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Food as a Weapon in Yemen

The targeting of food security in a New War

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Abstract

24 million people in war-torn Yemen were in 2019 in need of humanitarian aid. Delivery of aid has been hindered by parties to the conflict in what is best described as a strategic weaponization of food. The use of food as a weapon in Yemen requires thorough investigation, but there is a lack of research on the topic. Through a qualitative analysis of the single case of Yemen, this study identifies several aspects of the strategy used to target food security, including diversion of aid but also disruptions of markets and decreased agricultural production. As a possible perspective is also to see this alternative form of warfare as a characteristic of the changed nature of modern conflict, this study further discusses how weaponization of food relates to the dynamics of New Wars. The findings show that parties to the conflict intentionally cause hunger through hindering food availability and reducing people's access to food, through physical as well as economic methods. The findings further indicate that the purpose for using this strategy relies in part on the logics of New Wars.

Keywords: Yemen, Starvation, New War, Weaponization, Food
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1 Introduction

Yemen is suffering from the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today, as is often stated (IRC 2020: 7; OXFAM 2020; UNNEWS 14-02-19). Widespread hunger is the result of the war that has now ravaged the country for half a decade. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) an estimated number of 24 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, which is about 80% of the country's entire population (OCHA 2019a: 4). Wars have at many points in history caused famine and the correlation between conflict and high levels of food insecurity has been extensively studied (see for example Brück and d'Errico 2019; Cohen and Pinstrup-Andersen 1999; Gates et al. 2012; Marc J and Per 1999; Martin-Shields and Stojetz 2019). A reoccurring explanation in media for the case of Yemen, however, is that starvation has been a directly intentional strategy employed by the parties to the conflict. More precisely, many media channels use the concept of "food as a weapon" (CBS 19-11-17; SR 2019). Researchers have previously applied this concept to cases in Africa (Macrae and Zwi 1992), as well as the Nazi "Hunger Plan" (Gerhard 2011). Some even draw comparisons between Nazi Germany and contemporary Yemen (Runge and Graham 2020). Others have theorized the general strategy itself (Messer 1998). However, there is still a lack of research on exactly how food has been used a weapon in the particular case of Yemen.

To investigate this topic, we first need to understand the term *weapon* itself. In essence, a weapon is "a means of gaining advantage or defending oneself in a conflict or contest (OUP 2019). This is a fairly broad definition, and there is in fact no formal definition of the term "weapon" under international law (King 2015). Thus, a weapon can be a physical object, an action or something even more abstract - such as in the form of information (Lupion 2018) or social media (Singer and Brooking 2018) - when used with the intention to gain an advantage or defend oneself in conflict. Furthermore, food insecurity also has several different dimensions in the form of availability, access, utilization and stability (FAO 2006). As stated by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO 1996). These multiple dimensions further imply the existence of more than one way to cause food insecurity or starvation. In fact, Ellen Messer (1998) identifies three pathways: decreased agricultural production, disruption of markets and diversion of food aid. Without proper understanding of which of these pathways has produced the most food insecurity in Yemen, our possibilities to address the situation in the country decrease. Given the broad definition of the concept and the need for more nuanced understanding, the first part of this thesis will clarify in further detail the *means* of "food as a weapon" used in Yemen.

The second part of the definition states that a weapon is used to gain an advantage or defend oneself. This brings us to the question of why it is specifically food that has been weaponized (the act of using something as a weapon or adapt for use as a weapon) in Yemen. Whereas weapons such as guns and explosives may provide an advantage on the battlefield in the capacity to cause direct physical damage, the advantage of using food as a weapon is less apparent. Messer describes the strategy as having the purpose to "starve the opponent into submission" (Messer 1998: 173-174). Indeed, weakening the enemy would be advantageous regardless of the method used. However, the slower impact and potential to cause damage beyond the intended area (as documented by the fact that 80% of all of Yemenis lack proper access to food, not only the warring parties) begs the question of why the use of the strategy would be so advantageous in Yemen compared to other potentially more efficient methods of targeting the enemy. Thus, there is a need for deeper investigation of the purpose of using food as a weapon in Yemen.

This relates to the wider discussion in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies regarding characteristics of modern warfare, specifically the debate on the concept of "New Wars". Mary Kaldor is a central author in this debate. Her theories on the characteristics of modern conflict has been received with mixed reactions, her critics being sceptical of whether statistics support her claims that warfare has changed (Berdal 2003; Melander et al. 2009). However, her argument is less about to what extent today's conflicts are fundamentally different from earlier conflicts, and more about how old understandings of war are ill fitted for the wars we see today, and that important information is lost because of it. For example, her theories shine a light on aspects of the Yemen conflict that may otherwise be overlooked, such as alternative means of warfare (Kaldor 2012: 210-213). This pattern is of course visible in Yemen today, where the use of alternative strategies have had severe consequences for the wider population. To clarify at least part of the purpose of using food in particular as a weapon, the second part of this thesis will investigate how weaponization of food relates to New War dynamics.

1.1 Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a thorough understanding of the use of food as a weapon in Yemen. First of all, this is crucial for any fruitful response to the world's worst humanitarian crisis of today. Second, the thesis has value for the development of theory by drawing from and adding to Messer's theoretical framework as well as connecting it to Kaldor's theory, giving a detailed description of one aspect of warfare in modern conflict still in need of further research.

Given the above stated purpose, the thesis aims to answer the following question:

How has food been used as a weapon in Yemen
and how does the weaponization of food relate to New War dynamics?

1.2 Background to conflict

To better understand the context of the use of food as a weapon in Yemen, a brief description of the background to the conflict is in order.

Following the Arab spring, Yemen experienced much unrest. In November 2011 the former president Ali Abdullah Saleh handed over his power to the former vice president Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi in exchange for impunity, as part of wider transition measures sponsored by Gulf Cooperation Council states such as Saudi Arabia (and backed by the United States) including a National Dialogue Conference (NDC). The NDC developed a deal to divide Yemen into six regions as part of a new federal structure. This was seen by some as an attempt to benefit foreign interests and reduce the power and wealth of parts of the population. Indeed, one group that rejected the deal were the Houthis. This is a group that emerged out of the Zaidi Shi'a Muslim branch in northern Yemen, opposing economic discrimination as well as the spread of Sunni ideology. While taking up arms already in 2004, the Houthis expanded their control over much of the northern territories during the Arab spring. Cooperating with the former president Saleh, the Houthis seized the capital of Sana'a in 2014 and later captured the port of Hudaydah as well. President Hadi was put in house arrest in early 2015 but managed to escape and make it to the southern city of Aden. Then when the Houthis advanced on Aden, Hadi left for Saudi Arabia and requested military support. In March 2015, a coalition led by Saudi Arabia including other Gulf Cooperation states, Egypt and Sudan, and backed by the United States and the United Kingdom, launched "Operation Decisive Storm", later renamed "Operation Renewal of Hope" (Bachman 2019; BBC 06-11-19; DW 01-10-19; ECFR 2019). They declared that it would be a short operation, but fighting has continued (Al-Fareh 2018: 6).

The situation we see today is producing millions of hungry Yemenis. Both sides to the conflict are guilty of the deaths of civilians, but the deadliest factor is the lack of basic nutrition, water and healthcare – killing one child every 12 minutes, according to UN estimations (MEMO 26-10-19). An aspect of the conflict that is highlighted by Kaldor's theory is the importance of identity for the warring parties, visible in the long tribal history of Yemen with loyalties heavily tied to these identities. Related to these loyalties is the religious division between Shi'a and Sunni Islam, largely along the geographical line that separated the former Yemen Arab Republic (northern Yemen) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (southern Yemen). These two countries that were unified in 1990 in turn reflected the division between the Ottoman Empires rule of northern Yemen that ended in 1918, and the British rule of southern Yemen that ended in 1967. Thus, there are not only religious, but deeply rooted political and cultural differences that were made even more distinct in the later 20th century, especially with the rise of political Islam (ECFR 2019).

