SECTARIANISM IN THE LEBANESE AND SYRIAN CIVIL WAR

A study towards a possible sectarian nature of the 2011 Syrian conflict

Joris Bos

S1739417

Masterthesis

MA Middle Eastern Studies

Leiden University

Supervisor: dr. M. Warnaar

Leiden, August 2016

Contents

Introduction

"*In a region beset with chronic and widespread problems, ranging from poor governance, war, violent extremism, and resource scarcity, one threat stands above the rest in terms of potential for destruction and cost in opportunity: the use of sectarianism as a geopolitical weapon. Sectarianism encourages extremist rhetoric and violence and serves to distract a populations from economic and social concerns by providing a convenient enemy on which to focus.*"[1] This quote by the Soufan group, a strategic security consulting group, displays an opinion that is shared by mainstream media across the globe. The Middle East has apparently fallen into a state of religious extremism where violent sectarianism is every day's business. Current day Syria seems to be the focal point of all this sectarian violence. Bashar al-Assad himself however, has never really voiced his concerns on sectarianism. Moreover, Assad claimed in 2011 that "*Syria is stable. Why? Because you have to be very closely linked to the beliefs of the people. This is the core issue. When there is divergence you will have this vacuum that creates disturbances.*"[2] Two months after this interview was published people were dying in the streets of Damascus while crying out for someone who would actually listen to them.

Bashar al-Assad is still president in Syria. On July 26th 2015, after about a year of silence, Assad gave a gripping and belligerent speech about the strength and unity the Syrian people have shown and how the real Syria will never fall. While thanking the Iranian, Russian, Chinese and Lebanese fighters for their backing and dedication, Assad said: "*Syria's victory is for all Syrians against the plots hatched against them* (…) *the homeland, Syria, is our right, the protection of Syria is our duty and God stands with right*"[3] In a roar, his supporters answered with the now well known "*With our soul, our blood, we sacrifice for you oh Bashar!"*[4].

Claiming the existence of a 'real' Syria implies the existence of a fake counterpart. Although he doesn't explicitly name Syria's enemies, one of the currently major destabilising and militant factors within Syria's geopolitical borders is Islamic State[5]. Mainstream western media outlets have been covering the Syrian conflict non-stop, while especially focussing on Islamic State itself. This focus has created a new evil. After the Taliban and Al-Qaida, Islamic State is the new face of terrorism.[6] And rather than an invisible group somewhere in the mountains, it has proclaimed a state of its own. Islamic State is a visible and distinct geographic entity. Maps are drawn and urban battlefields sketched out. In every way, Islamic state has become the prime example of sectarian violence and whether it is here to

---

[1] The Soufan Group. "**the Greatest Threat in the Middle East**." http://soufangroup.com/tsg-intelbrief-the-greatest-threat-in-the-middle-east/ (accessed 02/23, 2016).

[2] Solomon, Jar & Spindle, Bill.,. "**Syria Strongman: Time for 'Reform'**." *The Wall Street Journal,* January 31, 2011.

[3] Al-Ibrahim, Mohammad A.,. "President Al-Assad's July 26th 2015 Speech." http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1454:president-al-assad-s-july-26th-2015-speech&catid=319&Itemid=496 (accessed 02/23, 2016).

[4] Ibidem

[5] Islamic state is known under various acronyms including, but not limited to "ISIL" (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), Daish or Daesh (acronyms of its Arabic name "*ad-Dawlah al-Islāmiyah fī 'l-ʿIrāq wa-sh-Shām*"). For clarity, this paper will make use of its unabbreviated form "Islamic State". – Zelin, Aaron Y.,. "The War between ISIS and Al-Qaeda for Supremacy of the Global Jihadist Movement." The Washington Institute for Near East policy. http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-war-between-isis-and-al-qaeda-for-supremacy-of-the-global-jihadist (accessed 23/02, 2016).

[6] Ibidem

stay or not, the Middle East has once again gained an extra layer to its already complicated modern history.

The Syrian conflict however, is no longer a mere regional conflict and by no means reflects just a sectarianist divide. Therefore, it seems ignorant to call this conflict a sectarian civil war. However, the societal schism that has occurred cannot be denied either. This paper aims to discover in what way Syria's society has been divided and whether it is correct to call this conflict sectarian.

It is important to objectively identify all the forces at play and the core of this conflict. How should we identify this civil war? Are we talking about a sectarian conflict or are we talking about a political conflict with sectarian influences? How should sectarianism and sectarian violence be defined in general? In order to find an answer to all of these questions this paper will be guided by a comparison. Sectarianism is not a new phenomenon in the Middle East. In academia, Syria's neighbour Lebanon is still the prime example of a sectarian division of society. A division that has known a gruelling civil war fuelled by sectarian discontent, sectarian violence and foreign interference. All factors that we van perceive in Syria today. The Lebanese 1975-1990 civil war then, is the perfect guideline to help identify what sectarianism and sectarian conflict does look like. These two case studies together will guide this paper towards an answer to the main question of "To what extend can the ongoing Syrian civil war be identified as a sectarian conflict compared to the Lebanese civil war of 1975-1990?".

By definition, a comparative research design like this "*entails the comparison of two or more cases in order to illuminate existing theory or generate theoretical insights as a result of contrasting findings uncovered through comparison".*[7] This means that besides the two case studies Lebanon and Syria, theory is required to guide these case studies. These three aspects will form the three main parts of this paper. In part one, the main ideas concerning sectarianism, sectarian violence and the way sectarianism is manifested and mobilized within society will be addressed. Using Peter Berger's model for Sectarianist groups and Collier & Hoeffler's theoretical model for civil war this part describes the theory behind this paper. Part two will demonstrate why the Lebanese civil war of 1975-1990 is such a good example by specifically displaying how the theory from chapter one is exhibited 'on the ground'. Finally, this paper will try and use the knowledge gained in the previous parts to explain if and why the Syrian conflict can be seen as sectarian in nature.

Within the academic community the Lebanese civil war has been researched extensively. The research done has provided a clear and coherent view of the struggles that face a population as divided as theirs. On Syria however, academics are just starting to find out how the recent explosion of violence has come to be. Although there is no lack of sources and research on the (post-)colonial legacies Syria has had to deal with, anything written before the conflict is merely showing an authoritarian Assad regime in a rather modern country. It had its serious issues, but a civil war was not in the books. This thesis aims to add to the existing research, by providing a picture of what sectarianism in the current

---

[7] Bryman, Alan.,. *Social Research Methods - 4th Ed.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. p. 710

conflict looks like and how it is manifested. The answer this research produces not only helps to identify the underlying problem in Syria, but it also paves the way for other research to continue and expand on the drawn conclusions.

Part 1 – Theories & Methods

Sectarianism is a concept that has been applied to many groups of religious fanatics in the past. Today we mostly see it occur in literature on the Middle East. In order to understand how we can decide upon the possible sectarian nature of the Syrian conflict, one first needs to understand the concept itself. The oxford dictionary describes sectarianism as "*Excessive attachment to a particular sect or party, especially in religion*"[8]. In other words, sectarianism is a more than necessary sympathetic feeling or fondness for a specified philosophical or political group. What sets sects aside from other religious subgroups is the 'excessive attachment' part. It implies a more extremist perspective. Sectarianism then, seems an umbrella concept used to describe groups deemed extreme by the one using it. It classifies people or groups of people into different categories, namely into religious or extremist classes. In this context, it seems to imply a bigoted, narrow-minded and discriminatory nature towards another group of conflicting ideology, different ethnic identity or social class often manifested in a fanatical sense.[9]

Sectarianism can refer to a political division within a society too. For example, one could describe the American Republican and Democratic Party as manifestations of American sectarianism. This however, is a rather rare use of the term and will usually specifically be referred to as *political sectarianism*, opposed to the regular *religious sectarianism*.[10]

From an academic perspective sectarianism is almost exclusively used as a referral towards religious beliefs. But, as common a term as it is, it is rarely defined. Especially in literature regarding the Middle East, sectarianism is a logical concept that people tend to understand without explanation. It has something to do with Sunni and Shi'a Muslims and the 'fact' that they don't get along. As easy as most authors tend to get away with it however, this paper tries to go beyond a common-sense understanding of sectarianism. Higgins & Brewer, leading researchers on sectarianism in Northern-Ireland present sectarianism in the most objective way: "*the determination of actions, attitudes and practices by practices about religious difference, which results in them invoked as the boundary marker to represent social stratification and conflict. It thus refers to a whole cluster of ideas, beliefs, myths and demonology about religious difference which are used to make religion a social marker, to assign different attributes to various religious groups and to make derogatory remarks about others.*"[11] So, sectarianism is the way groups of people with a specific conviction feel about other groups of people with different convictions and how they react to each other with a prejudiced attitude, which encompasses everything from ideas to actions.

Based on the previously provided definitions it seems clear that although it could be used as a term for politics, sectarianism is almost exclusively used to describe a religious group of people with

---

[8] Oxford Dictionaries. "Sectarianism - Definition of Sectarianism in English from the Oxford Dictionary." http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/sectarianism (accessed 03/16, 2016).
[9] Kingston, Paul W. T.,. "Reproducing Sectarianism Advocacy Networks and the Politics of Civil Society in Post-war Lebanon." State University of New York Press. p. 21-24
[10] Ibidem
[11] Higgins, G. and John D. Brewer.,. "The Roots of Sectarianism in Northern Ireland." p. 2

more than religious claims. This view is reinforced when we talk about sectarian violence. Sectarian violence is, logically, a violent crime committed by sects. Searching for violence of sectarian nature however yields just religious conflicts. This shows that, as political as a sect may have turned, sectarian violence is always grounded in fanatical religious believes. Additionally, this also means that while sectarian conflict can turn into a civil war, a civil war does not have to be sectarian.

§1.1 Peter Berger's Sectarianism in Sociology

If we are to research the possibility of a sectarian nature to the Syrian conflict, we need to have some method of proving sectarianism in a group. In this case Peter Berger has provided a sociological model to do exactly so. As has been noted before, sectarianism in academic literature is mainly regarded as a religious phenomenon. In sociology too, sectarianism is almost exclusively referred to as the religious isolation of a group of people, meaning that, although these religious groups can have political ambition, religion is always the basis on which these groups of people fall back. Peter Berger, a famous interpretivist sociologist, adds to this conception. As he puts it in his renowned article on American sectarianism: *"the study of sectarianism is of wider contemporary interest than might seem at first glance. (...) In the modern scene we find the dynamics of sectarianism at work in places far removed from religion proper – in politics, art, literature, and even within sacred precincts of science itself."*[12] In other words, although sects have their roots in religion, it does not mean that other parts of society can be the dominant attitude for a sect.

In his research, Berger has proposed a qualitative research method of researching sects. His goal was to not only identify a certain Christian group as a sect but also to identify what kind of religious sect he was dealing with. Berger focussed on American Christian sects, but he also explains how this model might be applicable not only outside of the United States, but also outside of Christianity itself.[13] Berger further argues that every sect, no matter how mild or extreme, has to have a system of meaning.[14] The validity of a sect, according to Berger, is dependent on how complex this system of meaning is, ranging from extreme primitivism to extreme sophistication. He identifies two aspects that are pivotal in assessing if and how a group of people can be called a sect or sectarian in nature. The first aspect we need, is what Berger, based on the Lund school of theology, has called the 'religious motif'.[15] This motif entails the form of religious experience and the patterns of a religious group and how these are fundamental to both the history and the current functioning of the group. According to Berger, if you understand the history of a groups' motif, you can induce whether something is sectarian in nature, are merely a pious group of people.[16]

---

[12] Berger, Peter L. "The Sociological Study of Sectarianism." *Social Research 51, no. 1 (1984).* p. 367
[13] Idem, 380 - 385
[14] Ibidem
[15] Idem, 378
[16] Ibidem

The second aspect is what Berger calls 'attitude'.[17] Attitude is what truly sets apart sects not only from other pious members of a church, but also from other sects. As Berger puts it: "*The attitude towards the world largely determines the inner social structure of the sect*"[18]. This attitude is important, because it determines how a sect makes sense of the world around it and it is the way in which a sect establishes itself to carry out the mission it believes in. To determine the attitude of a sect one needs to understand a sects system of meaning. This system is not set in stone. According to Berger, a sect generally knows two phases. First, there is a phase in which the sect discovers itself, in which the emphasis lies on social pressure rather than a religious one. The second phase happens when a sect becomes more routinized. This is where a sect hardens into a more ecclesiastical form where pressure is more religiously focussed, rather than social. In both cases however, a sect needs a different 'reality' from someone who is not in that sect. Berger sees this as a different mode of experience and atmosphere which is completely different from a non-religious experience. Berger does not define it much further, but interpretively the reality, or atmosphere is not very hard to point out in a religious group. Although both phases in a sects system of meaning are part of the attitude, it is the second phase in which its system of meaning is the easiest to dissect. To do this, one has to look at how a sect tries to attain 'peace of mind', 'peace of soul', or whatever ultimate state it tries to achieve. To check this, Berger has defined nine categories: Conversion, Catholicity, and Authority, Gnosis, Salvation, Community, Eschatology, Apologetic and '*Seelsorge*'.[19]

Conversion in a sectarian means the "*passing from one level of experience and perspective to another that is totally new and different*"[20]. In other words, when one first converts to the sects set of believes that person would experience a world that is completely different from what they experienced before they joined. Berger argues that while this is a characteristic of every religious experience, the sectarian experience is characterized by its 'violent difference'.

