

‘What kind of war is this?’

Exploring the case for a post-post-proxy war definition

International Relations in historical perspective – Master thesis

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Abstract

The war in Yemen is often called a proxy war by the media, but when searching for a definition of proxy warfare, it is difficult to find one overarching characterization. This thesis contributes to the historiography surrounding the New Wars debate using the theoretical framework of proxy warfare. The main problem surrounding proxy warfare is that definitions that were given not more than 15 years ago, that have taken the older definitions of proxy wars into account, do not seem to match reality anymore. Combining this with the rise of the weapons industry and private military companies and their influence on the government and warfare, a new definition of proxy warfare is possibly needed. In this thesis, the question is answered to what extent we can still speak of proxy warfare in contemporary conflict taking into account the rise of influence of private military companies and the weapons industry. To answer this question, the war in Yemen will be used as a case study to investigate the role that the weapons industry and private military companies have on proxy wars.

The title of this thesis is a quote from Nina Aqlan, a well-known Yemeni civil rights activist. She reacts to the Saudi Arabia-led airstrikes that bomb civilian targets. Most of the equipment used for these bombings is made by American, British and Brazilian manufacturers. This quote is taken from an article about proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran in Yemen, in the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*.

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/saudi-arabia-and-iran-fighting-proxy-war-in-yemen-a-1027056.html>

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Introduction

Images of the current situation in Yemen are spread by news outlets such as the BBC and CNN, and videos of the conflict are just one mouse click away from the eyes of the curious reader. Despite the publicity of these images and stories, the civil war in Yemen is not widely known and it is dubbed 'the forgotten war'.¹ The amount of newspaper messages about it is relatively small compared to another conflict that is taking the attention of the world, namely the war in Syria. But in the meantime massive atrocities are taking place in Yemen, and world leaders do not seem to notice or do not want to take action on the matter like they do in Syria.² This neglect occurs despite calls from organisations such as Amnesty International about the desperate situation of the Yemeni population.³ Even worse, countries such as the United States and Great Britain are selling weapons and providing intelligence support to Saudi Arabia, that is in turn supporting one of the parties involved in the conflict, thus facilitating the continuation of the conflict that has already claimed the life of about 10,000 civilians, and injured 40,000.⁴

Despite the war in Yemen starting out as a civil war, more parties are involved in the conflict. Saudi Arabia and Iran are fighting their bigger war for control of the Middle East in, amongst others, the territory of Yemen. The United States are delivering arms and intelligence to Saudi Arabia.⁵ There is also evidence that they help refuel Saudi fighter planes in the air, so more bombings can be carried

¹ Amnesty International, 'Yemen. The forgotten war', (date unknown) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/09/yemen-the-forgotten-war/> [retrieved 24-02-2017]; BBC, 'Yemen Crisis. The forgotten war' (21 October 2016) <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-37734173> [retrieved 05-03-2017]; The Economist, 'The West should help Saudi Arabia limit its war in Yemen' (15 October 2016) <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21708725-bombing-funeral-sanaa-draws-attention-forgotten-war-west-should-help-saudi> [retrieved 05-03-2017].

² Simon Tisdall, 'Why Yemen conflict has become another Syria' (10 October 2016) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/10/why-yemen-conflict-has-become-another-syria> [retrieved 30-05-2017].

³ Amnesty International, 'Yemen. The forgotten war. Amnesty International is calling for:' (Date unknown) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/09/yemen-the-forgotten-war/> [retrieved 24-02-2017].

⁴ Iona Craig, 'Britain. Saudi Arabia's silent partner in Yemen's civil war', *The Independent* (19 December 2015) <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/britain-saudi-arabia-s-silent-partner-in-yemen-s-civil-war-a6780186.html> [retrieved 05-03-2017].; Ahmed al-Haj, 'Yemen civil war: 10,000 civilians killed and 40,000 injured in conflict, UN reveals', *The Independent* (January 2017) <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/yemen-civil-war-civilian-death-toll-10000-killed-40000-injured-conflict-un-reveals-a7530836.html> [retrieved 05-03-2017].

⁵ Akbar Shahid Ahmed, 'Donald Trump Could Pull The U.S. From A Middle East War On Day 1' (05-01-2017) http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/donald-trump-yemen-war_us_586ea638e4b043ad97e26f88?utm_hp_ref=yemen [retrieved 03-03-2017].

out by the Saudi coalition.⁶ The Saudis subsequently use all this help to bomb the Houthi rebels in Yemen. However, they also accept civilian casualties as collateral damage or seem to intentionally bomb civilian targets such as hospitals.⁷ The Saudis have already been accused of multiple war crimes, and they have caused the majority of the 10,000 deaths since the beginning of the conflict.⁸

The war in Yemen has been called a proxy war by different media outlets.⁹ It can however be questioned if this is the right characterization. This partly has to do with problems surrounding the definition of proxy wars. It is not agreed upon by scholars what exactly constitutes a proxy war. Different definitions of proxy wars have been given over time, and all have highlighted different aspects of it.

Proxy wars have existed for a long time, but they have been especially prevalent during the Cold War. A lot of definitions were given during this period of what these authors thought a 'proxy war' entailed. Since the Cold War numerous other definitions have been given. These newer definitions have taken the older definitions into account, but these recent definitions already seem outdated when looking at what are called 'proxy wars' by the media today. The main problem that surrounds proxy wars is therefore that definitions that were given not more than 15 years ago, that have taken the older definitions of proxy wars into account, do not seem to match reality anymore. They can be called outdated when looking at the war in Yemen. Recently, there has been a rise in power of the arms industry and private military companies (PMCs), but these have not been incorporated in contemporary definitions. As research has already shown, the power of weapons manufacturing companies such as Boeing, Lockheed Martin and Halliburton over governments is ever increasing.¹⁰

⁶ Human Rights Watch, 'Yemen. US-Made Bombs Used in Unlawful Airstrikes' (8 December 2016) <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/12/08/yemen-us-made-bombs-used-unlawful-airstrikes> [retrieved 03-03-2017]; Phil Stewart and Warren Strobel, 'U.S. to halt some arms sales to Saudi, citing civilian deaths in Yemen Campaign' (13 December 2016) <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-saudi-arabia-yemen-exclusive-idUSKBN1421UK> [retrieved 03-03-2017].

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Ibidem.

⁹ For instance in: Simon Tisdall, 'Iran-Saudi proxy war in Yemen explodes into region-wide crisis' (26 March 2015) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/26/iran-saudi-proxy-war-yemen-crisis> [retrieved 04-06-2017]. And Reuters, 'Iran ups game in Yemen's proxy war' (22 March 2017) <http://www.reuters.com/video/2017/03/22/iran-ups-game-in-yemens-proxy-war?videoId=371349072> [retrieved 04-06-2017]. And Japan Times, 'Iran steps up support for Shiite ally in Yemen proxy war' (29 March 2017) <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/03/29/world/iran-steps-support-shiite-ally-yemen-proxy-war/#.WTQQt-vyipo> [retrieved 04-06-2017]. And Max Fisher, 'How the Iranian-Saudi Proxy Struggle Tore Apart the Middle East' (19 November 2016) <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/world/middleeast/iran-saudi-proxy-war.html> [retrieved 04-06-2017].

¹⁰ Andrew Feinstein, *The Shadow World. Inside the global arms trade* (London 2012).

I would like to argue that the influence of private military companies and the weapons industry have changed proxy warfare to such an extent that parts of the definition of proxy warfare possibly need to be renewed.

So the problem is that even recent definitions do not seem to match the reality contemporary warfare. Combining this with the rise of the weapons industry and private military companies and their influence on warfare, a new definition of proxy warfare is possibly needed. Therefore, the main question that will be answered in this research is: *To what extent can we still speak of proxy warfare in contemporary conflict taking into account the rise of influence of private military companies and the weapons industry?*

This question will be answered by subquestions divided into three chapters. The first subquestion is 'In what ways have proxy wars been defined and characterized over time?'. This question will revolve around the definition of proxy wars that has been given historically and more recently over the last 15 years. The second subquestion is 'How have the weapons industry and private military companies influenced proxy warfare?'. Andrew Mumford, associate professor in politics and international relations at Nottingham University, has stated that after the Cold War the nature of warfare changed, coinciding with the rise of private military companies.¹¹ They have been widely used by governments in conflicts all over the world. Arms manufacturers have more power over the U.S. government than the public can imagine.¹² Answering this question will include an analysis of the role of the arms industry and the industry of private military companies in relation to proxy warfare. The third subquestion is 'In what ways are private enterprises influencing the conflict in Yemen?'. This case study is important to the answering of the main question of this thesis because the non-involvement premise that most emphasised by scholars, appears to be defiled in Yemen's conflict by the involvement of PMCs and the weapons industry.

The demarcation in time regarding the main question will be from the Cold War to the present. During the Cold War, the first important definitions of proxy war were given. Since the case study for this research is a still ongoing war, the end point cannot be clearly defined.

Research has been done into proxy wars and the rise of the private military companies and the weapons industry separately. But the combination of the two phenomena, proxy wars and the rise of private enterprises, has not been widely researched. It is important to investigate this connection because the two industries have been changing warfare in general and have changed proxy war in

¹¹ Andrew Mumford, 'Proxy Warfare and the Future of Conflict', *The RUSI Journal* 158 (2013) 2, 40-46.

¹² Feinstein, *The Shadow World*.

particular by challenging the non-involvement premise that is important to the definition of proxy warfare. In this way this research is contributing to the debate on new wars, using the theoretical framework of proxy warfare and the influence of private companies.

Evidence presented will be derived mainly from news reports and investigations by NGO's such as Amnesty international and Human Rights Watch.¹³ For the research on the definitions of proxy warfare and the weapons industry and private military companies, mainly secondary literature will be used. This literature is selected based on the prominence of authors in the field of proxy war. Most of them try to give a definition of proxy warfare, summarized in one sentence. The statements made by the authors based on their definition will be used to analyse definitions and compare authors to each other. For the Yemen case study, primary sources will be analysed. These sources are newspaper articles and reports by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. These newspaper reports will be searched for specific information about the weapons industry such as the type of weapons that have been used in Yemen, where they have been produced, and information about weapons sales to Saudi Arabia.

In order to answer the main question of this thesis, the theoretical framework of proxy warfare will be applied to a case study. Yemen is chosen as the case study because it is often called a proxy war in the media but the definition that is given of proxy wars does not seem to match the reality of the Yemen war. In addition, the war in Yemen is a recent one, and it has not been researched in great detail yet. So by studying the war in Yemen and the influence of the weapons industry and private military companies have on this particular conflict, it becomes clear whether the recent definitions of proxy warfare still match reality of contemporary warfare.

There will be some difficulties in conducting this research. First, parts of the industry that will analysed in this research are not a very open. The weapons industry is a relatively open branch of industry compared to the one of private military companies, but there are still difficulties in conducting research into it. The contracts that arms companies sign through the government are openly accessible, and quite a lot is known about their finances. However, the influence they have on the government is of course not openly discussed. Their way of influencing the government and the market is secret to the public. The branch of private military companies is very difficult to study, because governments are not particularly open about hiring these private military companies. The amount of sources available

¹³ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/yemen/report-yemen/> and <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/yemen>

on the subject of private military companies is scarce. Articles are available, but some of them are very difficult to verify by other sources and could therefore not be used.

The second difficulty is that the war in Yemen is a recent and still ongoing war it only started in mid-2014.¹⁴ The airstrikes by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition started even more recently, in March 2015.¹⁵ Therefore, little research has been done on proxy wars and private companies related to this specific conflict. This makes the amount of academic literature available very small and the research already done on the topic is mainly restricted to news articles.

