How greed keeps Assad's fractured army in place

Universiteit Leiden

Name: Volkert Jan Olij
17-6-2019
Supervisor: Kevin Koehler
Bachelor project of IBO
Word count: 8711

Table of contents

Introduction

The Syrian Civil War has already approached its eight year and is not likely to end anytime soon, despite the severe amount of desertions that occurred. How can it be that Assad's army still stands, against the expectations of the international community? My research will concern the phenomenon of desertion in Syria's military, using the controversial greed versus grievance debate that was introduced by Paul Collier. Over the years, the conflict became increasingly violent and sectarian, having an impact on soldiers' loyalty consideration. Waves of desertion emerged, driven by ideology and fear. Despite these grievances, however, greed plays an underestimated role in desertion dynamics. Soldiers are influenced by both government's loyalty incentives as well as the fruitful war economy and its corruption opportunities.

Literature review and theory

In the post-Cold War era, the number of civil wars increased significantly. Of course, the academic literature on civil wars paralleled this trend. Scholars wanted to know why civil wars became more common, along with the reasoning behind actors' behavior, and the sociopolitical, economic and cultural situation that cause civil wars to escalate.

Civil war literature

First, it is important to define civil wars. Small and Singer (1982, p. 210) formulated the following definition: a civil war is "any armed conflict that involves (a) military action internal to the metropole, (b) the active participation of the national government, and (c) effective resistance by both sides." This definition differentiates civil wars from an interstate or extrastate war in the sense that the government is considered a combatant, that the conflict is internal and that it needs to exceed a threshold of a thousand deaths per year (Sambanis, 2004, p. 816). Interstate wars are between states, while extrastate wars are between a state and a non-state actor, for example an ideological organization, corporation, or militia (Sarkees & Schafer, 2000, p. 129).

Although here civil war is defined in a somewhat distinctive way, scholars have had a tendency to write in terms of an absolute distinction between war and peace, wherein war was being viewed as "inherently dysfunctional" and irrational, and peace was the single logical option (Malone & Nitzschke, 2005, p. 2). Keen (2005, p. 11) argues the contrary; violence can

help actors achieve their political or economic goals, or imitating von Clausewitz, "war is the continuation of economics by other means", making war a rational option. Moreover, even peace agreements are just another way of actors pushing their own interests and thus not entirely beneficial or honest (Keen, 2000, p. 18). Keen's contribution both dismisses the dichotomy between war and peace and clarifies the rationale behind war.

In the course of the twentieth century, scholars generally identified another dichotomy: one on how civil wars arise. On the one hand, rebels need motives to revolt, but on the other hand, they need an opportunity to act (Fearon & Laitin, 2003, p. 76). In political science, amongst other disciplines, civil war onsets are mainly explained through rebels' motives. Political scientists believe that ideological disagreements with the regime, social systems and economic inequality are main drivers of rebellion (Fearon & Laitin, 2003, p. 78). When people's grievances are adequately severe, a rebellion is likely to occur, at least according to political science (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004, p. 564). However, economists are drawn to the level of opportunity as an explanatory factor in civil war onset. They think that other social sciences overestimate ideology and social structure and argue that people will only start a rebellion if it is economically and military feasible. Its main determinants are the availability of finance and that of recruits. In addition, Hirshleifer (1995, p. 175) adds how actors perceive each other and interpret each other's actions as a third explanation for possible civil war outbreak.

Greed versus grievance debate

These two dichotomies make it clear that war can be a viable option and is often driven by economic incentives. An important contributor to the civil war literature, Collier, translates both ideas to his greed thesis. Together with Hoeffler, he argues that rebels only act out of greed and that grievances do not seem to matter at all, according to the econometric research that Collier and Hoeffler conducted (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). In order to measure greed and grievances, Collier and Hoeffler analyzed a comprehensive data set of civil wars over the period of 1960-99 and proxied greed as "extortion of natural resources, donations from diasporas, and subventions from hostile government" (2004, p. 565). For grievance they considered "ethnic or religious hatred, political repression, political exclusion, and economic inequality" (2004, p. 570) as satisfying proxies. Interpreting their study's results, Collier and Hoeffler (2004, p. 588) concluded that the opportunity model's explanatory power, that measures to what extent greed drives rebellion, is high, while that of the grievance model is low. According to their research, the factors that have the biggest impact on the likelihood of

people rebelling are availability of finance, the cost of rebellion and military advantage. Furthermore, Collier and Hoeffler (2004, p. 580) discovered that the presence of natural resources positively influences the likelihood of a rebellion.

Criticism on the model

This seminal piece of work by Collier and Hoeffler was considered highly controversial, leading to an increase in scholars thinking and writing and inherently spawning a great deal of criticism on the greed thesis. One of shortcomings of the article is the fact that it is often too easy to draw a conclusion on the individual level out of a research's statistical results (Ballentine & Nitzschke, 2005, p. 4). The difference between acting out of greed or mere survival is not observed. Another missing element in Collier and Hoeffler's theory is the role of the state (Ganesan & Vines, 2004, p. 304). The greed thesis solely focuses on rebels' motivations and the passive situation of opportunity, while in reality the role of the state is very active and influential. A third critique is concerning Collier's overlapping models of rebellion-as-business and rebellion-as-crime. The first approach states that rebels gain wealth despite the costs to society (Collier, Hoeffler & Söderbom, 2004, p. 255). This follows economic rational choice theory in which actors act primarily out of self-interest. In the second approach, taking it even further, rebellion is modeled as a criminal activity, - "the only difference from common crime being that predation is directed against natural resources instead of household wealth" (Collier, 2000, p. 852). Out of a purely economic perspective this might be true, but Gutiérrez Sanin (2004, p. 270) argues that it is to one-dimensional and restrictive. A final critique I will mention neglects Collier and Hoeffler's whole theory, namely Ballentine and Nitzschke (2005, p. 4) judging it too focused on natural resources and underestimating governance failures in conflict dynamics.

Still, scholars hold Collier and Hoeffler's greed thesis, that triggered the influential greed versus grievance debate in civil war literature, in high regard. It has enough explanatory power and brings a relatively new view on civil war onset to the table. Policy makers happily adopted the thesis in their policy strategy. Partly because the greed argument offered solutions on how the state should counterbalance economic opportunities and rebels' motivations, partly because the argument neglected social and political factors (Ballentine & Nitzschke, 2005, p. 4). The typically simplistic economic model gave way for policy-makers to ignore the complexity of ethnicity or religion.

Originally developed in order to explain civil war breakout, the greed versus grievance debate also strongly connects to the duration of war. Keen (2005, p. 12) already noted that war can

be a preferable situation for certain groups. If the recruitment costs are low and the revenues of war are high, rebels lack solid incentives to end the war, thus resulting in a longer war (Collier et al, 2004, p. 267). In addition, high economic inequality tends to prolong civil wars. This has to do with the fact that usually the majority of rebels is recruited from the poor. This, in combination with high economic inequality, results in low recruitment costs for rebels, leading to more intense and therefore probably longer civil war (Collier et al, 2004, p. 262). Furthermore, the greater the economic inequality, the greater the challenge of the rebellion and ultimately the longer the war will last. Another determinant that lengthens the duration of civil wars is the involvement of militias (Jentzsch, Kalyvas & Schubiger, 2015, p. 760).

