that took place, no matter how shallow or deep.

On the nature of rhetoric itself, Burke echoes the classical authors by dividing the persuasion – the primary goal of rhetoric – into three parts: instruction, poetry, and rhetoric. These all have different functions when persuading the audience. Instruction is about persuading the audience of the speakers truthfulness; poetry is about the persuasion of speaking beautifully and rhetoric is about persuading the audience to follow his advice. (Burke 1966, 451–452.) This to me sounds very similar to Aristotle’s *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, or, according to Kuusisto (1999, 42) to Cicero’s ideas. Building upon the fundamental purpose of rhetoric – persuasion by humans to induce actions or form attitudes in other humans – Burke goes on to invoke that language has the power to transfer logical terms into narrative ones (Burke 1969, 41; Burke 1966, 364).

3.1.3 War Rhetoric

Booth refers to war rhetoric as a subcategory of political rhetoric, which in turn is a subcategory of all rhetoric. Moreover, he sees political rhetoric as a highly destructive force, more likely to cause problems than fix them, and war rhetoric as “the most influential form of it”. (Booth 2005, 222–223.) This sense of highly destructive force of war rhetoric is shared by Engels and Saas, who note that war rhetoric’s ultimate goal is to dispose its audience into living their life a certain way. They note out examples of American leaders, during the war on terror, have essentially lulled their audience into a state of end-less war that does not affect the everyday lives of civilians. They note that without challenging this kind of new war rhetoric, there will be no end to the status quo of the war on terror. (Engels & Saas 2013, 229–231.) However, what Engels & Saas call the new war rhetoric that I agree with being integrated to war on terror, is not what I believe to exist in my study. Due to the nature of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, I believe we will see some more traditional rhetoric of war in play.

Riikka Kuusisto has researched the war rhetoric of Western leaders' during the Gulf War and the Balkan War. Her achievements, in the study of war rhetoric, paints a better contrast for my research. Her analysis finds many classically stereotypical results on a just war against evil enemy during the Gulf War, as well as the descriptions of irrational bloodshed that provided the reason why the Western powers decided to observe from distance during the Bosnian conflict. She paints a picture of systematic, carefully considered argumentation by the Western leaders in order to justify the position that they have decided to take on each conflict. (Kuusisto 1999.) All the details of her research are of course very enlightening but the point that I consider most crucial is the observation of carefully constructed narrative argumentation in order to justify either the action or inaction. If this is the general rhetorical argumentation of war by leaders of states, then it will be really interesting to see if my results on the argumentation of people on social media will be different.

Piotr Cap (2010, 4) has studied legitimisation in war rhetoric in the United States. He has mainly focused on the post 9/11 White House war rhetoric relating to foreign military activities. Legitimation is "the principal goal of the political speaker seeking justification and support of actions which the speaker manifestly intends to perform in the vital interest of the addressee" (ibid., 8). To turn this into the terms I have been using in this study, the speaker will seek to sway the audience to gain support or justify the actions that their side of takes in the war, or that their side has gone to war against the other side.

A key concept Cap relates to legitimisation is that of the proximization (ibid., 5). Proximization is used by the arguer to bring something closer to the audience in some manner of space, time, or axiology (Chilton 2004, 138). Cap turns this idea into a war rhetorical concept by having the arguer state the proximity or imminence of a threat to the audience. Thus, it comes into the proximity of the audience and legitimises the actions that the arguer is either about to take or advocates for, depending on their position. (Cap 2010, 5.)

Booth identifies two massive revolutions relating to war rhetoric that the speakers seem too often to be unaware of. The first of these is the expansion of audience from a localised one into a globalised one. What he means by this is that the audience of war rhetoric used to be the people of the nation that the speaker was trying to spur into action, whereas now the possible audience is not just the people of your nation but your allies, enemies, and onlookers from all over the world. Thus, targeting rhetoric to a more specific audience is much more dangerous than it used to be. Booth turns this into practicality by stating that

“any speaker’s enemies can easily check on what was said last week to a different audience, and then declare the speaker dishonest”. (Booth 2004, 229.)

Another massive revolution in war rhetoric has been the delocalisation of war itself. As we humans have developed ever better and more efficient ways to kill each other, the war has increasingly spread from soldiers fighting soldiers, to civilian population being caught into these battles intentionally or otherwise. In the context of war on terror, the Western leaders have stated it being a global conflict but Booth points out that these speeches are often still aimed locally, to those who already are supporting the war effort. This has resulted in an increase of enemies worldwide, without that being the intention. (ibid., 230–231.)

What Booth takes away from these two revolutions is that all war rhetoric should now be considered – intentionally or unintentionally – targeted to a worldwide audience. And in this sense, Booth calls for political leaders who understand this new world of (war) rhetoric and who are able to function in it. There can no more be “crusades against evil adversaries” but rather a complex consideration of everyone everywhere who have to be made to understand the action or inaction that is undertaken. (ibid., 233.)

War rhetoric is perhaps most often dominated by structured narratives of the conflict itself and all the sides that are participating on it either directly or indirectly. While most images that are invoked in us when speaking of war are negative, there is a completely different stance that modern entertainment media can have on an onlooker that has not experienced war itself. Thus, narratives of war are in a constant flux because later generations, that have not experienced war itself, can have a completely different stance on its role in, for example, nation building. Narratives of war can thus, when taken to extreme, take forms that were never actually experienced by those who actually lived it. (Martins 2012, 1 – 3.)

War rhetoric is very complicated set of narratives, attitudes and the efforts of persuasion that can affect masses perhaps more than any other forms of rhetoric just by its role as a divider or unifier, depending on the stances of the speaker and the audience. Beyond that, the study of modern war rhetoric has focused mainly on the imbalanced war on terror, where conventional war rhetoric mixes with other forms of political rhetoric to create a confusing set of ideas and attitudes that can affect everyday lives of people all over the world directly or indirectly. Thus, the analysis of rhetoric of modern war from this study can bring very interesting results to drive the study of war rhetoric to a different direction with the war in Ukraine most likely being the number one target of research amongst the field in the future.

3.2 Toulmin's Model of Argumentation

Originally Stephen Toulmin did not intend to create an analytical model for argumentation when he published *The Uses of Argument* in 1958. He instead sought to criticise the epistemology of the twentieth century rather than expanding the field of study. (Toulmin 2003, vii.) He felt that formal deductive logic could not provide relevance to the analysis of the most widely used arguments (Canavan 2012, 112). The result, differentiating from the intention, was the Toulmin model of argumentation that I am going to introduce here and critically evaluate the theory and prior research applications considering it.

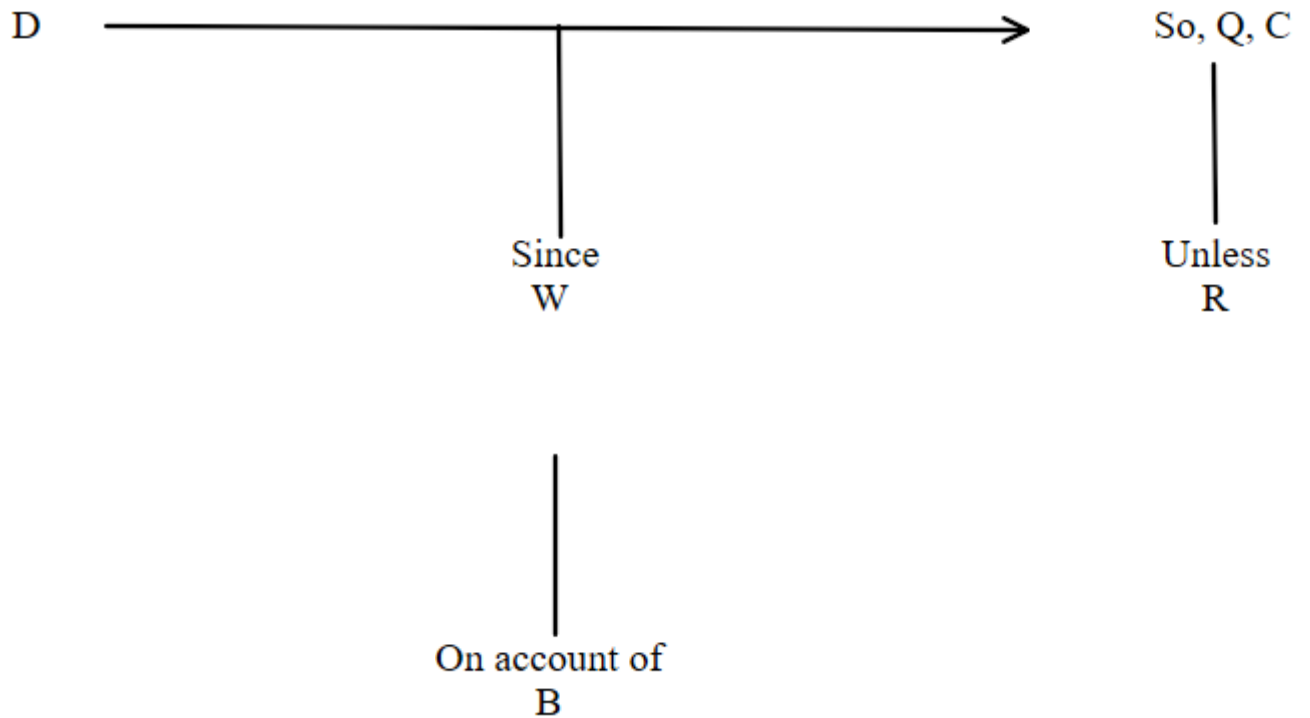
3.2.1 Theory of Argument

In laying out his argumentation model, Toulmin compares argument to an organism. “It has both gross, anatomical structure and a finer, as-it-were physiological one”, he remarks. (Toulmin 2003, 87.) Even though the model he creates is only intended to illustrate the criticism he makes, many authors have taken it as a methodological tool for analysis, as will also I. Thus, at least in this literature review, I will not discuss the majority of Toulmin's work but only focus on his argumentation model or as Lempinen (2009, 25) calls it, the anatomy of argument.

In Toulmin's model, the basic pattern remains always the same (Hitchcock and Verheij 2006, 11). Its most important structural pieces are data (D) – or alternatively grounds (G) – and conclusion – or claim, depending on the order of these but here I will only refer to this part as conclusion (C). Data refers to the basic facts that the person making the argument draws his conclusion from. Toulmin notes that while some arguments can be very simply constructed as “if D then C” but that most need a proposition of sorts. These he calls warrants (W) and they are the practical statements that allow the drawing of conclusion from data. (Toulmin 2003, 90–91.) Brockriede and Ehninger (1960, 45) refer to warrants as mental ‘leaps’ that advance the data to the conclusion. These three terms form what Toulmin refers to as the skeleton of the argument (Toulmin 2003, 92).

Warrants – and their evaluation – are the new element that Toulmin brings into his model. Traditional syllogism does not have warrants. However, warrants themselves do not make a huge difference, since an argument constructed from these three factors (D, W, C) can also be presented in a completely valid syllogistic form of “D if D, then C; so C”. (Hampel 1992, 226.) To flesh out his skeleton, Toulmin introduces another three factors that may be present in an argument but are not necessarily needed (Brockriede and Ehninger 1960, 45). All of these are closely linked to warrants and are called qualifiers (Q), rebuttal (R) and backing (B). Qualifiers indicate “the strength conferred by the warrant”. (Toulmin 2003, 93–94.) In practice, the qualifiers are often statements such as presumably, definitively, or most likely when drawing the conclusion. Rebuttals set out the circumstances when the warrant does not lead to the conclusion (*ibid*). Brockriede and Ehninger refer to rebuttals as the safety valves or escape hatches of the argument, as they allow the person arguing to lay out the conditions when the warrant does not lead to the conclusion and thus maintain the believability of the argument (Brockriede and Ehninger 1960, 45). Backing in turn is the ways in which we defend our warrants if questioned. Toulmin himself says that the ways in which we back our warrants can be very similar to how we draw our conclusions from data. (Toulmin 2003, 96; 98.) I would say that creating a backing for a warrant can create arguments of its own which might need further backing, which argument might need further backing and so on. Brockriede and Ehninger also admit the possibility of this (Brockriede and Ehninger 1960, 45).

Toulmin in his work also lays out a somewhat simplified diagram for forming an argument. I however consider this visual form the best way to understand Toulmin’s model as he himself presented it. Later writers may have added their own considerations to the model and thus modified or expanded the diagram, but as purely Toulmin’s handiwork, it is presented as follows:



(Toulmin 2003, 97)

Wohlrapp (1987, 327) gives an alternative step-by-step approach on the Toulmin model, which illuminates more clearly why the previously introduced factors of an argument perhaps need to be stated. The steps are formulated as follows:

- I. Step: The validity of a claim (C) is questioned and grounds (G) are presented
- II. step: The transition from G to C is doubted and a warrant (W) is presented which allows $G \Rightarrow C$
- III. step: The validity of the warrant is questioned and a backing (B) is presented
- IV: step: The force of the warrant is questioned and a respective modal qualifier (Q) is added to the claim
- V. step: Conditions under which the warrant is not applicable are questioned and the exclusion of those rebuttals (R) is added to the claim. (ibid., 328.)

Toulmin makes a clear distinction between the formal validity of the argument from the validity of the argument. An argument can be formally valid as being constructed in a

typical data to warrant to conclusion, where the warrant correctly builds the required bridge from data to conclusion, without anything pointing out to its actual validity, the reason why it is valid. That is drawn from the backing of the warrant, the examination of which is the most critical of when examining the truthfulness of an argument. (ibid., 132.) So, no formally constructed argument should be taken as correct or truth, without examining the backing. This will be a very critical notion for my study, as I am dealing with an array of very colourful comments, where formal validity might be found, but actual validity is not for me to determine.

3.2.2 Critique on the Toulmin model

Now that I have presented the structure of the Toulmin model, I will go over some critique given to it by various authors.

Even though Brockriede and Ehninger refer to Toulmin's model as "syllogism lying on its side", they maintain the idea that the structure provides researchers with a way to dissect and test rhetorical arguments much better than any methods of traditional logic (Brockriede and Ehninger 1960, 47).

Van Eemeren et al. criticise Toulmin for the vagueness and inconsistency of his work. They point out that the model – due to the introduction of the backing – does not lay out a structure for simple argumentation but, in fact, complex argumentation. (van Eemeren et al. 1996, 155; 158.) I would agree with this as I pointed out earlier that backing of the warrant can lead to further arguments and very complex chains before the conclusion can be achieved. Another criticism is that Toulmin's model expects data to be accepted, and if it is not, it should be made so before proceeding with the argument. This can also lead to complex strings of argumentation as the data of one argument becomes the claim of another. (ibid, 158.)

Lempinen (2009, 26) considers warrants one of the most problematic parts of this argumentation model. One problem to consider is that there are many kinds of warrants that "may confer different degrees of force on the conclusions they justify" (Toulmin 2003, 93). Another problem is that warrants are often implicit (ibid, 92). Differentiating warrants from data when analysing arguments has been an issue and while Toulmin recognises this, he

offers explicit warrants in his own work (Klumpp 2006, 106). This can further confuse the reader. Another problem with the distinction of data and warrants is proposed by Hample (1992, 228) when he points out that “there is no consistent way to tell data from warrant”. He goes on – via quotation of Toulmin himself – to say that there are no universal grammatical criteria and criticises Toulmin an essential part of “a model designed to criticise all ordinary discourse”, is then built upon a distinction that only works some of the time. Hample’s critique continues even further into distinctions of data and warrants:

But there remains some question about whether the data-warrant distinction is even sometimes clear, for Toulmin's functional descriptions of data and warrant are not especially helpful. Data, we are told, are the "foundation upon which our claim is based" (p. 97), but surely warrants are fundamental too. It is true that the "data we cite if a claim is challenged depend on the warrants we are prepared to operate with in that field" (p. 100), but the issue of logical primacy does not help because Toulmin explains elsewhere that we can create a warrant to authorize "precisely the sort of inference in question" (p. 135). Whether the warrant dictates the data chosen or whether the warrant is later written to link data to claim seems not to matter to the operation of the argument. The next chance to distinguish data from warrant is one that even Toulmin might wish to avoid: data are facts (p. 97) and warrants, being inference-licenses, presumably are not (p. 98). But if we have (rightly) abandoned grammatical standards, how can we hope to tell fact from not-fact? (ibid.,229.)