This thesis contributes to the broader academic debate of New Wars. When asking the question whether reality of what are called proxy wars today still matches the recent definitions of proxy warfare, it is important to look at the broader debate surrounding warfare in general. According to several scholars, a break in mode of warfare can be seen after the Cold War, and this is exactly the time in which definitions of proxy warfare became more prevalent. The characteristics of new wars might be similar to the ones of proxy wars. So when looking at the possibility that the definition of proxy warfare might be outdated, this will also have influence on the definition of warfare in general and the debate surrounding it.

The first time the term “New Wars” was mentioned was by Mary Kaldor in her book *New & old wars: organized violence in a global era* from 2012. She distinguishes a break at the Cold War in mode of warfare. Kaldor shows that political conflicts are still existent after the Cold War but these are part of a new political economy of war, in which a range of new militaries such as paramilitary groups, self-defence units, mercenaries and international troops engage in new forms of violence, and in which victims are mostly civilians.¹⁶ Kaldor places a lot of emphasis on the current global character of wars. This globalization process of the war economy began after World War II and eroded the autonomy of states and their monopoly on the legitimate use of force.¹⁷ According to her, wars should not be defined in terms of technology, but should be seen in terms of disintegration of states and the changes

¹⁴ Afrah Nasser, ‘Yemen war. Between internal and external interests’ (25 February 2017) http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/yemen-war-between-internal-and-external-interests_us_58b06766e4b0658fc20f9462 [retrieved 01-03-2017].

¹⁵ Ahmed al-Haj, ‘Yemen civil war: 10,000 civilians killed and 40,000 injured in conflict, UN reveals’ (17 January 2017) <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/yemen-civil-war-civilian-death-toll-10000-killed-40000-injured-conflict-un-reveals-a7530836.html> [retrieved 05-03-2017].

¹⁶ Martin Shaw, ‘Review: The Contemporary Mode of Warfare? Mary Kaldor’s Theory of New Wars: New Wars by Mary Kaldor; Basker Vashee’, *Review of International Political Economy* 7 (2000) 1, 171-180, 172.

¹⁷ Barbara F. Walter, ‘Review: New and Old War: Organized Violence in a Global Era by Mary Kaldor’, *The American Political Science Review* 95 (2001) 2, 519-520, 519.

in social relations under the impact of globalization.¹⁸ She summarizes her distinction between ‘new’ and ‘old’ wars as follows:

‘Old wars’ are between states where the aim is the military capture of territory and the decisive encounter is the battle between armed forces. The ‘New Wars’ in contrast, take place in the context of failing states. They are wars fought by networks of state and non-state actors, where battles are rare and violence is directed mainly against civilians, and which are characterized by a new type of political economy involving a combination of extremist politics and criminality.¹⁹

Kaldor’s theory has attracted a lot of critics. It is argued that the distinction between old and new wars does not exist, and that there is nothing new to the “New Wars”. Others question the lack of adequate empirical evidence and argue that the thesis lacks measurable criteria.²⁰ Kaldor states that technology is not important in the new wars. However, when looking at the reality of contemporary warfare it can be stated that the new weapons that have been developed can make a difference in proxy warfare, for instance drone technology.²¹ The focus that Kaldor places on non-state actors however, is, as this research will show, an important feature of contemporary warfare and in particular contemporary proxy warfare.

Because of all the criticism on Kaldor, it is important to also look at other authors when it comes to the new wars debate. According to several other authors a difference in warfare occurred after the Cold War. Authors have thought both optimistically and pessimistically about the end of the Cold War, but both camps agree that the end of the Cold War has had important effects.²²

One of the other, and very popular, form of new war thinking was developed by William Lind and Thomas Hammes. They contradict Kaldor’s distancing from the importance of technology. They contend that warfare has progressed through several different stages historically and that the world is currently in the fourth generation warfare that is characterized by highly technologically empowered western forces that face inferior opponents who try to undermine western public support.²³

¹⁸ Mary Kaldor, ‘The “New War” in Iraq’, *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory* 109 (2006) 1-27, 1.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, 1.

²⁰ Dodeye Uduak Williams, ‘Relevance of Mary Kaldor’s ‘new wars’ thesis in the 21st century’, *Journal of Law and Conflict Resolution* 6 (2014) 5, 84-88, 84.

²¹ Lawrence D. Freedman, ‘The Drone Revolution’, *Foreign Affairs* 95 (2016) 6, 153-158, 155.

²² Stathis N. Kalyvas and Laia Balcells, ‘International System and Technologies of Rebellion: How the End of the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict’, *American Political Science Review* 104 (2010) 3, 415-429, 416.

²³ Bart Schuurman, ‘Clausewitz and the “New Wars” Scholars’, *Parameters* (2010) 89-100, 90-91.

Another author contributing to the new war debate is Bruno Tertrais in his article *The Demise of Ares: The End of War as We Know It?*. His main argument is that interstate and even civil wars are becoming increasingly rare.²⁴ The decline in number of civil wars however, has been challenged by several authors.²⁵ Tertrais states that the diminution in the number of wars between major powers has been a historical trend and that 'classic international conflict has practically *disappeared* from the modern world'.²⁶ Important in the light of this thesis is that Tertrais sets the timestamp for this decline of warfare in general at the end of the Cold War. The end of the Cold War has marked a big change in the world. Since then, there has been a constant decline in the number of ongoing conflicts.²⁷ The notion that interstate war should be abolished became commonly accepted in the developed world since the Cold War ended.²⁸ Tertrais argues that this decline in international warfare can be associated with political and social trends.²⁹

Several broad trends, political, moral-political and technological changes, act as hurdles for the use of conventional warfare for a state. States are reluctant to be involved in warfare directly because of the growing resistance to traditional warfare. According to Tertrais, proxy warfare is a good alternative because the state is not directly involved in the conflict. Both Andrew Mumford and Chris Loveman see proxy war as the logical outcome of this changing context, if a state still wants to aspire to advance its national agenda.³⁰

The moral-political context is the growing domestic and international opposition to traditional warfare. Bruno Tertrais relates to what has been called 'war fatigue' by John Müller.³¹ The willingness of citizens to voluntarily join ever-shrinking national armies is declining, and an upset audience does not want to see coffins returning from war zones. Furthermore, engaging in warfare can alienate states from the international community and their citizens.³²

Technological advances mean that warfare can get more destructive, costly and hazardous. The role of the media might also have been a part of this alienation. Since the Vietnam War, which

²⁴ Bruno Tertrais, 'The Demise of Ares. The End of War As We Know It?', *The Washington Quarterly* 3 (2012) 35, 7-22.

²⁵ James D. Fearon, 'Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others?', *Journal of Peace Research* 41 (2004) 3, 275-301, 275. And Kalyvas and Balcells, 'International System and Technologies of Rebellion' 416.

²⁶ Tertrais, 'The Demise of Ares', 9.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, 8.

²⁸ John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday. The Obsolescence of Major War* (Rochester 1996) forward to the 1996 reprint.

²⁹ Tertrais, 'The Demise of Ares', 7.

³⁰ Chris Loveman, 'Assessing the phenomenon of proxy intervention', *Conflict, Security & Development* 2 (2002) 3, 29-48, 46.

³¹ Tertrais, 'The Demise of Ares', 15.

³² Loveman, 'Assessing the phenomenon of proxy intervention', 37.

ended in 1975, footage of wars and killings are easily accessible to the public and broadcasted almost daily on television.³³ The Vietnam War gave rise to the phenomenon of 'Vietnam syndrome', but this did not make the United States shy away from isolationism during the Cold War. Instead, they used proxy warfare as a way to further their interests.³⁴ As long as the trend of moral and technological change will continue to persist, the shift away from interstate war towards proxy intervention will be reinforced.³⁵

³³ Mumford, 'Proxy Warfare and the Future of Conflict', 40.

³⁴ Ibidem, 41.

³⁵ Loveman, 'Assessing the phenomenon of proxy intervention', 47.

Chapter 1 – Proxy warfare

In order to determine if the definitions often given of ‘proxy wars’ can be applied to and matches what are currently called proxy wars, it is necessary to look at the classic and contemporary definitions that are given of proxy warfare. The subquestion answered in this chapter will be ‘In what ways have proxy wars been defined and characterized over time?’. The classic definitions of proxy war were given during the Cold War period. Proxy warfare is not a new concept, but the notion of proxy warfare sometimes still evokes the vision of a Cold War struggle in some third world country, but this often is not the case anymore.³⁶ Therefore these classic definitions of proxy warfare given during the Cold War need to be compared with more recent definitions. More recently, in the last 15 years, scholars have also defined proxy warfare. They have taken the classical definitions into mind and used them to construct their own definitions. These new and old definitions can be analysed and compared to each other to find any common features and differences. It will become clear that the main contention point for the definition of proxy wars is the extent in which the principal is directly involved in the conflict. The term ‘directly’ also invokes debate because it is not agreed upon by academics when a principal is directly involved or not. All authors mentioned in this chapter find a different manner and scope of involvement in the conflict by the principal acceptable for a war to be called a proxy war.

In this chapter it will also be analysed how the definition has changed and evolved. This is important because this change shows that the definition of proxy warfare has evolved over time and has been adapted to reality. This important for this thesis because it is argued here that maybe a new definition is needed because reality has changed. The change of definition also shows that it is not unusual for the definition to be revised, because it has been done before.

1.1 Defining proxy wars

In order to give a complete overview of proxy wars, of course first a definition is needed. However, so many definitions have been given of proxy wars over time that not all of them can be incorporated in this research. The definitions here are given because they are the most prominent definitions. These definitions are given by the most important researchers regarding warfare and proxy war of the Cold War and contemporary era. They are incorporated here also because their diversity shows the ambiguity that surrounds the term proxy warfare. The definitions given below will be evaluated and compared to each other to find common features and differences.

³⁶ Tyrone Groh, ‘A Changing State of War. Review of Andrew Mumford’s Proxy Warfare: War and Conflict in the Modern World’, *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* (2014) 149-151, 149.

One of the starting points when looking for a definition would be in a dictionary. In the Oxford Dictionary, proxy war is described as 'A war instigated by a major power which does not itself become involved'. In the Cambridge Dictionary, the term is explained as 'a war fought between groups or smaller countries that each represent the interests of other larger powers, and may have help and support from these'. Already in these two definitions, there is ambiguity about the involvement of the principal power. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the principal is not involved, while the Cambridge Dictionary states that the proxy might get help and support from the principal.

1.2 Classical definitions

The definitions given by dictionaries are of course too narrow and might not be grounded in scientific research. Therefore, it is important that academic definitions of proxy wars are studied too. One of the most important classical definitions of proxy warfare is given by Karl Deutsch, a social and political scientist. He defined proxy wars in 1964 as, 'an international conflict between two foreign powers, fought out on the soil of a third country; disguised as a conflict over an internal issue of that country; and using some of that country's manpower, resources and territory as a means for achieving preponderantly foreign goals and foreign strategies'.³⁷ However, Deutsch does not take into account the local dimension of proxy wars in a clear way. For him, a proxy war does not have to be grounded in an already existing local conflict. He merely states that the war is 'disguised as a conflict over an internal issue'. It is not defined clearly if there is already a conflict in the form of warfare going on over this issue. Therefore, it is not entirely clear whether in Deutsch' definition the principal plays into a locally existing disagreement or a locally existing war, because 'conflict' can mean both of these. This means Deutsch is not clear about whether the principal starts the warfare or if it is already going on and the principal hatches on to the warfare. An additional point that stands out is that according to Deutsch' definition, proxy warfare needs to be fought with the resources of the country that the principal is taking interest in. Already in later proxy wars, such as the one in Afghanistan, it became clear that this was not the case, and that Deutsch' definition does not match reality.³⁸ Inherent in Deutsch' definition is a power relation from the principal to the proxy. The proxy is forced to use their own weapons so the principal can reach their own goals. He seems to be arguing that the proxy does not have anything to say about the relation between them and the principal.