These multiple aspects of the greed versus grievance debate lead to my research topic: the impact of economic motivations on soldiers' choice between loyalty and desertion. I will test the greed thesis that Collier and Hoeffler put forward on the Syrian Civil War. Although the argument originally focuses on civil wars onsets and rebellion, I am going to analyze the reasoning behind military officers and rank-and-file to stay loyal to the incumbent or desert in the civil war. The greed versus grievance debate offers an interesting framework for studying this phenomenon. According to Fearon (2004, p. 277), civil wars that arise out of mass uprisings tend to be quite brief. In Syria, this is not the case, partially because a considerable chunk of the military stayed loyal. What are their motivations to act as they do? Following the greed thesis, my research will mainly focus on the economic aspects in the consideration.

Why study the military?

In order to understand the reasoning behind studying the military, it is important to understand civil-military relations. In a state, both an autocracy and democracy, the government relies on the support of its civilians as well as the military. The civilians offer the government legitimation of power, whereas the role of military is to protect the state against threats. These threats are normally external: for example, interstate wars or peacekeeping missions. However, threats can also emerge from inside the state. When civilians disagree with the government and anti-regime protests are escalating, the military gets a secondary purpose. The military is not only used to fight wars, but also to suppress civilian unrest. This demonstrates that a strong military is essential for state and government survival. According to Feaver (1999, p. 214), this is where the central problem of civil-military relations comes from, constructing a simple paradox: "The very institution created to protect the polity is given sufficient power to become a threat to the polity." Where the military is needed to balance the society in times of unrest, the military itself needs to be balanced as well. A weak

military is not able to assure the survival of the civilians, state or government. However, when the military is too powerful, it might try to overthrow the government. The military is not just a passive instrument owned by the state (Chorley, 1943, p. 98). Thus, a crucial element in this civil-military problematique is the principal-agent theory. The government is not able to restrain the society and is forced to delegate this task to the military. The military is given the authority to carry out the government's orders. This means that the military is more directly involved in the task than the government, creating asymmetries in information (Pion-Berlin & Trinkunas, 2010, p. 396). The government knows that this asymmetry allows the military to disobey orders, leading the government to either monitor and punish the military or to incentivize them with material incentives to encourage obedience. This relation sums up why it is so important to study the military. While the military is necessary to protect the state and its civilians, it has a free will and is a decisive factor in unrest's outcome or even the cause of unrest itself (Bou Nassif, 2015a, p. 250).

As I said, the military is no passive instrument of the state. The military as institution has a variety of options as it deals with the principal's orders. My key question is how the military reacts when it is confronted with challenging societal change, such as an uprising. For the most part, academic literature on military behavior in anti-authoritarian uprisings discusses three possible ways of military behavior (Barany, 2011; Albrecht & Ohl, 2016; Dion-Berlin & Trinkunas, 2010). First, a possibility is staying loyal to the incumbent by repressing the civil unrest. Secondly, in some cases the military defects, meaning that military soldiers either desert or actively turn against the government by siding with the rebels (McLauchlin, 2010, p. 333). Thirdly, the military can decide to "exit", or to stay quartered, thus taking no action at all. By doing this, the institution deliberately ignores the principal's orders, which still greatly influences the situation.

However, what this literature neglects, by treating the military as an institution, is that the military is not as cohesive as it might suggest. It consists of individual soldiers on the higher and the lower levels of the military and these actors behave in a different and unpredictable manner in itself and to each other. The unit of analysis in my research is on the individual level of the military, concerning the decision-making of both the officers and the rank-and-file soldiers. Albrecht and Ohl (2016, p. 39) argue that higher officers are not only military personnel, but also members of the political elite. They have the power, though not really the freedom, to decide whether they are loyal to the incumbent or not and to eventually dislodge him. Soldiers, by contrast, are not involved in decision-making and consider military service

as a job. However, soldiers' choices in loyalty or resistance are heavily constrained by the hierarchical control of the military.

Research Design

In the Syrian Civil War, the military is plagued with desertions. Since the mass uprisings that were part of the Arab Spring in 2011 and especially in the year 2012, many Syrian soldiers have decided to defect. Abandoning duty is a risky and dangerous move and requires strong motivation and courage. Scholars on intrastate conflict did some research and speculations about various reasons for desertion or loyalty, but not enough.

Dependent variable

This leads to my dependent variable: the decision between loyalty and desertion of Syrian soldiers. I want to test if the behavior of soldiers follows Collier's theory, thus acting primarily out of greed. I will test this theory both on rank-and-file soldiers and on officers, because there is a clear difference between these two groups in the number of desertions. At the soldier level, there are many desertions, while at the officer level defections are rare (Albrecht & Ohl, 2016, p. 47). Of course, this difference is relative, since the bulk of any military consists of rank-and-file soldiers.

Before I can observe the influence of the independent variable, there is further clarification needed on the dependent variable. McLauchlin (2014, p. 1421) defines desertion as "rule-breaking exit from military service". He makes a distinction between deserters that just return to civilian life and those that defect and fight for the opposition. Nepstad (2013, p. 338) structures the factors that shape security force defections and loyalty in mass uprisings in three groups: regime tactics for maintaining loyalty, opposition tactics for encouraging defections, and macro factors. Ohl (2016, p. 8) offers persuasion and coercion by the state as the explanatory factors in defection. Combining these insights, my focus will lay on the persuasive regime tactics for maintaining its soldiers' loyalty.

Independent variable

I research the impact of material and economic incentives on desertion dynamics. There are many other ways to explain the behavior of Syrian soldiers, but I offer the economic explanation, inspired by the greed versus grievance debate. Because the Syrian Civil War is so complex, an economic explanation would not be enough, but the nature of the conflict

makes it so that innumerable different variables and explanations would be needed. I hope that with my approach I am able to explain a part of the conflict.

In making my point, I make a distinction between economic incentives that are provided by the government and incentives that are not. The reason I do this is that government provided incentives are active loyalty incentives, intended to maintain soldiers' support, while the other passive incentives emerge out of soldiers' authority or the war economy that emerged in the course of the conflict, making it more appealing to protect their privileged positions. The incentives that the government provides are salary and other material loyalty incentives. The other incentives are corruption, smuggling and looting.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis: Following Collier's argument, Syrian soldiers will stay loyal to the regime if they have enough material incentives (greed); irrespective of their sectarian affiliation or any complaints they have (grievance).

As I mentioned, the higher levels of the military suffer relatively less desertions. Lower-level military wages are very low in Syria and giving this salary up in favor of desertion is not disastrous. Officers, on the other hand, do make a decent salary and have access to numerous privileges provided by the government. This is an explanation for the difference in desertion rates and would prove my point that greed prevails.

In my research, I will not be able to determine a threshold on material incentives, which decides when soldiers desert or stay loyal. Every soldier reacts differently on economic incentives and most material incentives are not even measurable. Furthermore, my goal is not to give a definitive answer on desertion dynamics, but to show that greed is an important explanatory factor in staying loyal to the incumbent.