2 Theoretical Framework

In this section, the theoretical framework employed in this study is presented. It is useful to first provide an outline of the current body of research on the topic of food as a weapon, as well as the debate on "New Wars". Then, the framework for analysis of food as a weapon is operationalized, followed by the framework for analysis of how weaponization of food relates to New War dynamics.

2.1 Previous Research

As previously mentioned, the concept of food as a weapon has been researched to some extent. Nazi tactics during the second world war have been subject to analysis (Gerhard 2011) and also compared to contemporary warfare in Yemen (Runge and Graham 2020). For most of the 20th century, there was limited attention to this strategy in terms of legality (Mudge 1970). Messer (1991) is one of the earlier examples of scholarly use of the term "hunger as a weapon" itself, and her work is often recalled in later research on the strategy (see for ex. Blaikie et al. 2014; Teodosijevic 2003). As a part of what she calls "food wars", i.e. wars containing "the deliberate use of hunger as a weapon or hunger suffered as a consequence of armed conflict" (Messer 1998: 164), the strategy tends to be fuelled by structural violence that allows for the scarce resource of food to be utilized for political leverage. Messer described the strategy as active targeting of livelihoods and sources of food by belligerents in conflict for the purpose of starving the opponent into submission. The main pathways to achieve these aims are then through decreased agricultural production, disrupted markets and diversion of food aid (Messer 1998).

Relating to one of Messer's three pathways, Martha Mundy documents the targeting of agricultural land and rural areas in the Yemen conflict (Mundy 2017). Other than that, despite the use of the concept in media and reports from various organizations (HumanAppeal 2018), little research has been carried out on the use of food as a weapon in what has been aptly called the "forgotten war" in Yemen, overshadowed by other conflicts in for example Syria (Independent 15-10-18). In addition, Messer's framework provides only an initial categorization of the three different pathways of the strategy, with no further elaboration on specific methods or processes. More detailed descriptions of specific methods that can be separated into Messer's three categories (such as how decreased agricultural production is caused through the lack of labour supply or loss of access to land) can be found in the work of Marc Cohen & Per Pinstrup-Andersen (1999: 378-380). This is described further under section 2.2. Moreover, Messer briefly states that the purpose of the strategy of using food as a

weapon is for military forces to starve the opponent into submission, but she does not delve deeper into the question of why this strategy would be advantageous compared to violence targeting the enemy directly.

Kaldor's theory of New Wars is on the contrary engaged with these types of questions. Assuming that war functions according to traditional Clausewitzean logics, with clear geo-political or ideological goals, means neglecting the more complex goals of war today, as well as the economic and political interests that perpetuate violent conflict. Failing to recognize the reasons for the use of food as a weapon also implies an increased risk for addressing the conflict inadequately (Kaldor 2012: 94-95).

As the world at large moves forward into modernity, we see changes in the way wars are fought, although the strategies themselves may be close to ancient. In Syria, we see international law trying to grapple with instances of siege warfare producing starvation as combatants trap civilians in situations without access to food and other necessary supplies (Mikos-Skuza 2018; Power 2016). What Kaldor calls "New War" relates to specific patterns of violence that do not aim to capture territory from the opponent, but to control the local population, or rather to create an unfavourable environment for those one *cannot* control. This pattern of violence produces migration, and is therefore identified by Kaldor as *displacement techniques* (Kaldor 2012: 104). Kaldor writes that the political reasoning behind these techniques cannot be separated from the economics in New Wars, which she describes as relying on external support and civilian extortion, as opposed to the Old War economy running on a centralized economy that mobilized an entire population to produce the resources needed for the war effort. Taken together, we see how the armed groups political reasoning combined with their economic needs lead to warfare that is less discriminate of civilian lives and livelihoods.

These characteristics of modern conflict have been described by other authors as well, adding nuances to the argument such as how the cheaper cost of operations today increase the spread of violence when more people are able to take part, relying on civilian extortion for war finances (Münkler 2005). Stewart has concluded that unlike many interstate wars of the past that centralize the economy of a country and increases production, todays intrastate wars may have more damaging effects on the macro economy (Stewart 1993).

Critics of Kaldor have pointed out that what she calls "New" is in fact not unprecedented. Often using large-N statistics where Kaldor highlights small-N studies, they show that the patterns of conflict today have existed for a long time (Berdal 2003). An argument that Kaldor made regarding an increased ratio of civilian to combatant deaths has also been up for debate (Melander et al. 2009). However, as stated earlier, the strength in Kaldor's argument lies not in statistics of whether wars are fundamentally changed, but how a new time period calls for new perspectives on conflicts that are not as easily understood using outdated theories. Indeed, such as when we encounter the use of alternative means of warfare. But although Kaldor´s theory provides insight into the general reasoning of warring parties when employing such alternative measures, no connection has been explicitly made between her

theory and the use of food as a weapon. Thus, this thesis contributes to the New War debate with a more in-depth analysis of one case of alternative warfare, and a discussion of how it relates to Kaldor's theory.

2.2 Food as a weapon

In what follows, an operationalization is presented to be used as a framework for analysis of the Yemen case, to investigate how food has been used as a weapon. Using the framework of Messer (1998), we can theorize the main pathways of using food as a weapon as causing decreased agricultural production, disrupted markets and diversion of food aid. She also notes the underlying conditions of structural violence and vulnerabilities in the market that increase the potential for using the strategy. The addition of Marc Cohen & Per Pinstrup-Andersen (1999: 378-380) provides a more detailed description of various concrete methods potentially employed within the strategy. As their work is detailed, but lacks in the more generalized categorization, this motivates a framework incorporating both Cohen & Pinstrup-Andersen (1999) and Messer (Messer 1998). Combined, the framework to be employed in this study can be outlined as the following points:

1. Decreased agricultural production is caused through the lack of labour supply, loss of access to land, and direct effects on capital through destruction.
2. Disrupted markets can be caused by displacement of persons, loss of income, physical destruction of marketplaces and disrupted transportation networks. This complex topic can for the sake of clarity be divided into issues on the Supply-side (such as blockades and high prices) and issues on the Demand-side (such as low income or displacement).
3. Diversion of aid is done to reward supporters, starve opponents and finance own operation. Messer's description relates more to purpose than practical methods (which will provide some insight valuable for the later discussion on purpose), but we may use her categorization to differentiate between acts that obstruct delivery of aid to intended beneficiaries (purpose to starve opponent) and those that divert the aid to unintended beneficiaries (purpose to finance the own operation).

2.3 New War Patterns of Violence and Economy

To lift the discussion from being descriptive towards a more explanatory approach regarding how the weaponization of food relates to New War dynamics, below is an operationalization of Kaldor's theory of New Wars – more specifically of the patterns of economics and violence.

As previously mentioned, New Wars involve specific patterns of both economy and violence. Warring parties rely on external support and civilian extortion to great extent. In further detail, using Kaldor (2012), civilian extortion can be seen through the use of:

1. Property sieging
2. Blockades of humanitarian aid
3. Looted assets
4. Market pressure

External support on the other hand can be seen through the use of:

1. Remittances from diaspora
2. Taxation of humanitarian aid
3. Support from neighbouring countries
4. Illegal trade

This "New War economy" is intimately connected to the New War patterns of violence. So-called displacement techniques can take the form of systematic murder, ethnic cleansing and rendering an area uninhabitable for those with other identity labels that one cannot control. The latter is the one relevant for the discussion on food as a weapon and can be carried out using economic means or physical destruction of civilian targets (Kaldor 2012: 103-105). This deprivation of livelihoods leads to migration or death by starvation.