This critique of the distinctions of warrants from data is something that will greatly affect the practical analytic applications of Toulmin’s model, such as in the case of this study. It is critically valid to consider the role of the analyst and their understanding of the argument, since if there are definitive distinctions between data and warrants, it will be up to the researcher – and their information of the subject that the presenter is arguing upon – to make the distinction. I will ponder this problem later, when discussing how I turned Toulmin model into an analysis tool.

Wohlrapp criticises the Toulmin model by pointing out its inflexibility when trying to deal with argumentative discussion. He brings his argument out via following example of a conversation between a teacher and a farmer about the latter’s academically gifted son:

Wittgenstein: The boy should become a student.

Koderhold: But I need a successor for the farm.

Wittgenstein: It is good to be dexterous even for the handling of manure.
(Wohlrapp 1987, 329.)

In this example, Wohlrapp finds that the statement Koderhold here gives to Wittgenstein, is not actually challenging the initial claim, but just passing it to give a sort of counterclaim, an objection (ibid., 330). Then Wittgenstein proceeds to challenge Koderhold's claim and Toulminian model can again be applied. However, in the process, the first claim was bypassed and we are dealing with a completely different pattern of argumentation where Wittgenstein is trying to convince Koderhold by tying the education of his son into the farm work, instead of his academic gifts, the original motivation behind his first claim. This sort of discussion, where there is an immediate objection to the first claim, is not represented in the Toulmin model, since it is not derived from the challenge of the initial claim and thus creating its own argument, but rather the complete and utter denial of the entire premise. Now, Toulmin himself might see this as poor argumentation – since Koderhold's statement does not follow the proper form – but it was Toulmin's idea to create a model where one could make more sense of everyday argumentation and this is very much an example of a possible everyday discussion. While Toulmin (2003, 1) himself does point out that his model is not meant to serve as systematic treatise – rather as an invoker of questions and discussion – Wohlrapp's critique here is valid, since it is I who is trying to use Toulmin's model as an analytical tool.

3.2.3 Prior Research Application

In the context of Finnish political science research, the Toulmin model is not widely used. Hanna Lempinen has researched environmental rhetoric in her master's thesis paper. She breaks down and analyses environmental rhetoric of two influential environmental works of popular media: *Silent Spring* and *The Inconvenient Truth*. In her work, she presents a Toulminian diagram of results that she admits is a simplification of the complex arguments presented in the analysed data but does draw out the most crucial arguments made in the data. This study is a very good example on how to use Toulmin's ideas to study argumentation,

and although the methodology, even in Lempinen's own words, does come with limitations, it does illuminate the core arguments from a multi-layered and complicated data. (Lempinen 2009.)

In prior research relating to the field of war rhetoric that I will be studying, the work of Susan Stoudinger Northcutt and her Toulminian analysis on President George H. W. Bush's speech on the outset of the Persian Gulf War, comes the closest to what I am trying to achieve here. In the study, Stoudinger Northcutt breaks down the speech into the three basic elements introduced by Toulmin, so she does not analyse backings, qualifiers, or rebuttals. This makes the research rather lacking, though the goal of the study is not to provide a comprehensive Toulminian analysis, but to deduce the paradigm that Bush employs in his speech, which Stoudinger Northcutt does through the use of Toulmin's model. (Stoudinger Northcutt 1992.) This research, while employing both Toulmin's model and war rhetoric, is much too brief for me to comprehensively make use of as a way to do Toulminian analysis. However, it does provide value in the way it makes paradigm deductions from how claims are reached through warrants.

A couple other studies have been made in Finnish research using some variation of the Toulmin model. Kaisa Oksanen (2004) used a similar simplified version of Toulmin's model as Stoudinger Northcutt while analysing political discussion in Hong Kong after the British relinquished control of the city back to China. Jussi Heikkinen (2002) studied how Estonian statesmen tried to create idea of Estonia as a Nordic country, using Toulmin's work in combination with Perelman's theory on audiences and persuasion. Riikka Kuusisto (1999) used Toulmin's ideas as part of her analysis on the war rhetoric of Western leaders on the conflicts in the Persian Gulf and Bosnia.

Toulmin's model of argumentation does not seem to be a popular theory when taken into practical analysis. While his theory is very referenced in many different scientific fields, there was considerable difficulty in finding prior research not only relating to war rhetoric but overall. The best work I have is Lempinen's analysis of environmental rhetoric that will serve as my main inspiration for analytic method. I will talk more about how I will follow Lempinen's footsteps in my process in chapter 4.1 when discussing the application of Toulmin's theory into methodology for this study.

3.3 Data Selection and Anonymisation Processes

In this section, I will explain my method for the data selection and confinement. I will also walk you through the anonymisation process to create the necessary credibility for my anonymised data.

The data of this study will be a comment thread from a Facebook post made by the British newspaper The Economist. In the post, they share their online news story about the war on Nagorno-Karabakh and the stances that each side has towards it. The article was published during the fighting and thus most of the comments are from time before the truce as well. The detailed contents of the article are not important for this study as it will be the comments section of the Facebook post that I will be focusing on.

I would like to point out that I did not start this study with only one comment section. I had three comment sections, one from a New York Times post and two from Economist posts. At some point prior to the confining of the research data, one of the Economist posts was removed and thus I was left with two. At this point the comment amount separating these two posts was massive (about 1,200 comments in the Economist post and over 30,000 comments on the New York Times post). So, I decided to look at the similarity of the comments between these two sections to try to ascertain whether I could only use the smaller section of the Economist. The comments were very similar in their arguments between these two posts – judged by a long look, but no quantitative analysis. Thus, I decided to move on with only the Economist comment section.

There are roughly 1,200 comments in the comment section of the post. This is not a reasonable number to analyse so I had to confine the data somehow even further. Some of the comments were only people ‘tagging’ other accounts in the comment section with the possible idea to have that person also read either the article or the comment section. These comments hold no value for this study and thus they were easy to disregard. Then I considered the fact that some comments were given as a reply to other comments. While these comments certainly hold value due to their nature of building a discussion, I chose not to analyse those comments. My reason for this was that I wanted all of the comments that I was going to analyse, be ‘originated’ from the same source, in this case the article. I acknowledge that some of these commenters probably did not read the article itself but this is irrelevant as my point was that comments would not be directed towards other comments. So, I removed

all those replies from the research data. However, there were still about a hundred comments left, still too many to analyse. So, I decided to divide the arguments into two groups based on their stance on the war. One side was the Armenian supporters, and the other was the Azerbaijani supporters. The neutral comments I disregarded as I am looking to analyse the argumentation supporting the sides of the war. There were not that many neutral comments, so the two groups were still too large. At this point I also decided to ignore the short comments that mostly contained slogans like “Stop Armenian terrorism” or “Stop Azerbaijani aggression”. This eliminated some comments and left me with some dozens of comments for both groups.

In order to have a reasonable number of comments to analyse as my data, I gathered all the comments that were still applicable into two groups (Armenian side and Azerbaijani side). Then I started to analyse each comment thematically by which topics do the people talk about. Example themes were genocide, terrorism, who is the aggressor and so on. Based on these themes, I chose 24 of the most representative comments by each side, so I ended up with 48 comments in total, of varying length. I found this to be a sufficient number and decided to move on with these comments (found in the attachments of this study) as my research data.

The choice to anonymise the data used in this study was made after recommendations from the faculty. With the European Union’s GDPR directive, individual’s opinions have become more protected than before and thus I decided to anonymise the comments, even though they have been made publicly in a public platform, to avoid any unnecessary problems. I will thoroughly explain the process here to avoid any accusations of fabrication of data.

The anonymisation was in itself a rather simple process. After I had confined the data to the 48 total comments, it was simply a matter of reviewing them with someone else to provide a witness that such comments actually existed in the chosen thread. Thus, I went over the chosen comments with my thesis mentor, University Lecturer Mika Luoma-aho, and he can vouch for the integrity of my data. After this, I removed the names of the commenters and replaced them with the nicknames based on their national stance (i.e., Arm 1, Arm 2 ... / Azer 1, Azer 2 ...) as they appear in the attachments. I will be referencing to individual comments with these nicknames. I would also plead to anyone reading this study not to go looking for the people behind these comments even though they are in public

comment section, as it is not relevant to know the people behind these comments beyond their support for one side or the other.

4 Structure of the Arguments

4.1 From Toulmin's Theory to Methodology: Creating an Analysis Tool

There is one important distinction I feel like I have to make here in the beginning. Toulmin was, by most accounts, a logistician, who sought to realign the focus of logicians from formal arguments to informal arguments, or in his own words “a radical re-ordering of logical theory is needed in order to bring it more nearly into line with critical practice” (Toulmin 2003, 234). I, however, am not a logistician but an aspiring political scientist, trying to apply Toulmin's work into analytical use. In this chapter, I will examine the process of how I, following in the footsteps of some predecessors, built an analysis tool from Toulmin's theory.

I did not have too many prior studies making a complete use of the Toulmin model, while many studies have taken parts of his theory into their analysis. The only ones that used Toulmin's theory as straight methodology were Stoudinger Northcutt, Oksanen and Lempinen. Having already previously criticised Stoudinger Northcutt's analysis as a shallow version of the Toulmin model, due to it only taking advantage of the skeleton of the argument, I can also apply this critique to Oksanen (however neither study is by no means bad, both are very good, just not really applying the full potential of the Toulmin model). Thus, I will follow the methodology as applied by Lempinen in her work. Following Toulmin's model, she explains her methodology as follows:

The analysis of research data will begin by focusing on the most general outline of the argument – tracking the data and the claim or the conclusion drawn from it in a larger body of text. The next logical step is to trace the elements which justify the step from the data presented to the conclusion drawn ... The warrant is immediately supported by backing ... At this point the order of the

analysis differs from the original arrangement constructed by Toulmin; the closely related warrant and backing are dealt with together and the elements of rebuttal and qualifier indicating the strength of the argument are discussed in the final stage of the analysis. In the end, an attempt to formulate the macro-level arguments will be made. In case one or more elements are either missing in the texts or only vaguely present, possible explanations for the absence the elements that Toulmin requires essential ... will be provided. (Lempinen 2009, 31.)

Further following Lempinen's (ibid.) ideas, I will be dealing with arguments of both sides at the same time in the same chapters, rather than dividing them into separate sections. That will allow me to compare the two sides to each other constantly and maintain a coherent discourse with the results and the theoretical side, rather than referencing the same things separately when dealing with similarities from the different sides. While this is heavily inspired by Lempinen's approach, in her work the research data consists of two separate but likeminded works from two different authors, while my research data is constructed of two opposing views presented by multiple authors.

For this entire analysis to make sense at all, I must at all times assume that the contents of all the comments make sense, as in that I understand all the individual parts and their connection to the larger discussion at hand (Kakkuri-Knuuttila & Halonen 1998, 60). This is why I will, at all different chapters of this study, discuss the likely goals that that specific part of the argument aims to make for the purpose of the larger discussion. This is easiest to do when discussing claims, as I only have to assume the possible outcomes of the claim being accepted by the audience. As data and warrants link more towards the claims themselves, their purposes for the larger discussion refer more to the ideas and knowledge they rely on to prove the claim to the audience.

There are two big problems that I will be facing which I feel I have to address here in the beginning. First is the complexity of the argumentation present in the research data. In some cases, there are multiple claims that are backed by the same data with either same or different warrants. The separation of these layered claims was very difficult even when following the principles of analysis that I set for myself. Another thing with complexity was that some of the data could also be claims and vice versa. I had to basically differentiate what were the more relevant claims for the larger discussion and which things served as

grounds for those claims and this was not easy. As such, some other analyst might take different approaches on how to construct the general arguments, but I still believe that their findings would correspond to mine. There can be multiple claims that come from a single comment, but they have separate Toulminian structures from each other. These were not problems that could not be overcome and I will further address them in their respective chapters, but as they provided the analysis with a lot of difficulties, I feel that mentioning them here is warranted.

4.2 A Quick Word on Hashtags, Emojis and Terminology

There are hashtags and emojis present in the comments that make up the research data. I thought about removing the emojis initially, as I feel that they provide little value to the Toulminian analysis itself, but ultimately decided against it because if someone disagrees with me, those emojis will still be found on the attachments of this study and they can be read as intended by the commenters. There was one exception where I removed some emojis from the attachments and that was the flag emojis that did not convert properly into text file as images but instead these letter combinations (AM for Armenia and AZ for Azerbaijan). These I removed from the middle of the text as they in some cases provided difficulties in reading and thus understanding of the comment. Some can still be found in comments where they were included, for example, after a hashtag in the end of the comment.

Hashtags are actually a very fruitful part of the analysis, especially when inspecting the claims provided in the comments. However, not all hashtags can be considered claims themselves even if many of them are formulated as such, since there can be a lot of common hashtags that have nothing to do with the comment's content itself, so while the comment itself can be taken as a claim, there might be no data and thus warrant to support it. Thus, I have largely ignored the hashtags that have nothing to do with the larger content of the comment itself. I do not deny the purpose that these kinds of hashtags might serve to the larger debate. I merely state that these hashtags do not serve a purpose for this particular study. Those hashtags that have something to do with the contents of the comment, however, are very fruitful and have been included in my analysis.

During the analysis of the comments, I will be using the term Nagorno-Karabakh as that is objectively the most correct term. However, the term Artsakh – an Armenian name for the de facto state but also sometimes used as synonym for the region – is used by some commenters, which clearly seems to carry a political meaning. I will not shy away from using the term Artsakh synonymously to Nagorno-Karabakh but I will only do so when it is relevant for the sake of the analysis. As I have already until now, I will be referring to the region as Nagorno-Karabakh when there is no reason to do so otherwise.

4.3 The More Guilty Party

Breaking down the comments in Toulminian manner resulted in many interesting claims of many varieties but the most pervasive seems to be the question of who is ultimately guilty of this war. While there is no contest of who attacked whom first – Azerbaijan did start the war by attacking Nagorno-Karabakh region – the Azerbaijani commenters have different claims as to why it is not Azerbaijan that is guilty of this war but Armenia. On the other hand, Armenian commenters argue why Azerbaijan is guilty of this war. In this chapter, I will look what we can learn from these claims themselves and how would they factor into the larger argument if taken as they are. There are some claims presented in some comments that do not have data presented to justify them (beyond the hashtags I previously mentioned). Thus, these claims I have outright ignored in my analysis as those do not have Toulminian structure and thus present no value for this analysis.

The first types of claims that I examine are the Azerbaijani ones claiming that their country was justified in attacking Nagorno-Karabakh. As Azer 4 puts it “Azerbaijan is actually liberating its own internationally recognized territories”. Following a similar train of thought, another commenter points out that Azerbaijan is not actually attacking Republic of Armenia but instead just conducting “military operations within its own territory” (Azer 5). One commenter brings this claim out as an example where they ask whether Americans would find it acceptable to see Mexican soldiers operating in New York, to draw attention to in their opinion the absurdity of Armenian soldiers in Nagorno-Karabakh (Azer 15). Multiple more commenters essentially claim the same thing that Azerbaijan is justified in its military action (i.e., Azer 2 & Azer 20). These claims seem to follow the idea of a just war. A just war is in one definition that some wars can be justified, if their goals are, for example,

to protect helpless and innocents from stronger, perhaps maleficent powers (May 2007, 8). Similar claims were used by the leaders of the major Western powers before the Gulf War, when they were mobilising for the defence of Kuwait from Saddam Hussein's Iraq (Kuusisto 1999, 73).

Still keeping with the idea of a just war, but from a slightly different viewpoint, multiple commenters blame the war on Armenian territorial ambition and the occupation of territories from the previous war. For example, Azer 9 claims that Armenia is fighting a war of occupation to maintain control of territories that rightfully belong to Azerbaijan. While it is a defensive war, in their opinion it is not a justified defensive war. Another commenter points out that Azerbaijan lived peacefully with the neighbouring Armenians until the occupation that began after the last war (Azer 3). Thus, the blame is rolled on the Armenians whose occupation is the reason for this war. Beyond these comments that claim Armenian occupation and past territorial ambition as a reason for the war, many commenters simply claim Armenia as the aggressor (i.e., Azer 1 & Azer 7). They of course give grounds to their claims, of which I will go over in their respectable chapter.