³⁷ Andrew Mumford, 'Proxy Warfare and the Future of Conflict', *The RUSI Journal* 158 (2013) 2, 40-46, 40.

³⁸ Ahmed Rashid, 'Back with a Vengeance: Proxy war in Afghanistan', *The World Today* 52 (1996) 3, 60-63, 61.

Bertil Dunér, defining proxy wars in 1981, argues more clearly that a state should only be involved indirectly, but this means that the work can be done by someone else entirely or in part.³⁹ For him it is imperative that the principal and proxy have the same interests.⁴⁰ He also states that: “Thus, there is a tendency to insert into the proxy concept the circumstance that A provides B with material support intended precisely for the actual intervention, such as transport facilities, supplies of arms, etc.”⁴¹ However, he then goes on to state that the material support is not really important in comparison to the difference in power between the proxy and principal.⁴² This can also be inferred from the phrasing ‘there is a tendency’, implying that he does not necessarily agree with this. It however also shows that there is a change in definitions coming up, since apparently some of his fellow scholars are already challenging the definition.

In recent times, the dynamics of proxy warfare have changed dramatically, as will be shown in the second and third chapter of this thesis. Deutsch’ definition and other older definitions are too narrow for modern warfare. They were drafted in a time when modern weapon systems were not yet developed. In addition, the world has changed and relations between countries have altered. The stand-off between the United States and the Soviet Union has taken on a different form. Also since the end of the Cold War, in particular the Vietnam War and the resulting Vietnam Syndrome, the attitude of the public regarding warfare has changed.⁴³ This point has been raised by Andrew Mumford and has been supported by the broader trend surrounding the New Wars debate. Tertrais also emphasises this and Müller has called it ‘war fatigue’. The public has developed a growing resistance to conventional warfare.

These classic definitions are still interesting because it shows how people thought about proxy wars during the Cold War. They are also important because the scholars that have given definitions of proxy warfare over the last 15 years have taken these older definitions into account, and these newer definitions can already be called outdated.

1.3 Contemporary definitions

When looking at more contemporary definitions of proxy wars, several features are deemed important. First, this is the forms of co-operation that can exist between the principal and proxy. When defining proxy wars, it is important first to establish the relation between the principal and the proxy.

³⁹ Bertil Dunér, ‘Proxy Intervention in Civil Wars’, *Journal of Peace Research* 18 (1981) 4, 353-361, 353.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, 356.

⁴¹ Ibidem, 356.

⁴² Ibidem, 357.

⁴³ Mumford, ‘Proxy Warfare and the Future of Conflict’, 40.

In order for the principal and proxy to work together, there has to be a 'compatibility of interests'. This presumes a voluntary relationship between principal and proxy. The most commonly recognized feature of proxy intervention according to Chris Loveman, as described in his article *Assessing the phenomenon of proxy intervention*, is that the principal supplies weapons or other military equipment to the proxy thereby strengthening the proxy and avoiding direct intervention.⁴⁴ This is different from what Deutsch states because he argues that the weapons the principal use are provided by the proxy itself, but it matches his non-involvement premise. A broader approach can also be taken and can include no less than four aspects of military co-operation: intelligence, information, support and co-ordination.⁴⁵ These milder forms of intervention have supplanted, according to Ann Hironaka, the more aggressive actions by principal states.⁴⁶ This means that principal states are less likely to resolve conflicts with large military forces, but find other means to allow a conflict to continue.⁴⁷

Loveman then drafts a comprehensive list of common feature of proxy intervention, of which the first three are all about the relation between principal and proxy. First, a relation exists between a principal and a proxy, who share a common enemy. Second, this principal's aim is to avoid direct participation in and responsibility for a conflict. The principal provides the proxy with material aid that can vary in type and scope. Third, the principal and proxy need to co-operate activities and exchange of information. Fourth, proxy intervention normally results in the escalation of that conflict.⁴⁸ This list will later be applied to the Yemen case study.

This thinking about co-operation between principal and proxy is not a radical shift away from the definitions given in the Cold War era, because Deutsch and Dunér also established that relation between proxy and principal exists. However, there seems to be a shift in thinking about how this involvement manifests itself. The help a principal gives can vary in scope and means. Deutsch states that the principal is mainly involved through means of the proxy. Dunér states that the material support that is given by the principal to a proxy is not really important, because it is just a reflection of the power relation between principal and proxy. This power imbalance would be more important than the support itself. This is also what Deutsch seems to want to make clear. Two countries that are fighting have the complete control over the third country, and can even use the weapons of the proxy to reach their goals. From the arguments of Dunér and Deutsch it can be derived that in the context of

⁴⁴ Chris Loveman, 'Assessing the phenomenon of proxy intervention', *Conflict, Security & Development* 2/03 (2002) 29-48, 31.

⁴⁵ Dunér, 'Proxy Intervention in Civil Wars', 353.

⁴⁶ Ann Hironaka, *Neverending Wars: The International Community, Weak States, and the Perpetuation of Civil War* (Cambridge 2005) 131.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, 131.

⁴⁸ Loveman, 'Assessing the phenomenon of proxy intervention', 33.

the Cold War, emphasis seemed to be more on power relations than on weapons delivery or other forms of support.

The second important characteristic in contemporary definitions is that recently, the diversity in actors involved in proxy conflict is recognized more clearly. Andrew Mumford does take into account the local factor and diversity of actors in proxy wars more clearly than Deutsch and thus describes proxy wars as 'conflicts in which a third party intervenes indirectly in order to influence the strategic outcome in favour of its preferred faction'.⁴⁹ This is already a broader definition than Deutsch gave in 1964, because 'foreign powers' are replaced with 'a third party'. By 'foreign powers' Deutsch meant states. Mumford chooses explicitly to not use this term again, but changes it to 'third party'. This would suggest that Mumford is thinking of other actors than states when he writes 'third parties'. But in the subsequent pages of this essay, Mumford again focusses on the entity of states. In his book *Proxy Warfare*, that was written one year after the article, Mumford does include state actors as well as non-state actors and they can play any role: benefactor, proxy, or adversary.⁵⁰ This change shows that even within a year, scholars can adapt the definition of proxy warfare when needed.

Kim Gragin, senior research fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, describes this involvement of non-state actors as 'semi-proxy wars' in her article *Semi-proxy wars and U.S. counterterrorism strategy*.⁵¹ She uses this term because she thinks the classical or older definitions imply a Cold War framework and that the situation in the current world, especially in the conflict in Syria, is more complex. The classical definition also minimizes the involvement of external non-state actors in proxy warfare that is so important in contemporary wars.⁵² She thus argues that sometimes definitions need to be changed, and it shows how contemporary scholars think about classical definitions. Gragin argues that the modern world is too complex for the Cold War definitions.

The third important factor in more recent definitions of proxy warfare is the level at which conflict takes shape and takes place. Although the international level of proxy wars is very important, it is often overlooked that there is another, local level that is just as important. What both Deutsch and Mumford fail to mention explicitly, is that proxy wars are rooted in a local conflict. They do mention the local dimension, in the sense that the conflict is being fought out on a local level and that the soil on which it is fought out, is not the one of the principal country. But it is also important to notice that there is a

⁴⁹ Mumford, 'Proxy Warfare and the Future of Conflict', 40.

⁵⁰ Groh, 'A Changing State of War', 150.

⁵¹ R. Kim Cragin, 'Semi-Proxy wars and U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy', *Conflict & Terrorism* 38 (2015) 5, 311-327, 312.

⁵² *Ibidem*, 312.

level that goes before the decision of a country to start fighting on territory that is not theirs. Principals do not invent conflicts to be fought out on the soil of a third country, they hitch on to already existing local conflicts. So before there can even be any case of proxy warfare, it is paramount that there is a conflict going on between local actors that might not necessarily have the intention to have a principal involved. The principal can then notice these existing wars or tension to play into. This local level of proxy wars is strongly emphasized by Loveman. He states that 'Indeed, those intervening by proxy rely on using a local conflict to distance themselves from their actions'.⁵³ As follows from these definitions, to give one clear definition of proxy wars is, therefore, difficult because they are established on several different levels and can take many different forms and therefore can be analysed on different levels.

1.4 Definition for this research

In order to continue this research it is important that the given definitions of proxy warfare are compared. It is also important to analyse how these have changed over time. It is clear that there is no consensus on the nature of proxy warfare. However, it is possible to find some common features of proxy warfare that are underlined by all the authors that are mentioned here. The definition given below will be applied to the Yemen case study in chapter three.

The first feature that becomes clear from all the above authors is the fact that the principal is not directly involved in the conflict. Deutsch' definition does not explicitly mention the main contention point in the definition of proxy wars, namely the non-involvement of the principal, but it implies that the principal should not be directly involved in proxy wars. In his article Mumford additionally states that proxy wars are the logical replacement for states seeking to further their own strategic goals while at the same time avoiding engagement in direct, costly and bloody warfare. So for Mumford proxy wars are a logical step to take for governments. However, he emphasises that proxy warfare needs to have a premise of indirect engagement, with state A hiring proxies in state B to conduct operations on its behalf.⁵⁴ The factor of indirect engagement is thus important to both Deutsch and Mumford. Realistically, the relationship between the proxy and principal has been surrounded by more ambiguity and the total factual disengagement of 'State A' is not always as clear as Mumford describes. So as we have seen so far, both these definitions are not totally complicit with reality, and this shows how difficult it is to come to a clear complete definition. What becomes clear from the two definitions given by Deutsch and Mumford is that it is important for them that the third party is not directly involved in the conflict. The principal should only be involved through the proxy. Mumford draws the line between

⁵³ Loveman, 'Assessing the phenomenon of proxy intervention', 30.

⁵⁴ Mumford, 'Proxy Warfare and the Future of Conflict', 40.

proxy war and direct intervention based on whether the principal has personnel located inside the target state.⁵⁵ The non-involvement assumed in this thesis is the one in which the principal has no citizens on the soil of the proxy. This is also the dividing line that will be used in this thesis; for a war to be a proxy war, no citizens of the principal can be involved in battle inside the state where the war is taking place.

Secondly, the principal can support the proxy through various means. Most common is to support the proxy through weapons delivery, but it can also take the form of intelligence or organisational support. The presumptions of non-involvement and support in some way or form however seem to clash, and this cuts to the core of the main question of this thesis. The question is how much involvement is acceptable for it to not count as direct involvement. Deutsch and Mumford do not talk about delivering support to the proxy, but Loveman and Dunér do. For this thesis it will be assumed that support is possible in many different forms, but that weapon delivery directly to the proxy is the most common form. If the support involves citizens or personnel of the principal on the soil of the third country, it does not count as 'support' anymore, but as involvement.

A third feature of proxy warfare is that the conflict between parties is fought out on the soil of another country, and rooted in an already existing conflict. Of all authors, Loveman mentions this the most explicitly. Principals cannot invent a conflict.

1.5 Conclusion

Proxy wars have been defined differently over time, and there seems to have been no consensus at any point to what exactly proxy warfare entails. During the Cold War, proxy wars seemed to be about power relationships. In the last 15 years, definitions seemed to focus on the question of the amount and forms support from the principal can give. But the most important discussion has been the one surrounding the level of involvement from the principal. When comparing the definitions that have been given. Some common features can be found and a definition can be given to work with in this thesis. The principal should only be involved through the proxy. No citizens of the principal should be involved in battle in the soil of the country that the war is taking place in. The means of support from the principal to the proxy can vary greatly, but the most common form of support is weapons delivery. The origin of the proxy war should always be an existing conflict on the soil of another country.