3 Methodology

In this chapter, the methodology used in the study is described, starting with the research design in the form of a case study and then discussing the material used.

3.1 Research design

As the first aim of this thesis is to investigate the use of food as a weapon in Yemen, and the second aim is to find the relation of this strategy to New War theory, so the thesis itself will be descriptive as well as explanatory (Halperin and Heath 2017: 114-116). To achieve in depth analysis, the chosen research design is a case study. By its contribution in the form of valuable information about the specific case and the in-depth analysis of the measured strategy, the study holds internal validity (Halperin and Heath 2017: 149)

As the research on the use of food as a weapon is in need of further development, the conflict in Yemen is chosen as an *extreme case*, with the intention of providing insight for our understanding of the phenomenon (Flyvbjerg 2006). As Messer's framework is expanded on, this thesis provides a more detailed logic that may be applicable to other cases, in line with what Yin defines as *analytic generalization,* as opposed to *statistical generalization* that would require further comparison with other cases (Yin 2011: 18-19). By this contribution to wider theory, the study also holds external validity (Halperin and Heath 2017: 149).

The theoretical frameworks described in section 2.2 and 2.3 provide analytical units used to guide the analysis of the chosen case. As the aim is to analyse the strategy in general and not describe differences on opposite sides of the conflict, the potentially differing methods used on either side of the conflict are still analysed together.

3.2 Material

To answer both parts of the research question, the material used for this thesis consists of quantitative as well as qualitative data. This in the form of primary sources such as factual accounts in newspapers and data records, but mostly in the form of secondary sources such as

journal articles, analytical newspaper articles and reports by various organizations (Halperin and Heath 2017: 252-253).

A word of caution is in order regarding the reliability of sources. Useful information is sometimes not being gathered in conflict situations, and often this information is even a source of contestation itself. Where precise data is unavailable, estimations from legitimate sources have on occasion been used as substitute if deemed valuable, and then clearly stated as estimations. Moreover, perspectives from parties to the conflict have on occasion been included in the documentation of events, to highlight the importance of control of information. Sources used have been critically evaluated throughout the process of writing this thesis, to produce an honest depiction of the situation, given the circumstances.

Since the current conflict in Yemen broke out in 2014 and continues to this day, the primary time period of interest is that of 2014-2020. As the aim is to determine the general use and purpose of the strategy of using food as a weapon, which has been a steady element in the fighting since early in the conflict, the thesis does not differentiate between events separated in time. Thus, it does not discuss potential development of the strategy over the years.

Lastly, it is important to be aware of some ethical concerns. Since the aim of the study is to analyse the general strategy itself, there is no intention of explicit comparisons between methods employed by different parties to the conflict. Therefore, the differences in the severity of food insecurity caused may appear greater or smaller than in actuality, when comparing the strategy on different sides of the conflict. It is not the intention of this study to take the side of either part to the conflict, other than a moral standpoint of condemning the use of food as a weapon.

4 Analysis

This chapter applies the theoretical framework to the selected case. The initial part is dedicated to the first part of the research question, describing how food has been used as a weapon in Yemen, using Messer's operationalized framework. Prior to the analysis, it is fruitful to present the background for the food security situation in general in Yemen, which has increased the potential for using the strategy. The second part takes a more explanatory stance, investigating how the weaponization of food relates to New War dynamics, thus providing an explanation for the purpose of using food as a weapon in Yemen.

4.1 The Use of Food as a Weapon

Food security background

As a result of major political changes over the past 50 years in what is today a unified Yemen, domestic food sovereignty has severely decreased. In the beginning of the 1970s the oil industry drew labourers away from household-based subsistence in rural areas and towards urbanized wage-labour. Simultaneously, the remaining local farmers were unable to compete with subsidised imported foodstuffs and shifted from production of staple crops such as grains, to cash crops – the drug khat, most importantly. Today, areas cultivated with khat represent at least 25% of total irrigated agricultural land, using a third of the country's agricultural water resources (Al-Ariqi 2019; Mundy et al. 2014). The amount is increasing, which is concerning seeing as 90% of Yemen's water withdrawal already goes toward agriculture (USAID 2010). The change in food sovereignty is visible in the fact that the country imported 18% of its consumption of staple cereals in the 1970s, whereas this number had risen to 75% in 2014. Wheat consumption is supplied by import by 90%, and rice by 100%. Staple foods generally consist of 90% imports today (OXFAM 2017).

No more than 3% of Yemen's total surface is cultivated today. Due to a variety of factors such as centralization of land ownership, scarcity of water and erosion of land the food prices have increased remarkably while poverty has also spread (Mundy et al. 2014). Simultaneously, Yemen's population has grown from eight million in 1980 to 28,5 million today, putting further pressure on resource use (AtlanticCouncil 2017; WorldBank 2018b). Still, about a third of the population was before the conflict broke out employed in agriculture, with another third relying on this as their main source of income for the household (WorldBank 2018c). Overall, 80% of Yemen's poor people lived in rural areas prior to conflict. However, a general development over the years has been that smallholder

farms get pushed out by wealthy landowners. Another negative trend that seems to continue is that despite women playing a major role in agricultural production (accounting for an estimated number of 75% of cultivation activities), women often have little legal and political power, and rarely get the ownership over land. As the conflict increases the percentage of female-headed households, this puts women in situations of increased risk of food insecurity (Rohwerder 2017; USAID 2010).

Water shortage has spread many diseases and led to the largest cholera outbreak the WHO has ever measured (TheGuardian 12-10-17). Yemen is one of the most water-scarce countries in the world and droughts further exacerbate the problem (ScienceHub 2018; UNICEF 2019). Lastly, locust swarms are an additional and very imminent threat to crops and food security across the country (TheGuardian 20-03-20). For these reasons, control over water and food resources is important for both sides of the conflict, and as will become clearer throughout the text, even a tactic employed by them.

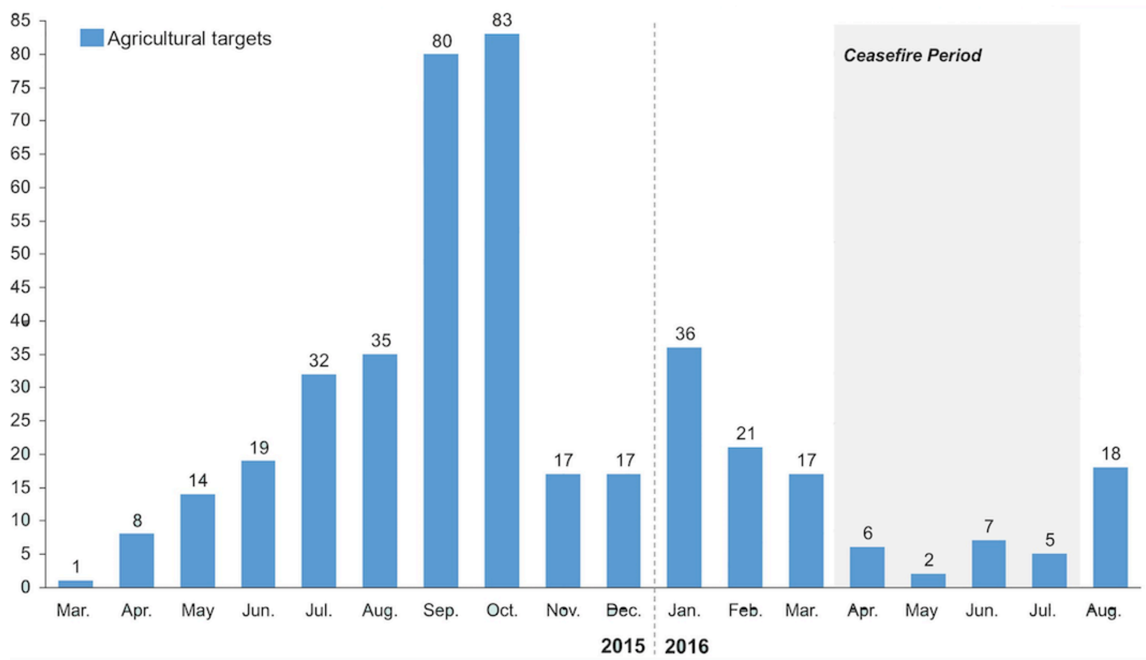
4.1.1 Targeting of Agricultural production