On the Armenian side, Azerbaijan is the obvious guilty party to this war because the commenters claim that Azerbaijan has been preparing for this war for a long time (Arm 14 & Arm 22). If Azerbaijan has been preparing for this war for a long time, the commenters question the idea that was the peace efforts ever given any real effort. Blame is also rolled upon the leader of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev (Arm 17). This claim of Aliyev's personal guilt could imply numerous things, but perhaps the most pervasive is the comparisons to other sole rulers who have fought wars that were not in the best interests of their people. Also, Azerbaijan alone may not be the sole guilty party as some commenters distribute blame towards Turkey and its president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan (Arm 19 & Arm 21). These claims of Turkish interference create an idea of a major power conflict instead of a two minor power conflict and attempts to build a narrative where Armenia is being crushed by a much stronger historical enemy who they have had negative dealings within the past. The goal of this narrative is most likely to build sympathy and support for their cause. As in the Azerbaijani side, there is a commenter naming Armenians, more specifically those living in Artsakh, as peaceful (Arm 22). Of course, on the opposite hand, Azerbaijan is named as non-peaceful (Arm 18). These claims of who is peaceful and who is not serve to point the blame towards those who would break the status quo of peace, the Azerbaijanis. Armenian justifications

thus seem to lean more towards the widely accepted general idea that a defensive war is always a justified war and that Armenians are being oppressed by much stronger powers.

The discussion that can be found from these claims of who started the war come mostly down to justification of military action, and that justification often comes down to territorial ownership – as would perhaps be expected. Azerbaijanis claim to fight a war of liberation of their territory, while Armenians claim to defend the same territory that belongs to them. Thus, I will next examine the claims that relate to the rightful ownership of this territory so we can see how those affect into the larger argument.

4.3.1 Whose Land

For Azerbaijanis the claims relating to ownership of the territory are fewer and less variant than those of why their military action is justified. One commenter just simply claims that Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to Azerbaijan (Azer 7). Another commenter claims that the “so called Artsakh” – referring to the de facto state – does not exist (Azer 8). This can then be interpreted as to the territory belonging to Azerbaijan since it is not an independent nation. Following in the footsteps of these two, Azer 13 denies the idea that Nagorno-Karabakh is a disputed region at all. This is also done by Azer 7. With this claim, they aim to strip power from the idea that there is claim on both sides and that their claim is simply stronger, which is perhaps not so decisive as what they bring forth. Another commenter then claims – as does Azer 13 – that Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to Azerbaijan via international recognition (Azer 13; Azer 16). Of course, bringing up the matter of international recognition already in the claim, aims to deflate any counterarguments by the other side, since international recognition is the most important thing when it comes to territorial disputes.

On the Armenian side, there are much more claims relating to the ownership of the territory. Firstly, there are claims that the region is historically Armenian (i.e., Arm 1 & Arm 8). This idea is taken a bit further with the claim that both modern Azerbaijan and Turkey are located on the land that is historically Armenian (Arm 4). These claims seem to be made to build a case that Nagorno-Karabakh is Armenian historically, which should then make the international community reconsider their recognition made towards the rightful ownership towards the region. The claim of the entire larger area of Turkey and Azerbaijan being

historically Armenian attempts to do the same but with the added narrative of prior oppressions and territorial conceding directed towards Armenians. Building upon these attempts to question the reason of international recognition favouring Azerbaijan, Arm 7, and Arm 2 claim – possibly one copying the other since they use the exact same words – that “Azerbaijan had no right to include the territory of the people of Nagorno Karabakh into its territory against the will of NK’s people”. Their goal seems to be the same as previously theorised: to discredit the logic that has led the international community to grant recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan.

While Azerbaijanis claim that Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to their state, there is not as clear of a stance on the Armenian side on the question whether the region should be an independent state or part of Armenia. There are no direct claims to the latter, as the claims I have mentioned previously and others like them talk about historical heritage of the region being Armenian but none make the connection that it should then belong to Armenia. Some talk about independence of Nagorno-Karabakh though, by claiming, for example, that it deserves independence same as the other former Soviet republics (Arm 1). This claim gives the region the same status as other recognised countries and begs the question why it should be any different. Other commenter’s claim echoes this by stating that people of the region have a right to self-determination (Arm 2). While the Minsk Group has very early into the peace process proposed that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh should have an autonomous status within Azerbaijan (Lütem 2009, 288), this claim aims to conclude that there could be no true self-determination if the region were to belong to Azerbaijan.

All in all, the claims of the two sides towards the territory are related to who has the international recognition or who should have it. Azerbaijan has it and their claims are built around that, while Armenians try to achieve it by appealing to the cultural heritage of the region and the rights of the people living in the region. So, the question of who is more guilty is dependent upon whether the region is Azerbaijani territory occupied by Armenia or it is Armenian/independent territory invaded by Azerbaijan. But the question of who is more guilty is not only up to the aggressor of the conflict. Next, I will inspect the claims that aim to paint the other side as war criminals and/or terrorists.

4.3.2 War on Terror

Beyond the prevalent debate about the ownership of the land, there are numerous claims on both sides of the conflict that accuse the other side of being war criminals or terrorists or both. As such, these comments take the debate off the perhaps more traditional concept of who attacked whose land and is thus more guilty and shift it towards the inscrutableness of the war crimes and terrorism.

On the account of war crimes, the Azerbaijani commenters are not as active as the Armenian ones. One commenter accuses the Armenians on committing war crimes on civilians (Azer 6). Another commenter goes much further by accusing the world of ignorance towards Azerbaijani war crimes and by comparing the destruction of Azerbaijani forces to Armenian forces – Azerbaijan destroyed an empty church while Armenians murdered school children (Azer 18). Both of these claims attempt to shed blame towards Armenian side for the international audience, while the latter commenter also presumably attempts to call the world into action against Armenians.

On the matter of terrorism, Azerbaijani commenters are also less active as their Armenian counterparts. One commenter, however, tilts the whole cause of the war on its head by stating that the war is “not just a war [but] a struggle against Armenia, which threatens the world with terrorism” (Azer 14). As such, this commenter steps away from the more traditional rhetoric of territorial war – which he however also talks about – and into the more modern discourse of war on terror. This is a drastic change to what otherwise so far has seemed like an attempt to legitimise the territorial war and thus perhaps keeping away larger international intervention in favour of allowing Azerbaijan and its allies to do what they are doing. As war on terror can be considered as “an international joint effort to defeat an invisible and unpredictable enemy” (Martins 2012, 1), this comment could thus argue for more international intervention against Armenia and thus dip the already somewhat crooked scales even further towards Azerbaijan. Another commenter follows in the same path but with a different approach, as they name the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and other regions as terrorism (Azer 21). One commenter keeps the idea of terrorism and occupation being related but puts it to yet another different context by naming them as fascist expansion of territory and slaps on the hashtag “#stopArmenianterrorism” (Azer 3). These two commenters use terrorism in a perhaps more coherent sense – compared to the first one – towards the other

claims which attempt to legitimise the war as reclaiming Azerbaijan's own territory. They likely aim to use the images conducted by terrorism and fascist territorial expansion – not that subtle nod towards Hitler and Nazi Germany – to discredit Armenian view of the war as defensive.

On the Armenian side, there are a lot more varied claims that Azerbaijan is committing war crimes. Many commenters accuse Azerbaijan of using chemical weapons and hitting civilian targets like hospitals (i.e., Arm 3; Arm 8). On the other side of the war crime spectrum, another commenter accuses Azerbaijan of violating the Geneva convention, by torturing and killing prisoners of war (Arm 5). Already we see a more diversified and coherent attempt to discredit Azerbaijan by Armenian commenters than what we saw from the Azerbaijani commenters. This is taken even further by Arm 11 who claims that the use of chemical weapons not only causes harm to the military forces and civilian population but also the environment, thus creating even more unjust destruction. Lastly, Arm 16 even goes to discredit the entire Azerbaijani discourse of territorial integrity by stating that with all the war crimes they have committed, there can be nothing that justifies this war. All of these comments likely aim to prove to the world that beyond all the talk about territorial integrity, there is a malicious force of Azerbaijanis that do not exhibit any restraint that modern war should have with the rules set by Geneva convention.

When talking about Azerbaijani terrorism, Armenian commenters seek to very actively prove that they are also engaging war on terror as any other peace loving country is or should. Beyond just naming Azerbaijanis as terrorists (i.e., Arm 3), the entire country of Azerbaijan is stated to be “terrorist, rogue state” (Arm 5). This of course can only be an attempt to name the entire conflict as war on terror, as there can be no other type of war against such a state. The discredit via terrorism from Armenian side is not targeted only against Azerbaijan but also its ally Turkey by Arm 13 stating that the Turkish leader Erdogan “woke up dozens of terrorist cells in one message”, and names these terrorists as the same ones that execute attacks in Europe, as an attempt to galvanise wide European support towards Armenia. Another commenter follows this train of thought by putting the root of all terrorism in the Caucasus region – namely Azerbaijan and Turkey – and points out an easy roadmap to follow that should Europe want terrorism gone, it should be destroyed in its roots (Arm 19). These seem rather straightforward attempts to gain international support by naming the other side as terrorists who cannot be reasoned with but who now have upper hand and if they are not stopped here, who knows what they can do to others later.

Perhaps unexpectedly in this context, there are one commenters on both sides that accuse each other of information war (Arm 24; Azer 15), as these claims of war crimes and terrorism can be taken precisely as that. Naturally we can assume that if any of these claims were to be accepted as true by the international audience and the opinion of the world is shifted towards either side, by itself it could shift the balance of power should the onlooking world take more action in favour of the one side or another. Perhaps this is why Armenia, as the objectively losing side of the war, has a lot more comments focusing on the war crimes and terrorism, while Azerbaijan as the winning side focuses more towards legitimising their offensive action.

Now that we have seen perhaps the most gruesome claims of these comments, we should ask whether there is any real talk of peaceful resolution and what would it take to get there.

4.3.3 Path to Peace

With the furious claims of terrorism and war crimes, can we expect there to be any chance for a peaceful resolution in the minds of these commenters.

On the Azerbaijani side there is a strict demand of what needs to happen for the violence to come to an end, and that is the withdrawal of Armenian forces from occupied areas per the United Nations resolutions (Azer 10). This is echoed by Azer 23 who states that no one in Azerbaijan will care what Armenians do inside their internationally recognised borders. While these are by far no calls or pleads for peace to Armenians to just please go home so that fighting can stop, they are much more pleasant than the comment by Azer 24, who essentially holds that there will be no peace until “Armenian aggressors go back to where they belong – Armenian cemetery”. This last comment really echoes the pervasiveness of the disagreements between the two peoples that could be seen from the accusations of terrorism and war crimes from the previous chapter.

Armenians do not create any more hope for peace than the Azerbaijanis. The best that these commenters can do is the claim that “unless [Azerbaijanis] stop the racist propaganda in [their] country there will be no peace in this land” (Arm 20). This is not on the same level as requirements set for peace by Azer 10 and Azer 23, as this comment maintains that there

is internal hostility between the two peoples that no settlement of territorial issues can solve. The idea of hate by Azerbaijanis towards Armenians is held by Arm 12 who claims that as long as Azerbaijanis are taught to hate Armenians, there can be no peace. Essentially this claim of hatred is echoed by another commenter, who states that the hatred infused in Azerbaijanis towards Armenians “leaves no room for peaceful co-existence” (Arm 23).

It is indeed an incredibly sad state of affairs in the region that can be read from these claims of peace not being possible. While the territorial issues seem to be the centre of the conflict, the ongoing hatred between the two nations has created a web of issues that are unlikely to be solved by just the settlement of the territorial affairs. Even if the more extreme elements (i.e., Azer 24) are taken out of the discussion, there is still the 30 years of mutual hatred that has to be alleviated between the two nations for there to be any sort of lasting peace.

4.4 Grounding the Claims

I will start this chapter with a disclaimer: During the analysis of the comments, I did not research whether any things presented as grounds for the claims were factual, embellished, belittled or fictional, as my intention was not to find the truth in the arguments, but rather present their structure. Thus, none of the things that are presented here as data, speak nothing of their truthfulness or lack of it. So, while some of the data can probably be considered objectively true and others entirely false, this study does not make any distinction whatsoever to that point. Even though Toulmin defines the grounds that are given for the validity of claims as facts, in this case they cannot be necessarily considered as such (Toulmin 2003, 90). From a more traditional argumentation analysis perspective this then comes down to a question whether – in the likely event that some grounds are non-factual – we have to consider if the commenter is *honest* which means that they believe in their own grounds, or whether they *manipulate* in which case they choose arguments that they believe will have an effect on the audience (Kakkuri-Knuuttila & Halonen 1998, 84).

As already stated previously by me when discussing the problems that prevailed during my analysis process, many of the things I am presenting here as grounds could also be presented as claims, not only due to their nature of being possibly questionable from a factual

viewpoint, but also due to the fact that some of these grounds will have grounds of their own to strengthen the overall argument made by the commenter. This idea of course is not foreign to Toulmin (2003, 90) who considers this a natural process in argumentation where the grounds of the initial claim are challenged. However, since this analysis lacks the context of coherent discursive argumentation¹, there is no explicit challenge to any of these claims. I will thus be taking all of these claims presented as grounds as facts², no matter their actual relationship to true factual knowledge (Kakkuri-Knuuttila & Halonen 1998, 87). So, I will not be diving into the vortex of multi-layered argumentation that the Toulmin model can produce and instead I will only focus on the grounds of the primary claim or claims of each comment.

4.4.1 Laws, Norms and Regulations

Grounds can be based on many various things that help them to be made understood by the audience. These can be including but not limited to, values, norms, goals, statistics and so on (Kakkuri-Knuuttila & Halonen 1998, 91). Many commenters present their grounds as leaning toward international laws and norms, but also the laws and regulations of the previous overlord of the Caucasus region, the Soviet Union.

On the Azerbaijani side, many give the United Nations resolutions about the first Nagorno-Karabakh war as grounds towards their claims of territorial ownership or Armenia being the aggressor in the war (i.e., Azer 1; Azer 7). In their grounds, the resolutions name Azerbaijan as the rightful owner of Nagorno-Karabakh. From the viewpoint of the audience, we can most likely deem the role of these resolutions by the UN as widely understood norms that should be followed. Thus, referring to the four resolutions brings the argument to the level where anyone from the audience, who considers the UN as important part of the international process, is likely to be moved towards the Azerbaijani side. The same goes for those who deem international laws and recognition as intricate part of what sovereign states can and cannot do, as those are also often given as grounds (i.e., Azer 16; Azer 4). Beyond

¹ I explicitly chose not to analyse comments given as reply to other comments (see chapter 3.3) which thus eliminated the chance of coherent discussion.

² I will sometimes also talk about them as facts, but this does not in any way reflect their relation to actual truth either.

referring to actual laws and regulations, this category of data can also attempt to appeal to our common sense, for example in the case where one commenter gives geographical facts as grounds towards claim of ownership of the region. They point out that if one were to look at the map of the region, they would find that Nagorno-Karabakh is located in the middle of Azerbaijan. (Azer 5.)

Taking a closer look at this kind of data provided by Azerbaijani commenters, we can find interesting varieties of the usage of laws, norms, and regulations when they give grounds to their claims. For example, when we look at how they use the UN resolutions, we can see that they are used for a variety of different claims. One commenter gives these resolutions as grounds towards the claim of Armenia being the aggressor in the war³ (Azer 1). In a different context, Azer 7 refers to the resolutions as grounds towards their claim of territorial ownership. Another commenter gives the resolutions' calls to end the occupation of Azerbaijani regions by Armenia as grounds towards their claim that Armenia is not as peace-loving nation as it claims to be (Azer 18). Then when speaking of international recognition, it is mainly used as to defend the claim that Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to Azerbaijan (i.e., Azer 4). However, another commenter uses the norm of international recognition as a fundamental requirement for statehood to discredit the claim of Artsakh's independence by pointing out that the de facto state has not gained any recognition in 28 years (Azer 8). There are also the widely understood norms of states' rights to defend their own territory (Azer 20) and the sovereignty of states (Azer 1). All in all, many Azerbaijani commenters base their claims on these grounds of international laws, norms, and regulations and to them being widely accepted by the audience.

Armenians also refer to laws, norms, and regulations when defending their claims, but differently and not as much as their Azerbaijani counterparts. One international norm which they draw their grounds from, is the right of self-determination of different peoples. This can be seen in the comment by Arm 7, whose claim of Azerbaijan having no right Nagorno-Karabakh is based on one hand the data that people of Nagorno-Karabakh did not want to join Azerbaijan when Soviet Union dissolved. Another international norm that Armenians draw from is the democratic processes of states, as in that a state that has democratic functions should be allowed to exist. This is pointed out by Arm 9, who defends Artsakh's right

³ While for example Cambridge dictionary maintains that aggressor in this context means "a country that starts a war by attacking first" and it is certainly that for Armenian side, but when used by the Azerbaijani, its meaning seems to be something more towards 'a country that starts a war due to its aggressive actions before the start of the actual fighting'.

to independence by stating that the de facto state has “all democratic values, institutions and government structure”. Reversing this thought process, another commenter argues that Azerbaijan is not a peace-loving country because its government is effectively dictatorial (Arm 18). These commenters thus attempt to draw acceptance from the audience’s values of democratic processes being ultimately good or at least better than dictatorial ones. The same idea is held by Arm 7, who judgementally declares that the region was given to Azerbaijan by Soviet Union, who is not known for its democracy.