Inferential strategy and case selection

My inferential strategy is a theory-testing case study in which I try to test Collier's theory on different levels of the Syrian military. I chose this case because Syria is a state where the military is divided, thus there are differences to be observed between soldiers. That is helpful, because it makes the effect of the material incentives observable. Another reason I picked Syria as my case, is that the military is full of corruption; I will come back to this. In civil wars, the formal economy vanishes and the, often illegal, informal economy flourishes. I went for a qualitative single case study, because my goal is not to compare cases but to test the greed vs grievance theory only on Syria. My BA thesis has no room for multiple cases.

Academic articles and books form the basis of my theoretical framework. Furthermore, I will use newspaper and think-tank articles to fill in the lack of literature on recent events. The extensive use of different sources is due to the complexity of the conflict. My goal is to avoid a one-sided perspective on dynamics of the Syrian Civil War.

A challenge in my research question is the fact that the research on my topic is not yet extensively conducted. I apply the greed versus grievance on loyalty and desertion of soldiers, instead of the original unit of analysis, rebels, used in Collier and Hoeffler's research. That, of course, does not help me in generating literature to base my research on. In addition, even motivations to desert or not to desert are not yet fully explored. Most of available literature on desertions is on the macro-level; by contrast, my unit of analysis, individual soldiers, concerns the micro-level. There is not a lot written about desertion in the Syrian Civil War itself as well. My goal is, despite the arguable lack of literature, to contribute to the economic aspect of individual motives of desertion and loyalty. I argue that direct, government-provided economic incentives on the one hand, such as salary, housing or financial bonuses, and indirect economic incentives on the other, such as government approval of smuggling and other forms of corruption, have a positive effect on the loyalty of soldiers. In most cases, these incentives will even outweigh various serious factors, like political ideology, religion, ethnicity or sectarianism.

The course of the conflict

The mass uprisings in Syria were the result of a wave of protests, called the Arab Spring, in the beginning of 2011 that emerged across the region. In Tunisia and Egypt, regimes were toppled in a matter of weeks and faith in a democratic transition began to spread to other Middle Eastern and North African states (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2019a). Like in the rest of the region, the people of Syria were dissatisfied with the standard of living. The economic inequality kept growing, the unemployment rate was high (caused by a youth bulge), and there was no way to vote popular representatives out of office, because leaders were authoritarian; the result was that people's only option was protesting on the streets (Gelvin, 2012, p. 25). Although Arab regimes were immensely unpopular and faced grave economic and political problems, their stability was greatly overestimated by scholars (Gause, 2011, p. 82). Even after the successful uprisings of Tunisia and Egypt, experts deemed a similar situation in Syria unlikely. This can to some extent be explained by Assad's promising, though unrealized, reputation as a reformer, but also because of how excessively violently the

regime has dealt with insurgencies by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in the past (Gelvin, 2012, p. 103). In addition, the military was strongly connected to the regime, which made it improbable that Syria would follow the Egyptian case (Haas & Lesch, 2013, p. 82). Despite this, a combination of repression and an extreme drought of four years led pro-democracy Syrians to protest in an initially peaceful manner.

Introduction of armed opposition

In March 2011, fifteen boys were detained and tortured by the *mukhabarat*, the Syrian intelligence apparatus, and the possibility of a peaceful resolution vanished (Lesch, 2011, p. 424). The regime continued this trend of repression by violently repressing the protests that spawned out of this incident, causing further protests to increase in size and strength, to which the regime responded with even heavier force (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2019b). Up to this point, protests had been relatively nonviolent, but the regime's crackdown pressured the protesters to take up arms against the security forces (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2019b). This escalation shifted the situation into another phase. The next phase, starting in summer 2011, was defined by armed combat between protesters and the regime's forces and attempts of the international community to ease the conflict. The greater part of the armed resistance was conducted by the Free Syrian Army, an organically formed rebel group consisting of primarily Sunni army deserters and civilians (Spyer, 2012, p. 47). Assad's security forces proved too powerful to the poorly equipped and organized opposition and the rebels realized that they were not able to force the regime's overthrow. Meanwhile, the international community was making its entrance, providing support for both parties (Holliday, 2012, p. 25). The Arab League offered mediation in the conflict to pursue an end to the killing, the release of prisoners, the withdrawal of the army from cities, freedom of movement for journalists and an open dialogue between the regime and opposition (Maddy-Weitzman, 2012, p. 76). Equal to the supporting UN mediation mission, the continuation of violence caused the attempt to fail. Mediators' lives were endangered, so the mission was put to an end. The lack of mediators' protection and overall effectiveness was partially caused by Russia and China's vetoes in the Security Council (Asseburg, Lacher & Transfeld, 2018).

Sectarianism in the Syrian Civil War

The third phase introduces the civil war. According to Phillips (2015, p. 358), if we use the widely accepted definition of civil war that I mentioned earlier, the starting point of the civil war is sometime between August 2011 and January 2012. The war stimulated Syrian sectarianism, predominantly between the Sunni and the Shia, and underlined ethnic contrasts.

Haddad (2011, p. 25) distinguishes various forms of sectarian identity, where on the one hand sectarianism is only present on the background, but not strongly shaping someone's identity. Examples are habitual daily rituals, which are no active choices, or at least not anymore. On the other hand, there is a fierce celebration of sectarian identity, along with denigrating other sects, which displays a very active form of sectarian identity.

Syria has always been a heterogeneous ethnic state with a variety of religions and sects. The majority is Sunni Arab and the rest comprises Alawites, Kurds, Druze, Christians, Turkomen and Ismailis minorities (Noueihed & Warren, 2017, p. 216). The ruling elite of Assad's party, the Ba'ath party, is almost exclusively made up of Alawites, which are an offshoot of Shia Islam and form around eleven percent of the population (Carpenter, 2013, p.2). The party's initial ideal of Arab nationalism gradually abated and eventually led to a particularly disproportionate representation of minorities when Hafiz, Bashar's father, consolidated power (Kerr & Larkin, 2015, p. 113). Although it might seem a problem that such a small ethnic minority governs the rest of the Syrian population, the Ba'ath party gets support from the other minorities. They back the party's secular policy of religious pluralism and Arab nationalism, because they fear being treated as second-class citizens in a Sunni-dominated state (Noueihed & Warren, 2017, p. 216). Forming only a tenth of total population, the Alawite regime depends on the other ethnic minorities for its survival. An interviewed Christian Syrian declared that he did not support the regime's security apparatus, but he had no assurance that another ruling sect would protect the Christian community in Syria (Rafizadeh, 2011).