The first aspect out of the three identified by Messer for the strategy of using food as a weapon is the targeting of and subsequent decrease in agricultural production. As operationalized, this section will first measure the direct effects on capital through destruction by intentional air raids of agricultural land as well as the fishing industry. Secondly, lack of labour supply is measured, as a result of these intentional strategies that also lead to farmers lacking access to land. The section is concluded by some brief estimations of decreased agricultural production.

Direct effects on capital through destruction

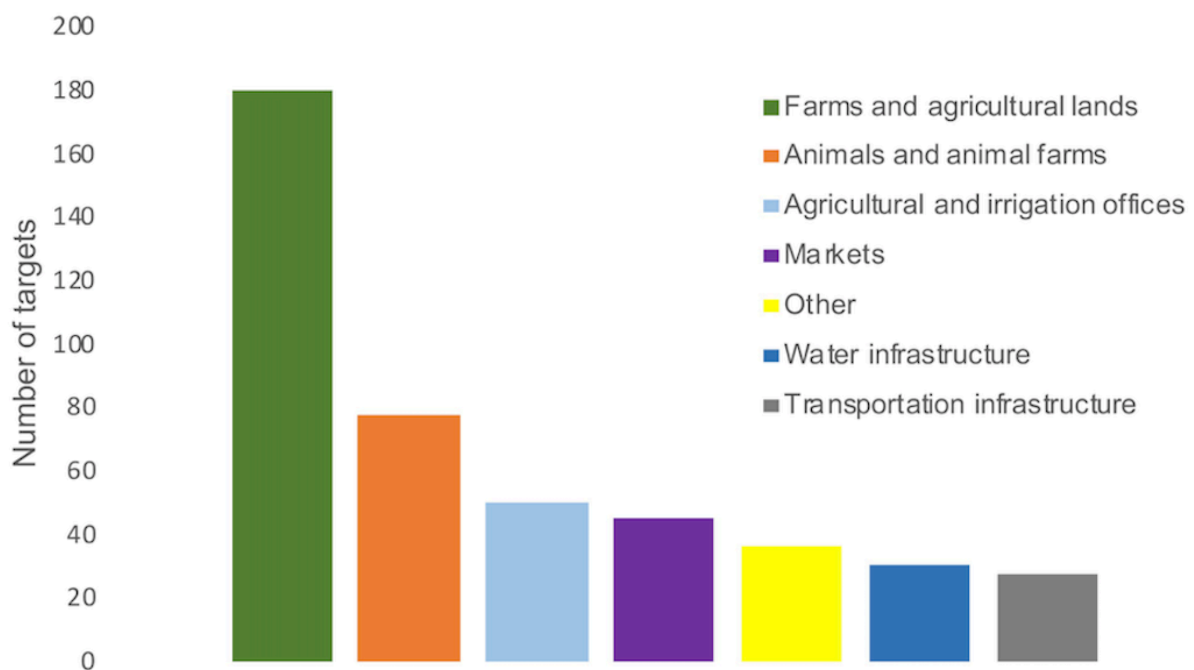
When the Saudi coalitions operation began, targets for airstrikes were primarily of military nature. From August 2015 and onwards, the strategy appears to have changed to more civilian targets, including water infrastructure and facilities for food production and distribution (Mundy 2018: 7). This shift is visible in statistics from the Yemen Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, showing a clear increase in agricultural targets after August 2015 (see Figure 1). Furthermore, we can see that attacks on farms and agricultural lands were distinctively more frequent compared to other civilian targets, when looking at overall attacks between March 2015 and August 2016 (see Figure 2).

Figure 1



Graph indicating number of agricultural targets for Saudi Coalition air raids during Mar 2015 – Aug 2016
Data produced by Yemen Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Sana'a
Graph gathered from Mundy (2018).

Figure 2



Graph indicating frequency of strikes from Saudi coalition air raids on agricultural and other civilian targets from Mar 2015 – Aug 2016
Data produced by Yemen Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Sana'a
Graph gathered from Mundy (2018).

Given that cultivated land covers less than 3% of Yemen's total land surface, targeting it this systematically requires precise aiming. Therefore, these statistics speak for the fact that attacks on agriculture are more than accidental – they are a precise strategy (Mundy 2018). As of May 2020, the total number of coalition air raids is 20 947. Currently 20 783 of these have been categorized, with 7103 military targets, 6402 non-military targets and 7278 unknown targets. That means no more than roughly a third of coalition air raids have been identified as hitting military targets. Non-military targets include residential areas (2071), transport infrastructure (785), farms (670), marketplaces (218), food storage sites (64), water and electricity sites (135), oil and gas sites (129) and many healthcare sites (YDP 2020). As Bachman states, these attacks "constitute deliberate attacks on the ability of Yemen's population to grow, store and transport its own food" (Bachman 2019: 303).

To damage agricultural production, bombing land and livestock is not the only tactic. As one study of two Yemeni cases shows, reoccurring air strikes specifically targeting irrigation systems in Tihama region as well as the authority responsible for the maintenance of these systems, has left a once fruitful region in ruins. Tihama is now a place where cultivated land has decreased by 51%, and where crop yields have severely decreased in places where agriculture is still active. Here, 43% of people go to bed hungry every night (FBLN 2017).

Besides land-based agriculture, another important sector is the fishing industry. Fish has over the past decades increased in importance for Yemen's GDP and for millions of Yemenis. Second only to oil and gas, and ahead of other big industries such as fruit and coffee production, the fishing industry is at the top of export value. More than half a million people have previously been employed in the fishing business, in turn providing livelihoods for 1.7 million Yemenis – close to a fourth of the coastal community's population of 9.4 million (Al-Fareh 2018). The Yemen Data Project has identified air raid targeting of the fishing industry, though it does not include fire from ships or helicopters, both major ways through which the coalition has attacked the fishing industry (NRC 2019). Furthermore, fishermen have unlawfully been captured and detained – even tortured – by Saudi forces (HRW 2019). These attacks have had severe consequences for the people in the coastal regions as well as the overall food security, especially since fishermen were already one of the poorest groups in Yemen (Al-Fareh 2018). In fact, 71% of fishing communities are considered very poor, with an additional 21% considered poor, according to Oxfam (2017: 9). Looking at the fact that close to all fish-offloading ports along the coast were targeted, it is apparent that these attacks were intentional and part of a strategy to target the fishing industry (Mundy 2018: 16-17). As of 2018, the number of fishermen in the workforce had been reduced by half and the Yemeni fish market has been severely diminished (Al-Fareh 2018: 9-10, 27).