Armenians also give grounds based on laws and regulations, mainly that of the Soviet Union and how the secession of the various states that formed from it should have gone on part of Nagorno-Karabakh. According to Arm 2, the self-determination of peoples is not merely an international value, but something that was also guaranteed in the laws of the Soviet Union. This same idea is somewhat maintained in another commenter’s point who reminds us that during the times of the Soviet Union, Artsakh, while autonomous, did not report to Azerbaijan, but directly to the capital Moscow (Arm 7). There is also the matter that Artsakh did not try to secede from Azerbaijan but from Soviet Union, as any other now independent Caucasian state, and did so even earlier than Azerbaijan (Arm 1; Arm 9).

Another set of grounds relating to laws, norms, and regulations is the question of who attacked first. It is a general norm in international law that the attacker is usually⁴ guilty of crimes against peace just by with the decision to wage war, while both sides can be guilty of war crimes, as in the acceptability of tactics employed when fighting said war (May 2007, 4). Few Armenian commenters lean into this idea by using the fact that Azerbaijan attacked Armenia as grounds to their claims of Azerbaijan starting the war and Armenians of Artsakh not starting the war. For example, Azer 19 uses this as grounds for the former claim, while Azer 22 uses this as grounds for the latter. By giving grounds to their claims which can be followed directly into international law could certainly provide legitimacy to the Armenian cause.

Referring to laws, norms and regulations as data is very compelling since those appeal to audiences’ sense of right and wrong, their sense of justice. The curious thing is that many different kinds of claims are grounded with same or similar data (within one side of the conflict). As for example the UN resolutions are used in a multitude of ways by Azerbaijanis

⁴ An example of aggressive waging of war without crimes against peace could be the Gulf War which had the support of United Nations.

– for example to prove that the region belongs to them or that Armenia is the more guilty party to the war, while the role of the Soviet Union can be very different in Armenian comments, going from its laws being the guarantee of Nagorno-Karabakh's independence to the evil entity that is the reason Azerbaijan has the international recognition of the region.

4.4.2 Heritage

With heritage, I am referring to the grounds that talk about the cultural heritage of Nagorno-Karabakh and of the national identity of the population. These types of grounds are by far the most imbalanced towards one side or another, with many Armenians using these, compared to no Azerbaijani commenters using these as grounds.⁵

Cultural heritage of the region is very prevalent in the grounds given by Armenians to defend different claims. One commenter for example argues for Artsakh being historically Armenian land, by stating as grounds that there are very old churches and cathedrals in Artsakh that are culturally related to Armenia, not Azerbaijan (Arm 1). Similar data of cultural heritage is also given by Arm 23, who talks about centuries old Armenian heritage in Artsakh, and by Arm 22, who mentions documented, scientific proof of Armenians living in Artsakh for thousands of years, compared to the barely century old state of Azerbaijan. The latter comment already offers us the negative use of lack of heritage to defend for example the claim that Artsakh is Armenian (Arm 4). Thus, for many Armenians this seems to be a debate of cultural heritage when discussing the ownership of the region. There are many reasons why this can be a persuasive use of data to base their claims on. We can, for example, compare the situation of longer cultural heritage to other parts of the world, where there might be a similar – although less violent – debate going on about the cultural heritage of the land. Closest example I can think of is the cultural heritage of Sami people in Lapland. While in most ways a different debate to that of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, there can be similar arguments made of the longer cultural heritage of one people compared to another and thus used as a way to solidify claims of the ownership of the land.

⁵ Some commenters (i.e., Azer 23) talk about heritage but those are separate sentences from the rest of the argumentation.

Beyond the use of cultural heritage, there are rather subtle uses of the fact that most of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh is Armenian. For example, Arm 22 talks about Armenians of Artsakh, while Arm 1 says that “[e]ven before the Soviet times ... Artsakh Republic was populated predominantly by Armenians”. These are used to justify claims that have to do with the ownership of the land. These are perhaps surprisingly lacking from the claims that have to do with the de facto state’s right to independence and the self-determination of peoples, but it could also just be that the ethnic makeup of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh is so widely known that some commenters feel no need to explicitly point that out.

Grounds about heritage thus can be understood to lean towards historical factors. With these historical factors, the commenters could seek to provide legitimacy to their arguments from the part of the audience that has understanding towards peoples being forced to live on land that has historically been theirs but does not belong to them because someone somewhere else said so. It is interesting how the use of heritage as grounds is so predominantly one-sided in this debate. Of course, we in no way cannot read this as to mean that there are no grounds than can be given by Azerbaijanis towards the cultural heritage of the region, but we can ponder whether they do not feel the value of such arguments compared to other arguments of international law and UN resolutions since the matter of heritage is linked to the claims that talk about the rightful ownership of the region.

4.4.3 Past Issues

Many commenters present past issues with the other side of the conflict as grounds. These past issues mainly refer to the First Nagorno-Karabakh War and the resulting aftermaths of it. While grounds relating to heritage were mainly given by Armenians, the grounds relating to past issues are mainly given by Azerbaijanis.

First type of grounds that concern past issues is the peace process that was started after the armistice which ended the first war with the intention of finding a mutually agreeable solutions to the questions of Nagorno-Karabakh and the occupation of Azerbaijani territories. This peace process has however made little to no progress in its efforts over the course of three decades and this fact is used by some Azerbaijani commenters as grounds. One

commenter uses the 30 year long wait for peaceful solution as grounds to why Azerbaijan is justified to use military action (Azer 20). Another commenter has basically the same claim and gives the same grounds with the added mention about the “non-constructive position of Armenia” to add gravitas to the grounds as if by saying that Armenia would never accept a peaceful resolution anyway (Azer 4). This is echoed by Azer 7, who states that Armenia was never going to give up the regions peacefully to prove his claim about Armenia being guilty to the war. The use of the long and unsuccessful peace process as grounds to claims about, for example, justified war and painting the other party as more guilty seems thus to create a narrative of Azerbaijan remorsefully being forced to act militarily as all other avenues for resolution of the situation have been taken and they have not yielded results.

Another type of grounds given that concentrate on past issues is the occupation of Azerbaijani territories⁶ by Armenia after the first war. These territories were still occupied by Armenian soldiers before the start of the 2020 war. This fact is then used as grounds for example by Azer 18 who, in addition with other data, seeks to convince the audience that Armenia is not peaceful or victim by any means in this conflict. This is also used by another commenter to justify the claims about Azerbaijan not attacking Armenia proper and blaming Armenia for the start of the war (Azer 19). Some commenters also use the occupation and the failed peace process in tandem, as for example Azer 14, who mentions that “[f]or almost 30 years, Armenia has not returned the occupied territories peacefully” which they use as data for their claim about Azerbaijan being justified in its attempt to restore its territorial integrity. The effect of the long occupation on the people who used to live there is also used as grounds, but that I will talk more about in the next chapter about ethics as grounds.

Last specific type of grounds about past issues is the question of who started the first war. As in some commenters from both sides blame the other side for starting the previous war and use this fact to prove their claims. On the Azerbaijani side, one commenter uses the blaming of Armenia as the starter of the previous war as data that Armenia is a state that has ambitions of territorial expansion (Azer 15). Another commenter uses this same fact as proof to their claim that there can be no peace with Armenia ever (Azer 24). On the Armenian side, one commenter uses the past war in two different ways to prove two different claims. On one hand, they use the fact that Azerbaijan started the previous war by ethnic cleansing the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh as proof to the claim that Armenians did not start the

⁶ When referring to occupied territories, it is not always clear whether these commenters count Nagorno-Karabakh amongst those or not

war, while on the other hand they use the fact that Armenia stopped its advance in the previous war when it could have kept attacking further into Azerbaijan as grounds for the claim that Armenia does not want to conquer Azerbaijani territory. (Arm 22.)

The grounds given about past issues aim towards similar historical factors as the ones about heritage. The difference is the part of the audience that they could be directed towards. While heritage perhaps sought to affect those that understand displaced or oppressed peoples, past issues might seek to affect those that have had difficult dealings with their neighbouring countries in the past that still affects their relations today. The one-sidedness is also interesting here but could be more easily explained than in heritage. I would say that Armenians do not rely so much on the previous war and the effects of that as much as on one hand they won that war and on the other they may feel that they do not have to defend their position as the non-guilty party as much as the Azerbaijani do.

4.4.4 Ethics

With grounds relating to ethics, I mean the data that uses war crimes, terrorism, or other horrific things as proof towards claims of the formerly mentioned things, and the claims of who is more guilty. While for example war crimes are also against international laws and could thus be included in that chapter, I have positioned them here because I feel that the way they aim to affect the audience are different from the rest of the grounds I introduced in that chapter.

For Azerbaijani commenters, the grounds of ethics can be roughly stated to be about the plight of their people. This plight can then be divided into different forms, with the most prevalent being the mass exodus of Azerbaijanis that have been forced away from their homes due to the Armenian occupation of the undisputed regions surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh. Azer 13 uses the fact that a million people have not been able to return to their homes as grounds towards their claim that Azerbaijan is justified in its military action to drive the occupiers away from its land. Another commenter uses the same issue that nearly million people are displaced because of Armenia's unwillingness to retreat from the occupied regions as grounds toward their accusation of Armenia not being peaceful and victim of this conflict (Azer 18). Another way that the plight of the Azerbaijanis is used are the

grounds that point Armenia as guilty of bombing civilians. For example, one commenter states that Armenian forces have destroyed settlements with civilians – especially children – still in them as proof that Armenia is more guilty in this war than Azerbaijan (Azer 11). Another commenter uses the attacking of civilians as grounds towards their claim that Armenia is conducting war crimes (Azer 6). One commenter takes this further by stating that Armenia uses chemical weapons to kill civilians and uses this statement as proof that Armenians are terrorists (Azer 16).

Armenians use more varied grounds relating to ethics in their arguments. First of all, they have the same arguments about chemical weapons and attacks against civilians as the Azerbaijanis have. For example, Arm 11 states that the Azerbaijani usage of chemical weapons in the conflict zone proves that they are not only war criminals but also that they are causing environmental disasters as the chemical weapons destroy forests. Another commenter uses the combination of chemical weapons and cluster bombing civilians as proof that the Azerbaijani hold no love for the land or peoples of Artsakh (Arm 10). One more commenter mentions that Azerbaijanis target not only military targets but also civilian targets such as churches and hospitals with their chemical weapons, making them clear and obvious war criminals (Arm 3). The most radical claim that these two facts provide proof for is made by Arm 21, who claims that the war has turned into an attempted genocide of Armenians. In addition to these crimes that both sides accuse each other of, Armenians also accuse Azerbaijani of torturing and killing prisoners of war. This statement is used as proof to the claim that Azerbaijan is committing war crimes (Arm 5; Arm 16).

Armenians also use the Syrian mercenaries that Azerbaijan and Turkey have deployed into the conflict zone to fight for their side as ethical grounds towards claims that attempt to point the two aforementioned countries as unethical. One commenter names these Syrians as terrorists to prove his claim that Azerbaijan and Turkey are terrorist countries that thus threaten the entire Caucasus' peace and stability (Arm 3). Another commenter uses the hiring of Syrian mercenaries as proof with the addition of Azerbaijani war crimes to claim that the rest of the world should help stop Azerbaijan (Arm 6). Arm 13 on the other hand uses the naming of these Syrians as terrorists to back his claim that Armenia is fighting against terrorism.

Last ethically oriented grounds that Armenians use are the statements about the hate that Azerbaijanis feel towards Armenians. Arm 12 uses the statement that the leader of

Azerbaijan Aliyev feeds Azerbaijanis with hate towards Armenians as proof to their claim that the conflict cannot be solved peacefully. Another commenter uses the fact that Aliyev first fed Azerbaijanis hate and then started a war to use that hate for as the reason for their claim that Aliyev is to blame for the war and all the destruction it has wrought (Arm 17). One more commenter uses the statement that Azerbaijanis are taught to hate Armenians as proof to their claim that there is no room for peaceful co-existence with the two peoples (Arm 23).

The use of these grounds that can be considered ethically wrong can appeal to the audience in multiple ways. The horrific war crimes may appeal to the audience's sense of justice or their humanity. Terrorism may appeal to those who have been victims of it or feel strongly towards it. Hate of one people towards another can appeal to the audiences who have experienced senseless hatred or despise it. All of these may appeal to our emotions and thus shape our stances towards the conflict. Different results could easily vary depending on the individual experiences, understandings and stances of individuals or entire populations that make up the international audience.

4.5 From Data to Conclusion

4.5.1 Warranting the Step

Now that I have examined both the claims and the grounds that attempt to prove those claims, it would be prudent to examine the warrants that are the step from the data to conclusion (same as claim). As Toulmin (2003, 91) himself explains, if the speaker putting forward the argument is challenged with the question of how they make the connection between the grounds given and the claim proposed, they must answer with a warrant. The answer to this is not to bring forward more proof but to bring forward a statement formulated somewhat like "if (data), since (warrant), so (conclusion) (ibid., 92). These warrants work with presupposed understandings that can come from multiple places and be of multiple kind. However, this statement is rarely explicit in actual argumentation and more often implicit and depending on the circumstances of the situation where and when the argument is placed. (ibid., 92–93.) So, I will work from the assumption that the warrants in these comments are implicit,

unless clearly proven otherwise. My analysis of the warrants will be two-fold. I will first look at the nature of the presupposed things that the warrants rely on. Then I will examine the perceived coherency of the proposed warrants and whether the use of those is prudent for the sake of the argument. It is, however, not practical to introduce and examine every single warrant from all 48 commenters, as this would likely result to almost a full thesis in and of itself. Rather, the examples I have selected for the latter part of the analysis are comments reflecting on the central claims and grounds I introduced from the previous chapters and which are, in my opinion, the most reflective of the respective research data.

What kind of warrants are made in the comments? What do the warrants rely on for the argument to be understood? I will answer these questions with a couple examples of a whole argument, formed in the Toulminian simple skeleton of “if D, since W, so C” (ibid., 92). Warrants can be formed as, for example, if there are old churches and cathedrals in Nagorno-Karabakh, since Armenia is predominantly Christian and Azerbaijan is Muslim, Nagorno-Karabakh is historically Armenian cultural land (Arm 1). The actual relevant understanding that Armenia is predominantly Christian while Azerbaijan is Muslim is not explicitly mentioned in the comments but has to be known in order for the argument to make sense. However, not all warrants in the comments require explicit knowledge to be understood, for example one Azerbaijani commenter forms an argument, if Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan, since international recognition should be respected, so Azerbaijan is conducting military operations in its own territory (Azer 4). In this case, the warrant is more of a belief or understanding that the commenter expects the audience to share with them. These two types of warrants – prior knowledge and shared understanding – are what all the commenters seem to use, depending on their claims and grounds. Some commenters, whom have multiple claims in their comment, may use both types of warrants. So, with the understanding of how the warrants are formed and how those can be divided based on the background they rely on, let’s examine some examples and try to form a larger understanding of the warrants and what those can tell us about the argumentation in the research data.

I have selected four example arguments from each side that in my mind reflect the best the larger research data in how warrants are used to authorise the step between grounds and conclusions. Starting with the Azerbaijani side, we have an argument that can be essentially written as: if Azerbaijan tried peaceful solution for 30 years, since peaceful negotiations not yielding any results justify other means to end the occupation, so Azerbaijan had

the right to initiate military action (Azer 13). This comment essentially relies on the shared understanding that justice can be achieved by force if a long and devoted attempt at peaceful negotiations do not yield results. This warrant may speak of a position of power. What I mean by that is that this commenter, and others like them, seem to see Azerbaijan as having the power to take the occupied territories back from the Armenians and thus only need to justify the military action so that the onlooking world does not interfere against them for being the instigators.