⁵⁵ Groh, 'A Changing State of War', 150.

Chapter 2 – Private enterprises

Now that the definitions that are given of proxy warfare are analysed and their common features are found, it is time to take a look at the role that the weapons industry and private military companies play in contemporary warfare. The question that will be answered in this chapter is 'How have the weapons industry and private military companies influenced proxy warfare?'. The deployment of mercenaries from private military companies has challenged the non-involvement premise of the definition of proxy warfare. The weapons industry has a great impact on the American government and the way in which the government wages war. As is stated by Alex Marshall 'Since the 1970s, the global economy as a whole has become dominated by the role played by finance capital in advanced nations – between 1973 and 2007, financial profits rose from 16% to 41% of total profits in the US economy, for example.⁵⁶ While state power continued to expand in terms of surveillance and advanced defence systems, therefore, its capacity to control and direct market forces withered.⁵⁷

2.1 Weapons industry

The documentary *Shadow World* from 2016, based on the book by Andrew Feinstein and directed by Johan Grimont, shows a lot about the power of the weapons industry. Through testimonies of research journalists, weapons traders, lobbyists and politicians it shows how powerful the weapons industry is. In the documentary it becomes clear how big the role of the weapons industry and their lobby is on the government of in particular the United States and the United Kingdom. Vijay Prashad, author and journalist, states in the documentary that 'for the last 50 years at least, policy has been made based on the assumption of greed. And it's ruined the world'.⁵⁸

The power of the weapons industry is made clear by statements from several different experts in the documentary. Chris Hedges, former war correspondent for *The New York Times*, states that the American government is controlled by corporations. There are over 35,000 lobbyists in Washington and according to Hedges they write the legislation and they write the bills.⁵⁹ Corruption is not shunned

⁵⁶ Alex Marshall, 'From civil war to proxy war: past history and current dilemmas', *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 27 (2016) 2, 183-195, 190.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, 190.

⁵⁸ *Shadow World*, DVD, director Johan Grimont, z.p, Dalton Distribution, 2016, 17:25

⁵⁹ *Shadow World*, 32:09.

in this process, and it makes the arms industry far bigger than it needs to be.⁶⁰ Feinstein describes this as 'legal bribery'.⁶¹

Riccardo Privitera, Weapon salesman at Talisman Europe Ltd., describes Lockheed Martin, one of the biggest arms manufacturers in the world, as an octopus that roams its tentacles in all levels of government.⁶² The phenomenon is sometimes described as the 'shadow government'. Lawrence Wilkerson, Colonel at the American army and former Chief of Staff for the Secretary of State, states that the National Security today is mostly composed of people that hit the so called revolving door. They make a name for themselves in the private industry, and then they come into the government.⁶³ This keeps the national security league very small and very wealthy.⁶⁴ It also ensures that the interests of the arms industry are always represented in the government. US State Secretary Rex Tillerson established good, business-like relations with Saudi Arabia in the days that he headed ExxonMobil.⁶⁵

Jeremy Scahill, research journalist and writer of the book *Dirty Wars*, states that Dick Cheney left the government to head the American arms manufacturer Halliburton. In the 1990s he built up the company's war empire. He then came back into the government, and hired Halliburton to send equipment and personnel to the Gulf Region. Scahill states that people like Cheney probably had a long-term plan to increase the power of private companies. It is also highly likely that Cheney personally made money out of the Halliburton contract deal. Samuel Perlo-Freeman, a defense-economist at SIPRI Stockholm appears in the documentary stating that many arms deals would not take place if they did not provide opportunities for personal enrichment.⁶⁶ He is possibly pointing to politicians who make profit from arms deals. These politicians, who have been bribed by amongst others the directors of arms manufacturers, have all the reason to keep their country involved in wars because they can make money out of it.

And for politicians who do not represent the weapons industry in one way or another, the weapons industry also has a solution. Riccardo Privitera states that politicians are easily bribed and politics are led by the demands of the arms industry.⁶⁷ Directors of arms manufacturers can easily bribe politicians

⁶⁰ Joe Roeber, 'Hard-wired for corruption' (28 August 2005) <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/hardwiredforcorruption> [retrieved 01-06-2017].

⁶¹ Feinstein, *The Shadow World*, Legal Bribery.

⁶² *Shadow World*, 33:40.

⁶³ Feinstein, *The Shadow World*, Future imperfect.

⁶⁴ *Shadow World*, 27:50.

⁶⁵ Andrei Akulov, 'US to Plunge into Yemen's War' (2 April 2017) <http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2017/04/02/us-plunge-into-yemen-war.html> [retrieved 05-05-2017].

⁶⁶ *Shadow World*, 48:55.

⁶⁷ *Shadow World*, 13:28.

with the promise of enormous amounts of money.⁶⁸ Money is exactly what the arms industry has in great amounts and it is used in other ways as well. When Saudi Arabian statesmen would come to Britain they would be bribed with cutlery sets, callgirls, cars and private planes.⁶⁹ BAE systems, one of the biggest manufacturers in the United Kingdom had 'slush funds' available to spawn the Saudi Arabians officials into arms deals.⁷⁰ They were giving shopping money, private chartered flights, cars and even planes. A lot is also used as smear money and bonuses for highly placed officials who make deals possible. Mark Thatcher, Margaret Thatcher's son, got 12 million dollars in cash for his role as a mediator in one of the deals, while denying being involved at all.⁷¹

Weapons companies do not really care if wars are won or lost, they profit from it either way. It does not matter to them that the war in Afghanistan was lost, it is good for their profit.⁷² A senior Capitol Hill aide who worked on arms trade issues for many years, states in an interview with Andrew Feinstein that 'Whatever the Pentagon wants it gets. And we're happy to sell to pretty much anyone and we're not that interested in what happens post-sale'.⁷³

Led by Lockheed Martin, the shares of the biggest American defence companies are traded at record prices, as shareholders get big rewards from escalating conflicts all around the world.⁷⁴ Investors make money out of rising sales of missiles, drones and other weapons that are used to fight Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. Jack Ablin, chief investment officer at Chicago-based BMO Private Bank said that with the United States flexing its muscles in the Middle East, the demand for military equipment and weaponry will likely rise. It can even get so far that the United States army would rely more on technology than on troops.⁷⁵

To relate this theory to the case study of Yemen in the next chapter, it is important to take a closer look at Obama's administration's attitude towards weapons sales. Since Obama's first six years in office, there has been an unprecedented boom in major U.S. arms sales. These new agreements were made under the Pentagon's Foreign Military Sales program, the largest channel for U.S. weapons exports. The deals totalled over \$195 billion. Overall, the Obama administration has approved more

⁶⁸ *Shadow World*, 14:39.

⁶⁹ *Shadow World*, 9:40.

⁷⁰ *Shadow World*, 11:06.

⁷¹ *Shadow World*, 12:38.

⁷² *Shadow World*, 31:05.

⁷³ Feinstein, *The Shadow World*, Legal Bribery.

⁷⁴ Richard Clough, 'Syria-to-Ukraine Wars Send U.S. Defense Stocks to Records' (25-09-2014)

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-09-25/syria-to-ukraine-wars-send-u-s-defense-stocks-to-records> [retrieved 03-05-2017].

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*.

major weapons deals than any administration since World War II.⁷⁶ The majority of these sales have gone to the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. Saudi Arabia tops the list with over \$49 billion in new agreements over since the Obama administration took office. Almost all of these agreements went through the Foreign Military Sales program.⁷⁷ According to Hartung, the increase in arms sales under the Obama administration is rooted in two factors, one political and one economic. Obama made a pledge to avoid getting into new, large wars like Iraq and Afghanistan with American boots on the ground. His tactic has been to limit U.S. casualties through technological advances such as drones and training allies to carry out fighting that might have otherwise been done by U.S. troops. On the economic front, the Obama administration has been a major promotor of export in general and weapons sales in particular. Hartung states that the Obama administration has been responding to pressure from weapons manufacturers like Boeing, Lockheed Martin and General Dynamics.⁷⁸

2.2 Private Military Companies

Before we look at the current situation of the PMCs, it is important to have an understanding of the rise of modern mercenary culture. After the Cold War, governments around the world collectively reduced their armies by nearly 6 million personnel during the 1990s, putting a significant number of highly trained individuals up for a transfer into the private sector.⁷⁹ Robert Mandel notices the presence of both a 'pull' factor, the downsizing of state militaries and international commitments, and a related 'push' factor, the demobilized military personnel available to move to private companies.⁸⁰ One of the most important reasons for governments to use PMCs is to limit the number of their own soldiers having to be engaged in warfare. PMCs are a solution to the change in mentality that has taken place after the Cold War. Private contractors that perish in battle do not receive a national ceremony and there is little public reproach for their deaths.⁸¹ Although numbers show that there is as much concern for fallen contractors as for fallen military, much less is known about the former.⁸²

⁷⁶ William D. Hartung, 'U.S. arms transfers to the Middle East: promoting stability or fuelling conflict?' (20 October 2015) http://securityassistance.org/blog/us-arms-transfers-middle-east-promoting-stability-or-fueling-conflict#_edn2 [retrieved 04-05-2017].

⁷⁷ Defense Security Cooperation Agency 'Fiscal Year Series' (30 September 2014), 341.

http://www.dsca.mil/sites/default/files/fiscal_year_series_30_september_2014_web.pdf

⁷⁸ Hartung, 'U.S. arms transfers to the Middle East: promoting stability or fuelling conflict?'

⁷⁹ Mumford, 'Proxy Warfare and the Future of Conflict', 42.

⁸⁰ Rita Abrahamsen and Michael C. Williams, 'Review: Selling Security: Assessing the Impact of Military Privatization', *Review of International Political Economy*, 15 (2008) 1, 131-146, 134.

⁸¹ Mumford, 'Proxy warfare and the future of conflict', 43.

⁸² Deborah D. Avant and Renée de Nevers, 'Military Contractors & the American Way of War', *Daedalus* 140 (2011) 3, 88-99, 94.

The changing nature of warfare due to technological changes and the change in mentality regarding warfare contributed to an environment that allowed PMCs to act as ‘foreign policy proxies for governments unable or unwilling to play a direct and open role’.⁸³ PMCs are not considered part of the state’s armed forces or supporting militias under international humanitarian law, thus government can deny their own responsibility for acts committed by the PMCs.⁸⁴ Most importantly, the explanation of government not wanting to play a big role in wars anymore cuts to the core of why PMCs are poised to become the proxy war wagers of the future. PMCs fulfil the critical function of minimising risk for states that are, as described in the introduction of this thesis, still eager to further their interest and spread their ideology, while at the same time not willing to invest in conventional warfare. So private military contractors are the embodiment of the core feature of proxy wars. José Gómez even described the phenomenon as the rise of ‘proxy or surrogate armies’ and notices that the outsourcing of military functions has led to the *de facto* privatisation of war.⁸⁵

The private military industry represents a trend in the emergence of alternative powers and authority linked to bigger trends that can be seen in the development of the global market, namely the development of power beyond that of the territorial state.⁸⁶ There is a general trend towards the marketization of the formerly public sphere, described by Singer as the wider “privatization revolution”.⁸⁷ The rise of the private military industry means that now states and non-state actors alike have access to military means previously only available to states, as emphasised by Kaldor.⁸⁸ This means that the state is losing its influence on the use of force.⁸⁹ The nature of PMC contracts means that the state no longer has control over the way military campaigns are carried out in the field.⁹⁰ Many of the larger private military companies also hire local “subs” or sub-contractors, often invisible to U.S. government officials and reporters.⁹¹ Another problem related to this is that the financial considerations of the private companies are not always in line with the interest of the public and the

⁸³ David Shearer, ‘Private Armies and Military Intervention’, *Adelphi Papers* 316 (1998) 9-10, 10.