Lack of Labour Supply

A 2016 report from ILO indicates that already one year into the conflict, rural areas were hit especially hard by the effects of the fighting. Despite much media coverage of urban battles such as the siege of Taiz and the battle for Hudaydah, statistics show that 68% of fighting and 69% of displacement occur in rural areas. Using measures from the governorates of Sana'a, Al-Hudaydah and Aden, they show that the rural population here declined by an average of

6.7% in the first 8 months. The agricultural sector specifically had lost 50% of its workers by then, mostly in Al-Hudaydah, a main agricultural region (ILO 2016). It is necessary to point out that a majority of displaced people in Yemen also relocate to areas similar to their place of origin. In other words, migration is as much rural to rural as it is urban to urban. Rural to urban migration accounts for less than a third of the total amount, even if the general trend for several decades has been steady urbanization. Although this might imply that there are people left living in rural areas that could be employed in agriculture, being displaced often puts people in situations without access to land and livelihood opportunities where they rely on humanitarian assistance to survive (IDMC 2019).

These above stated patterns of targeting agriculture and fishing translates to overall loss of agricultural productivity across the country. As indicated, this is due to direct loss of capital as well as the loss of labour supply and access to land caused by the displacement following attacks. Between 2014 and 2017, 76% of total cropland experienced decreased production (WorldBank 2018a). NRC estimates that since 2015, a third of total production in fishing and agriculture has been lost (NRC 2019). Thus, food availability has been affected, and clearly targeted. However, this development has had a double impact, visible in the fact that substantial parts of the Yemeni population have also experienced major loss of income. This relates to another dimension of food insecurity than availability, namely lack of food access. This is the topic for the following section.

4.1.2 Disrupted Markets

The second of Messer's three pathways for food as a weapon is the disruption of markets. To estimate the severity of this strategy, an operationalization was established differentiating between Supply-side disruptions and Demand-side disruptions. Supply-side issues identified in Yemen include blockades that drive the prices for commodities up, as well as other transport restrictions. Demand-side issues identified in Yemen include the loss of purchasing power for households due to unpaid salaries or displacement, or the lower income from remittances. To reiterate, Yemen relies heavily on imports, making it vulnerable to the observed changes in market dynamics, with severe results.

Supply-side disruptions

Coalition air raids have targeted economic sites and manufacturing areas that have resulted in workers being laid off or not paid, but the Saudi offense has had even wider effects on the national economy (Bachman 2019). Part of the Saudi-led operation in Yemen has since the beginning been to seal of the country, with closures of airports and temporary blockades of the Hudaydah port (Mundy 2018). After a Houthi attack (AlJazeera 2017b), on the Saudi airport of Riyadh in November 2017 however, this strategy was intensified with the shutting down of all of Yemen's air, sea and land ports. The sea ports of Aden, Mokha and Mukalla and the land port of al-Wadi'a – all located outside of Houthi-controlled areas – were reopened ten days later, and the coalition demanded all imports and humanitarian aid be

redirected to these ports. The ports of Hudaydah and Saleef had previously provided 80% of imports into the country. Once they reopened it was only for limited humanitarian aid, and the damage done to the economy was beyond repair (OXFAM 2017). After all, the majority of Yemen's food needs rely on imports – for some products with more than 90%, including staples such as rice and wheat. Moreover, 90-97% of their fuel needs came from imports, and this is key, since it's needed to both pump and transport water. Fuel prices had after only a few weeks of blockade doubled, and has continued to rise ever since (OCHA 2019b; OXFAM 2017: 3-5). Food prices had increased dramatically as well. A national average for price increases on all types of commodities was 21%, but locally and for certain products the increase could be much worse, such as 131% price increase for the staple food of maize in Hudaydah (OCHA 2017). For water delivered by truck, the price had increased by 600%, and this is a vital product seeing as Yemen is so severely dried out, and because diseases such as cholera are easily spread when clean water cannot be obtained (OCHA 2017; OXFAM 2019; UNICEF 2019). The reason for the monstrous price increase for water is that the increased cost of fuel means transports to rural areas become more expensive – just as the cost for rural residents to *get to* the markets also become more expensive (OXFAM 2017). Matters like these led Amnesty International to call the Saudi blockade a "collective punishment of civilians" (Amnesty 2017).

The redirection of shipments to a select few ports is combined with Saudi coalition inspections of the cargo, with the motivation that they need to ensure no smuggling of weapons take place. This follows UN Security Council Resolution 2216 (UN/S/RES/2216) imposing an arms embargo on Houthi leaders. However, the Saudi coalition has enforced this embargo very strictly, hindering all imports and humanitarian assistance. To ease this situation, the UN Security Council created the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) to monitor and manage deliveries. However, the Saudi Coalition maintains that they need to approve of UNVIM decisions to allow ships before deliveries can take place – essentially rendering the UNVIM powerless. This produces major delays, increasing the cost of imports as well as potentially spoiling food that is not delivered in time (AlJazeera 2019; Bachman 2019: 303; OXFAM 2017: 7). Import levels are far from where they were before conflict and there can be great variations from one week to another, due to continued fighting (FEWS 2019; OEC 2017). The delays also remain a fact (OCHA 2019a).

Once the unloading is completed in the ports, checkpoint inspections with fees and the need to take alternative roads due to destroyed infrastructure lead to further increases in both time and price for food deliveries (OXFAM 2017). Add to this the air raids targeting marketplaces (218), transport infrastructure (785) and other crucial facilities, and the potential presence of Houthi landmines around cities and the obstacles for a properly functioning market are clear (HRW 2017; YDP 2020).

Despite the fact that domestic production was far from making Yemen food sovereign, at least 60% of the population relied on agriculture as the main source of income. And as was shown earlier, household-based subsistence has over the years changed to cash crops, and therefore even these 60% are not self-sufficient in food. In fact, 90% of the population rely on markets

as their main food source, making food security highly dependent on market dynamics (HumanAppeal 2018: 15). The price increase of especially fuel has put 85% of farmers in situations without capabilities to operate properly. This, besides direct air raid targeting of their assets, is another factor forcing farmers to leave their lands, putting further pressure on their individual livelihood opportunities, as well as reducing the number of possible consumers in a certain area (OXFAM 2017: 8-9).

Demand-side disruptions

Overall, the private sector has seen a diminished workforce of 55%. Farmers and fishermen are of course not the only group affected. In the fall of 2016, the Central Bank of Yemen was moved from Sana'a to Aden. This made money transfers more difficult, but most importantly it led to the Hadi government ceasing to pay salaries to all government employees still in Sana'a, as well as many other in the service sector. The government is the largest single employer in the country, with the majority of public administration offices located in Sana'a (Mundy 2018: 7). In fact, one in three urban households and one in five rural households have at least one government employee (HumanAppeal 2018: 17). As of December 2017, 1.2 million public sector workers had not been paid for over a year, cutting the lifeline for another 7 million people in families depending on these salaries (OXFAM 2017: 10). This situation continues to this day, with irregular or lack of payments for public sector employees. In addition, the value of the Yemeni currency *Riyal (YER)* has plummeted (WFP 2019b). The World Bank estimates that eight million Yemenis have lost their jobs since the conflict started (FEWS 2019), in a country where 26% may have already been unemployed. The official unemployment rate is 13.5%, but critics (including the International Monetary Fund) doubt this number. Some even estimate that the number is as high as 40% (Al-Awlaqi et al. 2019: 6; Mundy et al. 2014: 8).