Moving on to another commenter, whose argument can be formed as: if Armenians have maintained an occupation of Azerbaijani territories for nearly 30 years, since maintaining an occupation is military action, so Armenia is the aggressor in this war (Azer 24). In this example, the idea that maintaining an occupation is military action, is critical for the sake of the whole argument. If this understanding is not shared with the audience, essentially the whole argument just falls apart. In comparison to the first argument, the goal of this seems to be to shed blame of this war to the Armenian side for the ongoing occupation being instigating military action.

Third example may be written thusly: if Armenia attacks civilians, children, and old people, since attacks against those are war crimes according to the international rules of war, so Armenia is committing war crimes (Azer 6). This is a very simple argument that can be easily accepted, if the audience accepts the grounds as facts and knows what war crimes in international rules of war are. This argument could also be formulated differently, with the warrant attacking those groups are unethical, which would not only turn this into a question of understanding of ethics, but also make the warrant explicit, as Azer 6 states in his comment that “[a]ttacking civilians, children and old people is unethical in the war”. All of the arguments, where the claim is that the other side is committing war crimes, can thus be warranted with either background information about the rules of war, or the shared understanding of ethics.

Last example is the one I already mentioned previously: if Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan, since international recognition has to be respected, so Azerbaijan is conducting military operations in its own territory (Azer 4). Now while I used this as an example of shared understanding, here the warrant may actually lean both ways in that it gives us a shared understanding but also could base itself on prior knowledge of international law. When leaning on the shared understanding, the warrant

essentially argues in itself for the need of order in international politics that the international law brings, as in the sort of realist school approach that without order, there will be anarchy as we can see here from the actions of Armenia. But all in all, it is a very straightforward argument that there is actually no inter-state war but more like a civil warrish event which of course would be an Azerbaijani internal matter.

Then on the Armenian side, the first argument may be formed as: if Azerbaijan has strong dictatorship and crimes against humanity, since these things are to be found in countries not committed to peace, so Azerbaijan is not a peaceful country (Arm 18). The general understanding that this warrant relies on is that non-democratic countries that also violate human rights cannot be peaceful in any case ever. This commenter thus seems to lean on larger Western democratic values in order to make his case. It could be that they are trying to reach those Western countries that are also predominantly Christian like Armenia, to act against the Muslim Azerbaijan. Perhaps more likely is that they are simply trying to make a call for a crusade not for or against religion but against dictatorship and for human rights. The main question about the audience is whether they hold these values in higher regard than those offered by the Azerbaijani commenters.

Second commenter talks about war crimes. With this topic, most of the Armenians followed a similar line of argumentation (attacks against civilians, bad because rules of war/ethics, so war crimes) with their warrants as their Azerbaijani counterparts. As I have broken down that type of argumentation already, I chose to include a comment that keeps in the topic but goes to the next level. This comment is not the only one of its kind, but it is in the minority of the Armenian war crimes arguments. I still feel that I can get more out by selecting this as an example than selecting something very similar to the Azerbaijani comment I already analysed. So, the second Armenian example can be formed as follows: if Azerbaijanis and their supporters are attacking civilian targets with chemical weapons, since those kinds of attacks point towards genocide, so Azerbaijan is committing a genocide (Arm 21). As I said, this commenter takes the war crimes argument further with the inclusion of attempted genocide in their argumentation. It similarly leans towards both international law and ethics, but I would argue that while the war crimes leans more towards law, genocide leans more towards ethics. I would say so, because I think that claims of genocide are by the base nature more radical than those of war crimes, thus evoking a more emotional response. It adds a level of villainy and deviousness, in a similar fashion than if a person were accused of murder instead of manslaughter. The former speaks of a cold and calculating individual

who planned everything while the latter can be incidental. So, while commenters use similar warrants to claims of war crimes and genocide, the result can be largely different, of course depending on the response and mindset of the audience.

The third comment goes roughly as: if people of Nagorno-Karabakh did not want to become a part of Azerbaijan, since all peoples have right to self-determination, so Nagorno-Karabakh is not part of Azerbaijan (Arm 2). Very simple argument that deals with both the knowledge of international norm and the shared understanding of the value of self-determination of all peoples. Its goal is to simply claim that Nagorno-Karabakh should not belong to Azerbaijan, without taking any positions of whether the region should be independent or part of Armenia. Essentially it could aim to discredit the whole idea of Azerbaijan's war of liberation of their territories with the argument that those should not be their territories. I would say that this warrant has one weakness that is not the values or knowledge it is leaning on, but the outside world having mistrust towards the opinions of peoples that stems from the rigged voting and polling, such as the referendum which results were used to justify the annexation of Crimea by Russia.

The last Armenian commenter is one of the very few that has an explicit warrant, but the argument itself very clearly represents its kind, so I have included it here. Their comment may be said to go as: if Turkey and Azerbaijan brought Syrian terrorists to fight for them, since "[d]ealing with terrorists makes them terrorists too", so Turkey and Azerbaijan are terrorist countries (Arm 3). Again, a very simple argument which warrant is easy to understand. Essentially the same as dealing with criminals makes one a criminal. Thus, this warrant expects the audience to share that idea (not understand, since it is explicitly stated). The point is to appeal to those countries and peoples that have suffered from terrorism. It is basically stating that Armenia is fighting terrorists too, so they should get the same help as other countries fighting against terrorism. Also, it could seek to discredit Azerbaijan and Turkey entirely and portray them as villains and thus Armenian and Armenians as victims.

One of the main questions that Toulmin has with warrants is that whether they are applicable or not to the situation that the argument deals with (Toulmin 2003, 95). All of the examples I have presented here fulfil this requirement in my opinion, some perhaps more clearly than others. In addition, I would say that all of the comments in the research data also fulfil this requirement. There are some claims presented in the comments that do not have

respective data to authorise them, but as I already previously stated⁷, I will not focus on those claims in this study. I will just mention here that of course without data those claims will also not have necessary warrants, making them incomplete for the sake of argumentation, and thus not fulfilling this requirement.

4.5.2 Backing the Step

Now that I have constructed what Toulmin might call as the skeleton of the argument from my research data, it is time for me to start, say, giving it flesh (*ibid.*, 93). This process will start by dealing with the backing of the warrants. Since warrants are used to justify the step from data to conclusion, backing is used to justify the warrants themselves when those are questioned. Thus, backing serves to justify the warrant itself with further information that gives the warrant the necessary authority to take that step from data to conclusion. (*ibid.*, 95–96, 98.)

But what are the differences between backing and the warrants that they try to defend? And how does the further relevant information provided in backings differ from those that are given as data to defend the claim? Toulmin himself states that backing and warrant cannot be mixed with each other if both are explicitly stated per his model, but difficulties may arise from the nature of the expression of the argument (*ibid.*, 98). For this, he does not give further examples or information as how to generally differentiate warrant from backing, but instead seems to rely on the individual's capability of telling the difference. The difference between backing and data is somewhat more complicated. As Toulmin himself states "backing for warrants can be expressed in the form of categorical statements of fact quite as well as can the data appealed to in direct support of our conclusions" (*ibid.*). The difference for him is the different roles that these two play for the construction of the argument. While data has to be produced explicitly for there to be any argument at all, backing can be implicit. (*ibid.*) Once again, Toulmin is quite vague about differences, so it again comes down to the ability of the individual to understand his ideas. However, since I have already differentiated claims, data and warrants for the previous examples, this analysis can proceed with backing

⁷ See chapter 4.3.

since we already know that backing is fact supporting the warrant but not necessarily explicitly mentioned in the comment itself.

Now that we have established the nature of backing, the role it plays in Toulminian argumentation, and its differences from warrants and data, I will examine the backings presented in the research data using the same eight example comments I used to analyse warrants in the previous chapter. The backings presented can be implicit or explicit, and I will differentiate between these two. So, starting with the first Azerbaijani comment: if Azerbaijan tried peaceful solution for 30 years, since peaceful negotiations not yielding any results justify other means to end the occupation, so Azerbaijan had the right to initiate military action (Azer 13). Here the backing of the warrant leans less on idea of military action being justified after failed peace process and more to the suffering of Azerbaijanis as a result of the occupation. This is explicitly stated in the comment in the form that they talk about a million people being unable to return to their homes and suffering from internal displacement (*ibid*). However, there is no element of international law that could back the basic idea that failure of the peace process justifies military action. There are, however, resolutions by United Nations (see *i.e.*, General Assembly resolution 62/243, 2008) that call for the end of occupation. This part of the backing is not explicitly mentioned in this comment. These two things form the backing for this argument and can be used either together or separately.

Moving on to the second Azerbaijani argument: if Armenians have maintained an occupation of Azerbaijani territories for nearly 30 years, since maintaining an occupation is military action, so Armenia is the aggressor in this war (Azer 24). This comment has no explicit backing, so I will first examine what is said about occupation (more accurately, illegal occupation as this commenter most likely is referring to that). Ardi Imseis (2021) names three norms that make occupation illegal in the eyes of the United Nations, if they are violated: “the prohibition on the acquisition of territory through the threat or use of force, the obligation to respect self-determination of peoples, and the obligation to refrain from imposing alien regimes inimical to humankind, including of racial discrimination”. Here our commenter already seems to have their backing. They could refer to all of these norms as reasons why the occupation is illegal, or they could use the same United Nations resolution as the first commenter. The only thing is that the warrant names this occupation as military action to justify Armenia as aggressor and that step is not necessarily backed by these facts.

The third example was formulated as follows: if Armenia attacks civilians, children, and old people, since attacks against those are war crimes according to the international rules of war, so Armenia is committing war crimes (Azer 6). Here the backing is very simple, as it just refers to the Geneva Convention and its list of war crimes as the legal statutes that provide the facts for this warrant.

Then, the last Azerbaijani example was: if Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan, since international recognition has to be respected, so Azerbaijan is conducting military operations in its own territory (Azer 4). The warrant itself is an understanding to be shared by the audience, but it can be backed with some statements that relate to classical theories of international relations, such as Hobbesian understanding of permanent state of war if there is no awe of larger power (Bull 1981, 720–721). While Hobbesian theories are not by any means categorical statements of fact, their relevance can be backed by examples such as the First World War that speak of international anarchy. Thus, the warrant can be backed with the (subjective) statement that lack of respect for international recognition means international anarchy, which would be very bad. I would say that this warrant cannot be backed with undeniable statements of fact.

Now we can move on to look at the Armenian side. The first argument of course was: if Azerbaijan has strong dictatorship and crimes against humanity, since these things are to be found in countries not committed to peace, so Azerbaijan is not a peaceful country (Arm 18). While the relation of crimes against humanity and peacefulness has not per se been studied, Babst and Eckhardt (1992, 52) have indeed found that fewer democratic countries (23 percent) indeed have participated in wars than non-democratic countries (93 percent) from 1950 to 1991. When put in together with the findings of Rummel (1989) that democratic governments are far less likely to kill their own people compared to non-democratic governments, the warrant made by Arm 18 can be effectively backed.

Moving on to the second Armenian argument: if Azerbaijanis and their supporters are attacking civilian targets with chemical weapons, since those kinds of attacks point towards genocide, so Azerbaijan is committing a genocide (Arm 21). Here the backing for the warrant is very similar to that of the war crime, as it could simply refer the United Nations' Genocide Convention. As I presented this argument as a next level from claims of war crimes, so has the backing to provide the difference between the two. The only difference between killing people as war crime and as genocide is the intent. If the targeting of civilians

is intended to “destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such” then it is genocide instead of war crime (United Nations, 1948). Thus, the only thing that this backing is lacking, is an objective proof that the targeting of Armenian civilians by Azerbaijanis has the required intent, as such is subjected to burden of proof in prosecution under international courts of law.

Third argument by Armenian side was: if people of Nagorno-Karabakh did not want to become a part of Azerbaijan, since all peoples have right to self-determination, so Nagorno-Karabakh is not part of Azerbaijan (Arm 2). Once again, a very easy warrant to back, as the right to self-determination of peoples is guaranteed in both International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Last argument went: if Turkey and Azerbaijan brought Syrian terrorists to fight for them, since “[d]ealing with terrorists makes them terrorists too”, so Turkey and Azerbaijan are terrorist countries (Arm 3). Here the warrant cannot be so easily backed, similar to that of Azer 4, as it relies on a statement that requires subjective understanding of the international stances to terrorism. While for example United States has a list of states that it has deemed to support terrorism, it does not name these states as inherently terrorist.

Having examined the warrants and backings for these eight example arguments, we have six arguments that have warrants that justify the step from data to conclusion, and that these warrants can be backed with (more or less) statements of fact. This, however, does not speak in any way or form to the factual nature of these six arguments, as there was no questioning of the data presented in them whatsoever. We have simply learned that these six have more coherent Toulminian structure than the two others. Why then, one may ask, did I scrutinise the warrants, and thus backing, with a fact finding mission of my own, while intentionally ignoring the actual nature of facts provided as data? The answer is simply the difference of roles these play in Toulminian argumentation, and the results that their questioning leads to. While the questioning of warrants leads to examination of backing, the questioning of data leads to entirely new argumentation that can have already taken us out of the argumentation that the comment in the research data was bringing forth.

4.6 Conditions of the Argument

4.6.1 Qualifiers

Having examined the warrants and how those are backed in the arguments present in the research data, I will next go over the last two elements of Toulminian argumentation that set conditions for the warrants issued. Starting with the qualifiers, they are the element that sets a sort of strength for the warrant, as in how likely the warrant is going to lead to the conclusion (Toulmin 2003, 99). Qualifiers can be phrases like presumably, most likely, perhaps, certainly, and so on. Each of these imply a different level of strength that the warrant has when it is leading to conclusion. Perhaps does not invoke a very strong warrant, while certainly implies an undeniable warrant. Toulmin himself does not clearly explain whether qualifiers are found explicitly or implicitly, so for the sake of this analysis, I will look for both kinds of qualifiers.

As most likely expected, the comments in the research data are not rich in their variety of qualifiers. All of the commenters portray their warrants as strong and certain. I would actually find it quite funny if suddenly one of these commenters – while arguing, for example, for the fact that their side should have Nagorno-Karabakh – to bring in a qualifier such as presumably which implies a certain level of uncertainty. However, the comments are not rich even in the qualifying statements that involve certainty. Instead, the certainty of these arguments seems to be heavily implied, as in this is how it is and one would be a fool to think otherwise. For example, looking at the arguments I presented when analysing warrants and backings, all of the warrants that authorise the step from data to conclusions are implied to be certain. Looking at the arguments of Azer 6 – if Armenia attacks civilians, children, and old people, since attacks against those are war crimes according to the international rules of war, so Armenia is committing war crimes – and Arm 2 – if people of Nagorno-Karabakh did not want to become a part of Azerbaijan, since all peoples have right to self-determination, so Nagorno-Karabakh is not part of Azerbaijan – there is no room for any uncertainty. The entire intentions of the arguments to paint the other side as the guilty party of the war crumble with even the slightest hint of doubt. If there is any chance that right of all peoples to self-determination does not lead to Nagorno-Karabakh not being part of Azerbaijan – for

example inserting a qualifier presumably – the other side would likely pounce on the chance to get their own certain viewpoint of the matter to the reaches of the audience.

4.6.2 Rebuttals

Rebuttals come hand in hand with qualifiers in the Toulminian model. As the qualifiers set the strength of the warrant, rebuttal sets the condition when the warrant does not apply for the argument (Toulmin 2003, 94). Essentially, the speaker can set a condition for their warrant that refutes their entire argument but saves their face since they admitted the possibility of that the entire time. As with qualifiers, Toulmin does not clearly state whether rebuttals are to be presented explicitly or implicitly. However, differentiating from the analysis of qualifiers, I find explicit rebuttals to be the essential focus here, because if it acts as a way out to save the speaker's face, it should be explicitly stated.

As rebuttals essentially give a chance for the speaker to offer a situation where their warrant does not serve the conclusion because they already offered a weakening qualifier in terms of certainty, it would be prudent to expect that the research data holds very little in terms of rebuttals since the qualifiers were certain in nature. This would be true for the most cases of argumentation found in the research data. For example, the argument by Arm 2 – if people of Nagorno-Karabakh did not want to become a part of Azerbaijan, since all peoples have right to self-determination, so Nagorno-Karabakh is not part of Azerbaijan – would trip on the goals of its own claims by inserting a rebuttal that would give a situation where all peoples do not have right to self-determination.