Catholicism means exactly what the word implies: universality. A sectarian meaning system needs a claim on universal validity. According to Berger, something can only be a sect if the groups believes seek to interpret the universe in its totality and to explain everything we experience.[21] Outside of this universal system, is only 'darkness and error' and should be condemned.

Authority kind of speaks for itself. The meaning system of a sect, and with that the sect itself, claims authority over all of its subjects and these subjects should not listen to anyone but the sect. Berger argues that the Latin phrase of *'Extra ecclesiam nulla salus'*, or, 'there is no salvation outside of the church', is the best description of the kind of authority a sect should hold over its members.[22] Not adhering to its authority means rebellion and consequently punishments like excommunication or death.

---

[17] Idem, 380
[18] Ibidem
[19] Idem, 382-385
[20] Idem, 382
[21] Idem, 383
[22] Ibidem

Gnosis is the idea of a superior cognition. If someone completely surrenders their body and mind to the sects meaning system that person will gain a new perspective on things or possess a new reality. Berger states that the *Gnosis* part of the meaning system creates an *"epistemological elite"[23]* that have been able to open their eyes to the actual truth, rather than what they thought was truth before. Berger makes in interesting notion in this stating that it is an interesting characteristic of a sect that if someone from the outside shows understanding of what he calls the 'gnostic corpus' but does not adhere to it, the sects reacts defensively and usually states that the outsider is ignorant to the fundamentals of the sects faith. A sects *gnosis* is meant as more of a secret perspective of truth.

Salvation is the ultimate goal of every sect. Without some kind of salvation, whether this is through heaven or through personal enlightenment, we cannot speak of a sect. Salvation truly is the meaning of what a sect member does in life. Salvation is easy to grab, but only if you adhere to the sects way of interpreting it.

Community is the factor of a meaning system which states that a sect cannot exist with only one member. Although it is open to most changes, it is also one of the screws that keeps the sect together. A sense of community unites and even preaches to its people.

Eschatology is the historical destiny a sect claims. Eschatology can be displayed as something mystic or extraordinary that has occurred in the past and the sect is a continuation of that historic happening. On the other end, eschatology can also mean that the sect works towards an historic event that, in their perspective, surely will happen. An example of this would be 'Judgement Day' as it is defined in Islam or Christianity.

The *Apologetic* characteristic of a sects system of meaning show how a sectarian movement will and should always defend every argument made against it and how it incorporates every fact. Added to this is an answer to why other religious believes exist and why they are wrong, even if they claim something similar to the movements own believes. Berger argues that although not every sectarian movement might be good at this, it is the drive or intention to execute it that counts, not how successful they are in their arguments.

Seelsorge, or spiritual welfare, is the way a sectarian movement deals with critical or difficult questions from within the own movement. Berger calls this characteristic a *"theory of doubt and a mechanism for dealing with doubt*"[24]. Every sect is supposed to have a mechanism that deals with doubt on the sects teachings. Berger states that there is no set way to deal with it, but without dealing with doubt and its implications, a sect will breakdown since doubt will break the isolation of the meaning a sect gives to life. It paves the way for other (heretic) interpretations.

Of course, this is an interpretivist model and thusly it will always be an abstraction from reality. However, Berger's model has been used to identify a lot off Christian sects in the United States during the troublesome years there and has proven to be a solid backing. It is therefore also not surprising that

---

[23] Ibidem
[24] Idem, 385

the model has been used by a large variety of scholars. Berger's model for interpreting a religious group provides a qualitative theory that can help differentiate between fighting groups in the Syrian conflict.

§1.2 Collier & Hoeffler's Greed and Grievance in Civil War

According the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 2014 has known more wars and more violence than any year since 2000.[25] With a few exceptions here and there, almost every conflict in the list has been internal. SIPRI argues that this rise in violence is especially due to the rise of Islamic State and the increase in sectarian violence in Syria overall.[26] This shows once again, that understanding civil war and the reasons why it happens are extremely important.

Academics have been trying to get a grip on exactly what causes civil war and what factors should be prioritized over others for a while. Over the last decade this debate has been dominated by a discussion on how civil war is caused by 'greed' or by 'grievance'.[27] Greed in this sense means the desire to better yourself as a group socio-economically while grievance is meant as a sentiment of a group in which it feels like injustice has been done to them. This could be economically, but usually grievance refers to ethnic, religious or geological injustice. While this debate is as fruitless as the 'nature-nurture' debate in biology, in the sense that not one answer is correct, both sides have developed useful theories on how civil wars are caused and what factors can help identify a possible civil war in the future. The model that instigated this debate was created by Collier & Hoeffler and still provides the best answers concerning both the greed and grievance argument.

Collier & Hoeffler were the first to try and model how greed and grievance play the major parts in civil war. In their article "*Greed and grievance in civil war*", they propose an econometric model, better known as the CH-model, which tries to predict civil conflict.[28] By using a dataset of 79 civil wars, they have tried to explain how and why these civil wars were initiated. The main hypothesis of their research was that rebellion in a civil war is untenable if the rebelling side does not have the funds. Ideology or non-financial inequality is, according to their hypothesis, not enough to start a civil war, unless the differences among the population are enormous. In other words, while objective greed might cause and maintain a civil war, objective grievance will not be enough to achieve the same. A big focal point of their research is aimed towards the costs of starting and the upkeep of a rebellion. Measuring this against the economic welfare and position of the people in a country, combined with political equality results in a figure which describes the likelihood of civil war. Next, they relate their numbers to what they call the opportunity model.[29] This model explains how significant a change there is of actually developing an opportunity for civil war. This model measures the level of education, commodity

---

[25] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.,. *Sipri Yearbook 2015 : Armaments, Disarmament and International Security.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
[26] Idem, 6
[27] Mitkov, Zlatin. "Civil War After the Arab Spring: A Comparative Study of Lybia, Syria and Yemen."Central European University, 2015. p. 11-19
[28] Collier, Paul., Hoeffler, Anke., World Bank., Development Research Group.,. Greed and Grievance in Civil War. Washington, DC: World Bank, Development Research Group, 2000.
[29] Idem, 573

exports, GDP, GDP growth, the duration of the current peace, geological (dis)advantages, and population values, like the amount of people, social fractualization, dispersion and the size and influence of the diaspora. The combination of these models, as is apparent in appendix 1, results in significant values for economic opportunities (also called the greed variables), while the more grievance oriented factors like ethnic/religious tension seem less important. Collier & Hoeffler also provide us with a list of criteria that are essential in 'measuring' a civil war, as can be found in the footnotes[30]. In short, Collier & Hoeffler found that although rebellion can always happen, a full civil war can only take place if the opportunity for organization and finance is right.

If we assess this model qualitatively, which will be its use concerning the Syrian civil war, we have to make a distinction between the Greed and the Grievance factors. The grievance factors in this model are called 'ethnic and religious hatred', 'political repression', 'political exclusion' and 'economic inequality'. If we look at these categories a little closer, the factors this paper has to look out for are self-determination; religious, political and ethnic diversity; ethnic cleansing/genocide; wealth disparities; economic insecurity; unemployment and lack of opportunity; displacement/Internally displaced persons, or IDPs; Predominance of one ethnic group (85%) and lastly weak states. Analysing these factors for both Lebanon and Syria will show how a sectarian conflict like the Lebanese civil war compares to the current conflict in Syria. Are there indeed a lot of similarities, or is there something else going on in Syria?

---

[30] GDP, Level of secondary schooling of boys, Population Density, Social Cohesion, Primary commodities, Military advantage (measured by mountainous terrain, population dispersion, social fractionalization), ethnic hatred, political repression, political exclusion and economic inequality.

Part 2 – Case study 1: Lebanon

In the 1950's, the Middle East was the centre of mainstream media. The newly founded state of Israel and its neighbours were fighting and the world's hegemonic powers were divided on what to do. The countries surrounding the Palestine region were facing severe political upheavals and, due to nationalisation laws in Egypt, Syria and Iraq, entrepreneurs took their business and with that a formerly flourishing part of the economy with them.[31] One capital city however, opened up and welcomed investors and political exiles alike, with open arms. Beirut, 'The Paris of the Middle East' served as "*an economic and cultural bridge between the West and the Middle East*"[32]. Apart from its location, Lebanon seemed to be different in every aspect of daily life from its bordering countries or its fellow Arabs throughout the entire Middle East. Free expression, freedom of press, a highly capitalist economy and a high ranking university were combined with flashy nightclubs, top-notch casino's and luxurious hotels. Or as Thomas Friedman put it: "every region of the globe needs one city where the rules don't apply, where sin is the norm, and where money can buy everything or anyone".[33] Beirut was that city in the Middle East.

Under the surface however, not all was fine and dandy. The Lebanese political system worked in two ways: While it repressed extreme diversifying opinions from developing, it also prevented sentiments, warnings and disagreements from being resolved.[34] These brewing troubles, combined with political change, led to a brutal and deadly civil war of fifteen years until the fine sectarian balance was once again restored. Beirut itself however, has never been the same.

In order to provide some answers this chapter will consist of three parts. First, it will try and demonstrate how sectarianism is rooted within the Lebanese society by giving a small overview of its history. This chapter will try and shed a light on how Lebanon has both failed and succeeded in balancing a widely divided country. Lebanon's recent turbulent history is a legacy inherited from its early history, the remains of the Ottoman Empire and the former colonial powers. In order to better understand how sectarianism plays a role in Lebanon and its history, one first has to assess that history. Analysing this history leads to questions like "how has sectarianism defined Lebanese history?" and "How has sectarianism influenced and determined the, what I would like to call, balance of power among the various separate groups in the country?" However, Lebanon's history of sectarianism can be traced back to the early Middle Ages and runs through Lebanon's past up until today.[35] While certainly interesting, analysing all of it would defy the point of this case study. This case study serves as a control study, showing how sectarianism and sectarian civil war show up in Berger's and Collier's & Hoeffler's model. Therefore, Lebanon's sectarian history will only be analysed on points that have proven to be relevant

---

[31] Cleveland, William L., Bunton, Martin P.,. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2009. p. 332-337
[32] Idem, 333
[33] Friedman, Thomas L., Mazal Holocaust Collection.,. *From Beirut to Jerusalem* 1989., p. 216
[34] Cleveland, 332-337
[35] Reilly, James A.,. "Ottoman Beirut: Crisis, History, and Sectarian Memory." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 31, no. 1 (2011): 164-171.

to the civil war from 1975. The issues that arose in the build-up to this bloody conflict cannot be analysed per group, since they have been intertwined since the beginning. Therefore, it makes more sense to shed light on Lebanon's sectarian history as whole rather than as fragmented groups. After establishing Lebanon's sectarian past the last two chapters of this part will demonstrate how Berger and Collier & Hoeffler would assess the Lebanese civil war.

Chapter 1 – The Fighting Sects of Lebanon

It is impossible to pinpoint the exact moment where sectarian violence in Lebanon started. The history of the fighting forces goes back to the early beginnings of their respective religions itself. It is probably around the change from the fourth to the fifth century A.D. where the first important stepping stone for Lebanon's societal divide can be found. It is this period, where a then unknown Syriac Christian monk and his followers founded a new religious community.[36] The Maronite Church as it is now known, became a rapidly expanding Christian subgroup. Early medieval times were harsh for the Maronites since their radical monothelitic take on Christianity was seen as heresy by the Orthodox Church, as defined during the Third Council of Constantinople in 680.[37] Maronites nevertheless, were not specifically named in the documents following the council. This has to do with the Arab and Islamic rule they were brought under from the 630's and onwards. The harshly ruling Muslims persecuted and attacked Maronites, which caused a slow immigration from current day Syria to the Lebanese mountains.[38] From here, Maronites attacked and raided Islamic forces, sponsored by Emperor Constantine IV. Ever since, Maronites and Muslims have found themselves in a delicate coexistence. The Maronites, shunned by the other religions in the region focussed themselves on artisan trades where other religious groups in the region wouldn't want to preside over.[39] Especially in the trade in, and processing of silk was in hands of the Maronites. This focus caused a stable income and grow of population until at the start of the twentieth century the Maronites comprised the main share of Lebanon's population.

In the early eleventh century however, a new sect appeared in the Levant. As odd as Maronites where to Christianity a couple of hundred years before, the Druze where a religious anomaly to not only (Levantine) Islam, but to the Abrahamic religions in general. The Druze religion started off as a subgroup within the Ismaili branch of Shia Islam, spread out over the entire Levant, but most prominent in Syria and Lebanon. Heavily influenced by Greek philosophy and ancient traditions, the Druze turned into a closed religious group where no converts were allowed.[40] Straying farther and farther away from the Muslim faith, the Druze soon found themselves in a position where they had to defend themselves.