Given this situation, the protests of 2011 initially had a national character, instead of a sectarian one. Before the escalation of the conflict, sectarian identity was somewhat weak. However, the regime's harsh crackdown that was portrayed by the media as an Alawite repression highlighted the differences between sects (Phillips, 2015, p. 369). In addition, the conflict drew actors with ethno-sectarian agendas, such as the Syrian Kurdish community that wishes for an independent Kurdistan (Tejel, 2008, p. 93). Shia militias used ethno-sectarian goals to justify their support for the regime (Phillips, 2015, p. 359). At this point, sectarian identity has already reached high levels, leading to uneasiness in the international community. According to the UN, the increasingly sectarian nature of the conflict is dangerous, because religious civil wars tend to be bloodier and longer than other types (Burke, 2013, p. 2).

The role of the international community

Until around 2015, the civil war did not actively involve major foreign backing; then the Syrian Civil War got progressively more global. Before the onset of the conflict, Russia was not much more than Syria's main arms supplier, but during wartime this demand raised significantly (Allison, 2013, p. 805). Furthermore, apart from its supplier role, Russia built a Russian air base in Syria to strike rebel forces (Cordesman, 2015). According to Allison (2013, p. 820), the reasoning behind Russian involvement in Syria is a mix between material interests, feeling the responsibility to stabilize the region, staying involved in the region out of geopolitical interest, and their history of good relations. The United States side with the rebels, but were far less engaged in the conflict than the Russians were. The US have a bad history with Middle East conflicts, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, and try to keep their hands of another debacle as much as possible (Gause III, 2014, p. 24). However, through missile attacks on regime's airbases and supposed chemical weapon sites, the US and its western allies fought along from a distance (Al Jazeera, 2018). Iran and Saudi Arabia have battled for regional influence in the past, and their involvement in Syria, is just another example (Gause III, 2014, p. 12). This clash is evenly sectarian with Shia Iran supporting Assad, while Sunni Saudi Arabia sided with the rebels. Iran already was one of the biggest defenders of Syria's regime, by actively sending advisors, equipment and money since 2012. Iran also played a role in the creation of the pro-regime Shia militias of Lebanese Hezbollah and the National Defense Forces (Goodarzi, 2015, p. 177). Turkey was thwarting Syrian Kurds to prevent a *de facto* Syrian Kurdistan, similar to what the Kurds have established in Iraq (Rabi & Friedman, 2017, p. 430). A final component contributing to regional and global complexity, that I will mention, is the rise of the Islamic State. Eradicating this radical organization was no actor's priority, but made the situation even tougher and more violent than it already was (Rabi & Friedman, 2017, p. 428). It is clear that there are many actors involved, all with different goals. Akpinar (2016, p. 2290) argues that involved states have high stakes in the war, support the outcome that lies in their own interest. This confirms Keen's theory about peace resolution.

The outside assistance of allies helps Assad's regime to survive, but also easy access to resources, the ability to strategically control the pace of escalation, and better equipment as well as organization makes it that the regime can outlast the rebels (Sayigh, 2013). Accordingly, the regime fights a defensive "war of attrition" to keep casualties on the already greatly diminished military low (Kozak, 2015, p. 35). Regime airstrikes on welfare services, bakeries and hospitals follow this "safe" strategy. Martínez and Eng (2018, p. 247) argue that

these attacks destroy both rebels' morale and statehood rivalry, bringing about state's survival. Even though the war is still going, some analysts are calling Assad the winner (Phillips, 2018; Cook, 2018; Hassan, 2018).

Desertion in the Syrian Armed Forces

One of the major challenges of Assad's regime and the military is the great scale on which desertion occurs. As Gaub (2014) states, the phenomenon of desertion is normal; every army suffers from desertion to a certain extent. So in order to make a point about economic influences on desertion, I have to research a period that is relatively packed with desertion: a deviant case. Patterns of desertion discovered by Albrecht and Koehler (2018, p. 188) through interviews with Syrian deserters, reveal that nearly two-thirds deserted between fall 2011 and late 2012.

During the first few months of the uprisings until fall, Assad successfully framed the rebels as illegitimate terrorists and soldiers were given clear and monitored instructions to suppress the unrest (Ohl, 2016, p. 278). In this period, military defections were still rare, but when people started to hate the idea of fighting civilians more and more, massive waves of desertion emerged (Albrecht & Ohl, 2016, p. 40). While the officer corps remained generally loyal, their subordinates defected individually across units, following a pattern of what Albrecht and Ohl (2016, p. 40) call "horizontal defection". What is interesting to note is that there were no cases of mutiny, because defection occurred individually. Even though it is a massively varying estimate, between 15 and 50 percent of the army has deserted in total (Gaub, 2014). After early 2013, it was clear that the regime would likely survive and gain the upper hand. Soldiers, that ultimately want to live, side with the winner of the conflict, thus the amount of desertions decreased. Furthermore, most soldiers that wanted to desert, have deserted at this point.

The magnitude of desertion has a couple implications (Ohl, Albrecht & Koehler, 2015). First, it led, counterintuitively, to a more cohesive military. While desertion is normally a sign that a military's cohesion is low, all desertions left the military with mostly pro-regime soldiers, and thus ideologically stronger. Second, the regime heavily relied on pro-regime militias, to keep up with opposition armed forces. Third, the government realized that the loyalty incentives of soldiers needed to be increased (Ohl, Albrecht & Koehler, 2015). While in the past the

soldiers depended on the regime through patronage networks, it is now vice versa. The military is essential as both the state's "legitimate steward" and for state survival, as well as the manager of the previously mentioned pro-regime militias (Khaddour, 2016). Fourth, military service is compulsory in Syria and desertion is punishable, which means that the regime automatically gains new opponents when soldiers desert. Penalties for desertion range from incarceration to torture or even "disappearing" (Landinfo, 2018, p. 8).

Drivers of desertion

Now that the scale of the Syrian desertion is clear, I will discuss some grievances that might be regarded as deciding factors in desertion decisions.

Grievances against the regime

The grievances that soldiers have against the regime are not much different from those of the civilians. The economic shortcomings of Syria were undeniable and political freedom was almost inexistent. However, the role of the military is unlike that of civilians and leads to other grievances. The first grievance that is shared among most deserters is the disgust of fighting and killing fellow Syrians. Pro-regime television and conspiracy theories about rebels being foreign terrorists indoctrinate soldiers combined with coercion of the officer corps, forces soldiers to shoot at both armed and unarmed protesters (Watson, 2011). With the majority of the population being Sunni and therefore the conscripts as well, the grievance is especially felt among Sunni soldiers. A second universal grievance was the fear of death. This is a logical grievance and the well-known risk of being a soldier, but this risk enhanced as the conflict got more violent. What does not help is that the military service of conscripts structurally exceeds the compulsory eighteen months. Not only that, but reservists are being used again as reserve officers (Landinfo, 2018, p. 5). Since the uprisings, most soldiers have been kept in the army indefinitely (Dagher, 2019). Naturally, this is an attempt by the government to compensate for the severe lack of conscripts. The third grievance is of sectarian nature. While the Alawi elite enjoyed material benefits in exchange of political support, Sunnis lived in poverty. This Alawite patronage system emphasized sectarian divisions (Balanche, 2018, p. 13). This might have contributed to underlying discontent explaining people's eagerness to protest, but it is not a main driver of desertion. Before the uprising, Sunni deserters felt no hostility towards Alawite comrades and emphasized the professionalism of the military (Ohl, Koehler & Albrecht, 2015). Respondents told that they

did not get along with the Alawite officer, but that is an issue of authority, rather than ethnicity. It was not until later that sectarianism became as important in the conflict as it is now.