There is, however, one kind of argument (made by a few commenters) where certainty is implied but a rebuttal is given explicitly. These are the arguments about the impossibility of peace between the two countries. For example, Arm 20 argues that there can be no peace between the countries because of racist propaganda in Azerbaijan, but immediately offers the (somewhat obvious) rebuttal that if the racist propaganda in Azerbaijan is stopped, then there can be peace. An argument from the Azerbaijani side denies the chance for peace unless Armenia's fascist government ceases to exist (Azer 3). The interesting notion with these arguments is that while the rebuttal is offered, it can be interpreted as to be extremely unlikely event, since the warrants themselves are implicitly qualified as certain. As in that

neither side actually believes in a chance of peace, since it would require the other side to change in a way that seems to be opposing to their nature. The rebuttals require the other side to change their ways so that it is still their fault even though rebuttal was admitted by the commenter. While these rebuttals indeed are exceptions to the rest of the comments, the nature of argumentation that they imply is consistent with the rest of the research data – the situation is like it is, because of the fault of the other side and the burden of fixing the situation thus falls solely on the other side.

4.7 Bringing It Back Together

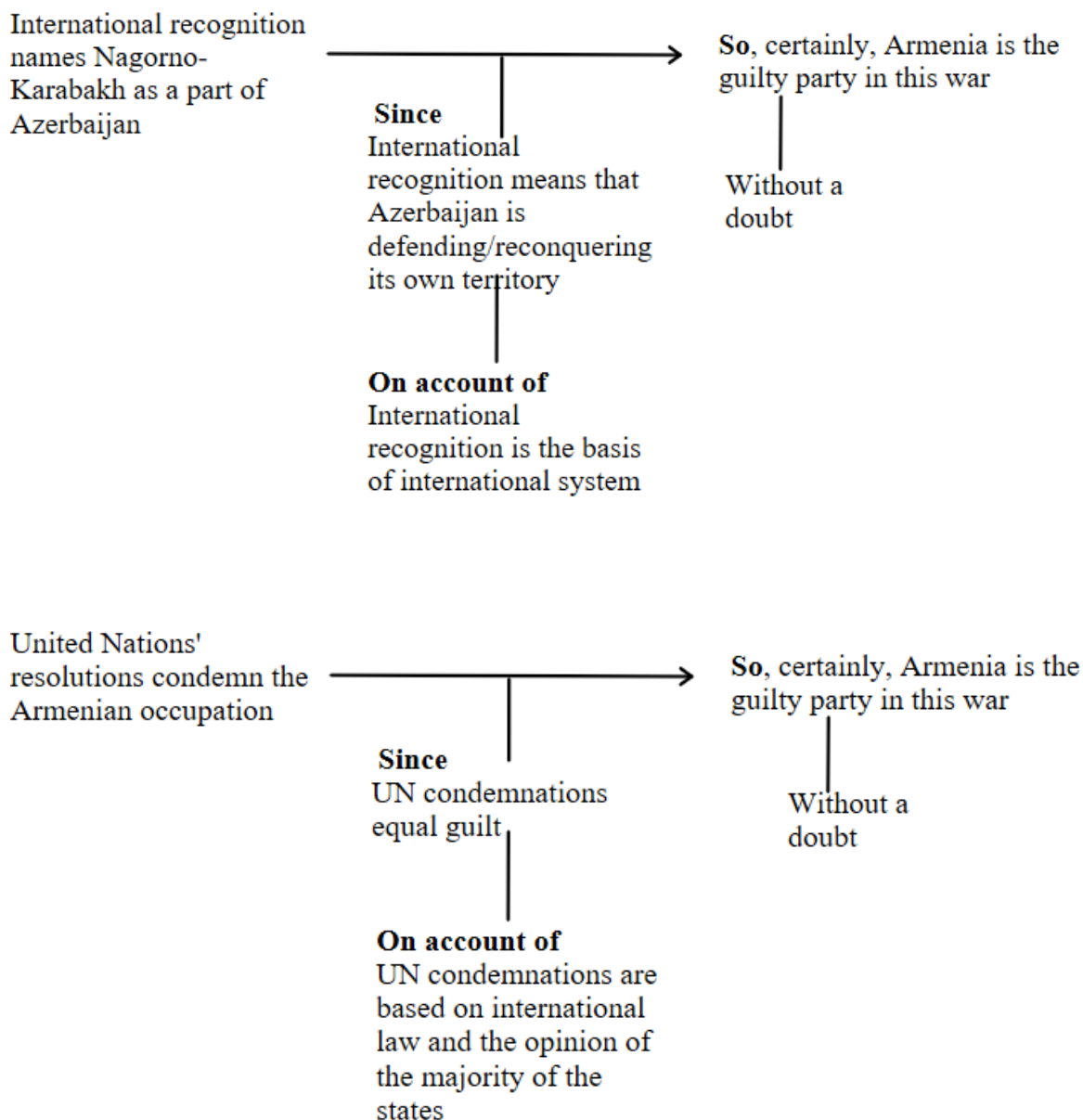
Having now broken apart and analysed all the individual aspects of Toulminian arguments found in the comments of the research data, it is time to reassemble the puzzle laid in before us. The fundamental question that all the arguments deal with is the question that started this whole analysis. Who is more guilty? The answer to that question being the opposing side is what all the commenters in the research data ultimately strive for, although via various different ways. In that sense, the two sides are not that different from each other. There are a lot of similarities and differences between the two sides in the ways that they seek to prove the other side being at least more guilty than their side.

To complete this analysis, I will now reassemble the arguments of both sides into Toulminian argumentation graphs⁸ of their own. As the arguments provide a variety of ways to argue for the opposition to be the more guilty party, so will I have multiple graphs portraying the plurality of the argumentation. Some of the elements in these graphs are actually in different positions than they were in the analysis itself, but that is only natural considering that the final claim and conclusion for both sides are the other side being more guilty than they are.

Starting on the Azerbaijani side, the argumentation leans most on international recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh belonging to Azerbaijan, United Nations' resolutions condemning the occupation of the Azerbaijani regions, the harm that the occupation has done for the displaced Azerbaijanis, and the war crimes committed by Armenia. These ideas are used in variety of ways to justify the military action instigated by Azerbaijan and to portray

⁸ See chapter 3.2.1 or Toulmin 2003, 97

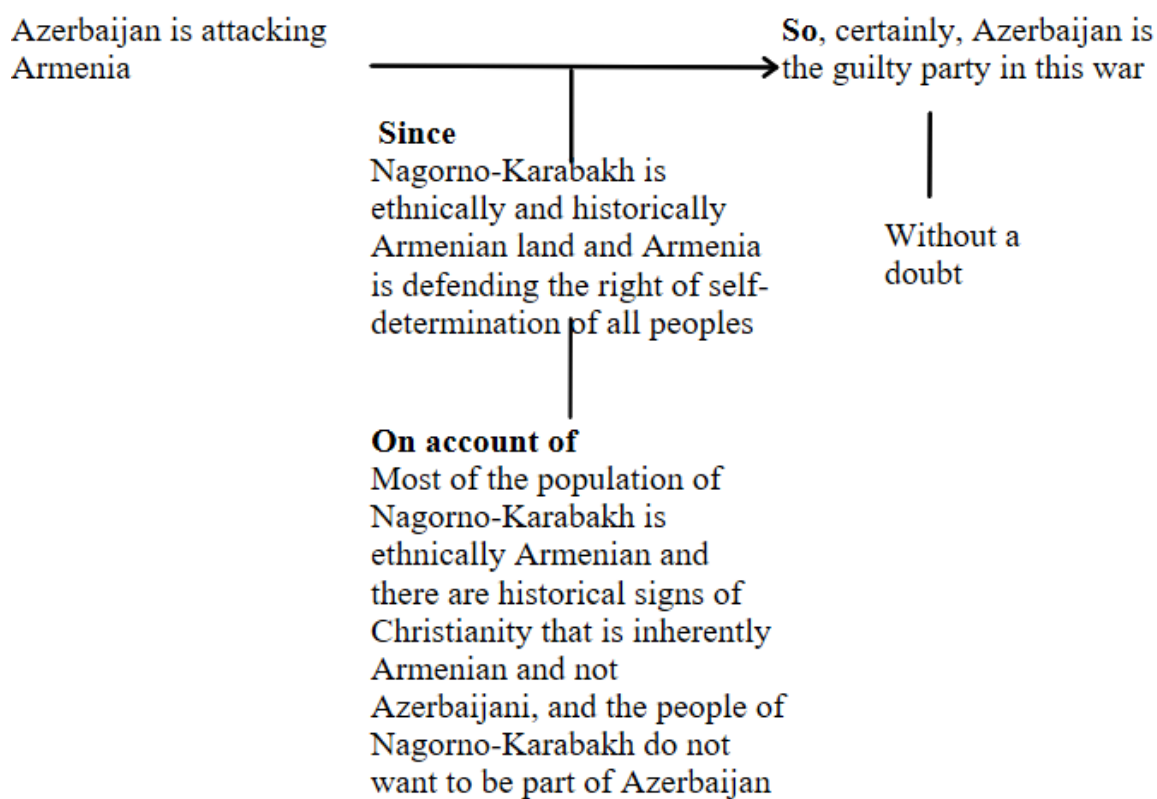
Armenians as war criminals and fascists who need to be stopped before they can do more damage. This argumentation can be represented in following ways:



The arguments about war crimes have already been explored so thoroughly that re-writing them here would give us nothing new. As we can see from these two graphs, the Azerbaijani argument relies on the international actors that have indirectly participated on the conflict via processes of recognition and condemnation. These arguments portray Armenia as a rogue state that disobeys all international institutions and so has relinquished its right to peaceful solution. This has given Azerbaijan the right to resolve the situation by using

military force to restore the internationally recognised status quo. Azerbaijan is only fighting for the restoration of their sovereign territory that Armenians have taken from them in the past and the international audience should rejoice in this as there will finally be a solution for this frozen conflict.

Moving on to the Armenian side, their argumentation is about them having to right to defend their territory as Nagorno-Karabakh should either belong to them or be independent country of ethnic Armenians. They also argue for Azerbaijani guilt via war crimes and even the attempt of a genocide. The argument can be written as:



Essentially the argument leans on the aggressor being the guilty party, since Nagorno-Karabakh, which was attacked by Azerbaijan, is indeed Armenian land by the factors of heritage and self-determination of all peoples. There can be no ‘liberation’ of territory that does not belong to the ‘liberator’ in the first place. The military action taken by Azerbaijan is just another dictatorship attacking a democratic country (or countries) and committing war crimes, genocide, and terrorism to create living space for its people. Also, there is the involvement of Armenia’s historical enemy Turkey in the conflict which is further proof of

the villainousness of these actors toward a small people just trying to leave peacefully between its two aggressive neighbours. The onlooking world should help the Armenians to stop Azerbaijan and guarantee the human rights of all peoples. Not that Armenians cannot stop the Azerbaijani attack themselves, but so that there will not be any more wars in the future. The Armenian argumentation seems to follow this kind of thought pattern.

To find actual, objective truth about the war in Nagorno-Karabakh from these arguments is an impossible task, but, luckily, I made no such attempt. What I found instead is a convoluted web of argumentation that seeks to both justify one's own side and demonise the other side. The only big difference between the two sides are the ways in which they seek to justify their side, and even there the difference is in semantics of substance. The demonisation towards the other side is done in same ways, the only difference being that the other side takes these measures slightly further. If I am afforded a moment of more colourful remarks regarding the perspective that this study has given me about the argumentation in this research data, I would say the following. The shouting of insults from one trench to another is only interrupted by the shouting that is targeted to the onlooking world to come join in the trench and hunker down, because the ones on the other trench are merciless fascists and terrorists who will not stop until we all are completely obliterated. Truth might indeed be the first casualty of war, but it seems to be closely followed by reason.

5 Conclusions

5.1 What Was Learned?

What did we actually learn from this Toulminian argumentation analysis regarding the rhetoric of war in social media? General argumentation seems to focus on to proving that the other side is at least more guilty than our side, but what does that and the arguments that point to that tell us about the war rhetoric when compared to the more traditional studies of war rhetoric that have focused on the remarks made by influential state and military leaders and other experts.

The two most prevalent rhetorical types are that of just war and war on terror. While the former is employed by both sides to some extent, it is more prevalent on the Azerbaijani side and the latter – while elements of it can be found on the Azerbaijani side – is far more used by the Armenian side.

The rhetoric of just war follows the idea that not only is the military action a right but even an obligation. War is the necessary evil that must be suffered through but everything will be better for everyone after it is over. (Kuusisto 1999, 75.) The findings of Kuusisto about the war rhetoric of leaders of the Western powers in the Gulf War are very similar to the rhetoric of the Azerbaijani commenters in the research data. The Western leaders held that the war was justified because it had been authorised by the United Nations Security Council and military action was only taken once all the other measures to solve the situation had been taken to exhaustion (*ibid*). Similarly, the Azerbaijani commenters believe the war to be justified because the Armenian occupation has been denounced by the United Nations and the peace process has not led to any results in nigh 30 years. The focus of the idea of just war in general is that the decision to take military action is morally justified and is separate though linked to the measures taken during that action (May 2007, 4). Thus, the Azerbaijani commenters seek to defend their nation's initiative to take military action to achieve what they perceive as the rightful state of affairs, as the status quo has not been that. The just war rhetoric used by the Armenian side is not (primarily) to justify their own military action as defenders against attack, but to mainly disregard the Azerbaijani argumentation about just war by denying their rights to the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Basically, their argumentation can be primarily viewed as being a sort of counter-rhetoric to the Azerbaijani stances by downplaying the rights to the war of liberation that Azerbaijan puts forward. The elements of justifying their own actions are few but consider the justification of the occupation as the safeguard that prevents the more populous Azerbaijan of completely overpowering and oppressing the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh.

As some readers might remember, I initially did not envision a rhetoric of war on terror to be found in the research data. I fully admit to being wrong about that. While I hold that the primary argumentation is about the rhetoric of just war as a 'debate' on whether Azerbaijan was justified in taking military action or not, there are many elements of war on terror rhetoric to be found, especially in the Armenian comments. The first thing about the war on terror is that it is a war for democracy (Engels & Saas 2013, 229). This idea is very prevalent in Armenian argumentation in defence of both themselves (and their state) and the

de facto state of Artsakh and its democratic structures against the oppressive dictatorship of Azerbaijan. The Armenians fight for the same values as the United States and its allies that have participated in war on terror operations across the globe since the September 11th attacks. They portray the same rhetoric as fighting for freedom, self-determination and human rights, all values that are not found in Azerbaijan. The naming of Syrian mercenaries as terrorists and drawing the line from them to those who pay them and naming the employers also as terrorists, is further building this type of rhetoric. It is as if Armenians are screaming towards the Western world that the only difference between the war on terror in the global West and Armenia is that Armenians are fighting it directly in their homeland while the rest of the West mainly fights it on foreign soil. The Azerbaijanis do not use terrorism as much as their adversaries, but some commenters do not shy away from naming Armenians as terrorists either. The Azerbaijani rhetoric on war on terror mainly focuses on the methods (war crimes) that Armenia has used and seeks to draw parallels to the targeting of civilians as being equal to terror attacks.

The audience for the argumentation of both sides are the international observers, both the state and non-state (regular people) actors. Sometimes the comments are directly targeted for the publisher of the article that the comments are a reaction of, but more often they seek to convince the larger onlooking audience that their respective side is just and right, while the other side are evil oppressors or occupiers, war criminals and possible even genocidal or terrorists. This argumentation is not targeted to their own side. It seeks not to galvanise the citizens of respective countries to participate in the war against the other, but rather to gain support of the international community to either interfere or stay away. This is a big difference towards more traditional war rhetoric, where the audience was the citizens of the country that the leader was speaking to, in order to gain support for the military action. Booth made the observation that in this information age, the audience for the war rhetoric can in fact be much larger than intended, since the rhetoric used can spread to the other side of the planet in just mere moments. Thus, the accommodation for a specific audience became more dangerous than before. (Booth 2004, 229.) Not only is that fact considered in the research data, but it is also intentionally used. The comments of both sides seem to target traditional Western values and rights of both peoples and states, such as sovereignty, international law, human rights, terrorism, and so on. Having the onlooking world as intentional audience makes the argumentation used by the commenters seem very effective, no matter how well grounded it is or not.