⁸⁴ José L. Gómez del Prado, ‘Private Military and Security Companies and the UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries’, *Journal of Conflict and Security Law* 13/3 (2009) 429-450, 436.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁶ Peter Warren Singer, *Corporate Warriors. The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry* (Updated edition; Ithaca and London 2008) 170.

⁸⁷ Peter Warren Singer, ‘Peacekeepers inc.’, *Policy Review* (June/July 2003) 59-70, 61-62.

⁸⁸ Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 170.

⁸⁹ Deborah Avant, *The Market for Force. The Consequences of Privatizing Security* (Cambridge 2005) 253.

⁹⁰ Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 170.

⁹¹ Sean McFate, ‘The Hidden Costs of America’s Addiction to Mercenaries’ (15 August 2016) http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2016/08/americas-addiction-mercenaries/130731/?oref=d-channelriver?oref=search_mercenaries%20yemen [retrieved 05-05-2017].

public good.⁹² So states are slowly losing their grip on PMCs and therefore on military operations, and in the same way it can be said that they are losing power because they are giving their support to proxy actors instead of being directly into the involvement themselves.

Kevin O'Brien links the use of PMCs directly to New War theory in his chapter on private military companies in the book *Making Sense of Proxy Wars*. He incorporates the argument that several other authors, such as Martin van Creveld and Ralph Peters argue that the new form of warfare is one of low intensity conflict, and that the state is no longer the leading entity when it comes to warfare.⁹³ By doing this, he explicitly connects the hiring of PMCs to the new form of warfare.

Contractors also encourage mission creep, because contractors don't count as "boots on the ground." Congress does not consider them to be troops, and therefore contractors do not count against troop-level caps in places like Iraq. The U.S. government does not track contractor numbers in war zones. As a result, the government can put more people on the ground than it reports to the American people, encouraging mission creep and rendering contractors virtually invisible.⁹⁴ It is also difficult to keep track of the mercenaries. The Department of Defense has not always been able to provide documents regarding contracts from companies such as Blackwater, despite requests.⁹⁵

If we focus on the relationship between the American government and PMCs, we find that they are deeply intertwined.⁹⁶ The United States legitimized the widespread use of retired military personnel to provide support for military interventions when it used tens of thousands of private contractors from all over the world in a wide variety of roles in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁹⁷ In the wars in Afghanistan, more than half of the personnel deployed by the United States since 2003 have been contractors.⁹⁸ Avant and De Nevers show that PMCs have been a part of US foreign policy in all parts of the world.⁹⁹

⁹² Singer, 'Peacekeepers inc.', 64-65.

⁹³ Kevin A. O'Brien, 'Surrogate Agents. Private Military and Security Operators in an Unstable World', in: Michael A. Innes (ed.) *Making Sense of Proxy Wars. States, Surrogates & the Use of Force* (Washington 2012) 109-136, 112.

⁹⁴ McFate, 'The Hidden Costs of America's Addiction to Mercenaries'.

⁹⁵ Anu Narayanswamy, 'Congressional Oversight of Blackwater Hampered by Lack of Documents' (16 October 2007) <https://sunlightfoundation.com/2007/10/16/congressional-oversight-of-blackwater-hampered-by-lack-of-docum/> [retrieved 03-05-2017].

⁹⁶ Thomas X. Hammes, 'Private Contractors in Conflict Zones: The Good, the Bad and the Strategic Impact', *Strategic Forum* 260 (2010) 1.

⁹⁷ William D. Hartung, 'Is the U.S. Facilitating the Use of Mercenaries in Yemen?' (8 December 2015) <https://lobelog.com/is-the-u-s-facilitating-the-use-of-mercenaries-in-yemen/> [retrieved 30-05-2017].

⁹⁸ Avant and De Nevers, 'Military Contractors & the American Way of War', 88

⁹⁹ Ibidem, 90-91.

They are hired to do a wide variety of tasks, one of them is to train militaries abroad.¹⁰⁰ Security assistance is now a key pillar of U.S. military strategy, which places American officers and non-commissioned officers in more than 150 countries to train, mentor, and professionalize other militaries.¹⁰¹ Since 2009, the ratio of contractors to troops in war zones has increased from 1 to 1 to about 3 to 1.¹⁰² Today, America can no longer go to war without the private sector.¹⁰³ This is even confirmed by the Department of Defense itself.¹⁰⁴

2.3 Conclusion

The new proxy wars are becoming increasingly technical, and by delivering highly technological weapons systems and ammunition to Saudi Arabia, the United States can influence the war in Yemen without actually sending their own troops and being directly responsible. The possibility for the principal to deny its involvement in warfare is one of the most important characteristics of proxy war and the New Wars theory. The United States does not want to be directly involved in warfare because of the aversion that conventional warfare causes with the public and because of economic factors, but they still want to further their goals. Proxy warfare is one of the most appealing because involvement can de facto be exercised through the proxy by selling weapons and providing mercenaries, but at the same time involvement can be denied because it is indirect.

So the reason why the United States delivers weapons to Saudi Arabia is twofold. First, it is an inherent characteristic of proxy warfare that the principal is not directly involved in a conflict to be able to deny responsibility. Second, the answer possibly lies in the power that private companies have on the government. These private companies can easily play into the need of governments to not be involved by offering that their weapons be used in the conflict, so the state can still further its goals. Important in the light of the main question of this thesis is that due to these weapons sales, the American government is still involved conflicts, for instance the one in Yemen. There are no boots on the ground in this case, but the influence of the United States on the conflict and its continuation is great, because American weaponry is responsible for deaths of civilians.

¹⁰⁰ Ibidem, 91.

¹⁰¹ Derek S. Reveron, *Exporting Security. International Engagement, Security Cooperation, and the Changing Face of the U.S. Military* (Georgetown 2010) 2.

¹⁰² McFate, 'The Hidden Costs of America's Addiction to Mercenaries'.

¹⁰³ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁴ Moshe Schwartz et al. 'Defense Acquisitions: How and Where DOD Spends and Reports Its Contracting Dollars', *Congressional Research Service* (20 December 2016) <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R44010.pdf>, 1. And Deborah D. Avant, *The Market for Force. The Consequences of Privatizing Security* (Cambridge 2005) 115.

Chapter 3 –Yemen’s ‘forgotten war’

The war in Yemen is sometimes called the ‘forgotten war’. Recently, with the surfacing of the tragedy of the ongoing famine and the attention in the media, there is a little more awareness about the situation in the country but it is not focussed on the conflict itself. The conflict itself is interesting for the debate on proxy warfare because it is called a proxy war by the media, but the influence of the weapons industry and private military companies seems to challenge contemporary definitions of proxy warfare. Therefore, the question that will be answered in this chapter is ‘In what ways are private enterprises influencing the conflict in Yemen?’. The focus will be mainly on the influence of the American weapons industry. Attention will also be paid to PMCs involved in the conflict, but little is known about these companies in this particular conflict. Before the role of the United States and the proxy war dimensions can be discussed, it is important to have an understanding of the conflict in Yemen.

3.1 The conflict in Yemen

To understand the proxy war aspect of the war in Yemen and the influence of private enterprises, it is important to first have a basic understanding of the conflict itself and have a historical sense of the situation in Yemen. In 1990, North and South Yemen united to become the Republic of Yemen with Ali Abdullah Saleh as president, who had been president to North Yemen for 12 years until then.¹⁰⁵ However, there were tensions and occasional fighting between the North and South occurred. Three years later, vice-president Ali Salem al-Beidh quit the government and returned to the South, demanding more economic recognition and less political violence. A civil war erupted in May 1994, which was won by the Saleh government just three months later.¹⁰⁶ In 2004, the founder of the Houthi movement was assassinated, sparking a series of six wars between president Saleh and the Houthi rebels in the group’s northern stronghold of Sa’da. During the 2011 Arab Spring, hundreds protesters were killed during mass protests calling for the fall of president Saleh, an end to corruption and demanding accountability for human rights violations. Saleh was forced to resign and sign a power-transfer deal. The new government, which had to oversee a two-year transition process, was led by Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi.¹⁰⁷ This new government however, continued to violate human rights, the violations that they committed included killings and enforced disappearances. The conflict with the

¹⁰⁵ Amnesty International, ‘The origins of the conflict explained’ (version unknown)

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/09/yemen-the-forgotten-war/> [retrieved 13-04-2017] ;

Jennifer Steil, ‘Yemen: Descending Into Despair’, *World Policy Journal* 28 (2011) 3, 62-72, 66.

¹⁰⁶ Unknown, ‘The origins of the conflict explained’, *Amnesty International* (version unknown)

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/09/yemen-the-forgotten-war/> [retrieved 13-04-2017].

¹⁰⁷ Leonie Northedge, ‘Is the US shadow war helping Yemen?’, *The World Today* 69 (2013) 1, 34-36, 34.

Houthi armed groups in the north was renewed. In September 2014, the Houthis, a Zaidia Shia group from northern Yemen also known as Ansar Allah, took control of Yemen's capital Saana after government slashed fuel subsidies.¹⁰⁸ In January 2015, they effectively ousted President Hadi and his cabinet, who fled to Saudi Arabia.¹⁰⁹ The Houthis, along with forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, then swept south, threatening to take the port city of Aden. They did this with the with the alleged support of Iran.¹¹⁰ In response to a plea for help by Hadi, Saudi Arabia formed a ten-member coalition and on March 26 2015, consisting of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Sudan, began an aerial bombing campaign against Houthi and allied forces.¹¹¹ Houthi rebels have been accused of using heavy weapons, but it is clear that the overwhelming amount of military and technological force is with the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, who are supported by the United Kingdom and the United States.¹¹²

When applying the definition of proxy warfare that was given in the first chapter of this thesis to the Yemen civil war, the most important characteristic here is the third one. This supposes that a proxy war is fought out on the soil of a third country, and that is rooted in an already existing local conflict. The conflict between the parties, in this case the United States and Saudi Arabia, must be fought out on the soil of another country, Yemen, and it must be rooted in an already existing conflict. It is uncontested that a conflict is taking place in Yemen and that it has a long history. When looking at the history of the current civil war, it is clear that the United States and Saudi Arabia are taking part in a proxy war that is rooted in an already existing conflict. The origins of the conflict that is going on today lay in the unification of the northern and southern part of Yemen in 1990, when the United States and Saudi Arabia were not yet involved. The conflict that is going on today started in September 2014, and the Saudi Arabia bombing campaign commenced in March 2015, so after the war had started. Saudi Arabia and the United States did not invent the conflict, they hatched onto the civil war that was already taking place.

¹⁰⁸ Amnesty International, 'The origins of the conflict explained'.

¹⁰⁹ Human Rights Watch, 'Yemen', (version unknown) <https://www.hrw.org/middle-east/n-africa/yemen> [retrieved 12-04-2017].

¹¹⁰ Gabriel Gatehouse, 'Inside Yemen's "forgotten war"' (11 September 2015) <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34211979> [retrieved 09-03-2017].

¹¹¹ Unknown, 'Foreign Assistance in Yemen', *Foreignassistance.gov* <http://beta.foreignassistance.gov/explore/country/Yemen> [retrieved 13-04-2017]; 'Yemen. Embargo Arms to Saudi Arabia', *Human Rights Watch* (21 March 2016) <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/03/21/yemen-embargo-arms-saudi-arabia> [retrieved 09-03-2017].