Grievances against the military

Apart from grievances against the regime, some soldiers experience grievances against the military itself. Bou Nassif (2015b) identified three different types of anti-military grievances, based on interviews with Sunni officers. The first one is on the professional level, concerning unequal treatment between sects. Before Hafiz al-Assad came to power in 1970, Sunnis were greatly represented in the officer corps (Bou Nassif, 2015b, p. 631). This makes sense since almost 60 percent the country's population is Sunni (Van Dam, 2011, p. 1). However, Hafiz' changes to the recruitment policies caused the Alawis to take over the overwhelming majority, thus preventing a fair representation in the military academy. This discriminative treatment had major implications after graduation, because officers enjoyed many privileges compared to ordinary soldiers (Bou Nassif, 2015b, p. 633). The second grievance of the Sunni deserters is that the regime ignored the corporate interests of the military. The officers complained about the old weaponry that they had been provided, and about the conditions in which soldiers lived, with dirty and overcrowded barracks (Bou Nassif, 2015b, p. 637). An interviewed deserter tells how the medical staff was insufficient and soldiers suffered from hunger. These flaws are both due to bad governance as well as corrupt higher officers that send food transfer sums to their own accounts, amongst other things (Alhallak, 2016). In addition, the Sunni officers had ideational complaints. Following the secular policy of the Ba'ath party, the religious freedom of Sunni officers was severely restricted. Daily prayers were frowned upon by fellow Alawite officers, and drinking alcoholic beverages was expected by superiors (Bou Nassif, 2015b, p. 641).

The impact of greed

What are soldiers' motivations to stay loyal to the incumbent despite their grievances? Even though the largely Sunni population is repressed, there are still Sunni soldiers in the army; especially the officer corps suffered relatively few Sunni desertions. One way in which Assad tries to keep his military significantly large is by offering military deserters amnesty. He gives them a few months to return without punishment in the hope of maintaining his armed forces (McDowall, 2018). Better is to avoid desertion by providing material incentives to the

soldiers. I discuss these incentives out of two perspectives. The first one I call governmental. This perspective relates to incentives that are directly provided by the government. The other perspective is non-governmental and comprises incentives that are either indirectly provided by the government, through the enabling of corrupt practices and other forms of economic enrichment, or not provided by the government at all.

Most incentives will apply to militants as well as soldiers, but I leave them out of my argument. Desertion and governmental control dynamics differ from those of soldiers, so I cannot pair them together easily. Just as with rebels, the greed thesis makes a valid point on militias, but the focus of my research are soldiers. Furthermore, the previously mentioned grievances do not apply to militias.

Governmental economic incentives

These economic incentives are direct loyalty incentives. This section describes how the government tries to maintain its soldiers' support by providing increases in salary as well as other material incentives.

Salary

Wages itself is not a loyalty incentive; soldiers earn money like any other job, and often below average. The basic monthly salary is said to range from 14,000 to 30,000 Syrian pounds in comparison to civil servants' earnings of at least 23,000 pounds. Generals on the other hand can earn 45,000 pounds or more. The salary of the average militant lies somewhere in between that of soldiers and officers (Westall & Al-Khalidi, 2015).

However, the destructive war demands a lot of the economy. Damage to infrastructure causes production to stagnate, entire residential and commercial areas collapsed under bombing, trust in banks faded, tourism vanished, and commercialism altogether took a different form (Wind & Dahi, 2014, p. 135). This has caused the Syrian pound to drastically decline in value, and the nation's currency reserves of 18 billion at the start of the war are nearly completely depleted (Herbert, 2014, p. 80). Iran supplies food, commodities, oil and ammunition, and it even implemented a bilateral trade agreement with Syria, but this alone cannot stop the devaluation of the Syrian pound (Al-Saadi, 2015). The consequence of this economic crisis is that the already poor wages of soldiers lost even more of their real value. Assad has tried to combat this by raising the salaries of all government employees several times (Butter, 2016). This raise, that does indeed include armed forces, is very clearly intended as an incentive for soldiers to stay loyal. In 2015, for example, Syria's prime minister announced that frontline

soldiers would receive a great monthly bonus of 10,000 pounds to boost morale (Westall & Al-Khalidi, 2015). Loyalty is not the government's only objective here; by still paying salaries to all its employees, including those in opposition areas, the state hopes to maintain control and influence (Richani, 2016, p. 52). In a time where, though not valuable, money is hard to come by, this financial assurance is a welcome one for soldiers and other employees. The regime also gave rewards to soldiers that provided information on comrades that worked together with the opposition (Ohl, Koehler & Albrecht, 2015). However, the increase of wages could not hold up with Syria's inflation rate, and soldiers were not able to survive of salary alone. Ohl, Koehler and Albrecht (2015) confirm that soldier' and even non-commissioned officer' salaries are meager, while high-ranking officers are able to live on it generously.

Other material loyalty incentives

Because the currency's value dropped, money is not worth as much. Because product prices also fluctuate heavily, it is easier to give the product itself and the regime does exactly this. The first way in which the regime manages this is by doling out seized houses to security forces after successful sieges (Grinstead, 2017). Not only is this a loyalty incentive, it is also the regime's way of making soldiers dependent on the state in both income and necessities. Secondly, the Ministry of Defense has launched a plan together with a group of businesspersons in 2007 to sell cars to retired military officers (Khaddour, 2016). These pensioners can buy cars at a discounted and tax-free rate. Retired officers could immediately sell their cars, making enormous profit of tax savings alone. While this economic benefit does not affect the active military directly, it prospects some comfort in wealth for future retiring officers. The third material loyalty incentive is free vacations abroad for officers (Ohl, Koehler, Albrecht, 2015). Again, this fits in the package of officer privileges with other incentives as free real estate and cars. Undoubtedly, the regime offers material encouragement in other ways similar to this list.

Non-governmental economic incentives

So far, I have discussed loyalty incentives directly provided by the regime. Soldiers' wages are excessively low to live off, so that most of them have a second or even third job to make a satisfactory salary (Lund, 2016). These extra jobs alone can offer a solution to their financial problems, but soldiers' authoritative power enable faster options to make money. Especially officers have the power to manipulate people and events. This occurrence, that I measure

though corruption, smuggling and looting, is enhanced by the war economy that the civil war brought about.

Corruption

Through Assad's patronage networks, corruption has long been present in Syria. As often seen in authoritarian regimes, political support is for sale. This is reflected in the Corruption Perceptions Index of 2018, where Syria ranks 178th of the total 180 countries (Transparency International, 2018). Transparency International defines corruption as the misuse of power for private gains.