As we have clearly seen, the war rhetoric is targeted to the international audience in an unforeseen way. This targeting cannot be done without carefully constructed narratives and how those narratives are brought closer to the audience. In her study, Kuusisto (1999, 194) examined the two very different cases on how the Western major power leaders constructed their narratives in the Gulf and in Bosnia. In the former case, Saddam Hussein's Iraq is narrated to be the new Hitler's Germany and that there should be no appeasement, while the Bosnian conflict is meaningless slaughter where too much interference will only create further problems. These former narrative of evil empire can be found on both sides of this study. Commenters on both sides view the other as unreasonable, fascist, terrorists and so on. The struggle against such a villain is then morally justified and the world should cheer. But these narratives still exist out there somewhere in the Caucasus, while the audience sits (more or less) far away, so why should they care. This is where the concept of proximization – “speaker solicits approval of his actions by placing the addressee close to the source of threat or, alternatively, by picturing the threat as close to the addressee” – comes into play (Cap 2010, 5). Especially on the Armenian rhetoric, the threat that Azerbaijan and Turkey, and the terrorism that they support, is actively being portrayed to be heading to, if not already existing in, Europe. The events in the far of Caucasus are argued to directly affect European homes. This effect is made entirely by linguistic effort of the commenters (Chilton 2004, 153). There are no Azerbaijani supported terrorists that the commenters are physically showing to the audience, but instead the rhetoric is carefully constructed to portray that it is as if they did have those.

The entirety of the comments that the research data consists of have multiple things in common with not only each other, but also with prior results that the research into war rhetoric has produced. In the end, all of the comments serve the basic fundamental idea of rhetoric, to use speech (written or spoken) in order to persuade others and have them “form attitudes or induce actions” (Burke 1969, 41). In war rhetoric, this idea is just taken to its most extreme usage (Booth 2005, 223). The shades of grey (mostly) disappear, replaced by black and white images of good versus evil, us against them, kill or be killed. Thus, in most senses, there is little difference between the grassroots level war rhetoric in social media forums and the more studied war rhetoric of political and military leaders and experts. The minor differences are in semantics and expression. The most prevalent difference is how the global audience is better understood by the commenters in this study than by those leaders

that have been studied previously, but that difference might just be caused by the forum in which these arguments are presented.

5.2 Relevancy of the Results

What can be deduced from the results that the study produced? What do they tell us about social media war rhetoric and argumentation. In general, the results produced here are not, in my opinion, universally applicable to all social media war rhetoric ever. I would say that examining for example American social media war rhetoric about the war on terror could yield very different results to what was found here in this study. However, while certainly needing more research to prove, I would claim that the war rhetoric in social media is not that different from the war rhetoric of those political and military state leaders whose rhetoric the studies of the past have focused on. There are differences – as proven – but those can in my opinion be mostly said to be caused by the platform that they are presented upon, and the perceived audience that they have.

The study of war rhetoric itself seems to have suffered from a recession in the past decade or so with the United States' withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan and generally there being little military conflicts that have concerned the largely Western focused academia. With the Russian invasion of Ukraine, I predict this recession to end, and the study of war rhetoric to enjoy a renewed interest. If this is to be the case, I hope that this study finds its way to being a part of the discussion and perhaps even inspiration of further study or critique. Especially interesting would be to see a study following similar theoretical commitments be done about the Ukrainian war and see if that conflict has created new forms of war rhetoric or are the old commitments the majority in that discussion as well.

For the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the results sing a hopeless tune. The absolute unwillingness of both sides to consider a peaceful solution that does not involve the other side being completely humiliated and the dehumanising elements found in the rhetoric, do not speak towards a solution for the conflict. In no point has the goal of this study been to prove who is right and who is wrong, and I cannot make that distinction. However, I hope for more informed interest towards this conflict from all over. When speaking to my fellow students, friends, and family, not many of them knew what or where Nagorno-Karabakh even is. I

also hope for more research on the conflict itself as part of this interest. I highly encourage any further research on war rhetoric of this conflict, whether using Toulminian methods or other methods.

In the context of military conflicts, it is interesting to ponder whether this war is typical or not. If I would have asked this question when I started to actively work on this thesis in late 2021 – even with the results and knowledge I have now – I would have probably said that it is atypical, since the most modern conflicts were either unbalanced conflicts in the name of war on terror or covert, surrogate operations such as the ‘little green men’ of Crimea in 2014. However, with the current situation of Russian invasion of Ukraine, it can be said that the Nagorno-Karabakh war went from an echo of a bygone era, to a portent of things to come.

It is of course incredibly sad that there has to even be research on war rhetoric in this information age where sharing ideas and thoughts between peoples is very easy if there just is willingness to listen and learn. But since humanity seems to be unwilling to learn the lessons of history, the study of war rhetoric must continue on. I apologise if I seem idealistic but I woke up one moment during this process and realised that the study of war rhetoric should indeed be dead by lack of new research subjects and not find itself being revitalised and myself being part of the process. But unfortunately, as history repeats itself, so the study of war rhetoric must continue so that we can produce more accurate and better knowledge. Whether some good comes out of that knowledge or not is for someone else to consider and for time to prove.

5.3 Room for Critique

The Toulminian method of argumentation analysis has its merits but also some severe shortcomings. The various criticisms that have been pointed towards it rang through to me as well during the course of this study. I think there are two main problems when applying the Toulmin model to argumentation analysis in the manner which I did. First of all, the fact that portraying arguments in a Toulminian way can lead to nigh endless structures of argumentation when individual elements of the argument are questioned. In actual argumentation, some premises will most likely be eventually agreed upon, but since in analysis it is

impossible to determine which premises are agreed upon, we have to take arguments individually and as unchallenged to avoid these endless layered arguments. This works when there is no coherent discussion (such as in mine and Lempinen's studies) but becomes increasingly problematic if the research data were to consist of a discussion between two or more parties, where it is also unclear due to the formulation of the sentences that which premises and elements are agreed upon and which are not. However, since we have to take the arguments without the complex layers from which the argument is built on, there might be some things which could be missed. The second problem is linked to the first one and is the fact that all individual elements of Toulminian argumentation structure can be claims of their own and would thus require their own structures. The same problems from analytical standpoint come as previously. When some things just have to be accepted for the analysis to make sense, some things might be missed. Of course, these possible misses would require their own studies to be understood better, but the point of these problems is that they produce only a very narrow viewpoint into the entirety of the rhetoric.

The other problems with the Toulmin model come not from its internal weaknesses as universal theory, but from it being a subject to individual researcher's capabilities of finding and identifying the different elements of argumentation. In research data such as mine, where a single comment could have multiple claims which were not subservient to each other, it was difficult to determine the primary claim of the arguments. It is entirely possible that another researcher might have chosen a different claim to serve as the primary claim of some arguments in the research data. I do not believe that this would at least radically change the results of the study, though. Thus, I would very much want to see someone try to repeat this process, even with different research data and even maybe a different topic, to see whether their results would be in a similar line to mine or not and why they were or were not in similar line. I would also encourage more studies in to the same topic of war rhetoric, but with different methods, as the Toulminian method can also ignore some important rhetorical concepts, such as metaphors and rhetorical questions, due to its nature being the study of the literal meanings.

Where the Toulmin model excels, is the analysis of the individual elements of argumentation. When argumentation is broken down into parts, as I have done, we can analysis the elements separately and their role not just to the argument, but their effect to the larger discussion or debate. Thus, it is easier to analysis argumentation from such a research data as mine, where the plurality of voices is much vaster than in some other studies of

argumentation and rhetoric which take a single subject or a few subjects and analyse multiple texts or speeches from the same topic, whereas I could take multiple speakers from one source and time and try to find commonality between these. I would even say that this is the promise of the Toulmin model in future studies. Some other methods might be better when analysing, for example, the war rhetoric of President Volodymyr Zelenskyi, but when focusing on the war rhetoric of Ukrainian public, the Toulmin model can bring interesting results of what are the large commonalities and themes. The hindrance of this is that individual voices that differ from the large majority might be pushed aside, depending on the researcher applying the method.

The point of this study was to produce new information on the social media war rhetoric overall, and the war rhetoric of the Nagorno-Karabakh war. Since that frozen conflict seems to be heating up again with the weakening of the Russian state, due to their failures in Ukraine, there is ever more need of knowledge on the conflict. While us in the global West are much more focused now on the conflict that is closer to our own borders, we cannot forget other conflicts in the world that we are not directly part of either. While I fully support and encourage any future studies on the war rhetoric and argumentation of the Ukrainian war, I hope that other military conflicts elsewhere in the world are not forgotten from research if my prediction of the study of war rhetoric being revitalised comes to pass.

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Attachments

1 Armenian comments

Arm. 1

Artsakh is Armenian historical land, only because it was "gifted" by Stalin to Azerbaijan during USSR, does not mean it is Azerbaijani (which is by the way, an artificial word coined by Stalin). After the collapse of the USSR, Artsakh proclaimed its independence like Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan did. Even before the Soviet times, even before a concept like Azerbaijan existed, Artsakh Republic was populated predominantly by Armenians, hence churches, cathedrals and cross stones (armenian: խաչքար, khachkars) dating back to 4th and 5th centuries, I repeat when there was no concept, no nation, no country as Azerbaijan.

#RecogniseArtsakh

#StopAzerbaijaniAggression

#StopTurkeyAggression

Arm 2.

During the collapse of the USSR, at the time of independence, Azerbaijan had no right to include the territory of the people of Nagorno Karabakh into its territory against the will of NK's people.

According to international norms, as well as the constitution and laws of USSR, during the collapse of the USSR, the people of Nagorno-Karabakh had all the rights to self-determination through free will, which they did. Therefore, Nagorno-Karabakh has never been part of

the independent Azerbaijan. In other words, Nagorno Karabakh has nothing to do with the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

Arm 3.

Azerbaijan showed its real face to the world targeting churches, hospitals (including maternity hospitals), schools and kindergartens. It used weapons that contain chemicals elements such as white phosphorus.

With the help of Turkey, Azerbaijan brought syrian terrorists to fight for them and destabilized the entire region. Dealing with terrorists makes them terrorists too.

Azerbaijan and Turkey are a huge threat to international and regional peace and stability. They are TERRORIST COUNTRIES!!!

#RecognizeArtsakh AMAMAM

#StopAliyev #StopErdogan

#StopTurkishTerrorism

#StopAzerbaijaniAggression

#KickTurkeyOutOfNATO

Arm. 4

Artsakh has always been Armenian. Artsakh is a part of historic Armenia. Western Armenia was conquered by turkey in 1915 after armenian genocide. So the turks live on the armenian lands while the turks' original homeland is western china. the turks' ancestors are the Uygurs living in Western China. azerbaijan is created by lenin in 1918 on the armenian lands. Naxijevan is used to be an armenian land, it is also a gift from lenin to azerbaijan. there is NO azeri nation. the azeris are the remnants of the turks. turkey and azerbaijan are artificial countries on the armenian lands. So, why dont azerbaijan and turkey go there from where they have come to drink armenian blood?????????????

Arm. 5

Azerbaijan has established itself as a terrorist, rogue state, where human rights are encroached upon and belittled. #RecognizeArtsakh 🙏

Torturing, injuring or killing prisoners of war constitutes a war crime. Azerbaijan is violating the Geneva convention. #RecognizeArtsakh to #StopAzerbaijaniAggression 🙏

Arm. 6

This war is biggest evil and nuisance in the world. Turkey-backed Azerbaijan together with hired terrorists wants to 'liberate its land occupied land'. How mean and disgraceful this motive can be? How long is Azerbaijan going to follow its erroneous assumption? Where on earth have you seen so much lie and hatred that drive Azeris to mass killing and destruction by forbidden weapons and dishonest moves?

#StopAzerbaijaniAggression #RecognizeArtsakh to save lives from the monsters

Arm. 7

MUST KNOW!!

During the collapse of the USSR, at the time of independence, Azerbaijan had no right to include the territory of the people of Nagorno Karabakh into its territory against the will of NK's people. And what is more important is that Nagorno Karabakh has never been part of independent Azerbaijan and even during USSR when Stalin decided to give the land inhabited with 90+ ❖❖ Armenians to Azerbaijan Nagorno Karabakh had been granted a self-autonomy and had its own governing bodies reporting not to Baku but Moscow. It's time to RecognizeArtsakh!

Arm. 8

Shelling civilians, children and old people, using white phosphorus which is prohibited. This is the small number which I have mentioned. Artsakh always were and will be Armenian

land, not land, homeland. We have 7000 years of history while Azerbaijan is less than 100.
 #StopAzerbaijaniAggression #RecognizeArtsakh

Arm. 9

#Artsakh is a small, de facto independent country with all democratic values, institutions and government structure already almost 30 years. It became a part of Azerbaijan during Soviet times in 1920s by the will of devil Stalin and Bloody Bolsheviks. It became independent from Soviet Union earlier than Azerbaijan in 1990s.

By the way, UN resolutions that Azerbaijan always mentions if the one will start just to read the mentioned articles/resolutions, he/she will find almost nothing to do with what the leader of this country states. Think twice to make a choice... either you stand for dictator Stalin's and bloody bolsheviks' decision or you for the democracy and self-determination?
 #ArtsakhStrong and it will live and #wewillwin 🙏🕊️🙏

Arm. 10

There is no 'love of land' when Turko-Azeri forces use white phosphorous to burn the forests and destroy the environment, while clusterbombing civilians. This enforces the argument that all of this is more about the Azeri leadership intentions to build an oil pipeline, enriching themselves and doing nothing for ordinary Azeri citizens. If the people living there are legally 'Azeri citizens', why does the Azeri government bomb their own hospitals and schools? This is more like the abusive husband who claims 'If I can't have her, nobody will.' or 'I'll kill her before letting her live without me.' #StopAzerbaijaniAggression #RecognizeArtsakh #SanctionAzerbaijan #SanctionTurkey #WarCrimes

Arm. 11

🚫 The forces of the adversary used phosphorus munitions, containing elements of chemical weapons, in the Artsakh-Azerbaijani conflict zone. This is a gross violation of international humanitarian law, norms and principles of customary law, Geneva conventions, as well as relevant provision in UN conventions and documents. Further, it does only aim at causing

damage to the Armenian Forces, but it also aims at causing massive forest fires and creating real dangers of an environmental disaster in the area.

The prohibition of such actions and the protection of related rights and values are first and foremost in the realm of customary law, and the use of such weapons, which do not create an opportunity of a clear distinction between military and civilian objects, and simultaneously cause an environmental disaster and possible human loss, is a war crime.

Arm. 12

So sad that hatred is taught from such a young age. This will never allow the conflict to be solved in a peaceful way. And this shows also that Aliev cannot guarantee the safety of the Armenians. How can he simultaneously feed his people with hate and then proclaim that Armenians can live safely in the territories of Azerbaijan? This can never happen, so Armenians will fight till the end for their safety.

#RecognizeArtsakh

Arm. 13

For more than a month #armenians are fighting against #Terrorism

#europe was silent. Today the terrorists are fighting against Europe in the heart of Europe.

#Erdogan woke up dozens of terrorist cells in one message.

This fighting doesn't recognize religion but the all civilization should be united against terrorists.

#StopErdogan

#stopterrorism

#peaceforArtsakh

#peacefortheworld

Arm. 14

During the two months immediately before the launch of hostilities on Sept 27, Azerbaijan's military imports from Turkey surged from \$278,000 in July 2020 to \$36,000,000 in August 2020 (129 times more) and \$77,167,000 in September 2020 (277 times more). The picture should become clear on who has been actively preparing for war and who would want to start it.

Arm. 15

War is ugly for both sides. But Armenia did not start this war. Why would it? Why would 3-million Armenia start a war against 10-million Azerbaijan that has the support of 80-million Turkey? Try to answer this question and you will see who is the real aggressor.
#AzeriWarCrimes #StopAzerbaijaniAggression #RecognizeArtsakh

Arm. 16

Of course, Nurlan Ibrahimov also doesn't attack when he calls to kill every Armenian, kids elderly people, women... And bombing and killing peaceful population in Stepanakert, Azerbaijan is not attacking as well... engaging terrorists from Syria whose job is just to kill for money - no attack. Using white phosphorus munitions, beheading prisoners of war, attacking church, more than 50 schools, kindergartens hospitals and even maternity hospital.... Let's now talk about "territorial integrity".. Shut the f*ck your bloody mouths, terrorists will be destroyed totally.

Arm. 17

Azerbaijanis have been told for 3 decades that their country is not prospering because of Armenia, and Karabakh... Dictator Aliyev strengthened his grip on power by feeding hate to his people against Armenia, do they wouldn't see their real enemy, Aliyev and his clan! So eventually his people wanted him to give them that war, these war thirsty people have never live in war, war comes to every home, if not in the way of a loved one lost, but with economical and other consequences... Aliyev has certainly affirmed his country as a terrorist dictatorship. I don't think this is the image he wasted millions trying to advertise!