[36] Ḥarb, Anṭwān Khūrī.,. *The Maronites : History and Constants*. [Beirut, Lebanon]: "The Maronite Heritage", 2001. p. 42-48
[37] Moosa, Matti., *The Maronites in History*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1986. p. 195-216
[38] Harb, 62
[39] Traboulsi Fawwāz.,. "A History of Modern Lebanon." Pluto Press ; Distributed in the United States of America exclusively by Palgrave Macmillian. p. 8-9
[40] Hazran, Yusri.,. *The Druze Community and the Lebanese State : Between Confrontation and Reconciliation* 2014. p. 16-17

The Druze developed into a force to be reckoned with. Though not big in numbers, the Druze managed to hold off and raid the crusaders during the Crusader rule of Syria.[41] Their fierce fighting brought them prestige and authority with the Sunni caliphs who were still ruling the lands. Their command over the Beirut port made for a Druze focus towards the Lebanese city and its countryside. Following the Christian occupation however, the Mamelukes focussed on eradicating everything non-Sunni within Islam, including the once useful Druze. After severe fighting, the Druze were pushed to the background and forbidden from practising their religion in public.[42]

The history of Lebanon is characterized by violence and rebellion. Either between the Maronite and Druze minorities or between one those groups and their rulers. Throughout Traboulsi's book it becomes clear that there has not been a century since the arrival of the Druze where there has not been at least one civil war. According to him, especially the Ottomans had a hard time controlling the Lebanese territories because of five ways in which they had divided the region combined with the already ingrained tribal and religious separations.[43] The first division is due to the *millet* system. This religious divide created a hierarchy system where a superior Muslim ruled over an inferior 'protected' community made up of people following the other Abrahamic religions. Although Christians and Jews were not being persecuted, they had to pay *jizya* among other regulations, causing very apparent distinctions between the two groups. According to Traboulsi it is this system that pushed the Lebanese Christians and Jews into peasantry and artisan trades, while the Druze picked up a tribal-warrior outlook on life, causing political and sectarian inequality and unrest

The second cause of division can be found in the division was a power relation one.[44] The Ottomans, or their chosen governors in the provinces, bestowed titles upon important families and clans in the region (referred to as the *manasib* class), distinguishing them from the other common folk, also referred to the *'amma*. The *'amma* however consisted not only of poor people, but also of rich traders and manufacturers. Nonetheless, the holders of *iqta'* (also called *iltizam*), or *muqata'ji* families as they were called, were the only ones to enjoy enormous benefits. Not only socially and financially, but also concerning their political power. Important to note here is that the muqata'ji families were always Druze families. Unsurprisingly, clashes between these classes happened throughout the ottoman period.

It is within the ruling elite however, where Traboulsi identifies a third set cause of conflict.[45] Local rulers, whether Turkish or a local war chief, did not see eye to eye with the central government in Istanbul. Because of the benefits they enjoyed, these political leaders usually managed to enrich themselves, gather a following and try to continue without Ottoman support. Often encouraged by European support, especially in the Maronite rebellions, these uprisings caused a great deal of conflict and damage in the already heavily separated region.

---

[41] Firro, Kais.,. *A History of the Druzes*. Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1992. p. 25-28
[42] Ibidem
[43] Traboulsi, 3-5
[44] Ibidem
[45] Ibidem

Next, much like the Ottoman political rulers, the *muqata'ji* families also quarrelled among themselves for the best benefits.[46] Some economic or social assets were better than others and if you couldn't get these by way of bribing Ottoman officials, physical conflict was the other resolution. The last reason for rebellion Traboulsi describes is guided by the landlord-peasant relationship between the *muqata'ji* families and their leases to the *'amma*, which caused many violent peasant revolts.[47]

Although the *muqata'ji* system formally fell at the end of the 19th century, the Druze still consider the leaders of these ancient families to be their leaders. These divisions all played a part in the Lebanese 1975-1990 civil war. However, the biggest issue was the different occupations of the religious minorities. The Druze had established themselves as great warlords and the Maronites where skilled tradesmen and artisans. These specialized endeavours meant that, outside of religious ideals, their respective populations also rarely mixed. They kept their separate villages and towns, and in big cities like Beirut they had their own quarters. The Sunni and Shi'a population, understandably, went the same way. Especially Beirut turned into an unintentional segregated city.[48] When Lebanon as a state first received a constitution in 1926, these sectarian differences became apparent on paper too. This constitution, which still forms the basis for the Lebanese constitution today, is, according to Traboulsi a hybrid one: "*on a republican body, emphasising individual rights and liberties and political and judicial equality were grafted articles concerning communal rights and* [sectarian] *representation.*"[49] A few of the most important of these articles for the new sectarian republic are article 9, 10 and 95. These articles are still in effect today and have barely changed since 1926. They show the importance of legislation on the subject because before this constitution, sects were allowed to do as they saw fit. Depending on who ruled the area one could be punished. Or not.

Article 9 states that every religious community is granted the freedom of expressing their religious values as long as it doesn't result in violence and that "*the personal status and religious interests of the population, to whatever religious sect they belong, is respected.*"[50] This is not very different from other constitutions, but it is an important step against discrimination and repression. Article 10, on freedom of education, is however more of a limited freedom: "*Education is free insofar as it is not contrary to public order and morals and does not interfere with the dignity of any of the religions or creeds. There shall be no violation of the right of religious communities to have their own schools provided they follow the general rules issued by the state regulating public instruction.*"[51] Article 95 however, is an especially rare article when it comes to constitutions. It shows how the consociationalist system Lebanon has today was already in place back then. The article, among other divisions, states that administrative and government positions must be equally distributed among Christians and Muslims (and no-one else), no

---

[46] Idem, 3-24
[47] Ibidem
[48] Reilly, James A.,. "Ottoman Beirut: Crisis, History, and Sectarian Memory." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 31, no. 1 (2011): 164-171.
[49] Traboulsi, 90
[50] Lebanon., American University of Beirut., Department of Political Studies and Public Administration.,. *The Lebanese Constitution; a Reference Edition in English Translation.* Beirut: Khayats, 1960. p. 3
[51] Ibidem

matter how they are represented parliamentary. So, if for example Christians would secure 95% of the parliamentary seats, the government positions still need to be divided equally. Since deputies were to be popularly elected along sectarian lines, the elections always resulted in the same division: the President was a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the Chamber of Deputies a Shia Muslim. The French were confident that because of the Christian majority[52] in the state a Muslim would never become its President. However, when in 1932 the Sunni Sheikh Muhammad al-Jisr announced his candidacy, while Maronite Emile Iddi withdrew from the race, High Commissioner Ponsot suspended the constitution and dissolved the Chamber of Deputies, showing just how fragile the Lebanese state still was.

After a series of put-down rebellions instigated by the Sunni population in the 1930's to force annexation with Syria, the Second World War brought renewed talks of independence, concluded by the 1943 'National Pact'.[53] This pact contained a set of principles that should guide the country towards smooth coexistence.

The first major principle was the distribution of power in politics.[54] They agreed on a parliament that consisted of 55 seats. 30 for the Christians and 25 for the Muslims in which the primary positions would be divided as they had traditionally been. So, the President should always be Maronite, the Prime Minister always a Sunni and the speaker of parliament should always be Shi'ite.[55] The second and third principle helped to deal with the complex position Lebanon was in. On the one hand they could not ignore their Arab identity, but on the other hand they could also not ignore the strong western influence in the region. Therefore, as an addition to article 1 of the Lebanese constitution,[56] they added a definition of Lebanon as a "*country with an Arab profile that assimilates all that is beneficial and useful in Western civilisation*"[57]. In other words, the Arabs and Muslims would not seek annexation with Syria or any other Arab country. Premier Suhl proved he meant to keep his promise only a year later when, as one of the founding members, Suhl headed the Lebanese delegation that would sign the Alexandria Protocol, the basis for what would become the Arab League. In this document he put a special clause which stated that Lebanon had to be respected as an independent and sovereign Arab state by every member. In exchange the Maronites had to accept an Arab identity of Lebanon. They were to never seek foreign help or intervention and promised that "*Lebanon shall not be a base or a passageway for colonialism*"[58]. Lastly, Maronite President Khuri and Sunni Prime Minister Suhl agreed to work closely together in running the state so Muslims would have more influence on power than they had had before. To commit

---

[52] The results from the 1932 census were: 402,000 Christians (51%) to 383,000 Muslims (49%). The population distribution by sects was as follows: 226,000 Maronites (28%), 76,000 Greek Orthodox (10%), 46,000 Greek Catholics (6%), 53,500 Other Christians (7%), 176,000 Sunnis (22%), 154,000 Shi'is (20%) and 53,000 Druze (7%). Traboulsi p. 273
[53] Traboulsi, 104-108
[54] Idem, 106
[55] Also, the Deputy Prime minister and Deputy speaker would always be Greek Orthodox, the Chief of the Army would always be Druze and the Chief of general staff would always be Maronite.
[56] "Lebanon is an independent, indivisible, and sovereign state." – "Lebanon - Constitution." http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---ilo_aids/documents/legaldocument/wcms_125865.pdf (accessed 12/03, 2016).
[57] Ibidem
[58] Traboulsi, 110

to this promise, Khuri agreed to favour Muslims at the expense of Maronites in the sectarian quota's concerning the positions in the administration or the government.[59] As positive as the 'National Pact' seemed, it was not made official or incorporated in the new constitution of 1943. This left an already difficult to govern country with two different governing texts and many of the conflicts to come could be ascribed to different interpretations or priorities in these texts. Indeed, the Maronite Presidents used different interpretations mostly to enrich themselves and their allies, while the Sunni premiers mostly sought out an increase in power.[60] These parliamentary problems were enhanced when, after Israel's war for independence, the young Lebanese state was flooded with fleeing Palestinians. The Lebanese government turned out to be incapable of properly dealing with the humanitarian crisis. The fact that these refugees were Muslims caused several rifts within parliament among Maronites and Sunni's. Tensions kept building and every couple of years major rebellions and strikes would be instigated by disgruntled Druze, Maronite or Sunni people. When a solution would be found, undoubtedly another group would feel left out, causing a repeat of problems over and over again. In 1975, after skirmishes between the extreme right Maronite Phalange party and the Palestinian PLO, Beirut, and soon to follow the entire country, was at war with itself.

---

[59] Idem, 111
[60] Traboulsi, 104-108

Chapter 2 – Sectarianism in Lebanon Defined

This paper, but academia in general, has bombarded the Lebanese civil war to the stereotypical manifestation of sectarianism and sectarian violence. However, in claiming that this civil war was sectarian, the participating groups need to be sectarian in nature. Since this is the goal for the Syrian conflict, it is important to first establish whether Berger's model indeed functions. Does it actually help identifying a sectarian group? Therefore, this chapter will be dedicated to proving exactly that. By using groups generally considered sectarian, Berger's model as explained in Part one should provide answers.

The Palestinian Sunni forces, and the several other Sunni and Shi'a combinations of militia's have fought a lot in the Lebanese war. There are however some problems with calling them sectarian. As explained in part 1, sects can only occur as a splinter group of a main religious stream and should therefore always be a religious minority. While the main stream is of course Islam, calling the Sunni's or the Shi'ites small minorities would be ignorant towards the believes of both groups. Worldwide, over a billion Sunni's and more than 200 million Shi'ites make up the vast majority of Muslim believers. Defining these overarching groups as sectarian makes little sense, since they in themselves are made up of a varying group of sects and other non-sectarian but religiously guided groups. This chapter merely tries to be a proof of concept for Berger's model and is not seeking to make new arguments concerning the Sunni versus Shi'a debate. Sunni and Shi'a violence in Lebanon is religious violence combined with the military actions of the Maronites and the Druze. Within the country, the Sunni's, and especially the Shi'ites are minorities, which does explain their portrayal as sectarian. However, in light of the Lebanese civil war what should be clear is that whether you define a Sunni or Shi'a fighter as a sect member or not, they fight for a religious cause with other groups who might indeed be called sects over the same issues.

To shortly recap Berger's idea: a group with a sectarian nature consists of two important aspects; a religious motif and an attitude which contains a system of meaning. This chapter will analyse the three main sectarian groups: the Maronites, the Druze and the Sunni's and the Shi'ites combined. What should be noted however, is that while these three main divisions do constitute for most of the fighting, several different groups fought under the same flag. This means that while one group fighting for the Druze might be strongly sectarian in nature, a different one might be very loosely tied to sectarian roots. This chapter will analyse the broader ideas behind the Maronite and Druze. As explained in part 1, Berger has shown that although sectarian groups are always religiously based, they can be politically active in varying degrees. The same goes for the different groups fighting for one major religious stream. Although some are more religiously involved and some are more focussed on politics, all of them are fighting under their groups sectarian flag.

§3.1 Maronites

The Maronites are probably the group that has played the most important part in Lebanon's divisionary history. As we have seen in chapter 1 they were one of the first established religious groups to colonise the Mount Lebanon region. But, sociologically speaking, what is their religious motif? The motif is the red line that has guided a group throughout its history. It is the glue that binds current day group members to those of the earliest days. For the Maronites this history dates back to the fifth century. Originally Maronites were a Syrian Orthodox (Jacobite) group that converted to the Roman Catholic Church at the end of the sixteenth century. Little is known about the period before however. Those thousand years have a few sources which mention Maronites, but their own writings have not been found. What has set their religion apart from both these two main stream Christian faiths however, is the monothelitistic approach of this group. This is also the most common reason for Maronites to be named in sources before the 1500s. Although much can be said about the theology on this subject, for this paper it will suffice to say that monothelitism is a Christian believe where Jesus Christ has two natures (Human and Divine) but only one will (mostly divine but it is influenced by Jesus' human nature) in contrast to the Catholic and Orthodox two wills of Jesus Christ which work together. From the Third Council of Constantinople in 680 monothelitism was considered heresy. The Maronites specifically were not yet mentioned during the Council, but several claims have been made in the following centuries concerning their heresy. It brought the Maronites in a place where they had to defend themselves physically from the Muslims, but theologically from the rest of the Christian faith. It is this motif that sets Maronites apart from other Christians and made them seek refuge in the Lebanese mountains.