The Syrian Civil War brought soldiers more possibilities to exploit their power. Syria is filled with government and rebel checkpoints that are used to separate occupied territories and to regulate trespassing of civilians (Selo, 2013). What makes this fruitful for soldiers is that they can coerce tariffs on trespassers or tax traders' merchandise. Long queues can by bypassed by using the faster military lane, but this is of course in exchange for a bribe (Samaha, 2016). Merchants, whose goods can expire or sustain damage by waiting in line for hours, are almost forced to take this option. Besides, officers charge merchants to be accompanied by soldiers to facilitate a safe passage through checkpoints (Khaddour, 2016).

While these military checkpoints offer benefits for all soldiers, corrupt officers abuse their power in an advantageous way that rank-and-file soldiers cannot. Moreover, officers take advantage of rank-and-file soldiers. I already mentioned how higher officers kept military food transfer sums to their accounts. Officers pay conscripts to do their chores, such as performing maintenance or construction work and driving kids to school (Khaddour, 2016). A common practice for decades preceding the war, bribable officers allowed conscripts to evade their service for long periods. The continuation of this procedure during the Syrian Civil War did not foster the already heavily diminished army, to say the least.

Smuggling

An important method for soldiers of abusing both authority and the exemption of strong governmental control is by smuggling. Smuggling happens on both sides of the conflict. Due to the disrupted economy, people are forced to look for alternatives to make money, which is manageable in a state like Syria. Since long before the war, Syria has a successful illicit economy. This partially has to with its geographical position in the Middle East. Its lengthy and poorly controlled borders give it access to the sea and thus connections to other markets, and Syria is surrounded with states where crime is a common theme (Steenkamp, 2017). Since the intervention and occupation of Lebanon in 1976, the Syrian government and

particularly the army got involved in illicit economy. Lebanese smuggling networks depended on military approval if they wanted to continue operating, which led to the development of strong relations between them (Herbert, 2014, p. 72).

Both the regime and opposition were receiving financial support from either allies or actors that had certain stakes in the war, but this aid could not reach or satisfy every soldier or rebel. Smuggling offered an outcome. The smuggled goods ranged from consumer goods with high tariff rate, such as tobacco, to illegal goods, such as drugs and weapons (Herbert, 2014, p. 70). Even illicit services, such as human trafficking and prostitution, were carried out. Although smuggling happened frequently before the war, its frequency grew. Firstly, the control on the borders was lost, which made smuggling easier for all parties (Herbert, 2014, p. 75). While the rebels and the army differ ideologically and have opposing goals, they tended to ignore this when they traded smuggled goods and natural resources with each other (Wind & Dahi, 2014, p. 137). Secondly, the economic sanctions imposed by the international community, forced the government to find alternative commerce in the illicit economy. The sanctions hit the Syrian state heavily as intended, but along with it, its civilians are not left unharmed (Samaha, 2016).

Smugglers were not only benefitting financially; these networks also gave them power. They often had political influence, because the smugglers make clients dependable by offering them the necessities of daily life (Herbert, 2014, p. 70). Of course, as always, money is power.

Looting

Looting is another example of something that happens on both sides of the conflict. When one side sieges an area of the opposite side and control is gone, people will loot the area. This phenomenon compares to government's distributing of sieged houses to soldiers. However, looting is more valuable for rebels, because in general they loot newly conquered territories, while the military takes back its occupied territory. Still, looting is easy and appealing for soldiers and happens frequently, even though the state tries to curb such activities (Hallaj, 2015, 4).

I argue that it happens in two ways. The first form of looting is material and this undoubtedly happens to every village or any other valuable site that soldiers come across. Reports point out that soldiers loot rebels' homes and properties after government sieges (Wind & Dahi, 2014, p. 137). Apart from this, Syria is home to world's first agricultural villages and this culturally heritage comes under threat of looting, because artifacts from archaeological sites

make a lucrative profit on the black market (Casana & Panahipour, 2014, p. 128). Another crime that can be interpreted as looting is hostage taking. Taking prisoners started out as an inevitable side issue in military sieges, but soon became the main motive (Hallaj, 2014, p. 4). Kidnapping proved very profitable, because of the ransoms that people, assisted by local peace committees, were willing exchange for hostages (Steenkamp, 2017).

Analysis

As McLauchlin (2014, p. 1421) rightfully remarks, "The focus on positive incentives is helpful, but insufficient. It suggests that soldiers essentially have the freedom to act as they see fit." An economic explanation can offer some insight, but is in itself insufficient to explain Syria's desertion dynamics, as any one-dimensional explanation would be. Furthermore, greed can explain why soldiers stayed loyal, but is not useful in explaining desertion. The Alawis that make part of Assad's patronage networks have no choice but to support the regime vigorously, because their lives depend on it. When the regime falls, the Alawis fall with it (Landis, 2012, p. 5). This is endorsed by the fact that deserted Alawis escape the country rather than side with the rebels in fear of Sunni retribution (Balanche, 2018, p. 14). To a slightly lesser degree, this applies to Sunni soldiers that risk suspiciousness by the rebels and thus abstain desertion, creating preference falsification (Koehler, Ohl & Albrecht, 2016, p. 448).

Still, the findings on material incentives in the military present an interesting understanding of desertion dynamics. The army receives many economic benefits from both the government and the war economy. Most of these incentives were already present before the onset of the conflict. Soldiers already earned a salary earlier, but officers, and especially those within the state's patronage networks, also gained additional material benefits in the form of real estate, cars, vacation. Corruption in all sorts in Syria was nothing new, as well as smuggling. Nevertheless, all of these factors enhanced since the war started.

My hypothesis states that, according to the greed thesis, soldiers will stay loyal to the incumbent if they receive enough material incentives, despite any grievances they experience. In order to test this hypothesis, it is essential to make a distinction between rank-and-file soldiers and higher officers, because the benefits they receive are not the same at all. The first incentive, salary, shows this difference in that the higher officers can earn up to three times as

much as rank-and-file soldiers. This is again reflected in the gifts that the state hands out to the higher military ranks. Only with the sieged houses, the rank-and-file soldiers are equal to the officers. This is because the soldiers are made dependent of the government by receiving a house that they cannot afford themselves, while the officers on the other hand can. With the nongovernmental incentives, it is also more even between ordinary soldiers and officers due to the chaotic character of the conflict. Still, the more power a soldier has, and the power of soldiers varies heavily, the more he can take advantage of the situation. Higher officers are not only able to exploit their power on citizens, but on lower soldiers as well.

My observations regarding desertion in the Syrian military confirms the greed thesis in multiple ways. Firstly, as Landis (2012, p. 5) notes, opposition leaders hope that the regime runs out of money, because this will provoke collapse. Without money, the regime cannot persuade or coerce its citizens and military and causes most soldiers to desert while some will commit a coup d'état. While salary is not soldiers' primary source of income, this economic incentive comes with authority and can generate a lot more through corruption, smuggling or looting. The rebels also operate in Syria's illicit economy, but their lack of authority generates less wealth. Secondly, the difference in desertion between rank-and-file soldiers and higher officers can be explained by the greed thesis. The more a soldier earns, the more likely he is to stay loyal. This applies to both Alawis as well as Sunnis, since Sunni desertions in the officer corps are relatively rare compared to ordinary soldiers. Thirdly, since the regime is on the winning side, the trend of desertions fell heavily. This is because the chance of survival is now higher for those loyal to the regime. Fourthly, the army often trades with the opposition. In these cases, grievances are set aside and greed resolves both parties' needs.