¹¹² Gatehouse, 'Inside Yemen's "forgotten war"'.

3.2 American involvement

America is involved in the war in Yemen in several ways. They send some support to the Saudis in the form of intelligence and logistical assistance. On March 25, 2015 a statement was made by the White House declaring: 'In response to the deteriorating security situation, Saudi Arabia, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members, and others will undertake military action to defend Saudi Arabia's border and to protect Yemen's legitimate government.'¹¹³ Bernadette Meehan, spokesperson for the National Security Council (NSC) then goes on to state that:

'The United States coordinates closely with Saudi Arabia and our GCC partners on issues related to their security and our shared interests. In support to GCC actions to defend against Houthi violence, President Obama has authorized the provision of logistical and intelligence support to GCC-led military operations. While U.S. forces are not taking direct military action in Yemen in support of this effort, we are establishing a Joint Planning Cell with Saudi Arabia to coordinate U.S. military and intelligence support.'¹¹⁴

The number of U.S. military personnel have been assigned to what U.S. officials have called a "joint fusion center" in Saudi Arabia to oversee the air campaign, has been raised by a dozen in 2015.¹¹⁵ This means that this U.S. personnel is not actually fighting in Yemen, but they are coming very close to actually being involved.

The United States is involved in the war in Yemen because it can be seen as part of the struggle and peace talks with Iran. Another important reason why they might be involved is the battle against Al-Qaeda. This becomes clear from the briefing from 25 March 2015 when White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest stated: 'At the same time, the United States continues to closely monitor terrorist threats posed by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula and will continue to take action as necessary to disrupt continuing, imminent threats to the United States and our citizens.'¹¹⁶ There was

¹¹³ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 'Statement by NSC Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the Situation in Yemen' (25 March 2015) via <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/25/statement-nsc-spokesperson-bernadette-meehan-situation-yemen>.

¹¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹¹⁵ James Rosen, 'U.S. stepping up weapons shipment to aid Saudi air campaign over Yemen' (7 April 2015) <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/article24782785.html> [retrieved 09-03-2017].

¹¹⁶ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 'Statement by NSC Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the Situation in Yemen'.

no official statement by the Department of Defense about the deployment of any troops, which is responsible for the armed forces giving support to the GCC.¹¹⁷

It was made clear by the NSC that U.S. forces are not taking direct military action in Yemen.¹¹⁸ But Micah Zenko, senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, argues that the United States are in fact involved in the conflict. American military planners are using live intelligence feeds from surveillance flights over Yemen to help Saudi Arabia decide what and where to bomb.¹¹⁹ It is not clear if these planners are actually on Yemeni territory. Zenko does mention that these planners are using footage from unmanned drones, so most likely these planners are not in Yemen. It is possible that they are in the United States or in Saudi Arabia. The U.S. has been refuelling Saudi aircraft and has advisors in the Saudi operational headquarters since the kingdom started its military involvement in March 2015.¹²⁰ In May 2016, Peter Korzun stated the U.S. formally acknowledged that it had Special Operations Forces on the ground in Yemen to assist the United Arab Emirates Special Forces battle militants associated with al-Qaeda.¹²¹ When looking an article from the Washington Post on the same topic, it becomes clear that these forces have been advisors to support the Arab forces. Since 2009, over 4000 Emirati troops have been trained by U.S. military personnel.¹²² The Washington Post has stated that these advisors have been placed on the ground in Yemen. They had been supporting Yemeni and Emirati forces that are fighting a battle against militants near the south-eastern port city of Mukalla. They are also supporting Emirati forces with medical, intelligence and maritime support, and is executing aerial surveillance missions. It was emphasised that these were only seen as support for the Saudi-led coalition troops in battling the Houthi rebels, and that the advisors would only be in

¹¹⁷ Micah Zenko, 'Make No Mistake – the United States Is at War in Yemen. The White House just doesn't want to admit it' (30 March 2015) <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/30/make-no-mistake-the-united-states-is-at-war-in-yemen-saudi-arabia-iran/> [retrieved 02-05-2017].

¹¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹¹⁹ Ibidem.

¹²⁰ Andrei Akulov,, 'US to Plunge into Yemen's War' (2 April 2017) <http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2017/04/02/us-plunge-into-yemen-war.html> [retrieved 05-05-2017].

¹²¹ Peter Korzun, 'War in Yemen: US directly involved in another regional conflict' (14 May 2016) <http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2016/05/14/war-yemen-us-directly-involved-another-regional-conflict.html> [retrieved 02-05-2017].

¹²² William D. Hartung, 'Is the U.S. Facilitating the Use of Mercenaries in Yemen?' (8 December 2015) <https://lobelog.com/is-the-u-s-facilitating-the-use-of-mercenaries-in-yemen/> [retrieved 30-05-2017].

Yemen for a short period.¹²³ In 2015 it was already stated that besides the logistical and intelligence support, a kind of U.S. combat support might be needed.¹²⁴

In February 2017 press reports revealed that U.S. special-operations troops had conducted a raid in Yemen. One Navy SEAL was killed, and several others were injured and a \$75-million aircraft destroyed. The raid turned out to be an embarrassing and costly failure, and the Yemeni government has reportedly forbidden any further such intrusions.¹²⁵

Important for the definition of proxy warfare is the non-direct involvement of the principal in the conflict. Mumford states that a principal should hire proxies in another state to conduct operations on its behalf. When keeping strictly to this definition of non-involvement, the United States is already too involved in the conflict to be called a principal. The U.S. is actively supporting the Saudi Arabians and they are actively involved in Saudi Arabian warfare. So the United States is not solely using the proxy in this conflict to commence the warfare, but they are actively involved in planning the Saudi warfare strategy.

However, other scholars state that the principal can support the proxy in different ways and not be involved themselves. For instance, according to Dunér, four forms of support from principal to proxy can include intelligence, information, support and co-ordination. Especially the intelligence and support from the principal are evident in the conflict in Yemen. The Special Operation Forces are using surveillance footage to advise the Saudi forces on their movements on the ground. Support in the form of intelligence, co-ordination and logistical support are the milder forms of intervention that Ann Hironaka discusses. The large military forces of conventional warfare have been replaced by military personnel performing supporting tasks. In the recent definitions of proxy warfare, given by scholars such as Loveman and Mumford, the different forms of support are taken into account, so this support would be acceptable for a principal to be non-involved. Because no personnel of the United States is actually involved on the ground in the conflict in Yemen, it can be argued that this counts as non-involvement. But in the strictest sense, the United States is too involved in the conflict already to be called a principal. The report from the Washington Post states that U.S. advisors have been executing

¹²³ Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Missy Ryan, 'U.S. forces now on the ground supporting combat operations in Yemen, Pentagon says' (6 May 2016) https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/05/06/u-s-forces-now-on-the-ground-supporting-combat-operations-in-yemen-pentagon-says/?utm_term=.5488776b8400 [retrieved 03-05-2017].

¹²⁴ Angela Greilling Keane, 'U.S. Backs Saudi-Led Yemeni Bombing With Logistics, Spying (26 March 2015) <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-03-26/yemeni-bombing-led-by-saudis-is-backed-by-u-s-logistics-spying> [retrieved 09-03-2017].

¹²⁵ Andrew J. Bacevich, 'Why are US Forces in Yemen at All?' (8 February 2017) http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2017/02/why-are-us-forces-yemen-all/135265/?oref=search_yemen [retrieved 05-05-2017].

aerial surveillance missions. This would suggest that the line was crossed that was set for this research for involvement. There have been American citizens in Yemen, according to the Washington Post. However, this information is based only on the Washington Post article, so precaution has to be taken when making a statement based on one article.

3.3 Proxy war dimensions

In order to answer the subquestion, it is also important to establish the proxy war dimension of this conflict. When finding out if the war in Yemen matches the definition of proxy wars, it is important to establish who is the proxy and who is the principal. In many sources, the war is called part of a regional struggle for power between Saudi Arabia and Iran.¹²⁶

The war in Yemen can also be seen as a part of the struggle surrounding the nuclear deal between Iran and the United States.¹²⁷ In April 2015 the United States sent their own warships to Yemen to monitor nearby Iranian ships that could be trafficking arms to Houthi rebels in Yemen.¹²⁸ In an interview with NBC from 22 April 2015, President Obama says that 'There is a reason why we keep some warships in the Persian Gulf region, and that is to make sure that we maintain freedom of navigation.'¹²⁹ 'We're not sending them [Iran] obscure messages, we send them very direct messages about it. My hope genuinely is that we can settle down the situation in Yemen that's always been a fractious country with a lot of problems [...]. It is not solved by having another proxy war fought inside of Yemen and we've indicated the Iranians that they need to be part of the solution not part of the problem.'¹³⁰ Marc Lynch makes a very strong statement when stating the following:

In reality, the United States was appeasing the Saudis on Yemen in order to prevent them from acting as a spoiler on the Iran talks, thereby condemning millions of Yemenis to pointless suffering. Middle East power politics today are dominated by proxy wars and interventions. The disruption or collapse of

¹²⁶ Gabriel Gatehouse, 'Inside Yemen's "forgotten war"'. ; Dieter Bednarz, Christoph Reuter and Bernhard Zand, 'Saudi Arabia and Iran Vie for Regional Supremacy' (3 April 2015)

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/saudi-arabia-and-iran-fighting-proxy-war-in-yemen-a-1027056.html#spRedirectedFrom=www&referrrrer=https://en.m.wikipedia.org/> [retrieved 09-03-2017].

¹²⁷ Marc Lynch, 'Obama and the Middle East. Rightsizing the U.S. Role', *Foreign Affairs* 18 (2015) 18-27, 20.

Andrei Akulov, 'US to Plunge into Yemen's War' (2 April 2017) <http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2017/04/02/us-plunge-into-yemen-war.html> [retrieved 05-05-2017].

¹²⁸ Jim Sciutto and Jamie Crawford, 'U.S.: Warships near Yemen to create 'options' for dealing with Iranian vessels', *CNN* (22 April 2015) <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/04/20/politics/iran-united-states-warships-monitoring/> [retrieved 09-03-2017].

¹²⁹ 'Exclusive Obama Interview: Iran, Yemen & Mixed Signals. Hardball. MSNBC' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-7gIS9PuF0>.

¹³⁰ Ibidem.

governments in Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen has transformed those countries into open arenas for regional powers to wage their political conflicts.¹³¹

The actors involved in the conflict and the relations between all the parties shows the complexity of the conflict. In this case, the United States is the principal, and Saudi Arabia is the proxy. Saudi Arabia are an active party in the conflict in Yemen. The United States is supporting Saudi Arabia in the form of intelligence, weapons and material support.

Bertil Dunér stated, in his classical definition of proxy warfare, that the principal delivers weapons to the proxy. But according to both him and Deutsch it is more important to take into account the power imbalance that exists between principal and proxy. This theory was prevalent during the Cold War, and when applying it to the relation between US and Saudi Arabia it becomes clear why it is not explicitly adhered to by contemporary scholars. Saudi Arabia is not less powerful than the United States. This can be deduced from the quote by Lynch, where he states that the United States was appeasing the Saudis. In addition, Saudi Arabia has an almost endless amount of resources to buy weapons from the United States, and this puts the Saudis in a very powerful position. So the relation between principal and proxy that is described in the classical definitions of proxy warfare is not applicable to the case of Yemen.