With their motif defined the need arises to analyse the Maronite system of meaning. As explained before, a sects system of meaning is defined by nine categories, which al must be present to a religious group. This does not mean it cannot be weak, but all nine categories are adamant if we want to call a group a sect. *Conversion* in the Maronite group is not very apparent, but its different level of experience comes mostly from the way the church is structured. From early on, Maronites have believed that the Church is responsible for the spiritual and moral side of life, while politics is does not have to meddle in this. Politics should defend the Churches subjects, but above all else they have to guard the church members' equality and it is in this very aspect where we also see the 'violent difference' as described by Berger.[61] Every member of the Maronite Church is seen as equal, no matter how wealthy they are or what their race was. A Maronite is called upon to establish a society of freedom, justice and equality based on dignity and equal opportunity for all.[62] This equality was rare in especially medieval times, but has only recently become a generally accepted idea.

Maronite *Catholicism* is very similar to the claims of mainstream Catholic or Orthodox Christianity. It believes God, with Jesus Christ as his human embodiment, has created all that is and all

---

[61] Berger, 382

[62] Stephanous, Andrea Zaki.,. *Political Islam, Citizenship, and Minorities : The Future of Arab Christians in the Islamic Middle East*. Lanham: University Press of America, 2010., 146

that will be. God is the universe and through this the Maronites claim universality in their faith. The same can be said for the *Gnosis* part of the Maronite system of meaning. The superior cognition or perspective that is claimed by mainstream Christian faith is reflected among the Maronites and they work towards a very similar form of *Salvation* as well. If we move to the *Eschatology* of the Maronites, a similar picture is painted. Just like the ultimate salvation is similar to main Christian faith, Maronites believe they move towards Judgement Day. The main difference however, is that while the mainstream faiths believe Judgement Day brings the kingdom and the city of God, Maronites believe they have to build the city of god before Judgement Day.

The *Apologetic* and *Seelsorge* characteristics are very flexible with Maronites. This is probably due to the fact that they have been balancing their faith on the edge of heresy. Usually, both are quite similar to mainstream Christians unless they talk about their monothelitistic background. Over the centuries however, this fact has been less and less important to for example Catholic believes, which has also seen a decrease in questions concerning their religious motifs.

In contrast to both Orthodox and Catholic Christianity, the Maronites do have a different take on *Authority*. While their faith does influence all of their decisions and forms their moral compass, Maronites see the authority of their religion mostly as a spiritual authority and not so much politically. Consequently, its *Community* is also different. Rather than a strictly hierarchal system as these mainstream faiths have, Maronites believe that although they choose a patriarch, he is only the representation of the community in a system where they are obligated to have a leader.[63] The Maronite Church is the spokesperson, but not the embodiment of the community. Important to note however, is that while Maronites have historically seen themselves as different from other Christians, they have often sought allies among other Christians, as is evident in their connection to the French. Number wise, over 3 million Maronites are known today of which the vast majority lives in Lebanon.

To Conclude the Maronites, it is safe to say that they have a place in every category within Berger's system of meaning and a clearly different religious motif from other Christian groups. It is mainly their motif that has set them apart and has caused them to live a more reclusive and sectarian lifestyle. Although they have similarities to the mainstream Christian faiths, especially concerning the salvation and the gnosis, there are big differences, mostly concerning the way they want to build a community or how they want to live their lives.

§3.2 Druze

The religious motif for the Druze is more complex than any other religious group in this paper. Originally, the Druze started out as a branch of Twelver Shi'ism which mostly reflects in their originally west-Asian ethnicity. Describing Druze religion as Shi'ism however is wrong. The faith is highly syncretistic and contains elements of Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and convictions of ancient Greek

---

[63] Moosa, 279-304

philosophers like Plato and Socrates. The diversity of influences has accumulated to a mystic and difficult to comprehend religion. According to the Druze, God has no attributes because God, in its essence, is everything and therefor also all attributes. Everything you see, you experience and can perceive is God. Since he is everything and nothing at the same time, God is also incomprehensible, immanent and transcendent at the same time. However, God has been reincarnated on earth several times and has done so quite often in the time of the Prophet Muhammad and his descendants along Ali's line. To Druze Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, as he has last appeared, was the god that had manifested himself seven times before. To them Al-Hakim was not just a prophet, he was God himself. Not only God reincarnates, however, but humans as well. Contrary to Hinduism of Buddhism, humans can only reincarnate into new human bodies of the same sex. However, it happened the second your previous body dies. The body in this sense is nothing more than a shell for the eternal soul. Teachings by prophets and religious leaders, holy books and other scriptures are symbolic and allegorical and mainly meant for the intellectual elite of the community and only after rigorous learning you can grow through the three layers of meaning ascribed to these symbolic teachings[64]. To add to the scriptures, the Druze have seven pillars: Truthfulness - love of the truth; Fellowship - take care of one another; Abandoning false beliefs; Avoidance of confusion - avoid evil; Accept divine unity in humanity; Acceptance of all al-Hakim's acts; Submission in accordance to al-Hakim's will[65]

The Druze motif as explained above is far from complete, but complete enough to understand its position among the religions of the Middle East and to further analyse it's sectarian nature. This belief system is the red line that runs through Druze faith until this day. Its attitude, as defined by Berger is, unsurprisingly also quite different. Starting off once more with the *Conversion* category, it is clear to see how the religious experience differs from other religions. Practising the Druze religion means a very philosophical experience where every aspect of life can be analysed. Its focus on intellectual interpretations of the teachings and its drive towards enlightenment gave the Druze an extremely different religious experience.

The *Catholicism* of the Druze is undoubtedly clear. Where most Abrahamic religions claim a universal God, the Druze claim that God does not only see everything as an entity, but it *is* everything. There is no more universality than claiming that God is everything around you. This claim immediately reflects the *Gnosis* of the Druze system of meaning. If there is such a thing as Berger's "*epistemological elite*"[66] it can be found among the Druze. To them, the truth can only be sought in a way that is different to most other religious convictions. Through study and surrender to God, you can achieve enlightenment that not only allows you your superior cognition over others, but it makes you understand the universe. Their gnosis also becomes apparent in the third of their pillars: Abandoning false beliefs. Achieving the

---

[64] There is the obvious layer (exoteric) which is available to anyone. Next is the esoteric layer which can only be accesed through critical analysis and interpretation, which can only be done by intellectuals. Lastly, there is the anagoge layer which can only be accessed by the few truly enlightened scholars who understand the universe and its nature. - Makārim, Sāmī Nasīb.,. *The Druze Faith,*. Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1974. p. 55-58

[65] Dana, Nissim.,. "Druze Identity and religion–Tradition and Apostasy." (2009). p. 6-9

[66] Berger, 383

highest form of enlightenment is *Salvation* although heaven to the Druze is the state of ultimate happiness where you are so enlightened you will meet the creator.[67]

The *Authority* this group claims over its subjects is in line with its universality. Denying Gods universality means denying the soul of the Druze people and thus, there is 'no salvation outside of the church'. Concerning its *Community* it is safe to say that the Druze following of about 2 million people (with have of the people in Lebanon and Syria) shows it is thriving, although not as much as they historically have. The care they have to show for their fellow believers is shown in the second pillar of the Druze faith.

The *apologetic* characteristic is harder to find out. What has been shown however, by Dana, is that the Druze, who have been attacked and persecuted regularly, have claimed to be an Islamic sect in nature and have claimed that although they claim Islam in a different way, it is still Islam.[68] Connected to this, is a heavy focus on why they are right, rather than talking about why others are wrong. In the end however, the Druze have always been very secluded when it comes to their religion and it is forbidden to convert people to the Druze faith. This becomes especially clear in the Druze custom of *taqiyya* which they inherited from their Shi'a history. So although the apologetic characteristics are there, they are not extremely strong, since the Druze believe they have nothing to defend. This reflects a little on the *Seelsorge.* Dealing with doubt means dealing with evil. If you doubt the universality of god and with it the Druze religion, you have given into evil and should go see a religious leader.

The Druze are a very clear sect, even without the help of Berger's system. But, as explained before, it needs to have a religious system of meaning but especially a clear religious motif to separate a sect from other pious groups. The Druze motif shows its extreme difference from other groups and affirms its sectarian nature. The Druze attitude can be explained in the same terminology. It is radically different in most respects and shows, in comparison to the Maronites how sects can differ while still fitting the sectarian picture.

---

[67] Makarem, 59-88
[68] Dana, 13

Chapter 3 – Greed versus Grievance in Lebanon

'Greed versus grievance' is one of these central debates that that seems to never go away since there simply is not a right answer. This chapter will analyse both sides of this debate by using a model that speaks for both sides. Just like in the previous chapter, this chapter will serve as a proof of concept. How well does the sectarian nature of the civil war in Lebanon transfer to a model? And can it, at least partly, be explained in such a way?

The instigators of this debate are Collier & Hoeffler with their econometric model which was first published in '*Greed and grievance in civil war*'.[69] In this article, together with their two volume book '*Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis*', they prove that a civil war is not as unpredictable as thought before. By analysing the causes of 79 civil wars between 1960 and 1999, they have come to the conclusion that, while grievance is never completely out of the picture, greed is the main factor for civil conflict. However, if the grievance variables are significant, these will show up perfectly as well.[70] The model has ever since achieved an important role among analysis tools for civil conflict. The most important aspect of this model, is that it uses both grievance and greed variables to come to an understanding. However good their model might be, one of their case studies significantly stands out from the rest.

When Collier & Hoeffler used the data they needed for Lebanon and put them through their model it turned out to be unlikely that civil war would break out. Anyone who has remotely studied the history of Lebanon however, knows that the region has always been on the brink of civil conflict. In '*Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis*' Samir Makdisi and Richard Sadaka are given the honours of explaining why this civil war is different from the others and what alternate explanations could provide extra insights.[71] It is through them and the results of Collier & Hoeffler themselves that we analyse this sectarian conflict. As we have by now established, a sectarian war has to be fought along religious lines. The CH-model does put some weight on these factors, but by far the heaviest weight is put on economic factors. According to Makdisi & Sadaka, this is one of the reasons Lebanon is, even in this research, an outcast.

To look at how Collier & Hoeffler assess the Lebanese situation an assessment of the pre-war conditions needs to be made. Economically, Lebanon seemed to be thriving for a developing country. Since their independence of 1943, especially the private sector had developed immensely, mostly due to the lack of natural resources in the area. Lebanon was in a free foreign exchange program and, in contrast to their neighbours, this allowed the private sector to freely interact with whomever they wanted. Lebanon therefor turned into an interesting investing climate. Between 1950 and 1974, the average annual growth rate of the Lebanese economy was about 7 percent, while inflation stayed around

---

[69] Collier, Paul., Hoeffler, Anke., World Bank., Development Research Group.,. *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*. Washington, DC: World Bank, Development Research Group, 2000.
[70] Idem, 570-572
[71] Makdisi, Samir., Sadaka, Richard.,. "The Lebanese Civil War, 1975-90." *Understanding Civil War : Evidence and Analysis Understanding Civil War : Evidence and Analysis / Ed.by Paul Collier, Nicholas Sambanis, ISBN 0821360477* 2, (2005)

2% until it increased to about 8% in the early seventies and into the war. With the highest level of per capita income ($1.200) in any developing country in 1974[72] everything seemed to go rather smoothly on the economic side. However, 54% of the population was still qualified as poor and 21% was classified very rich.[73] This is not good, but compared to other developing countries, it is also far from bad. The problem in Lebanon then, arises when we look at how the wealth was distributed. Those 21% rich people were either living in Beirut, or they were Christian Maronites in the central Mountains. The periphery of Beirut, and especially the people living in the south were mainly Shi'a or Druze communities who filled the poor class.

The economic differences are overshadowed however by the political differences. Lebanon's division of politics along sectarian lines meant that a weak government was a given, while corruption and clientelism were a necessity to keep the government alive. In 'exchange', Lebanon did enjoy regular elections, religious freedom and free growth and expression of political parties. Obviously, those parties still were divided along sectarian lines and the Christians for example always had a right to 55% of the parliamentary seats, but how these seats were filled politically was up for free election. These strains only increased when the Muslim population, and the Sunni's in particular started demanding more equal rights, which would also be accompanied by a more equal economic division. To add to these strains, were the international crises of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the massive influx of Palestinian refugees.