It is hard to say if greed is the main motivation in these four points, but grievances do seem to be of minor importance here. Furthermore, the Syrian case is in line with the academic literature on civil wars in the sense that economic inequality and involvement of militias lead to longer wars. The Syrian Civil War is lasting several years already and is not likely to end soon. Al the involved actors make it so that the conflict is surprisingly balanced, and although nobody will win, certainly nobody will lose.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I argue that the greed thesis holds up in the desertion dynamics of the Syrian Civil War. However, the literature on desertion is poor and the Syrian Civil War is still fresh, which makes it difficult to make a definite argument about it. Furthermore, the conflict is extraordinarily complex and multilayered, contributing to its difficulty. Syria suffered many defections during the war with a peak at 2012. The regime has increased loyalty incentives to combat this. Soldiers themselves are also able to take advantage of the chaotic climate and illicit economy. Following the greed thesis, the economic benefits that soldiers receive out of this situation form an important motive in their consideration. The fact that officers rarely defect also aligns with the theory, regarding that they benefit significantly better than rank-and-file soldiers do. Although this research does not fully explain desertion dynamics of the Syrian Civil War, it does offer an interesting overview of how money plays a role in the conflict and how ideology seems to have a minor importance. Using this research to generalize to other cases is not possible, but it is likely that similarities are to be found.

Literature

Akpınar, P. (2016). The limits of mediation in the Arab Spring: The case of Syria. *Third World Quarterly, 37*(12), 2288-2303.

Al Jazeera (2018, April 14). Syria's civil war explained from the beginning. *Al Jazeera English.* Retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/syria-civil-war-explained-160505084119966.html

Albrecht, H., & Koehler, K. (2018). Going on the Run: What Drives Military Desertion in Civil War? *Security Studies, 27*(2), 179-203.

Albrecht, H., & Ohl, D. (2016). Exit, resistance, loyalty: Military behavior during unrest in authoritarian regimes. *Perspectives on Politics, 14*(1), 38-52.

Alhallak, G. (2016, December 16). Why I deserted the Syrian Army. *Middle East Eye*. Retrieved from https://www.middleeasteye.net/big-story/why-i-deserted-syrian-army

Allison, R. (2013). Russia and Syria: explaining alignment with a regime in crisis. *International Affairs, 89*(4), 795-823.

Al-Saadi, S. (2015, June 2). Iran’s Stakes in Syria’s Economy. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Retrieved from https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/60280

Asseburg, M., Lacher, W., & Transfeld, M. (2018). Mission impossible? UN mediation in Libya, Syria and Yemen. *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*.

Balanche, F. (2018). Sectarianism in Syria’s Civil War. *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.* Retrieved from https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01702640/document

Ballentine, K., & Nitzschke, H. (2005). The political economy of civil war and conflict transformation. *Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, Berlin.*

Barany, Z. (2011). The role of the military. *Journal of Democracy, 22*(4), 24-35.

Bou Nassif, H. (2015a). Generals and Autocrats: How Coup-Proofing Predetermined the Military Elite's Behavior in the Arab Spring. *Political Science Quarterly, 130*(2), 245-275.

Bou Nassif, H. (2015b). 'Second-Class': The Grievances of Sunni Officers in the Syrian Armed Forces. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *38*(5), 626-649.

Burke, D. (2013, September 4). Syria explained: How it became a religious war. *CNN Belief Blog*. Retrieved from http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2013/09/04/syrian-wars-got-religion-and-that-aint-good/

Butter, D. (2016). *Salvaging Syria's Economy*. Chatham House for the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

Carpenter, T. G. (2013). Tangled web: The Syrian civil war and its implications. *Mediterranean Quarterly*, *24*(1), 1-11.

Casana, J., & Panahipour, M. (2014). Satellite-based monitoring of looting and damage to archaeological sites in Syria. *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology & Heritage Studies*, *2*(2), 128-151.

Chorley, B. K. C. H. C. (1943). *Armies and the Art of Revolution* (Vol. 463). Beacon Press.

Collier, P. (2000). Rebellion as a quasi-criminal activity. *Journal of Conflict resolution*, *44*(6), 839-853.

Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A. (2004). Greed and grievance in civil war. *Oxford economic papers*, *56*(4), 563-595.

Collier, P., Hoeffler, A., & Söderbom, M. (2004). On the duration of civil war. *Journal of peace research*, *41*(3), 253-273.

Cook, S. (2018, July 23). The Syrian War Is Over, and America Lost. *Foreign Policy*. Retrieved from https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/07/23/the-syrian-war-is-over-and-america-lost/

Cordesman, A. H. (2015, September 23). Russia in Syria: Hybrid political warfare. *Center for Strategic and International Studies.*

Dagher, S. (2018, May 14). Assad is desperate for soldiers: The problem is that few want to fight for him. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/05/syria-assad-conscription-refugees-lebanon/560282/

Encyclopædia Britannica. (2019a, February 13). Syria. *Britannica Online Academic Edition.* Retrieved from https://www.britannica.com/place/Syria/Uprising-and-civil-war

Encyclopædia Britannica. (2019b, January 24). Syrian Civil War. *Britannica Online Academic Edition.* Retrieved from https://www.britannica.com/event/Syrian-Civil-War

Fearon, J. D. (2004). Why do some civil wars last so much longer than others?. *Journal of peace research*, *41*(3), 275-301.

Fearon, J. D., & Laitin, D. D. (2003). Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war. *American political science review*, *97*(1), 75-90.

Feaver, P. D. (1999). Civil-military relations. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *2*(1), 211-241.

Ganesan, A., & Vines, A. (2004). Engine of war: resources, greed, and the predatory State. *Human Rights Watch, World Report*, 301-324.

Gaub, F. (2014, July 29). Syria's Military: Last Man Standing? *Carnegie Europe*. Retrieved from https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/?fa=56274

Gause III, F. G. (2014). Beyond sectarianism: The new Middle East cold war. *Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper*, *11*, 1-27.

Gause III, F. G. (2011). Why Middle East studies missed the Arab Spring: The myth of authoritarian stability. Foreign Affairs, 90(4), 81-90.

Gelvin, J. (2012). *The Arab uprisings what everyone needs to know* (What Everyone Needs to Know). Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Goodarzi, J. (2015). Iran and Syria. *The Iran Primer: Power, Politics, and US Policy*, 175-178.

Grinstead, N. (2017, January 16). The Syrian Humpty Dumpty. *Clingendael.* Retrieved from https://www.clingendael.org/publication/syrian-humpty-dumpty

Haas, M., & Lesch, D. (2013). The Arab Spring: Change and resistance in the Middle East. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Haddad, F. (2011). *Sectarianism in Iraq: Antagonistic visions of unity*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Hallaj, O. A. (2015). *The balance-sheet of conflict: criminal revenues and warlords in Syria*. NOREF.