The situation today is that food is generally available, with the bigger issue being that people cannot afford or access it, as many logistical challenges remain for the supply of food across the country and the prices remain high (WFP 2019b). As one form of assistance, remittances from the diaspora have had big importance for Yemenis purchasing power. After the relocation of the Central Bank, though, remittances from Yemeni diaspora through the bank system were increasingly difficult. However, research has shown that a substantial part of them are made through informal networks. This makes precise amounts hard to measure. Official estimations put the value of remittances at 3-4 billion USD. Either way, remittances account for a substantial part of Yemen's GDP, and surveys show that receiving households use the income mainly for basic needs (food and clothing). Furthermore, as much as 59% of imports 2016 may have been paid for using remittances – speaking for the importance of remittances for food security. However, in 2017 Saudi Arabia imposed new fees on Yemeni remittances, greatly affecting the inflow of money into Yemen (Al-Awlaqi et al. 2019; MPIC 2018).

To summarize, the disruption of the market is beyond clear – greatly affecting food security for millions of Yemenis. It also follows the operationalized pathway from Messer's theory. Issues on the demand-side are visible in that the Hadi government, together with the Saudi

coalition, has severely restricted the purchasing power particularly in northern Yemen with the move of the Central Bank and the blockades of imports driving prices for food and fuel to the sky. Issues on the supply-side are apparent in the direct targeting by air raids of transport infrastructure and marketplaces, which also proves the intentional character of this economic warfare on food access, something the Houthis also contribute to as their use of landmines put rural residents at risk when traveling to markets. Thus, food access is as much an obstacle as food availability in the use of food as a weapon in Yemen.

As much as remittances has contributed in the past, it would not be enough even without Saudi restrictions. Another form of assistance is humanitarian aid, which covers 20% of Yemen's monthly needs of imports (OXFAM 2017). This relatively low number highlights the importance of the commercial market. Regardless, millions of households are to an increasing extent relying on this humanitarian assistance (IPC 2019). The problem is that providing this humanitarian aid has also been diverted away from the intended beneficiaries - by both parties to the conflict. This diversion is the topic for the following section.

4.1.3 Diversion of Food Aid

The last pathway identified by Messer concerns diversion of food aid, separated into acts of obstructing aid delivery, and diversion of aid towards unintended beneficiaries. There are numerous reports by humanitarian organizations of both of these phenomena taking place in Yemen. As 24 million people are in need of this aid, this is no small obstacle. More specifically, 20 million are in need of food support and 9.9 millions of them are in *acute* need (OCHA 2019a).

Obstructing aid delivery

As humanitarian aid enters Yemen the same way commercial imports do, the blockades and general sealing off of the country has often prevented this assistance from getting to where it needs to go (Bachman 2019). As much as 85% of aid has entered through the port of Hudaydah alone (DiplomatieFrance 2020). This port has also been bombed, with the rebuilding delayed, as replacement cranes were not allowed to enter until 2018 (Al-Fareh 2018; Reuters 15-01-18). And that was despite the fact that two of the cranes would be reserved for WFP food aid only (Coppi 2018). Today, the port is operational, but as we have seen, the Saudi coalition has imposed strict regulations for shipments, extra inspections and limitations of Hudaydahs capacity that impact aid as well as commercial imports (OXFAM 2017). At the time of the blockade, the UN deemed the Hadi government as using the threat of starvation as an instrument of war (UN/S/2018/68 2018).

The OCHA identifies 83 "hard-to-reach districts", where humanitarian workers are facing moderate or severe access constraints (OCHA 2019b). The majority of these districts are located on the frontlines of the conflict and in 46 of them (accounting for 51% of people living in hard-to-reach areas) the main obstacle for access is indeed direct fighting**.** In 33 other districts (accounting for 47% of people in hard-to-reach areas), the main obstacle is not

violence, but instead bureaucratic restrictions such as delayed and refused imports of essential equipment and denials of visas for workers, the latter being something impacting even officials such as the country director of the Non-Governmental Organization Human Appeal (HumanAppeal 2018; OCHA 2019b).

It has been shown that the obstacles differ in nature depending also on who is in control of it. In much of the Houthi-controlled areas, humanitarians are to great extent hindered by bureaucratic issues such as contradicting authority, improper organization and lack of trust (Coppi 2018). In 2016, staff from the Norwegian Refugee Council were detained by Houthi forces because some of the aid products were delivered in boxes that were Saudi-labelled due to re-use from an earlier aid delivery (AlJazeera 2017a). The perception that international NGOs cannot be trusted was then reinforced. In Hadi-controlled southern Yemen, the government lacks the strength to enforce control over local militias and Islamist groups, which then get more power. This makes action in these areas risky. Bureaucratic constraints in general also make access very slow and restricted here, as well as very expensive (Coppi 2018).

The humanitarian needs are most acute in areas most affected by conflict and where numbers of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) are high, such as Taizz, Al-Hudaydah, and Sana’a (OCHA 2019a). However, this of course also means increased risk for the humanitarian organizations – if they are at all allowed to operate, which is not always the case when high tensions and local lockdowns lead to lack of trust from the warring parties (HumanAppeal 2018). For example, Oxfam International and other international NGOs were hit by RPGs in December 2019, causing a temporary suspension of these organizations operations that reached more than 200 000 local residents. The attackers have not been identified, but there are indications that they could have been members of an Islamist group such as Al Qaeda (MiddleEastEye 2019). Al Qaeda have also been responsible for kidnappings of humanitarian staff (InsecurityInsight 2018). Al Qaeda is fighting against the Houthis, in some cases alongside the Saudi Coalition (Fox 2018) – although this is something the US fervently denies (WashingtonTImes 2018). What’s visible in Yemen Data Project statistics, however, is that Saudi air raids have targeted NGOs four times, and bodies of the UN eight times (YDP 2020). This, together with the above mentioned attacks on humanitarian aid indicates a clear disliking for the delivery of much needed assistance.

Diverting food to unintended beneficiaries

According to UN officials, the Houthis have also hindered humanitarian assistance. Reportedly, in 2015, Houthi-Saleh forces used snipers to target people seeking food and medical aid (Coppi 2018). They are also said to be impeding food aid trying to enter Houthi-held areas, removing supplies from distribution areas and reselling it or giving it to those not entitled to it (BBC 2018; HRW 2016; ReliefWeb 2018). The Houthis deny this (Telegraph 2019). The UN, however, maintains its position and because of it, WFP has cut assistance to people in Houthi-controlled areas by 50%. This will significantly reduce access to food for 8.5 million people and increase the levels of acute food insecurity (FEWS 2020).

WFP had for some time a contract with a Houthi-appointed aid agency to carry out the task of distributing humanitarian assistance. However, the UN has reported that some of aid has not reached the intended beneficiaries, despite records stating that the aid has been delivered. In 2018, 1200 tons of food aid was diverted from Sana'a during August and September alone. Interviews by CNN show that despite people on the ground being listed as beneficiaries, thousands of them had gone without any aid for a long time. One woman said that she saw a record stating that she had received 110 000 Yemeni Riyals from another aid organization, but in actuality she had not received anything at all. Some of this lost aid is said to have been diverted towards fighting units and some is used to buy political support for the Houthi aims. Moreover, when WFP switched to an alternate NGO to carry out the delivery, Houthi associates hindered assistance from taking place (CNN 2019a).

Furthermore, taxation at road blocks and checkpoints of humanitarian aid imports as well as commercial imports provides the forces on both sides of the conflict with revenue even before distribution (OXFAM 2017). The UN Panel of Experts on Yemen has concluded that not only is humanitarian aid taxed when entering the country through such ports as Hudaydah, but it's taxed again when crossing the frontlines – thus financing both the government and the Houthis. This income goes both to the forces in general and to individual commanders (Clements 2019).