As explained in chapter 2, it is along those sectarian lines that the civil war broke out. Collier & Hoeffler believe that it is those militias and the way they get funding together that determines the intensity and the duration of the conflict.[74] In Appendix 2 we see the dominant and minor factions who were battling each other during the fifteen years of war. For the major militias, it is known that they set up intricate organisations to support their military activities. Large administrative offices and social services made it possible for the fighters to earn money. According to Makdisi and Sadaka "*a soldier's salary was usually $75–$150 per month, which was higher than the prevailing minimum wage. Low-ranking officers were paid $170–$200 per month, while higher ranking officers received between $250 and $400 a month.*"[75]. Since unemployment was high, this wage was very tempting for a lot of men. Furthermore, militia's spent about 60% of their budgets to fighting equipment, with the rest going towards 'information offices' which under held contact with other militia's or foreign troops and sponsors like the Syrians or the Israeli's.[76] Revenue wise, the Militias managed to amass about $15 billion US internally and $30 billion externally.[77] This simply meant that it was easy to maintain a war effort. After the fighting was done, an estimated 144.000 people had died by violence and the economy was destroyed, with estimates of costs between 80 and 160 billion US dollars.[78]

---

[72]Idem, 60
[73] Ibidem
[74] Collier, P., Hoeffler, A., and Soderbom, M. (2004). 'On the duration of civil war.' Journal of Peace Research, 41, 253-73.
[75] Makdisi & Sadaka, 63-66
[76] Idem, 67
[77] Idem, opzoeken
[78] Idem, 69

So, we see that with a relatively booming economy, Lebanon still plunged into civil war. However, the CH model, calculated that in 1970, the opportunity for war was only 2,6%.[79] Since very few things changed in Lebanon until the war, it is safe to assume this figure would have been similar for 1974 when the fighting broke out. Where does this go wrong? Let's assess the list of variables for the CH-model: *GDP*; *Level of Secondary Schooling of Boys*; *Population Density*; *Social Cohesion (measured mostly by social fractionalization)*; *Primary Commodities*; *Military Advantage (measured mostly by mountainous terrain and population dispersion)*; *Ethnic Hatred*; *Political Repression*; *Political Exclusion*; *Economic Inequality* and lastly *Time Passed since Last Conflict*.[80] In this model, social cohesion, ethnic hatred, political expression and political exclusion for the Grievance side, while the others combined form the Greed argument.

As we by now know, the GDP was high for a developing country, meaning that the probability for civil war there was low. The level of schooling was relatively high, meaning the probability was low. Population density was low, except for in Beirut, and the general population only counted about 3 million people.[81] Social cohesion is measured mostly by how fractured the society is. It is very apparent that the Lebanese society is fractured along thick religious lines. Social fractionalization however, is measured by two variables: ethnic and religious fractionalization. Ethnically, Lebanon is one. Even the Druze, although originally from a south-west Asian ethnicity, had lived in the Lebanon region for so long they did not adhere to ethnic differences. So while ethnographically the fractionalization is almost 0, the religious one is very high. The CH-model however, as an 'average' of all 79 civil wars they measured, heavily favours ethnic fractionalization, since that is a far more common problem than a purely religious division. In short, although religious differences are high, the numbers for social cohesion will be relatively low, meaning once again a low probability for civil war.

This very same problem shows in the *Political Repression*, *Political Exclusion* and the *Economic Inequality* categories, or in other words: the other grievance categories. Both are measured along ethnic lines. Politically, every ethnicity is represented greatly, since there are very few different ethnicities in Lebanon. So, the odd religiously divided parliament is not taken into consideration. As shown before economic inequality was mainly present along sectarian lines, but not if we look at the total population. Sure, 54% was still in the poor category, but in relation to other developing countries this is very low. After this and Chapter 2, the *Ethnic Hatred* category speaks for itself; ethnically the fighting forces are all the same. *Primary Commodities* were quite low. Historically silk and tobacco had been important to the Lebanese economy, but since its independence Lebanon had seen a big increase in its tertiary sector, overtaking the exports of silk and tobacco, which had already been in decline due to the independence of other developing countries.[82]

That leaves *Military Advantage* and *Time Passed Since Last Conflict*. The mountainous terrain

[79] Idem, 71
[80] Mitkov, 11-19
[81] Makdisi & Sadaka, 71
[82] Idem, 80

of Lebanon is a benefactor to rebel groups but, the population dispersion is once again measured ethnically meaning that military advantage is not high, but not low either. The time passed is measured from the last serious internal conflict Lebanon had been in, which was the troubles of 1958 where the Americans had to intervene. According to Collier & Hoeffler, this is a long time relatively to the other case studies, causing, once again, a low probability rating.

The strong focus on economies and the way ethnicity is valued over religiosity are paramount to the position of Lebanon as an anomaly in Colliers' & Hoeffler's results. It is fair to say however, that the sectarian division of Lebanon's society has created as much trouble as similar countries with ethnical problems. It is safe to assume that if we replace the ethnic with the religious numbers, the probability for civil war would be much greater. So, what we learn is that, if most values relevant to a countries stability are in favour of stability except for extreme sectarian division, the CH-model sees little chance of a civil war. This does not make the model useless in the slightest. Firstly, it shows how rare a truly sectarian civil is. Secondly it shows that if there is a high probability of civil war, there is probably more going on than sectarian trouble.

Part 3 – Case Study 2: Syria

In academia some scholars have assumed that if religious violence happens, sectarianism must be the root. An example of this is Lawrence G. Potter's famous book: Sectarian politics in the Middle East. He starts his book off with: "*By 2013, sectarian conflict had reignited in Iraq and spread to Syria, where ruling Alawites were locked in bitter civil war with a Sunni resistance which dragged in the neighbouring states of Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.*"[83] A quick internet search shows just how widespread this idea is. Thus, what happens is that a lot of research is focussed on solving the sectarian crisis in Syria (or Iraq), rather than actually analysing the fundamentals of the ongoing conflict. The basic assumption that because 'people with different (ethno-) religious ideologies are fighting, so we are speaking of a sectarian conflict' is ignorant. Recently, more scholars are agreeing that research on 'solving Syria' should first analyse the assumptions they hold for granted. According to Christopher Phillips, this type of research is characterized by three wrong assumptions.[84] The first assumption, he argues, is that sub-state identities and political alignment based on those identities inherently represent a failure of nation building. Secondly, it is wrong to assume that a sect, or a group with sectarian ties, is a rigid thing with set believes. In reality, such groups are "*ambiguous and fluid*"[85] and not very cohesive. The third wrong assumption is that ethno-sectarian models can solve sectarian violence. The political identity of a sect is more complicated than merely a set of religious ideas it wants to portray politically. Reducing an entire conflict, like the Syrian one, to sectarianism means one does not only ignore part of the reality, but it also plays down the significance of what is happening.

Wrong assumptions aside, if this many people claim something sectarian is happening, there could also very well be some truth to it. The previous chapter has clearly demonstrated how sectarianism can evolve from something as small as a job occupation that is refused by one group but not the other, to centuries of quarrels and thousands of deaths. Sectarianism – as hard as it might be to define – is therefore not unidentifiable. In order to do this for Syria, this chapter needs to follow a slightly different path than Part two. Lebanon's sectarian groups are characterized by a common history that has made them the nation they are today. For Syria, the fighting groups developed mostly linear and while Syria's history is riddled with complications, they have occurred from very different problems.

Assessing if the Syrian civil war is indeed a sectarian civil war, means making some assumptions, namely that if this is a sectarian civil war, we must be able to find an historic basis. After all, sectarianism is not something that occurs out of the blue. The next assumption that will be made, is that Syria indeed is a country with a sectarian divide. Consequently, this chapter will assess its sectarian history, leading up to analysis of who plays a part in this war and how they can be characterized, using Berger's model. Next, this chapter will place those groups and the entire conflict in the Greed and Grievance debate to decide if the Syrian civil war should indeed be called an expression of sectarianism.

---

[83] Potter, Lawrence G.,. *Sectarian Politics in the Persian Gulf* 2014., 1
[84] Phillips, Christopher.,. "Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria." *Third World Quarterly Third World Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (2015),. 358
[85] Ibidem

Chapter 1 – Syria's Fighting Forces

Lebanon, as the stereotype for sectarianism and consociationalism, has been researched thoroughly on the historical roots of its sectarian divide. In stark contrast, Syria's (recent) history is not known for sectarianism at all. Therefore, it would make sense to start off with a historical analysis of the Syrian sects. For the current civil war in Syria, this is not as clear-cut. Starting with a historical analysis of Syria's sectarian history means delving through Syria's entire history and make note of every influential religious group that ever settled in the region in the hope that they are still relevant today. Lebanese sectarianism has been mapped this way, however, it has not been done for Syria. It surely will in the coming years, but as of right now such a history book has yet to be written. Therefore, rather than starting off with the history, this chapter first analyses what groups are currently fighting in Syria. That way, the historical analysis can be accurate and thorough without beating too much around the bush.

So, how is the civil war in Syria currently divided? As can be seen in the picture below, provided by Vox[86], it is quite messy. Basically, we can identify four fighting sides: the Assad regime, the

Opposition's rebels, Islamic State and the Kurds. Generally speaking all fighting sides have found some foreign backing[87] and, although for example Russia's support for Assad seems to diminish slightly, these all play a part in the war. Assuming Syria's sectarianism however, the foreign entities played no significant part in the sectarian structures that underlay this struggle, much like they did not in Lebanon. Therefore, this chapter will focus on the four main groups.

---

[86] *Syria's War: Who is Fighting and Why*. Directed by Vox.
[87] IS has no immediate support from foreign states, but is backed up by a lot of international fighters. The Kurds are in a somewhat similar position. They do have some US support, but are also benefitting from Kurdish fighters from different countries.

§1.1 The Assad Regime

In 1970 Hafez al-Assad enters office through a rather peaceful coup d'état within the ruling Ba'ath party.[88] After he died, his son Bashar is elected president and would rule the country until the current day. Fouad Ajami, author of '*The Syrian Rebellion*', ascribes the success of the Assad dynasty to their Alawi (also known as Alawite or Nusayri) heritage. Like many other authors, he recognises the Alawite come off as one of the most pressing divisionary matters within Syria's society just before the fateful happenings of 2011. While he describes the Assad success to the '*alawi asabiya*'[89] the historical antagonism between the Sunni cities and the Alawi Mountains cannot be overlooked when talking about the sectarian nature of this conflict. Therefore, it makes sense to start the historical analysis in these mountains.

The Alawite faith is a branched of section of what is generally known as Twelver Shi'ism, the main branch within Shi'a theology.[90] While the exact origins of this faith are unknown, it is generally believed that Ibn Nusayri – a disciple of the tenth and eleventh Imam – and his followers are the original creators of the faith.[91] They travelled the Middle East after Nusayr's excommunication before they settled in the mountains of current day Syria, in Aleppo and in Baghdad.[92] Their religion stayed relatively secret until the twentieth century when researchers slowly started to unravel what being Alawi exactly entailed. This secrecy towards outsiders, combined with the general consensus of Alawi's being "*extremist exaggerators*"[93] gave rise to a lot of distrust towards the Alawi people, resulting in the Alawi's keeping to themselves. This exclusion got worse when the famous jurist Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) issued several fatwa's against the Alawi's, declaring them "*sectarian enemies of Islam*".[94] With their territories in Aleppo and Baghdad soon gone, the Alawi people retreated to the mountains not to return to the public eye until the Mamelukes and later the Ottomans found them during their conquest of Syria.

During these centuries the Alawi's would often be the aim of punitive expeditions and persecution.[95] During the crusades of the eleventh century the Alawi in the Lebanon Mountains helped out the Christians, which angered every Muslim community in the region, especially the Ismaili, who they had been feuding with for a long time anyway. In 1220, when the Ismaili launched a massive operation against the Alawi, the Kurds, who had recently aligned themselves with the Ismaili entered

---

[88] Dam, Nikolaos van. 1979. *The struggle for power in Syria: sectarianism, regionalism, and tribalism in politics, 1961-1978*. New York: St. Martin's Press. p. 31-50

[89] *Asabiya* is the Arab notion of solidarity, group feeling and group consciousness. In the Alawi case Ajami argues that the mountain people have a strong sense of superiority mixed with a grudge towards the many years of persecution. – Ajami, Fouad., Dwight, Herbert and Dwight, Jane.,. Working Group on Islamism and the International Order. *The Syrian Rebellion*. Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 2012., 13

[90] Farouk-Alli, Aslam.,. "Sectarianism in Alawi Syria: Exploring the Paradoxes of Politics and Religion." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 34, no. 3 (2014): 207-226.

[91] Moosa, Matti.,. *Extremist Shiites : The Ghulat Sects*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1987., 257-259

[92] Friedman, Yaron.,. "Mohammad B. Nosayr." Encyclopaedia Iranica. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mohammad-nosayr.

[93] This is mainly due to the fact that the Alawi see Ali Ibn Abi Talib (the cousin of the Prophet) as equal to Muhammad and that both had been reincarnations of God himself. To Sunni this is heresy and to Shi'a this is taking Ali's legacy a couple of bridges too far. Their strong connection with Jesus Christ also did not improve relations. - Ajami, 15 - 16

[94] Idem, 17

[95] Moosa, 270

the persecutions as well.[96] After this the Kurds and the Alawi had a hard time getting along. However, a new thread was on the horizon: The Mongol Horde. The Horde swept through Syria and the Alawi were allegedly helping them capture the cities and castles of the north. The Mamelukes, who were somewhat understandably furious about this, ordered the Alawi's to build mosques in every village in order for them to return to normal Islam after they had driven the Mongols from the Syrian lands.[97] The Alawi built the mosques, though as far away from their villages as they could, only to never maintain them. Besides the persecutions, several tribes within the Alawi fought each other, leaving anything but a united sect behind.[98] When the Ottomans found this extraordinary sect in the early sixteenth century they nicknamed them 'The Lost People' (*al-milla al-dhalla*)[99] and although the Sultan was highly suspicious of this extremist Shi'a sect, he left them largely to themselves. Instead, he ordered thousands of Shi'a Turks from Khurasan to move into the same mountains and live among the same territories, so the Sultan would have eyes and ears in a region where is army was largely powerless.[100] The Alawi strongholds outside the mountains were captured and any Shi'a left would be killed. In the mountains however, the Turks integrated and became part of the sect, rather than eradicating the sect as Sultan Selim I had intended.[101]

Plans and persecutions similar to Selim's were hard to execute, since the inhospitable mountains that the Alawi called their home were easy to defend. Therefore, the Ottomans left them largely to themselves, only imposing high taxes on them (which were rarely collected) and intervening only when there was a serious crime committed. Matti Moosa, author of '*Extremist Shi'ites: The Ghulat Sects*' gives an example of how about 300 Alawi came down from the mountain because they had had a fight amongst themselves and had been expelled.[102] The Ismaili's at the foot of the mountains, though reluctant, accepted the group in their villages, only to be murdered by the Alawi and a couple of hundred of their kinsmen from the mountains a short while later. The Ottoman governor was outraged and slaughtered every Alawi they could find in the area.