Hassan, H. (2018, December 30). Syria: Assad has decisively won his brutal battle. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/30/syria-year-cemented-assad-victory-trump-us-troops

Herbert, M. (2014). Partisans, profiteers, and criminals: Syria's illicit economy. *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, *38*, 69-86.

Hirshleifer, J. (1995). Theorizing about conflict. *Handbook of defense economics*, *1*, 165-189.

Holliday, J. (2012). The struggle for Syria in 2011. *Middle East Security Report*, *2*, 1-29.

Jentzsch, C., Kalyvas, S. N., & Schubiger, L. I. (2015). Militias in civil wars. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *59*(5), 755-769.

Keen, D. (2000). War and peace: what's the difference? *International Peacekeeping*, *7*(4), 1-22.

Keen, D. (2005). *The economic functions of violence in civil wars*. Routledge.

Kerr, M., & Larkin, C. (2015). *The Alawis of Syria: War, faith and politics in the Levant* (Urban conflicts, divided societies). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Khaddour, K. (2016, March 14), Strength in Weakness: The Syrian Army's Accidental Resilience. *Carnegie Middle East Center*. Retrieved from https://carnegie-mec.org/2016/03/10/strength-in-weakness-syrian-army-s-accidental-resilience/iuz7

Koehler, K., Ohl, D., & Albrecht, H. (2016). From disaffection to desertion: How networks facilitate military insubordination in civil conflict. *Comparative Politics*, *48*(4), 439-457.

Kozak, C. (2015). *"An Army in All Corners": Assad's Campaign Strategy in Syria*. Institute for the Study of War. Retrieved from http://www.understandingwar.org/report/army-all-corners-assads-campaign-strategy-syria

Landinfo (2018, January 3). Syria: Reactions against deserters and draft evaders. *CGRS*. Retrieved from https://www.cgra.be/sites/default/files/rapporten/landinfo_report_syria._reactions_against_deserters_and_draft_evaders.pdf

Lesch, D. (2011). The Arab spring – and winter – in Syria. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, *23*(3), 421-426.

Lund, A. (2016, May 13). A Fistful of Dollars: The Dwindling Value of Syrian State Salaries. *The Century Foundation*. Retrieved from https://tcf.org/content/commentary/fistful-dollars-dwindling-value-syrian-state-salaries/?agreed=1

Maddy-Weitzman, B. (2012). The Arab League Comes Alive. *Middle East Quarterly*, *19*(3), 71-78.

Malone, D. M., & Nitzschke, H. (2009). Economic agendas in civil wars: What we know, what we need to know. In *Making Peace Work* (pp. 31-50). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Martínez, J. C., & Eng, B. (2018). Stifling stateness: The Assad regime's campaign against rebel governance. *Security Dialogue*, *49*(4), 235-253.

McDowall, A. (2018, October 9). Syria offers amnesty to deserters and draft dodgers. *Reuters.* Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-conscription/syria-offers-amnesty-to-deserters-and-draft-dodgers-idUSKCN1MJ0RH

McLauchlin, T. (2010). Loyalty strategies and military defection in rebellion. *Comparative Politics*, *42*(3), 333-350.

McLauchlin, T. (2014). Desertion, terrain, and control of the home front in civil wars. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *58*(8), 1419-1444.

Nepstad, S. E. (2013). Mutiny and nonviolence in the Arab Spring: Exploring military defections and loyalty in Egypt, Bahrain, and Syria. *Journal of Peace Research*, *50*(3), 337-349.

Noueihed, L., & Warren, A. (2017). *The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-Revolution and the Making of a New Era.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Ohl, D., Albrecht, H., & Koehler, K. (2015). For Money or liberty? The political economy of military desertion and rebel recruitment in the Syrian civil war. *Carnegie Middle East Center*, 24.

Ohl, D., Koehler, K., & Albrecht, H. (2015, December 17). The Syrian Military has thousands of deserters: new research tells us why they left. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/12/17/talking-to-assads-military-deserters/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.bd66232a5737

Phillips, C. (2015). Sectarianism and conflict in Syria. *Third World Quarterly*, *36*(2), 357-376.

Phillips, C. (2018, August 4). The World Abetted Assad's Victory in Syria. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/08/assad-victory-syria/566522/

Pion-Berlin, D., & Trinkunas, H. (2010). Civilian praetorianism and military shirking during constitutional crises in Latin America. *Comparative Politics*, *42*(4), 395-411.

Rabi, U., & Friedman, B. (2017). Weaponizing Sectarianism in Iraq and Syria. *Orbis*, *61*(3), 423-438.

Rafizadeh, M. (2011, September 16). For Syria's minorities, Assad is security. *Al Jazeera English.* Retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/09/201191213521392719 6.html

Richani, N. (2016). The political economy and complex interdependency of the war system in Syria. *Civil wars*, *18*(1), 45-68.

Samaha, N. (2016, October 3). The Black Market Kings of Damascus: The war has in Syria has devastated its economy. But some people have found ways to get rich. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/10/syria-war-economy-damascus-assad/502304/

Sambanis, N. (2004). What is civil war? Conceptual and empirical complexities of an operational definition. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 48(6), 814-858.

Sanín, F. G. (2004). Criminal rebels? A discussion of civil war and criminality from the Colombian experience. *Politics & Society*, *32*(2), 257-285.

Sarkees, M. R., & Schafer, P. (2000). The correlates of war data on war: An update to 1997. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, *18*(1), 123-144.

Sayigh, Y. (2013, June 7). Syria's Strategic Balance at a Tipping Point. *Carnegie Middle East Center*. Retrieved from https://carnegie-mec.org/2013/06/07/syria-s-strategic-balance-at-tipping-point-pub-52038

Selo, L. (2013, September 6). The Deadly Checkpoint that Divides Syria's Biggest City. *National Public Radio.* Retrieved from https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2013/09/05/219258334/the-deadly-checkpoint-that-divides-syrias-biggest-city

Small, M., & Singer, J. D. (1982). Resort to arms: International and civil wars, 1816-1980. Beverly Hills [etc.]: Sage.

Spyer, J. (2012). DEFYING A DICTATOR: Meet the Free Syrian Army. World Affairs, 175(1), 45-52.

Steenkamp, C. (2017). The crime-conflict nexus and the civil war in Syria. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, *6*(1).

Tejel, J. (2008). *Syria's Kurds: history, politics and society*. Routledge.

Transparency International. (2018). Index 2018. *Transparency* International. Retrieved from https://www.transparency.org/cpi2018

Van Dam, N. (2011). *The struggle for power in Syria: politics and society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*. IB Tauris.

Watson, I. (2011, July 6). Syrian deserter: 'It was like a war against your one people'. *CNN*. Retrieved from http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/meast/07/05/syria.sniper/index.html

Westall, S., & Al-Khalidi, S. (2015, June 8). Syria to hike pay of frontline soldiers with bonus: PM. *Reuters.* Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-military/syria-to-hike-pay-of-frontline-soldiers-with-bonus-pm-idUSKBN0OO1IR20150608

Wind, E., & Dahi, O. (2014). The economic consequences of the conflict in Syria. *Turkish Review*, *4*(2), 132-40.