In summary, diversion of food aid has taken place in terms of pure obstruction of aid delivery, such as through the unnecessarily strict restrictions of port operations by the Saudi coalition or direct targeting of aid beneficiaries by the Houthi. Fighting has in general been an obstacle for aid, but violence has also been directed towards humanitarian organizations, both out of lack of trust in the sincerity of operations, as well as out of pure disliking of the act itself. Diversion of food aid has also occurred by redirecting the aid to unintended beneficiaries, such as the warring parties themselves. As Messer stated, the diversion has had the intention to both starve the opponent and to finance one's own operation. Thus, we can see a first indication of what the purpose has been for the use of food as a weapon. To further investigate this topic, we now move into the second part of the research question – how does weaponization of food relate to New War dynamics?

4.2 How Weaponization of Food Relates to New War Dynamics

Messer (1998) identified the ways through which food is used as a weapon, and broad as they are, they can be said to capture the ways that it has been done in Yemen, as we have seen above. She mentions the structural inequalities that allow for the resource of food to be used for political leverage, and that the overall purpose of the strategy is to "starve the opponent into submission" (Messer 1998: 173-174). However, further investigation is needed for what

the purpose of the use of food as a weapon in Yemen is, since other methods would appear more efficient and less damaging to one's own position. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to this task.

4.2.1 New War Patterns of Economics

As shown in the fact that diversion of food aid benefits warring parties by rewarding supporters or supplying one's own fighting units, or that taxation of humanitarian aid provides income for both sides of the conflict, the war in Yemen is in part financed by diversion of food aid. This phenomena is part of what Kaldor calls the "New War economy" (Kaldor 2012). In further detail, and as operationalized, she divides this economy into external support and civilian extortion. Starting with the former, then moving on to the latter, this section clarifies how the war in Yemen is indeed a New War economy.

External support

Unlike many interstate wars that centralize the economy of a country and increases production, intrastate wars may have more damaging effects on the macro economy (Stewart 1993). That this is the case in Yemen should have been made clear by now. The Yemeni production has in many places collapsed. Tax revenue for the government has dropped (Coppi 2018: 10). A big part of the warring parties' economies is attained through external support.

One way that warring parties often finance their operations is through illegal trade across borders. One example of this form of external support in Yemen is that enormous amounts of archaeological artefacts have been smuggled out and sold to museums in countries such as the United States. To provide some sense of how big a revenue we are talking about, an example is that one item alone was sold for 34 million USD. Apart from destroying the cultural heritage of Yemen, this smuggling has provided fighting units with income (WorldAtLarge 27-12-19). Another example is arms trafficking, providing weapons to parties on both sides of the conflict as well as revenue from trade (CNN 2019b; InsideArabia 2020). Also, the Houthis have provided false documentation to conceal donations of fuel given to them. There are indications that these donations have come from Iran (UN/S/2019/83). This brings us to another form of external support and the most literal one – direct support from other countries.

Iran has for a long time refuted claims that it provides the Houthis with arms, money or other support. Recently, they admitted to giving consultation and assistance only in ideological form (MEMO 03-10-19). However, there is much evidence speaking for more materialistic forms of support as well, not least militarily (MEI 06-12-18). The Hadi government of course has more explicit support in the Saudi-led coalition, after Hadi requested and received military backup in 2015. The US and the UK have provided much needed help to the Saudi coalition in the form of intelligence and fuel (specifically mid-air refuelling), as well as trade in weapons (Bachman 2019).

Civilian extortion
As clarified above, external support for the warring parties, including the diversion of external humanitarian aid, often impact civilians negatively – sometimes deliberately so. Add to this the second part of warring parties' finances that is explicitly dependent on civilian extortion. The UN Panel of Experts on Yemen has reported systematic looting of private property carried out by the Houthis, as well as unlawful detentions of civilians (UN/S/2015/125). For example, a testament from nine civil society organizations states that clashes in the governorate of Jawf led to the displacement of more than 2000 families. Afterwards, the Houthi forces looted many homes as well as a hospital (ArabWeekly 08-03-20). Hundreds of cases of detentions have also been documented by Yemeni rights groups, and Human Rights Watch has interviewed fourteen former detainees and two relatives of detained or disappeared persons. Besides torturing detainees, the Houthis are reported to have extorted family members on a regular basis – often without releasing the detainee. The amounts paid were often millions of Yemeni Riyal, and sometimes as much as ten million (HRW 2018). To put that in perspective: In 2009, even before the outbreak of violent conflict, the average annual income was only about half a million (Fanack 2009).

As well as revenue from industrial areas and ports such as Hudaydah, the Houthis have introduced major taxations of the population – by some estimates with as much as 500% more than before conflict (Al-Masdar 26-02-20). This in response to being blocked by the Saudi coalition from selling Yemeni oil (WSJ 04-08-15). Indeed, Houthi forces rely on civilian extortion for their finances, and some leaders have even taken the opportunity to develop extensive income streams that are dependent on conflict, such as smuggling and dealing in drugs (Clements 2019).

Apart from redirection of aid to benefit one's own operation, parties finance themselves through external sources by direct support from other countries or through illegal trade. This impacts civilians, as do even more direct financialization tactics that can even be seen as one part of using food as a weapon. Overall, the economy of the Yemen conflict revolve around the warring parties, as they control the inflow of goods and the distribution of also domestic production to large extent (Coppi 2018: 32). What it all comes down to is the heavy impact on civilians, whether discussing the financialization of warring parties or the use of food as a weapon in general. Kaldor's New War theory encapsulates all of these aspects in what she calls displacement techniques, which the following section is dedicated to.

4.2.2 New War Patterns of Violence

According to Kaldor, New Wars contain certain patterns of violence, which she calls displacement techniques. One of these techniques involves the tactic of rendering an area uninhabitable, whereby parties may employ economic means or cause physical destruction. What ensues is a deprivation of livelihoods that leads to migration or death by starvation. This final section of the chapter clarifies how the war in Yemen is a case where "displacement techniques" have been used, and then discusses the purpose of its use.

Besides the direct targeting of civilians that we can see both sides of the conflict are guilty of (the Saudi coalition through their air raids of civilian targets for example, and the Houthis through their use of snipers and landmines), displacement techniques can be easily seen in the use of food as a weapon. In terms of physical destruction, the air raids on farms, irrigation systems and agriculture in general have produced massive displacement. As we saw in section 4.1, the agricultural sector has lost about half of its workers and many have been forced to flee their homes. In a wider sense, the deliberate disruption of the market that was also described in section 4.1 represents the economic means of "displacement techniques", as do the patterns of New War economics, such as financialization of the war effort by civilian extortion and external support, given the great impact on civilians. The effect of the use of food as a weapon has been a Yemen further and further pushed towards famine, indeed leading to migration and death by starvation as indicated above.

The reason for the use of displacement techniques is according to Kaldor the desire by the parties to rid an area of those loyal to different labels than one's own – those one cannot control. The stated goals of the Houthis were from the beginning to counter economic underdevelopment, political marginalization and discrimination for the Zaydi branch of Shia Islam (JUNEAU 2016). The tribal history of Yemen, as presented in the background of section 1.3, means these political and economic conflicts have identity labels attached to them, and the government and the Saudi coalition base their anti-Houthi campaign on equally labelled grounds. Thus, the interests driving the conflict easily take on dimensions of population displacement targeting specific labels. As one Saudi diplomat is reported to have said: "When we control *them,* we will feed *them*" (Mundy 2018: 7, emphasis added).