The now well-known Ibrahim Pasha had quite an influence on the Syrian lands. The Alawi, like with every ruler before Ibrahim, had problems with him. They refused to disarm so after Ibrahim had secured the Alawi castles and villages outside the mountains, he sent Druze (and a few Maronite) forces from Lebanon to deal with these annoyances. All 500 of the Druze soldiers were murdered at a place in the 'Wadi al-Uyuu'm' valley that has be called 'Blood Rock' ever since.[103] The savage fighting and rebellions against not only the government, but also among themselves gave the Alawi the reputation of barbaric and ungodly. Public opinion was that no-one in their right minds would try and negotiate with these people because they would just cut your head off.

---

[96] Ibidem
[97] Idem, 267-279
[98] Idem, 255-266
[99] Ibidem
[100] Idem, 275
[101] Ibidem
[102] Idem, 276
[103] Idem, 277

The twentieth century arrived and in 1916 this once again meant a new suzerain. After some struggles with self-proclaimed King Faysal and Alawi forces, it was the French who incorporated Syria into their vast colonial network. The Alawi supported the French rulers and were paid back for their loyalty when the French divided the Syrian region into several ethnic 'states' and concluded that the Alawi state should be one of them (see Appendix 3). The state contained approximately 370.000 inhabitants, of which 60% was Alawi, 20% Sunni and the other 20% a mixture of different Shi'a and Christian groups.[104] Although the state lasted only about fifteen years until the French gave in to a central command in Damascus, the French had given the Alawi people a way up.

At this time the Alawi were very poor. The situation was so dire, that some families even had to sell their daughters as servants in order to support the rest of the household.[105] Although they had a big majority in the region, most of the wealthy people were Sunni and had hired Alawi people to do their common jobs. Religiously the Sunni upper class did not bother them, but politically it did.[106] Every Sunni ruler had tried to eradicate the Alawites, who had no reason to believe the Sunni nationalists in Damascus now were any different. However, the new autonomy this state created gave the Alawi a renewed sense of community.[107] So, when the French gave them the possibility to better their economic positions, they seized this opportunity with both hands. Serving in the French army division of *Les Troupes Spéciales du Levant* the poor Alawi sons enjoyed an education and probably due to the heritage of the Alawi militaristic nature, quickly grew through the ranks of the army division. Just before the outbreak of the Second World War a generation of young, moderate and educated Alawi officers had emerged who, in contrast to their hard-line fathers, saw a future in Syrian nationalism.[108] However, when negotiations with the French to join Lebanon failed near the end of the 1930's, World War II emerged and would ultimately, mean the end of the French mandate over Syria. By 1946, the Alawi Mountains were ruled by Sunni Arabs once more.

The improved positions of conscripted Alawi men in turn encouraged other Alawi boys to join with enthusiasm. The region however, was still poor and a lot of common Alawi families could not afford the *badal*, a sort of army tax to the government. This then led to forced conscription for the boys of these families. By the late 1940's and the 1950's, Alawi soldiers dominated the army's officer positions although they did not yet occupy the highest positions. From 1949 to 1954, four military coups took place, all organized by Sunni Generals or Colonels. These resulted in various cleansings of the army ranks, leaving a lot of Alawi officers in place while many Sunni's who had supported at least one of the coups had to make way.[109] By 1955, almost 65% of all officers in the Syrian army was Alawi.[110] At the same time, the Syrian Social National Party (SSNP) and the Ba'ath Party attracted a large Alawi

[104] Ajami, 19
[105] Batatu, Hanna.,. "Some Observations on the Social Roots of Syria's Ruling, Military Group and the Causes for its Dominance." *Middle East Journal* 353, (1981)., 341
[106] Moosa, 286-289
[107] Idem, 280-281
[108] Van Dam, 67-82
[109] Moosa, 292-310
[110] Batatu, 341

following because of its positions towards religious minorities. Among them were most of the conscripted soldiers. When the SSNP was disbanded by the government, most of their members enlisted in the Ba'ath Party. However, when Syria entered the United Arab Republic, the Ba'ath party was disbanded too. Consequently, the officers in the army grew wary of Nasser's influence. During the UAR years, a secret military branch of the Ba'ath was established by one Druze (Hamad Ubayd) and three Alawi (Hafiz al-Assad, Salah Jadid and Muhammad Umran) army officers. After the fall of the UAR and the establishment of Ba'ath rule, this military group assumed complete control over the army, with not just the highest officers being either Alawi or Ba'athist, but also with full control over the military academies.[111]Although the 1960's did bring the Ba'ath party rule over Syria, several attempted (and a few successful) coup d'états among their own ranks and from for example Nasserites, meant that power was far from being secured yet. During these chaotic years, more and more Alawi members became active members of the party.[112] Through their influence, the party's ideals of Arab nationalism slowly changed into a focus on regionalism and sectarianism.[113] Slowly, the Alawi's in the Ba'ath Party distanced themselves and drew up plans to stage a coup themselves.

By 1966, after yet another putsch, Alawi strongmen occupied every major position within the Ba'ath party and systematically purged and arrested Sunni, Druze and Shi'a party and army members. The disgrace of the 1967 war with Israel reinvigorated and modernized the army, which by 1970 had become so powerful that it allowed Hafiz al-Assad to purge his enemies within the party and assume complete power over the party and the army. By eliminating his fellow Alawi leaders, he became the sole Alawi front runner and in 1971, he became the first ever Alawi president. Hafez managed to stabilize Syria's politics, which had been riddled with coups ever since its independence. He had managed to get the Alawi faith declared Islamic by Musa al-Sadr[114] and ayatollah Khomeini and immediately transformed the Syrian constitution into a much more secular one.[115] His secular rule over Syria accepted every religious minority (even into government or party positions) and transformed Syrian politics into a system where the president always had the last say in things.[116] While an Alawite elite emerge from Hafez' rule, his own ruling elite certainly was not sectarian. Among his trustees for government were several Sunni figures who played important parts in the everyday rule of the country and would do so even when his son took over. Rather than religious or ethnic background, Hafez chose people who could help him stay in power. Hafez al-Assad had created a cult of personality (initially around himself and later around his entire family) that was solely based on power. The only times sectarianism was practised by Hafez was if his own power was threatened.

---

[111] Moosa, 296-305
[112] Ibidem
[113] Idem, 300
[114] An influential and famous Iranian-Lebanese Shi'a leader who in 1974 issued a fatwa stating that the Alawite faith was a recognised community of the Twelver Shi'a Muslims.
[115] Glassé, Cyril.,. *The New Encyclopedia of Islam*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001., 36-37
[116] Hinnebusch, Raymond,. *Syria, Revolution from Above*. London; New York: Routledge, 2005., 65

When Hafez' son Bashar al-Assad took over the office in 2000 after Hafez' death, Syria had lost a shrewd and strategically strong leader. Bashar, was the general conclusion, had ruined the powerful Syria of the second half of the twentieth century. The days that Syria was one of the strong holders and frontrunners of the Arab world had gone. Human Rights Watch described Bashar's first decade in power as "*a wasted decade*"[117]. Or, as Ajami summarizes Syria's abysmal position: "*Unemployment was over 20% and 32% of its people lived below the poverty line. The country ranked 165th (out of 175 nations) in press freedom, 152nd (out of a sample of 152) on the index of democracy, and 19th (out of 22 Arab countries) in economic performance.*"[118]

These measures are proof of a totalitarian regime that in spite of everything would do whatever it takes to stay in power. Hafez had used the Alawi's rising position in the army and later in the Ba'ath party to better himself and his family. Although he had not been the brain behind the initial rise to power, he had profited from these struggles the most. However, these struggles, although the Alawi clearly opposed Sunni leaders, had not been sectarian. Their religion did not matter, but their status as a minority did. It had helped them gain support from other rural minorities like the Druze, the Kurds and even the Ismaili and other Shi'a Muslims. This was not sectarianism; this was minority politics.

Bashar on the other hand did not experience this power struggle. He was born when Hafez was already high up in the ranks of the army and the Ba'ath party and he was not even trained to rule until his brother died in 1994.[119] Unaware of the exact kind of support he needed, Bashar alienated most minorities from his regime.[120] More importantly, the countryside, which had given rise to the Alawi regime to begin with, had grown distant to the regime. They did not trust the urbanized ruler in his porcelain tower. To Assad however, not just the Sunni, but everyone who tried to take his power away was a wrongdoer that should be taken care off. After the initial struggles of the Damascus spring, immediately following Bashar's election, Bashar aligned himself with the extremist Lebanon based Shi'i group Hezbollah and its affiliated leaders in Iran.[121] These steps, together with the assassination of Sunni prime-minister Harari (also a protégé of the Saudi's in Lebanon) caused significant unrest among the Sunni in Syria. The Muslim Brotherhood, sponsored by the Gulf States and the Saudi's, started creating a Sunni versus Regime schism which soon spread among the population. In early 2011, when Tunisian president Ben Ali had dissolved his government and the Tahrir-square in Egypt had been occupied by protestors, Bashar al-Assad was interviewed by '*The Wall Street Journal*'. When asked whether he was concerned for Syria, Bashar answered with the same quote used in the introduction of this paper[122], in

[117] Human Rights Watch (Organization).,. "A Wasted Decade Human Rights in Syria during Bashar Al-Asad's First Ten Years in Power." Human Rights Watch.
[118] Ajami, 65
[119] Andersen, Roy., Seibert, Robert F., Wagner, Jon G.,. *Politics and Change in the Middle East: Sources of Conflict and Accommodation*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990. p. 175-176
[120] Ibidem
[121] Nizameddin, Talal.,. "Squaring the Middle East Triangle in Lebanon: Russia and the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah Nexus." *The Slavonic and East European Review* 86, no. 3 (Jul., 2008): 475-500.
[122] "*Syria is stable. Why? Because you have to be strongly linked to the beliefs of your people. This is the core issue. When you have divergence (...) you will have this vacuum that creates disturbance.*" - Solomon, Jar & Spindle, Bill.,. "**Syria Strongman: Time for 'Reform'**." *The Wall Street Journal,* January 31, 2011.

which he claimed that there was no divergence in Syria because he as president was linked to the beliefs of his people. Two months later, protesting Syrians were dying because of the differences within Syria's society created by the Assads.

§1.2 Opposition and Rebels

The year 2011 was an eventful year in the Arab world. While the 'Arab Spring' ended in Tunisia, protests, which in some cases erupted in fighting, broke out in Algeria, Jordan, Oman, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, Iraq, Bahrain, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Kuwait, Morocco, Mauritania, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, The United Arab Emirates and indeed Syria.[123] In other words, almost every member state of the Arab league saw protests against the sitting governments, even if they were minor protests like in Saudi Arabia. In Syria the protests started on January 26th when a man was assaulted and later arrested by a police officer. The protestors demanded that the man were set free.[124] A little over a month later, children in the rural city of Daraa were arrested and abused because they had written anti-government slogans on walls at a few places in the city.[125] The first demonstrations were aimed at releasing these children, but soon they were aimed at the government, the Ba'ath party and indeed Bashar al-Assad himself. A few days later thousands of people were demonstrating the regime all across Syria, from the countryside to Damascus itself. Assad set the army on his people and a couple of months later the people started fighting back when nonviolent protests proved ineffective. However, soon the Syrian opposition itself fell apart from internal disagreements. According to the BBC, at the highpoint so far over a thousand armed opposition groups were fighting the regime uncoordinated.[126] This gave rise to more extremist groups taking the overhand in fighting the Assad regime.