When applying Loveman's list of characteristics of the relationship between principal and proxy, it is difficult to establish the common enemy of the United States and Saudi Arabia. This common enemy could be Iran, who are allegedly supporting the Houthi forces. It could also be Al-Qaeda, against whom the United States is also conducting air strikes.¹³² Second on Loveman's list is the fact that the principal avoids direct participation and wants to avoid having to take responsibility for the conflict. The last is clearly the case in the Yemen war. The problem for the United States however, is that their proxy, Saudi Arabia, is violating human rights on a large scale. However, since it is known that the U.S. sells weapons to the Saudis, it becomes hard for the U.S. to deny their responsibility in the conflict. The third point, co-ordination of actions, is also clear in the fact that the United States is advising the Saudis on troop movement.

¹³¹ Lynch, 'Obama and the Middle East', 24.

¹³² Eric Schmitt, 'United States Ramps Up Airstrikes Against Al Qaeda in Yemen' (3 March 2017) <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/03/world/middleeast/yemen-us-airstrikes-al-qaeda.html> [retrieved 03-06-2017]. And Barbara Starr and Ryan Browne, 'US launches second round of airstrikes in Yemen' (3 March 2017) <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/03/02/politics/us-airstrikes-yemen-al-qaeda/index.html> [retrieved 03-06-2017].

3.4 Private military companies in Yemen

The previous examples of support by the United States to the Saudi Arabian coalition is just part of the involvement of the United States. Mercenaries have also been employed in the conflict in Yemen through U.S. companies. Companies like Academi, formerly Blackwater, are deployed to conflict zones under contracts that are often worth billions. A three billion U.S. dollar deal between the United Arab Emirates and DynCorp sent contractors from the company to Yemen. Mercenaries from Academi have been forced to withdraw from Yemen after heavy losses were inflicted on them, forcing Saudi Arabia to approach DynCorp.¹³³ In 2015, the New York Times reported that the United Arab Emirates had hired foreign mercenaries from a program launched by US company Blackwater's head Erik Prince, and sent them to fight in Yemen.¹³⁴ These mercenaries have been contracted by the Saudi Arabian government through private US companies such as Northrup Grumman and in some cases by the government of Saudi Arabia.¹³⁵ According to Charles Tiefer, professor of law at Baltimore University, this is a problem because Blackwater has alienated Iraqis against the United States due to their actions in the Iraq war. Now the use of foreign mercenaries will signify to the "outs" in the Middle East that the rich will use these mercenaries against them.¹³⁶ The deployment of mercenaries will thus possibly alienate the Yemeni population from the rich western countries.

About 450 mercenaries, among them Colombians, Panamanians, Salvadorians, Eritreans and Chileans, have also been sent to Yemen according to the New York Times.¹³⁷ According to analyst William Hartung, the United States government has trained 30,000 soldiers from the four countries that make up the Latin American part of the Saudi Arabian force in Yemen.¹³⁸ It is not clear if they have

¹³³ POC, 'Private Military Contractors take the fight to Yemen', (6 June 2016) <http://www.your-poc.com/private-military-contractors-take-fight-yemen/> [retrieved 1 March 2017].

¹³⁴ Charles Tiefer, 'In Yemen War, Mercenaries Launched By Blackwater Head Were Spotted Today – Not Good News', *Forbes* (26 November 2015) <https://www.forbes.com/sites/charlestiefer/2015/11/26/in-yemen-war-mercenaries-launched-by-blackwater-head-were-spotted-today-not-good-news/#191b3e55a3d5> [retrieved 09-03-2017].

¹³⁵ Laura Carlsen, 'Mercenaries in Yemen – the U.S. Connection (December 2015) http://www.huffingtonpost.com/laura-carlsen/mercenaries-in-yementhe-u_b_8704212.html# [retrieved 03-05-2017]. ; Mehr New Agency, 'US company hires mercenaries for war in Yemen' (12 December 2015) <http://en.mehrnews.com/news/112752/US-company-hires-mercenaries-for-war-in-Yemen> [retrieved 05-05-2017].

¹³⁶ Tiefer, 'In Yemen War, Mercenaries Launched By Blackwater Head Were Spotted Today – Not Good News',

¹³⁷ Human Rights Watch, 'Eritrea. Events of 2016' <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/eritrea.>; Emily B. Hager and Mark Mazzetti, 'Emirates Secretly Sends Colombian Mercenaries to Yemen Fight', *New York Times* (25 November 2015) https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/26/world/middleeast/emirates-secretly-sends-colombian-mercenaries-to-fight-in-yemen.html?_r=0 [retrieved 10-04-2017].

¹³⁸ Hartung, 'Is the U.S. Facilitation the Use of Mercenaries in Yemen?'

been trained in America or by Americans in their own country.¹³⁹ Colombia contributes the largest number of the mercenaries. While the Colombians claim to have contracts directly with the Emirati military, a recent investigative report from El Salvador cites a Ministry of Defence source that affirms that contracting goes through a national company subcontracted by the American company Northrup Grumman.¹⁴⁰ It is also possible that Mexicans are involved in this same process. It is not clear if they have been trained in America or by Americans in their own country.¹⁴¹

The fact that most of the contractors are not from the United States is a part of trend of the United States developing a dependency on the private sector to wage war.¹⁴² The recruitment of specifically Latin American mercenaries is not new, but this is the first time that they have been sent into combat.¹⁴³ In the last few years, these trained militaries have been prepared for an emerging industry, the “export of security”.¹⁴⁴ Sean McFate, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council and author of *The Modern Mercenary* states, states in a reaction to the deployment of mercenaries to Yemen that “The private military industry is global now”.¹⁴⁵ The United States basically legitimized the industry by hiring mercenaries for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁴⁶

They are sent all over the world doing, as Laura Carlsen calls it, ‘the dirty work’ for the United States. In this way the United States avoids exposing its forces to harm or facing accusations of interventionism.¹⁴⁷ She confirms the use of mercenaries in relation to proxy wars: ‘And the United States has strong interests in the region, but does not want to pay the political price of seeing its soldiers return home in body bags. The solution? Hire mercenaries from impoverished Latin American countries.’¹⁴⁸

So what we can see here is part of Mary Kaldor’s new war theory, namely the fact that a broader spectrum of authors are involved in warfare besides states. Not only are states such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar involved in the conflict, it is also non-state actors such as mercenaries that are part of it. Mumford emphasizes that the principal can only be involved through the proxy. In Yemen, the

¹³⁹ Carlsen, ‘Mercenaries in Yemen – the U.S. Connection’

¹⁴⁰ Carlsen, ‘Mercenaries in Yemen – the U.S. Connection’.

¹⁴¹ Carlsen, ‘Mercenaries in Yemen – the U.S. Connection’

¹⁴² Sean McFate, ‘The Hidden Costs of America’s Addiction to Mercenaries’ (15 August 2016) http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2016/08/americas-addiction-mercenaries/130731/?oref=d-channelriver?oref=search_mercenaries%20yemen [retrieved 05-05-2017].

¹⁴³ Carlsen, ‘Mercenaries in Yemen – the U.S. Connection’

¹⁴⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁸ Ibidem.

South American mercenaries are involved in the war. These are officially fighting for Saudi Arabia, but some of them are contracted through American companies. In addition, the mercenaries have allegedly been trained by American citizens. So in this way, America is involved in the war in Yemen more directly. The deployment of mercenaries through American companies makes the Americans involved in ways that are not just through the proxy.

3.5 Weapon sales

Besides the support in the form of manpower that the United States is giving to Saudi Arabia, the Obama administration in recent years has also approved the sale of billions of dollars' worth of military hardware from American contractors to the Saudi and Emirati militaries. This equipment is being used in the Yemen conflict by the Saudi Arabian coalition.¹⁴⁹

In the face of multiple reports pointing out human rights violations in Yemen, several countries have still continued selling weapons to Saudi Arabia and its coalition members. These arms have also fallen into the hands of Houthi rebels and other groups involved in the conflict.¹⁵⁰ The sales of weapons to a Saudi Arabia is highly controversial because of the fact that the country and the members of their coalition continue to commit human rights violations and to breach the laws of warfare. Tariq Riebl, head of programmes in Yemen for Oxfam, is quoted by the BBC in saying "It's difficult to argue that a weapon sold to Saudi Arabia would not in some way be used in Yemen".¹⁵¹ And Amnesty International Head of Arms Control and Human Rights, James Lynch, said that "The irresponsible and unlawful flow of arms to the warring parties in Yemen has directly contributed to civilian suffering on a mass scale. It's time for world leaders to stop putting their economic interests first".¹⁵² The most important weapon suppliers are the United Kingdom and the United States.¹⁵³ The United States, United Kingdom, France, Spain, Canada and Turkey together transferred nearly \$5.9 billion worth of drones, bombs, torpedoes, rockets, and missiles to Saudi Arabia between 2015 and 2016.¹⁵⁴ By delivering these weapons, countries are maintaining the conflict in Yemen.

In 2015, the Obama administration authorized a \$1.29 billion request for new bombs to replenish Saudi stocks that had been shrinking due to the attacks Saudi Arabia carried out in Yemen. They were part of the larger \$500 million deal for more than a million rounds of ammunition, hand

¹⁴⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁵⁰ Amnesty International, 'Arms fuelling the crisis'.

¹⁵¹ Gatehouse, 'Inside Yemen's "forgotten war"'.

¹⁵² Amnesty International, 'Arms fuelling the crisis'.

¹⁵³ Gatehouse, 'Inside Yemen's "forgotten war"'.

¹⁵⁴ Amnesty International, 'Arms fuelling the crisis'.

grenades and other items.¹⁵⁵ In October 2015, the government approved the sale of up to four Lockheed Littoral Combat Ships to Saudi Arabia, a contract worth \$11.25 billion. In November that year, 10,000 advanced air-to-surface munitions including laser-guided bombs, “bunker buster” bombs and MK84 general purpose bombs were sold to Saudi Arabia. They have used all three kinds of bombs in Yemen.¹⁵⁶ In December 2016, the Obama administration told Reuters that they would limit some weapons transfers to Saudi Arabia. But a few days later, this was downplayed by Secretary of State John Kerry saying that the U.S. is committed to helping the kingdom.¹⁵⁷ In the same month, an attack took place in the city of Saada in which two civilians were killed and at least six wounded. The Saudi-led coalition fired Brazilian-made rockets containing banned cluster munitions. This was one day after Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Brazil and the United States, amongst other countries abstained from a vote in the United Nations General Assembly that overwhelmingly endorsed an already widely accepted ban on cluster munition.¹⁵⁸ So the United States is deliberately keeping open the possibility for sales of cluster munition. In the light of the power of the weapons industry, this move by the government might not be hard to explain.

The air force of the Saudi Arabia coalition has the use of both British and American-made fighter jets, including F15s, Tornados and Eurofighter typhoons, and the majority of the airstrikes is carried out by the American-made F15 jets.¹⁵⁹ Related to the air strikes is one of the most controversial ways in which the United States is helping the Saudi Arabian airforce. American tanker planes are refuelling coalition’ jets in the air, making the planes able to carry out bombing campaigns more frequently.¹⁶⁰ This refuelling has increased by 60 percent between February and August 2016.¹⁶¹ Without these flights, the coalition could make significantly fewer bombing runs. In May 2015 it became clear that the Saudi Arabia coalition has been using cluster bombs that were supplied by the United States by Textron Systems Corporation.¹⁶² From photographs taken on site, Human Rights Watch identified the remnants

¹⁵⁵ Hager and Mazzetti, ‘Emirates Secretly Sends Colombian Mercenaries to Yemen Fight’ ; Human Rights Watch ‘Yemen. Embargo Arms to Saudi Arabia’.

¹⁵⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁵⁷ Shahid Ahmed, ‘Donald Trump Could Pull The U.S. From A Middle East War On Day 1’.