This dimension of labels can be seen in further detail in the Houthi construction of identity, that heavily relies on presenting the group as an oppressed, religious unity. The opponents are presented not only as a military threat, but as a Sunni threat to the very Zaidi identity. In fact, they distance themselves from the Yemeni identity as well, indicating a sense of belonging completely separated from southern Yemenis (Alaghbary 2017). Similarly, the Saudi coalition relies on the Sunni identity which dominates in most of these countries to motivate their attacks on opposing identities in the region (Hokayem and Roberts 2016: 170).

Apart from physical attacks on the lives and livelihoods of people, attacks on cultural sites has been recognized as a genocidal strategy, as it indicates an intention to wipe out not only human beings, but their identity (Bachman 2019). This is visible in Yemen since the Saudi coalition has not only destroyed food sites, but deliberately targeted cultural ones as well. There are numerous and repeated instances of air raids targeting important historical buildings (46 air raids) and mosques (51 air raids), and other cultural sites (29 air raids) (YDP 2020). Indeed, this led Bachman to call the Saudi operation "genocidal" (Bachman 2019).

Again, this follows the logic described by Kaldor as displacement techniques used on those with undesired identities, to render an area "uninhabitable for those one cannot control", as stated in the operationalization. To claim that the war is entirely genocidal, though, is to

reduce the conflict of some of its complexity. Looking at the Saudi quote from above, it may also be interpreted as "When we *control* them, we will feed them" (Mundy 2018: 7, emphasis added). This interpretation also has some evidence to support it, such as the fact that Saudi Arabia is one of the major contributors the Yemen Humanitarian Fund, providing some much needed aid in accessible areas (such as areas they indeed control) (OCHA 2020). This means that although Kaldor's theory does highlight "New War" dimensions of identity in the Yemen conflict, aspects of "Old Wars" such as geo-political goals are also visible, as parties do seek political control over territories.

To summarize, financialization of warring parties rely on external support as well as civilian extortion, which represents one aspect of the wider strategy of displacement techniques used in Yemen, also including the use of food as a weapon through deliberate targeting of livelihoods for the Yemeni people. Weaponization of food in Yemen follows the logic theorized by Kaldor as New War patterns of economics and violence to an extent, as identity dimensions mix with dimensions of more traditional goals in conflict. This relation between food as a weapon and New War theory is elaborated on in the final discussion below.

5 Discussion

What follows in this chapter is further discussion of how the practical strategies employed relate to New War theory, as well as what this knowledge means beyond the world of academics.

Widespread hunger is the result of a war that has now ravaged Yemen for half a decade. As the analysis shows, this is no coincidence. Food has been used as a weapon on both sides of the conflict. Messer's description guides us to the main pathways but needed the additional input of Cohen (1999) and Martin-Shields and Stojetz (2019) to form a full theoretical framework for analysis. Then, the strategy becomes clear. Intentionally decreased agricultural production and a disrupted market put millions of Yemenis in need of food aid, which parties to the conflict divert from intended beneficiaries. This is then the connection to Kaldor's theory. Just like hunger is no coincidence, the use of food as a weapon serves a specific purpose. As New Wars such as Yemen function according to certain logics, missing out on these logics means missing out on the reasoning behind the alternative warfare. However, to reiterate to a central argument of Kaldor's, her theory is less about categorization and separation of old and new, and more about allowing for complex information about conflicts today. Clearly, this is necessary for our understanding of the strategy of using food as a weapon in Yemen, and as Nietzsche said about doing science, *"one should not wish to divest existence of its rich ambiguity"* (Nietzsche 1974: 373). The answer to how weaponization of food relates to New Wars should therefore allow for some of this ambiguity, as the use of food as a weapon does fit the description of a displacement technique with the intention of rendering an area uninhabitable for a certain identity, as indicated also by the desire to wipe out cultural and religious sites and the identity formation of the warring parties; however, this desire seems dependent on a lack of political control over the population and territory, giving the conflict aspects that contradict the specific characteristics identified by Kaldor as those of New Wars.

This thesis contributes to theory by adding to Messer's framework on food as a weapon, as well as the addition of a clear example of its use as a continuation of Kaldor's theory of displacement techniques. The significance of proper understanding becomes apparent when looking at actions by international actors. For example, Sweden has sold weapons to countries in the coalition to a value of more than 200 million USD during the period 2015-2019 (SvenskaFreds 2020). No new deals between Sweden and Saudi Arabia or United Arab Emirates have been made since 2013, but this does not stop export included in earlier agreements. During 2019, Swedish weapons trade with Saudi Arabia alone reached a value of 14 million USD (SvD 19-03-20). Arguably, this decreases Swedish legitimacy as a mediator in the conflict and puts the donation of 24,4 million USD of humanitarian aid to Yemen in

2020 in a different light (SIDA 2020). Weapons trade is of course a transaction benefiting Sweden, and not an act of explicit support for the Saudi coalition's strategies. However, the absence of strict measures to prevent the use of Swedish weapons in strategies of starvation leads me to argue that Sweden allows Saudi strategies and is therefore implicitly supporting their use of food as a weapon. Furthermore, I argue that this implicit support is made possible by a lack of understanding of modern conflict. Had the strategy of using food as a weapon been highlighted to the extent that other strategies are - such as the use of chemical gas in Syria - the response would likely have been different in the state that was supplying this weapon.

The UN Security Council Resolution 2417 from 2018 recognized the connection between hunger and conflict, and condemned the use of food as a weapon (UN 2018). Similarly, the ICC recently voted to extend its jurisdiction to include the use of starvation as a weapon in non-international conflicts (WFP 2019a). However, the understanding of modern conflict is still lacking in media as well as in the political debate, and therefore Sweden can continue to sell weapons that inevitably contribute to the use of food as a weapon in Yemen.

6 Conclusion

To reiterate, the aim of this study has been to answer the following question:

How has food been used as a weapon in Yemen
and how does the weaponization of food relate to New War dynamics?

Regarding the first part of the question, it can be concluded that food has been used as a weapon in Yemen on both sides of the conflict, through methods that can be categorized into decreased agricultural production, disrupted markets and diversion of food aid. Furthermore, decreased agricultural production has been caused by direct targeting of farmers assets and important infrastructure for a functioning agricultural sector, which has been followed by a lack of labour supply as rural people are forcibly displaced. Due to this, food availability has decreased, and a disrupted market remains, with further price increases as a result of blockades. Fuel and food become too expensive for civilians to access, which is the main problem for food security. Households become dependent on food assistance, which is diverted by parties to the conflict intentionally, for the purpose of financing one's own operations, but most importantly to starve out major proportions of the Yemeni people.

This weaponization of food relates to New War dynamics in that it follows a certain logic that to some extent can be summarized as displacement techniques, with the purpose of rendering an area uninhabitable for people with a certain identity. However, the strategies employed by parties to the Yemen conflict also exhibit intentions that contradict the logics of New Wars in their "Old War" related desire for political control over territory and population. Regardless, the analysis has provided an investigation of how food has been used as a weapon and has also given an enhanced understanding for this strategy by relating it to New War theory. This study has contributed to Messer's theories of food as a weapon with more detailed accounts of her three pathways. It has also expanded Kaldor's theory and given a detailed description of one aspect of warfare in modern conflict. These two contributions represent my analytic generalizations that may provide points of departure for further research on the topic. Continued investigation of the use of food as a weapon is much needed, as proper knowledge of modern conflict and strategies used in them is crucial for any fruitful response to situations such as that in Yemen, the worst humanitarian crisis of today.

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