§1.2.1 Recognised Opposition

In 2013 the *National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces* (SNC) was founded, which united individual parties and opposition figures alike. They set aside their political difference so they could form an opposition that would be able to topple the Assad regime. The SNC is recognised by the UN and most of its members as the official Opposition to Assad and has been in peace talks with them since the first Geneva conference held on the topic of solving the Syrian crisis. Their goals can be found in Appendix 4. The Free Syrian army, which was established first in July of 2011, is under direct command of the SNC as well, but they are one of the many groups recognised by the SNC.[127] The SNC

---

[123] Smith, Lydia. "Arab Spring 5 Years on: Timeline for the Major Events and Uprisings in the Middle East." *International Business Times,* January 23, 2016.
[124] Ajami, 69-82
[125] Ibidem
[126] BBC. "Guide to Syrian Rebels." http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003.
[127] According to their website they "*welcome everyone who is committed to the realization of a democratic Syria*". However, the following groups have been recognised as part of the SNC: the Free Syrian Army, Syrian National Council, the Democratic Bloc, the Revolutionary Movement, Syrian Revolution General Commission, Local Coordination Committees of Syria, and the Local Administrative Councils of Syria.

states that they are united by three core principles: inclusivity, accountability and consensus.[128] This also means that religious convictions, ethnic backgrounds do not matter as long as "*all major groups and individuals* [are] *committed to a democratic, inclusive, and pluralistic Syria*". The only thing that matters is that Assad is toppled and democracy restored. What they do strongly distance themselves from is "*acts of extremism committed by terrorist groups*".

§1.2.2 Islamist Opposition

Besides the SNC, a couple of other groups have allied themselves with the SNC, but they are not officially recognised as opposition by anyone else but themselves and have therefor not participated in the peace talks that have been held so far. Among them are the Islamic Front, Muslim Brotherhood, and the Army of Conquest. All of them propose a Sunni Islamist way of rebuilding Syria. These groups, although religiously affiliated, have been fighting extremist groups like IS. In their dedication to religious dominance and sectarian division, they have not been able to join the SNC. However, since their goals of toppling the regime are similar they are known as an opposition force.

Jabhat al-Nusra is an extremist group that is very similar in its goals to IS, as I will explain in paragraph 1.3. The al-Nusra front, together with for example the Muslim Brotherhood, have had an interesting and sometimes quite long history of Islamism and are perhaps some of the most well-known defenders of that political stream. Their sectarian struggle did gain some popularity among the population, like it did with other Islamist groups. These groups, however, are also known to fight the SNC or even among themselves. The problem is that, according to the Soufan Group, jihadi fighters, and especially the foreign ones, only join the most extremist of groups this means that many of them end up with IS, and Jabhat al-Nusra, but few affiliate themselves with the Muslim Brotherhood or other Islamist groups.[129] So while these forces are fanatically fighting Assad, IS and rarely but sometimes the SNC, in the end their role in the bigger picture of the civil war is small. These groups then, are but a minor voice among the rebellious forces aiming for the toppling of Bashar al-Assad.[130] That minor voice however, does speak very loud and their sectarian fanaticism has been a major cause for branding the Syrian civil war sectarian.

§1.3 Islamic State

To many, Islamic state (IS, but also known as ISIS, ISIL or Daesh[131]) was a completely new and radical thing. Reviewing its history and what is currently known, however, shows how IS has been active for quite some time in several different ways. Although Abu Bakhr al-Baghdadi proclaimed the caliphate

---

[128] National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces. "**Fact Sheet**." http://en.etilaf.org/about-us/fact-sheet.html (accessed 05/20, 2016).
[129] Topal, Ömer Faruk.,. "Foreign Fighters Involvement in Syria and its Regional Impacts." *USAK Yearbook of Politics and International Relations* no. 6 (2013): 285-289.
[130] Ibish, Hussein.,. "Is This the End of the Failed Muslim Brotherhood Project?." *The National,* October 5, 2013.
[131] Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Daesh (is an acronym derived from its Arabic name ad-Dawlah al-Islāmiyah fī 'l-ʿIrāq wa-sh-Shām ("Islamic State in Iraq and Syria").

in 2014, the actual origins of IS go back to the late 1990's. There is a lot of confusion around the subject of this extreme Salafi group, but it is safe to assume that out of every group currently fighting in Syria, IS is the group with the most sectarian roots.

To properly understand this sectarian sect we must go back to 1999. Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad ('Organisation of Monotheism and Jihad') or JTJ was a newly established jihadist group led by the Jordanian Sunni Muslim Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Al-Zarqawi, disgruntled by how 'un-Islamic' his home country had become. He had come to Afghanistan in 1999 to fight the Soviets, but after the Soviets left al-Zarqawi felt like he had to do something to improve the position of Islam.[132] Together with some other Jordanian jihadi's and some money from Osama Bin Laden he started an jihadist training camp under the name of his newly established group.[133] With the goal of overthrowing the rulers in Jordan and later the entire Levant, al-Zarqawi had set a plan in motion that would in the end lead to the self-proclaimed caliphate we now call Islamic state.[134] Apart from some of the more extreme ideas he said, like that Shi'ites were to be called with every other faith[135], little is known about what else this group did in the first few years of its existence.

Following the 9/11 attacks, Bin Laden stopped funding to the JTJ training camp and thus, after the Americans invaded Afghanistan, al-Zaqawi and his compatriots fled to Baghdad.[136] Although his group was being hunted by Saddam Hussain's regime[137], the JTJ was allegedly behind violent attacks and bombings against Shi'a targets and the assassination of US diplomat Laurence Foley in 2002. In 2004 the group officially allied itself with Al-Qaida and changed its name to Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn, better known as 'al-Qaida in Iraq' or AQI.[138] It was the same year when the United States put al-Zarqawi and his group on the international terrorist group list. AQI became the main source of fighters and violence for the 'Iraqi insurgency' and created a four stage plan that would bring Islam back where it belonged.[139] First, the UUS forces needed to be expulsed out of Iraq. Then, Iraq needed to be re-established as a caliphate. The third step would be to extent its caliphate to all the secular neighbouring countries through a 'jihad wave'. Last, after this big caliphate had been established, a clash with Israel was supposed to follow. These years were riddled with kidnappings, bombings and other attacks, all aimed at Shi'a or Western targets. In 2006 an US airstrike killed al-Zaqawi and his second in command Sheikh Abd-al-Rahman. The new leader, Abu Ayyub al-Masri, then led AQI into a new struggle for power. In the fall of 2006 the Islamic state of Iraq (ISI) was founded by six Sunni Arab tribes that declared Abu Omar al-Baghdadi its leader. Al-Masri became their Minister of War and with

[132] Zelin, Aaron Y.,. "The War between ISIS and Al-Qaeda for Supremacy of the Global Jihadist Movement." The Washington Institute for Near East policy. http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-war-between-isis-and-al-qaeda-for-supremacy-of-the-global-jihadist (accessed 23/02, 2016).

[133] Ibidem

[134] Ibidem

[135] Weaver, Mary Anne.,. the Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi. *The Atlantic*, July 2006.

[136] United States., Congress., Senate., Select Committee on Intelligence.,. *Report on Postwar Findings about Iraq's WMD Programs and Links to Terrorism and how they Compare with Prewar Assessments : Together with Additional and Minority Views.* [Washington, D.C.]: [U.S. G.P.O.], 2006.

[137] Ibidem

[138] Rabasa, Angel.,. *Beyond Al-Qaeda.* Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp., 2006.

[139] Whitaker, Brian.,. "Revealed: Al-Qaida Plan to Seize Control of Iraq." *The Guardian,* October 13, 2005.

that AQI gained an important place within this caliphate. After the US increased their troops present in Iraq however, AQI and ISI started to lose a lot of fighters and with that a lot of ground. By 2008, as Andrew Phillips describes, ISI was in a state of crisis when not only their numbers dwindled, but the Sunni community of Iraq turned itself against them.[140]

In 2009 al-Masri and al-Baghdadi were killed along with about 80% of the ISI members, according to American general Ray Odierno.[141] Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi became the new leader of a group of extremist, but disillusioned people who had lost everything they had once gained. Al-Baghdadi breathed new life into the group by introducing former Iraqi Ba'ath party officers into the group. In contrast to its Syrian counterpart, the Iraqi Ba'aths under Saddam Hussain were al Sunni, These officers were hardened in battle and used to a militaristic regime. Soon they made up about a third off ISI's top 25 commanders.[142]

When the protests began in Syria, al-Baghdadi sent Abu Muhammad al-Julani to Syria to set up a branch of ISI there.[143] Now known as Jabhat al-Nusra, the group grew rapidly and gained a big popular support within the Syrian opposition. In 2013, al-Baghdadi declared a merger, which was denied by al-Julani.[144] Al-Zawahiri, the leader of al-Qaida backed al-Julani, but al-Baghdadi was determined to establish his caliphate. His subordinations to al-Zawahiri continued and led to a break-up between the now called ISIL and al-Qaida. A couple of months later the Eastern controlled regions of al-Nusra defected and joined ISIL's cause. The big difference between al-Nusra and ISIl was that while al-Nusra claims to be actively fighting Assad in order for him to leave, ISIL only fights in order to first establish, and nowadays enlarge their caliphate. In 2014, the captured territories proclaimed themselves a worldwide caliphate with al-Baghdadi as its caliph. They renamed themselves again and turned into what is now referred to as IS, ISIS or Daesh.

Its aggressive take on jihad, its extremist Salafi interpretation and strong enforcement of Sharia law meant that to Salafi's all around the world this new caliphate was a big attractive force. Foreign fighters dominate the caliphate's ranks and while the fighting on the ground knows its ups and downs, their terrorist attacks in both the Middle East and outside of it have had a serious impact on the Western perception of Syria, its conflict and its surrounding problems.[145]

§1.4 The Kurds

The Kurds are the odd one out in this civil war. Where IS and the Alawi's call themselves religiously different, the Kurds are fighting for ethnological purposes. In this civil war, the Kurds don't care so much what happens to Assad or the Syrian regime, as long as it means independence for their people and the formal creation of Kurdistan. Ethnically they are closest related to the Iranians and currently

[140] Phillips, Andrew.,. "How Al Qaeda Lost Iraq." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 63, no. 1 (03/01, 2009), 64-84.
[141] Ibidem
[142] Hubbard, Ben & Schmitt, Eric. "Military Skill and Terrorist Technique Fuel Success of ISIS." *New York Times,* August 27, 2014.
[143] Lister, Charles R. 2016. *The Syrian jihad: Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the evolution of an insurgency*. p. 51-118
[144] Idem, 51-62
[145] Barrett, Richard., Soufan Group.,. "Foreign Fighters : An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq." .

number about 25 million people.[146] In Syria around the turn of the century about a million of these lived in Syria.[147]

Much like the Alawi, the Kurds have been persecuted or regarded as second rank people for ages, the big difference being that Kurds were persecuted for their ethnicity while being Sunni. The first time the Kurds come into written view is in 637 when the Arab conquests move towards this region of the Middle East.[148] Initially the Kurds fought bravely for their Sassanid overlords but when it became clear that that empire was failing the Kurdish tribes submitted their loyalty to the Arabs and their new religion. Again like the Alawi, the Kurds did not want to be dominated and from their mountainous territories they staged several rebellions over the next centuries[149], earning them a rebellious reputation, but at the same time they were recognized for their excellent military strategy. Soon they would be enlisted in the Arab armies where their reputation grew and was solidified when the famous Saladin, a born Kurd, established the Ayyubid Empire.

While the Arabs left them mostly to themselves, it was the Turks who regularly invaded their lands and caused big losses among the Kurdish population. The issues with the Turks would never seize and are one of the many fronts in the Syrian conflict we see today. It was however not the Turks, but the Mongol Horde that created chaos in the Kurdish lands. During the 13th century Kurdish cities were often sacked, burned to ground and discomposed of any living humans.[150] This led to a more nomadic lifestyle that became dominant among the Kurds for centuries to come. David McDowall, author of '*A Modern History of the Kurds*' argues that rather than an ethnic cleansing, the troubles the Kurdish had gone through these six centuries were due to their location. They were on the most important routes between East and West, meaning that every army ransacked that region and unfortunately it was the Kurds who were living there.[151]

With the sixteenth century came the relative stability after the Ottoman and the Safavid empires had settled most of their border disputes that crossed Kurdish lands. For three centuries to come, they were relatively left alone and could rebuilt everything they had lost before although the two neighbouring superpowers still regularly moved through their lands. To current day Kurds, this was their "*golden age of independent existence*"[152]. Their entrance into the Ottoman Empire was far from perfect. The Kurds enjoyed their tribal freedom while the Ottomans enjoyed order and bureaucracy. A delicate system of semi-independence was set in place, mostly due to the Kurdish Sunni faith and military brilliance and lasted well into the nineteenth century. It was the nineteenth century however when the Kurds started rebelling for their independence again, but also among themselves. A couple of Sheikhs had converted to Shi'ism and this caused troubles not only with the Ottomans but with other Kurdish