Arm. 18

It's funny when people from countries with one of the strongest dictatorships in the world, with a shameful history full of crimes against humanity, who now support terrorism, talk about humanism, historical justice, peace, stability, etc. Keep your mouths shut, don't talk about values that are strange to your culture. Once already Armenia saved the lives of the Armenians of Artsakh from a new genocide of new ethnic cleansing now it saves and it will always do so. Artsakh has no future with Azerbaijan.

#RecognizeArtsakh #StopGenocide #StopAzerbaijaniAggression #StopTurkey

Arm. 19

The roots of terrorism is here, in Caucasus. The World must stop Azerbaijani and Turkish aggression against Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. There is no need to be just concerned and call on BOTH sides to stop the fire, because there is no any "both sides". There is ONE side, and it is the criminal union of Turkey and Azerbaijan that attack Artsakh and feed terrorists that have already reached Europe.

The World should destroy terrorism in its roots. AM

#RecognizeArtsakh

#ArmeniaAgainstTerrorism

#DontBeBlind

Arm. 20

An attempt of Azerbaidjan supported by Turkey and terrorists is failing. You know why? Because armenians fight for their land, for their families, churches, graves, history, and love. Whereas attackers fight for "bringing back" a land without people which never belonged to independent Azerbaidjan. I am sure many Azerbaijani soldiers already regret that, however, they have no choice than to listen to the dictator's false agenda and failed plan... He even does not care about taking the bodies of fallen soldiers/terrorists. Understand that unless you stop the racist propaganda in your country there will be no peace in this land.

Arm. 21

It is not Aliyev's war. It's a people's war,"????!!!! Yes, it isn't Aliev's war, it is ErdoGUN's war- war against civilization!!!! It is echoing in Europe already. And it is not war, it is crime now. Turkey/Azeri/mercenaries are shelling civilians, hospitals, maternity centers with cluster bombs, using chemical weapon over forests where civilians are hiding. To hide these crimes no foreign journalist are allowed to be there. These people who live under dictatorial regime and grew up with fake history do not have access to social media now and do not understand the reality. The whole nation will pay for these criminals. Civilized world has to stand for human lives and recognize Artsakh to prevent another genocide. ASAP!!!

Arm. 22

#SanctionAzerbaijan #SanctionTurkey #RecognizeArtsakh

I just can't understand why Azerbaijan is crying about "their lands" despite the fact that Artsakh has always been ethnic Armenians land for thousands of years (way before Azerbaijan became a republic just as of 1918) and there's a lot of scientific and documented proof on that. This war, not before and not nowadays, was NOT started by peaceful Armenians or Artsakh. In 1991, after Soviet Union (SSSR) collapsed and all republics and regions started claiming their independence or autonomy, and as soon as Artsakh, peacefully claimed to become an Artsakh Autonomous Republic, the Azerbaijan's government got furious with that request and responded with brutal and barbaric ethnic clearance of Armenians from Baku, Sumgait, and many other regions BECAUSE they knew that all of the regions that wanted to be separated from Azerbaijan's dictatorship were of Armenian nationality for centuries living there. Azerbaijan's government killed tortured, and displaced Armenian families from their house and lands so there is no sight of Armenians left in there to claim for autonomy anymore. They destroyed as much as they could of churches, schools and any other historical evidence that was Armenian. That was their plan, but it didn't work become Armenia stood for its sons and daughters and defended them from a complete genocide. After very intense battles, Armenia was able to free Artsakh and other surrounding regions that were strategic areas for Azerbaijan's army (so they couldn't attack again). Was it wrong? Of course, not! Armenian army stopped and didn't go forward, even though had all of the abilities to go straight to Baku. We stopped but they cry that we took their lands. These

were not their lands but these were important strategic regions for preventing Azerbaijan's army from further and future attacks.

Indeed, despite their cries that they were silent for 30 years, their attempts factually never stopped and were getting more aggressive with every try but always were unsuccessful. For 30 years Azerbaijan was actively planning this 2020 war attack on Artsakh and Armenia and now, with the help of thousands of terrorist ISIS soldiers and modern weapons sent to them by Turkey, they are trying to commit another genocide on Artsakh and Armenia.

#SanctionAzerbaijan #SanctionTurkey #RecognizeArtsakh

Arm. 23

Back in late 1980s Azerbaijan denied NKR's wish and right to get reconnected with Armenia and come out of AzSSR according to USSR law. The overwhelming majority of the population were ethnic Armenians. Instead, mass killings took place in Sumgait, Baku, Kirovabad (now Gyantja) and hundreds of thousands of Armenians had to flee their homes. Centuries-old Armenian heritage in Artsakh is a proof who real owners of the land are. Az-ni have been destroying everything for 40 days, using even chemical weapons to burn the forests. Would one demolish his home? Never. For about three decades people were brainwashed about Armenians being evil. It leaves no room for peaceful co-existence as a whole nation is daydreaming about killing Armenian women, newborns and the elderly. It's a pity I can't attach screenshots of such posts by famous football players, politicians and likewise.

Now they have included Turkey and terrorists to put a full end to the existence of a nation which only wants to live peacefully in their homeland. But the outcome of the war is doomed, #Armenia will win because it simply can't stop existing on the Earth.

Arm. 24

If you know the story Armenians gave time to the people of Khojaly to empty the village. And I wonder why would Armenians kill them!! When they opened the way and gave them time to go!! You can get the answer by reading about Chingiz he was an Azerbaijani reporter who got killed in Karabakh war. He recorded that he saw Azeri military officials in the area that was forbidden to enter over the death bodies of Azeri people (they were telling Chingiz

that Armenians are there and it's not safe to get there)but he recorded everything while he was flying over the area with helicopter!!

It make sense

Azeri officials got rid of fleeing people and blamed Armenians for that killings 😞 poor people. #RecognizeArtsakh #StopAzeriAggression #StopErdogan

2 Azerbaijani comments

Azer. 1

Is survival for Armenia the occupation of the territories of another country? There is the sovereignty of the country, there are principles of international law, in the end there are UN resolutions. And on all counts Armenia is the aggressor. And the existence of the Armenians is threatened only by their government, forcing them to die for someone else's lands #stoparmenianoccupation #dontbelieveArmenia #Nkpeace

Azer. 2

haha another fake news! For 30 years we were trying to solve this problem by peace but we are fed up with your lies and aggression. The world has to know the truth! #Karabakh has always been the territory of Azerbaijan! You were just a guest here, like you are in California, in the Greater Los Angeles area, u even call it "little Armenia". Our hospitality and amity turned into a tragedy for us! #KarabakhisAzerbaijan

Azer 3.

The Economist stop lying. 27 ago, Armenia occupied Nagorno Karabakh and 7 neighboring regions of Azerbaijan. Before that, we lived in peace with our neighbors. But they dream of the idea of a great Armenia and have territorial claims to all neighboring states. They could live in the peace if they wanted to, but unfortunately the people of Armenia suffer from the fascist ideology of their government.

#stopArmenianterrorism

Azer. 4

That is totally normal when conflicting sides have different perspectives on the matter. Many viewed, The US intervention in Iraq as the occupation, whereas the US viewed it as the liberation. In respect of Karabakh, Azerbaijan is actually liberating its own internationally recognized territories. All countries, including, the UN recognized Karabakh as an internal part of Azerbaijan and 30 years of negotiations did not yield effective results due to the non-constructive position of Armenia. Therefore, Azerbaijan is on righteous path and it is single-handedly implementing UNSC resolutions by enforcing Armenia to peace.

#karabakhisazerbaijan

Azer. 5

Call things by their right names. Look at the map you will see where Nagorno Karabakh is located. It is in the center of Azerbaijan. It is not a part of Armenia. How can this be a war of survival for Armenia? Invasion of Karabakh by Armenia is just a step taken to realize their "Great Armenia" dreams. But we will never reconcile with occupation. Azerbaijan conducts military operations within its own territory and did not attack the Republic of Armenia.

#KarabakhisAzerbaijan

Azer. 6

Attacking civilians, children and old people is unethical in the war, it also signifies that they have become weak and very soon they will surrender the illegally occupied land. If NK area is internationally recognized as a territory of Azerbaijan then why this weaker n smaller country is itching with bigger n stronger country. And the toothless UN is worthless, a organization to condemn only. #StopArmenianWarCrimes

#DontBelieveArmenia

#StopArmenianWarCrimes

#KarabakhisAzerbaijan

#armeniasupportterrorism

Azer. 7

Nagorno-Karabakh is not a disputed territory. This is the territory of Azerbaijan. Both historically and (#822, #853, #874, #884).

2. Armenia has occupied not only Nagorno-Karabakh, but also 7 Azerbaijani regions around it, which Armenia was not going to give up all these 30 years peacefully.

3. The war is not on the territory of Armenia. The Azerbaijani army is not trying to seize the territory of Armenia or any part of it. The war that began with the occupation of Azerbaijani territories 30 years ago and as a result of which up to 20% of the territory of Azerbaijan was occupied, is the liberating one to get lands back to Azerbaijan.

#DontBelieveArmenia

#StopAttackingCivilians #StopArmenianOccupation #KarabakhisAzerbaijan

#StopArmenianTerror

#StopArmenianWarCrimes

#PrayForBarda

#BardaCity

#PrayForGanja

#StopArmenianTerrorism

#StopArmenianAggression

#KarabakhBelongsToAzerbaijan

Azer. 8

The belated justice of life is brought by Azerbaijan! Comments of opposite side still funny. Begging for recognition of "so called" artsakh. As if the non-existent place (for already more than 28 years) will be recognized suddenly 😊 You wish

#myKarabakh #myAzerbaijan

#KarabakhisAzerbaijan

Azer. 9

Karabakh is internationally recognized Azerbaijani land and territory, for Azerbaijan it is a war of liberation of its own land, but for Armenia it is waste of human lives for the sake of someone's land. I would recommend to go and read four UN Resolutions on Karabakh issue and you will understand that how Armenia wastes its time and human lives for the decades long of Armenian lies and aggression

#KarabakhisAzerbaijan

#StopArmenianOccupation

Azer. 10

The whole World have to understand, Our war is not against the people of #Armenia. In fact, the people of #Armenia suffer from the irresponsible and reckless behavior of the Armenian military-political leadership. Everything is so simple. There is only one way out of this situation: Armenian government have to obey UN resolutions and unconditionally withdraw its troops from our lands!

#KarabakhisAzerbaijan #stoparmenianaggression #Armenianterrorists #StopArmenianLies

#UNHumanRights

Azer. 11

We were told that the world is fair. We were told that the world does not accept cruelty. We were told that people are ready to protect each other.

It was all a LIE! The world is silent about Khojaly, the world is silent about Ganja. Now the world is silent about Terter.

Keep silent, WORLD! These are just murdered children at school.

This is not an abandoned church...

#DontBelieveArmenia

#KarabakhisAzerbaijan

#WelcomeHome

#KarabakhIsAzerbaijan

#WelcomeHome

#vurkomandirvur

#birlikdegucluyuk

#StopArmenianAggression

#StopAttackOnAzerbaijan

#VoiceofKarabakh

Azer. 12

Survive in the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan?! Armenia has the choice to survive by obeying international laws and leaving our lands. Azerbaijan fights in its own lands and implementing UN resolutions. #KarabakhisAzerbaijan #StopArmenianOccupation #StopArmenianAggression #DontBelieveArmenia

Azer. 13

It's not a disputed region. It's internationally recognised territory of Azerbaijan that has been under occupation for around 30 years. Besides Karabakh, Armenia had also occupied 7 adjacent districts where purely Azerbaijanis had lived before. Armenia kept those districts under occupation claiming that they keep buffer between Azerbaijan and Karabakh, and in the meantime 1m internally displaced people couldn't return to their homes. What's happening now is the result of Armenia's aggressive policy and its refusal over the past 30 years to return the lands peacefully.

Azer. 14

Azerbaijan is trying to restore the territorial integrity accepted by the UN. For almost 30 years, Armenia has not returned the occupied territories peacefully. Azerbaijan rightly implements UN resolutions alone. This is not just a war. This is a struggle against Armenia, which threatens the world with terrorism!

#KarabakhisAzerbaijan

#StopArmeniaTerror

Azer. 15

In the 90s Armenia saw war as expansion of their "great armenia" project, we saw it as survival and occupation.

There is no war in Armenia, war is in Azerbaijan. I don't understand what armenian soldiers are doing on our territories?

Would you accept, for example, Mexican soldiers to execute operations in New York for example? You would say wth are you doing here?

Instead of following UNSC resolutions which require armenian troops to leave Azerbaijan's lands immediately, they produce paid articles, fake propaganda and news to change the view of the global society, but it will not work.

Azer. 16

- 1.It is not disputed territory. it is internatinally recognized territory of AZERBAIJAN!
2. Armenians should withdraw their troops from the occupied territories.
3. United Nations have accepted 4 resoulitons on Nagorno Karabagh and 7 adjacent regions.but armeninas has not yet implemented those resoulitions.

Armenias is childkiller and terrorist. They using phosphorus bombs on our cities , killing our innocent people. Why do you choose being silent and not to impose sanctions on armenina?

Have you ever heard that Kim Kardashian allocated 1 million dollars to Armenia's terrorist groups to fight against Azerbaijan?

You can get easily information about that in internet.

Don't close your eyes!

#KarabakhisAzerbaijan

#AzerbaijanTurkey

#Don'tBelieveArmenia

Azer. 17

Armenia's 3-decade-long, illegal, UN-condemned military occupation of Azerbaijan's territory destroyed the lives of 800,000 Azerbaijani civilians. Every human being with a conscience should applaud the liberation of the occupied lands because it will allow innocent people to return to their villages and towns!

#KarabakhisAzerbaijanAZ

Azer. 18

If you look at any comment written by a person of Armenian ethnicity, you will see only peace rhetoric and positioning as a victim. The questions are: 1. how come such a peace loving country has been occupying 8(!) regions of Azerbaijan for 27 years?? 2. How come such a kind hearted nation expelled almost 1 million of Azerbaijani civilians from their homes? 3. How could a victim commit a genocide of Azerbaijani civilians in Khojaly in 1992? 4. How come so honest Armenian politicians ignored numerous resolutions of UN calling for immediate de-occupation of Azerbaijan's lands? 5. How was it possible to shell Azerbaijan towns located far away from the the occupied lands killing civilians?

#DonotbelieveArmenia

#StopArmenianAggression

Azer. 19

It's nothing to do with survival for Armenia. The war is not in Armenia, it's in Azerbaijan. It's just the opposite, Armenia occupied the territories of Azerbaijan (including those which had never been in dispute), and now Azerbaijan is liberating them, in order to return 800,000 Azerbaijanis who were ethnically cleansed from their own homes by Armenia.

It is Armenia which violates international law and ignores UN resolutions.

Azer. 20

Every country reserves all the right to defend its lands. Making it sound otherwise is either being stupid or expecting others to be stupid enough to believe it.

Azerbaijan has eventually waited 30 years for Armenia to withdraw its army from Azerbaijan's lands peacefully.

Today, we are retaking our own lands. We mean no ill. We mean no bloodshed. But we will not hesitate to do so if Armenia chooses to stay in our way and in our lands. We can't save a suicidal country from its own curse. It is that simple.

#Azerbaijan #KarabakhisAzerbaijan

Azer. 21

The war is not our choice. We have already waited around 30 years for peaceful resolution. But, if #ArmenianTerrorism is powerful than peace, then no any other solution than fighting to get back our occupied lands and defence our people from #armenianaggression

Azer. 22

For survival? Armenians has their own state- Armenia! Which nation in the world has two states? No one! They are occupants and no more. Hitler also claimed struggle "for survival of German nation". So?? Why the world didnt let him to "survive"?? Dear TheEconomist please use proven information and terms! the liberation of the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan from the Armenian aggressors is the Patriotic War for our people,

restoration of international law and historical justice. If you dont want die people persuade Armenia to stop occupied territories of Azerbaijan!

Azer. 23

The Economist No need to suffer in occupied territories. They may just f..k off to Armenia where nobody from Azerbaijan will care them. They have their own state by the way built on ancient Azerbaijan territories. But we do not claim which does not mean that we are ready to continue to lose another territories. Again, they are free to f..k off.

Azer. 24

Armenia is an occupant which makes Armenian military an aggressor. Every 30 years or so Armenia decides to start another war, invades Azerbaijan and kills innocent civilians. There will be no peace on these territories until Armenian aggressors go back to where they belong
- Armenian cemetery