¹⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch, ‘Yemen: Brazil-Made Cluster Munitions Harm Civilians’, (23 December 2016) <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/12/23/yemen-brazil-made-cluster-munitions-harm-civilians> [retrieved 12-04-2017].

¹⁵⁹ Gatehouse, ‘Inside Yemen’s “forgotten war”’.

¹⁶⁰ Shahid Ahmed, ‘Donald Trump Could Pull The U.S. From A Middle East War On Day 1’.

¹⁶¹ Oriana Pawlyk, ‘U.S. Air Force refueling missions over Yemen grow by 60 percent’ (8 August 2016) <https://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/2016/08/08/us-air-force-refueling-missions-over-yemen-grow-60-percent/88400838/> [retrieved 30-05-2017].

¹⁶² BBC, ‘Yemen. Saudi Arabia used cluster bombs, rights groups says’, (3 May 2015) <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32572408> [retrieved 09-03-2017].

of two CBU-105 Sensor Fuzed Weapons manufacture by Textron Systems Corporation. Although the use of this bomb is banned under the Convention on Cluster Munitions but it is permitted under US policy and its export is permitted under US export restrictions on cluster munitions. A contract for the manufacturing of 1,300 CBU-105 munition was concluded in August 2013, so before the war in Yemen began.¹⁶³

As in the case of the private military companies, the non-involvement premise that is so important to the definition of proxy warfare is challenged. The United States might not be involved in the conflict directly, but the weapons that are sold to the Saudis are used in Yemen. Sources from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch prove that American produced weapons are used in attacks.

Another point is that the weapons are not given to the Saudis, but they are sold to the Saudis. In Dunér's quote "Thus, there is a tendency to insert into the proxy concept the circumstance that A provides B with material support intended precisely for the actual intervention, such as transport facilities, supplies of arms, etc."¹⁶⁴ it is said that A 'provides' B with weapons, but in the Yemen case the United States is selling the weapons to Saudi Arabia instead of giving or providing them. From all the contemporary definitions, it does not become clear whether weapons have to be sold or given to the proxy.

3.6 Conclusion

The Americans are involved in the conflict in Yemen in many ways besides through the proxy, Saudi Arabia. First, the United States supports the Saudi Arabians by advising them on troop movement and supporting them logistically and on planning. Second, the United States provided weapons to the Saudi coalition that are used on the ground to attack the rebels, but they are also used to attack civilians. The Saudi Arabian coalition fighting in Yemen use weapons from American weapon manufacturers. These weapons are sold to the Saudi Arabians instead of given to them. Third, American private military companies are also involved because they deliver mercenaries to fight for the Saudi coalition. In addition, these mercenaries are trained by American advisors. Fourth, the United States is supporting the Saudi coalition by refuelling planes so the coalition can carry out more bombings. So the influence and impact that the weapons industry and private military companies have in Yemen is

¹⁶³ Human Rights Watch, 'Yemen: Saudi-Led Airstrikes Used Cluster Munitions. US-supplied Weapon Banned by 2008 Treaty' (3 May 2015) <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/05/03/yemen-saudi-led-airstrikes-used-cluster-munitions> [09-03-2017].

Contracts can be found on the website of the Department of Defense: <https://www.defense.gov/News/Contracts/>

¹⁶⁴ Dunér, 'Proxy Intervention in Civil Wars', 356.

significant. They provide the weapons, support and mercenaries that keep the war going. This is exactly one of the characteristics of proxy warfare mentioned by Ann Hironaka when she writes that states are less likely to use military force, but use other ways to keep conflicts going.

By delivering weapons that the Saudi coalition eventually uses in the air attacks, the United States is responsible for the deaths of millions of Yemeni civilians. The United States likes to position itself as the protagonist of human rights, but still the government approves of huge arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Amnesty International estimated that the United States and the United Kingdom have transferred more than \$5 billion worth of arms to Saudi Arabia, but they have only spent about \$450 million dollars on development aid to Yemen over the past two years.¹⁶⁵ The arms delivery is, as we saw in the first chapter, an important characteristic of proxy wars. It is possible that the United States is involved in the war in Yemen because they can fight Al Qaeda in this way, but this does not take away from the fact that the weapons that they are delivering to Saudi Arabia are not mainly used to kill members of Al Qaeda, they are mainly used to destroy the lives of civilians.

¹⁶⁵ Amnesty International, 'Yemen: Multibillion-dollar arms sales by USA and UK reveal shameful contradiction with aid efforts', (version 23 March 2017) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/03/yemen-multibillion-dollar-arms-sales-by-usa-and-uk-reveal-shameful-contradiction-with-aid-efforts/> [retrieved 13-04-2017].s

Conclusion

The civil war in Yemen is often called a proxy war in the media. However, when trying to find the definition of proxy warfare to apply to this conflict, it is difficult to come upon one clear-cut definition. Proxy warfare is a complicated and delicate subject, and not a lot of scholars seem to want to get near the case. As was shown in this research, it is very difficult to come to one definition of 'proxy war' since existing definitions have a lot of aspects to it that can differ greatly. The main contention point seems to be the scope of involvement that is acceptable for a principal to be called a principal. When this involvement gets too great, it can be questioned whether the principal can still be seen as a principal to a proxy, or as an actor in the war. The term non-involvement is used mostly to draw the line between being a principal to a proxy and being an actor in a conflict.

It was however also determined in this thesis that support from the principal can take on many forms and that according to scholars, various forms of support are possible for a war to still be called a proxy war. The fact that for many scholars, the non-involvement premise and support in the form of intelligence, training and logistical support go together, shows how complicated it is to define proxy wars. These two premises seem contradictory but scholars still put them together in one definition. It also bares an important problem that surrounds proxy wars: how much involvement from the principal is acceptable for a proxy war to be called a proxy war? Because on the one hand, the principal cannot be involved, and on the other hand they can give support that gets close to actually dictating the warfare of the proxy. Thus in any definition of proxy warfare, it needs to be clearly defined what support from the principal to the proxy can entail.

Defining proxy wars becomes even more difficult when taking into account the rise of the weapons industry and private military companies. The main hypothesis of this thesis is that because of the influence of the weapons industry and the increasing usage of private military companies by governments all over the world, the definition of proxy war possibly needs to be changed. The weapons industry is becoming increasingly powerful and their influence on governments is great. This influence makes for the American government selling weapons to countries with a questionable human rights record, such as Saudi Arabia. The arms industry makes it easier for governments to wage war.¹⁶⁶ The influence of the private military companies on the definition of proxy war lies mostly in the fact that governments can send citizens to warzones, without these mercenaries being officially counted as personnel. So this means that the principal is not officially involved in the proxy war, and this is exactly the goal of choosing proxy wars over conventional warfare.

¹⁶⁶ Feinstein, *The Shadow World*, Future Imperfect.

The fact that weapons from the United States are used in conflicts all over the world, and the fact that mercenaries are contracted through American companies and sent all over the world, means that the United States is at the same time becoming more and less involved in warfare. They are becoming more involved because the weapons that are made by the ever growing weapons industry are being used more and more in conflicts all over the world. That way the United States can be involved in more conflicts than when they would send their own personnel and put boots on the ground. At the same time they are becoming less involved. Because of the weapons sales, the United States can further their interests in the world without actually sending personnel to warzones. Also, the link between proxy and principal is not as clear as the definition of scholars make it out to be. For instance in the Yemen case, the United States does not give weapons to Saudi Arabia, they sell it to them. The United States does not deliver weapons directly to the Houthi rebels in Yemen, but still American weapons are used in the conflict to kill civilians. Thus in this way, the United States government is less involved than in conventional warfare.

So do we need a new definition of proxy warfare? When analysing different definitions of proxy warfare, it became clear that the definition has evolved over time. The fact that the definition of proxy war has changed over the years is very important for this thesis, because the main argument here is that the definition of proxy warfare is challenged when taking into account the influence of the weapons industry and the deployment of PMCs. It is important to incorporate involvement like this into a definition on proxy wars because it better matches the current reality of what are called proxy wars. These new ways of involvement can be part of a new definition of proxy wars, because the classical definition presumes non-involvement by the principal. Thus, when these developments are taken into account in the definition of proxy wars, it matches reality better.

Commissioning PMCs and selling weapons to proxies at the same time confirms and undermines the definition of proxy warfare. They confirm it, because inherent in the New War theory and the definitions of proxy warfare is the fact that the principal is not involved in the conflict. By selling weapons to the proxy and sending mercenaries, the United States can deny involvement in the war in Yemen and other conflicts. The use of private military companies fits the definition of proxy warfare perfectly. For government, it serves the goal that they do not have to be directly involved, but can still influence the outcome of the conflict in their favour. So it is not curious that governments are using private military companies, but it is striking that they are not incorporated into the definition of proxy warfare.

At the same time they undermine the definition of proxy war exactly because there are American weapons and citizens in the form of advisors on the ground in Yemen. The increasing involvement of PMCs and the use of American weapons in conflicts all over the world makes the United States government indirectly involved in an increasing number of conflicts.

Because the rise of the weapons industry and PMCs in a way also confirms the definition of New Wars and the one given of proxy wars, there is no direct need for a radical transformation of the definition of proxy warfare. However, the non-involvement premise needs to be adjusted to take into account the weapons industry and the private military companies. As stated by Tariq Riebl, head of programmes in Yemen for Oxfam: "It's difficult to argue that a weapon sold to Saudi Arabia would not in some way be used in Yemen".¹⁶⁷ When knowingly selling weapons to Saudi Arabia that the American government can know are going to be used in Yemen, this comes dangerously close to actually becoming involved in the conflict. Thus what is needed is a specification of the non-involvement premise. Works by Andrew Mumford show the contradiction that the definition of proxy warfare holds. On the one hand he states that state A can only be involved *through* [emphasis added] state B, but he also recognizes the use of PMCs in proxy warfare.¹⁶⁸

When placing the power of the weapons industry and the use of PMCs in proxy warfare in the broader debate about New Wars, they partly match the ideas that are articulated by Mary Kaldor. She places a lot of emphasis on the global character of wars.¹⁶⁹ The deployment of South American mercenaries by Saudi Arabia through American companies shows this characteristic of New Wars. What we can also see is that the government is losing control over warfare, and that more actors besides states are becoming involved in warfare.¹⁷⁰ The mercenaries that are fighting in Yemen are contracted through American companies, but the government does not seem to have any influence on the process and the actions that these mercenaries are taking. Kaldor does state that technology is not important in her new war theory, but the advanced weapons systems that are sold to Saudi Arabia shows that technology is important in current warfare. The fact that weapons sales and PMCs make a country non-directly involved in warfare, see to the decline in conventional warfare that Tertrais notices.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Gatehouse, 'Inside Yemen's "forgotten war"'.
¹⁶⁸ Mumford, 'Proxy Warfare and the Future of Conflict', 40.
¹⁶⁹ Walter, 'Review: New and Old war', 519.
¹⁷⁰ Kaldor, 'The "New War" in Iraq', 1.
¹⁷¹ Tertrais, 'The Demise of Ares', 7.

Some considerations regarding this research need to be taken into account. First, this research was mainly focussed on Yemen, and it is difficult to generalize on the basis of just one conflict. Therefore, to address the dilemma of proxy warfare in more depth, it is important to keep researching wars that are called proxy wars and compare them to previous proxy wars. Second, the war in Yemen is an ongoing conflict, that leaves this thesis with an open end because there are new developments every day. With the presidency of Donald Trump, a new path is chosen for the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia, and this will have consequences for the war in Yemen. So it is important to keep an eye on developments surrounding Trump's presidency, his foreign policy, and the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia.

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