---

[146] McDowall, David.,. *A Modern History of the Kurds*. London: Tauris, 2014., 3
[147] Ibidem
[148] Idem, 21
[149] According to McDowall names at least 12 different major rebellions where the Kurdish tribes united over the course of two centuries. The most successful of which is their occupation of Mosul in Northern Iraq that lasted for fourteen years. – Ibidem
[150] Idem, 24
[151] Idem, 23
[152] Idem, 26

tribal leaders as well. This caused several tribes to declare their independence from the Ottomans or continue as vassals to other tribes as can be seen on the map below.[153] By 1880, Ottoman and Qajar forces combined defeated the rebellious groups and added the territories back to the Ottoman Empire.
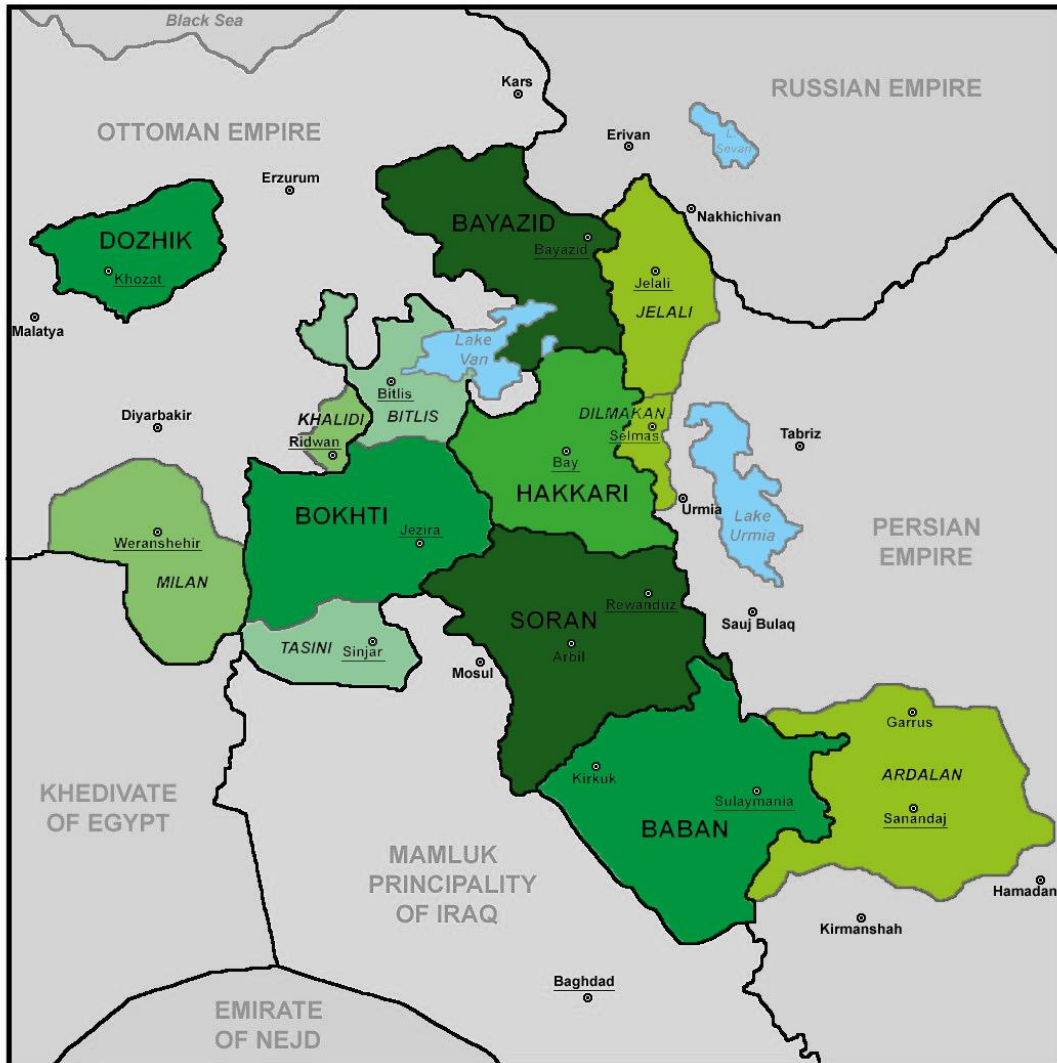
Kurdish Independent Kingdoms and Autonomous Principalities circa 1835:

BABAN - Independent kingdom or principality and its approximate domain

ARDALAN - Autonomous vassal principalities and khanates

Rewanduz - Capital

Arbil - A major populous city

⎯⎯⎯ - International boundaries

⎯⎯ - Boundaries of autonomous principality

---

[153] Kurdish principalities (http://www.institutkurde.org/images/cartes_and_maps/kurdish_independent_kingdom.jpg)

Kurdish nationalism (re)emerged when the Ottoman Empire was partitioned after the First World War and was mainly a reaction to the secularization and centralization taking place in Turkey.[154] After the Treaty of Sèvres several ethnic-nationalistic groups in the Kurdish lands were convinced they could create their own state, but they were blocked by Kemal Atatürk. In 1927 however, backed by the UK, they established the republic of Ararat but in 1930 they were beaten and occupied by the Turks. In Iraq the Kurds tried to create a state in the 1960's but this turned into a war with the Iraqi's.

While only a small percentage of the Kurdish population live in Syria, a coalition consisting of mostly Kurds, but also a couple of Arabs, Syracs and Turkmen have established the constitution of Rojava. Rojava is a region combined of three self-governing cantons in Northern Syria and traditionally this area is considered to be part of Kurdistan. This has caused many Kurds from all over the region to join the several fighting groups to defend this territory, first and foremost, from IS, but also from recapture by the Assad regime. The main group fighting is called the 'People's Protection Units' (or Yekîneyên Parastina Gel, YPG) whose guerrilla like tactics and use of female squads have earned themselves a fierce reputation. The main goal for the Rovaja troops are not in the slightest religious, but mostly ethnographical in their cause. Their push for independence also meant that they have distanced themselves from the opposition forces who seek complete reunification of Syria.

---

[154] Natali, Denise.,. "Ottoman Kurds and Emergent Kurdish Nationalism." *Middle East Critique* 13, no. 3 (2004): 383-387.

Chapter 2 – Sectarian groups in Syria

The Syrian civil war is a war that consists of many different groups, fighting for many different motives. The easiest groups to pick out are the Assad government, the Kurds and Islamic State. The opposition, as has been described in chapter 1, is a mixture of groups, but generally we speak of both the official recognised opposition and the Islamist opposition. This chapter will apply Berger's model on the same main groups analysed in the previous chapter.

§2.1 – The Assad Regime

The Assads have grown through the ranks of Syria in its time of turbulence since the independence in an astonishing rate. Their backing is mostly Alawi and, people who claim that the Syrian civil war is a sectarian civil war also claim that it broke out because of a Sunni discontent with the Alawi rulers. As this paper has argued in the previous chapter, my assessment of the conflict is different. In my point of view, the Assad clan have used their Alawi heritage to play minority politics to get into power in the first place. It had absolutely nothing to do with having Alawi rule over other faiths. However, that does not take away the fact that the Assads have that heritage. If we want to assess the sectarian nature of the civil war, we have to assess the group that is fighting. That group is the regime and its supporters. This regime has an Alawi background, but has tried very hard to be called Shi'ites, rather than Alawi's specifically but only to solidify their political position. Berger argues that a group can only be a sect if it is a religious subgroup to begin with. This brings trouble for the regime, since it is a political group, which is political in focus, but has a religious heritage. The Alawi faith will be assessed, however, since Bashar al-Assads regime is not portraying a religious government, except in their relations with Iran, it makes no sense to treat them as a religious subgroup and perhaps a sect.

§2.1.1 Alawi Sectarianism

Alawites believe in the absolute oneness of God, who is self-existent and eternal. Like with many other Shi'a groups, the Alawites believe that God is undefinable so it makes no sense to attempt to grasp his existence, his essence or his attributes. However, when God appeared on Earth, he was never one, but three. According to them, God has appeared on earth seven times, but has three personalities, which they named '*Mana*' (Meaning), '*Ism*' (name) and '*Bab*' (door). Together, they form the complete manifestation of God in the world where the *Mana* is the causal determinant who is the source and meaning of all things. The *Ism* is created by the *Mana* and is the way *Mana* is to be portrayed. The *Bab* is created by the *Ism* as the explanatory factor and the path that leads to God. As Alawi's say for short: "*I turn to the Gate; I bow before the Name; I adore the Meaning*"[155] His seven manifestations can be found in Appendix 5 but to Alawites the last and supreme time God manifested himself (*Mana*) he did it as Ali., with the *Ism* of the Prophet Muhammad and Salman al-Farsi as the *Bab*. This holy trinity is

---

[155] International Business Publications, USA,. *Syria Country Study Guide. Volume 1, Volume 1,* 2015., 60

there for referred to as AMS. With this system of believe the Alawi underrate the Prophet, while they give extra importance to Ali. Unsurprisingly, this has caused tension with especially the Sunnites. But the oneness of god is also questionable to many Muslims, causing further alienation from other Muslims.

Although their AMS-system is very different, they share a lot of similarities to the Druze faith. Just like them, the Alawi believe in metempsychosis, or the transfiguration of the soul, ending with reincarnation. In contrast to the Druze however, the Alawi believe in the possibility that a human soul can reincarnate into anything, from another human body to plants or even dirt.[156] Unbelievers will never become human again, while firm believers will enter a body better than their own.

This religious motif is obviously very important and is the main reason why the Alawi have such a harsh history. Concerning the *Conversion* category in Berger's theory, it is clear that the Alawi meaning system follows a violently different course from regular Shi'a and Sunni Islam. The way the faith is set up, means that perspective and religious experience are aimed towards a different goal: reincarnating into a better human body in every way. This heavily influences the *Gnosis* and *Salvation* categories as well. After all, salvation can only be achieved if you follow the Alawi scriptures and teachings, which will help you in being reincarnated into another human. The gnosis' idea of a super cognition, mostly refers to the extreme status of Ali, and the way God has manifested himself on earth. Although there are a few Shi'a sects with somewhat similar believes (albeit not this extreme), this is a very elite way of looking at God and one that can only be understood if you are part of the groups believes. To add to this, the groups *Authority* rests on exactly that point. You can live outside of the Alawi faith. However, if you do, you will not be reincarnated as a human, but rather as an inferior species or worse. There is life outside the group, but not salvation.

The *Catholicism* of the Alawi faith is quite similar to most Islamic believe systems. God is one, and eternal. The accusations of the divisibility of God as believed by Alawi is mostly cast by Sunni criticizers and has always been denied by the Alawi.[157] Although God is not in every molecule as for example in the Druze faith, the universe can be understood through God and his teachings only.

In its *Eschatology* the Alawi believe not in a mystical and history changing day in the future. However, they do believe that one day God will manifest himself once more and it is up to the Alawi to find the *Bab* that leads them there. It is however their past based on especially Ali that sets them apart in this category. In the *Community* category the focus on reincarnation shows that since Alawi's have been around for so long, they are doing something right, since they keep being incarnated. So although a community and the way of life might change, the faith, and with that the fate of the world, relies heavily on its community.

Apologetically the Alawi are not very strong since they rarely try to convince others that their believes are wrong. If other believers don't agree with them, or doubt practises in their religion, they

---

[156] There are seven kinds: Naskh (Human soul to human), Maskh (Human soul to animal), Faskh (A soul not necessarily human to plant), Raskh (A soul to a short plant), Waskh (A soul to dirt or trash), Qashsh (A soul to a dry plant or a straw), Qashshash (A soul to an insect). – Moosa, 362-363

[157] Idem, 409-418

accept that and rare refute them. This is also why they mostly stayed in the mountains. They did not care. The Alawi feel that if you doubt their faith, you will pay for it in the next life of your soul. *Seelsorge*-wise, this is somewhat similar. However, according to Moosa the Alawi have quite a few written texts by prominent early Nusayrites or for example the Druze.[158] These, together of course with their prayers and the answers found in the Qur'an and the Hadith, should take care of all the doubts.

In short, it is clear that the Alawi faith would qualify for a sectarian group according to Berger's model. They rank highly different from regular faith in every category except for maybe the *Seelsorge* and depending on whose interpretation you ask, *Catholicism*. Like the Druze in part two, the Alawi form a religious and sectarian minority that gives an extraordinary interpretation to the world and how to function within that world. The implications for daily life which have been ingrained in Alawi identity is that you stay to yourself and protect what is Alawi, but outside of that everyone can do as they see fit. If you are a really devout Christian for example, you might reincarnate into a swine and learn your lesson that way.[159] The same goes for a very religious Jew who might see his soul transcend into the body of a monkey. This is in sharp contrast to the Assad regime. They have tried to stay in power through minority politics, claimed to be Shi'a rather than Alawi, though never renouncing their heritage. They have not stayed true to their Alawite heritage, but only to themselves.

§2.2 – Islamic State

United States President Barack Obama has called Islamic State 'un-Islamic' on multiple occasions.[160] However, Islamic state is arguably the most sectarian component in the Syrian civil war. Although chapter 1 has explained its historical roots, its religious motif has mostly been ignored so far. What seems clear to me however, is that Obama's rhetoric is wrong. Islamic State is Islamic and very strictly Islamic too. In relation to its history, IS could best be described as an extremist form of Salafism, which in itself is an extreme form of Sunni Islam. As the word implies, Salafist ideology entails a wish to go back to the times of the *Salaf* (ancestors). This fundamental ideology states that the time of the Prophet Muhammad, and immediately after are the best times Islam has ever known. This time is truest to what Islam really is supposed to be and can be seen as an eternal model for how every Muslim should want to live his life. The Islam as practised by the Salaf (so existing out of the *Qur'an*, the *Hadith* and the *ijma*) is all you need. Islamic State is one of the Salafi movements that goes beyond the letter of the Qur'an in the strictest sense. They believe that even the most extreme Islamic schools of thought are wrong since they are venerating names or persons who are not Allah or the Prophet Muhammad. That is also why this paper will refrain from using the term Wahhabism in explain Islamic State's position and believes

---

[158] Idem, 267-279
[159] Idem, 362-371
[160] Statement by the President on ISIL, September 10, 2014. (https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-isil-1)

Anyone who doesn't follow the most literal interpretation of the Salaf scriptures is, according to IS, subject to the practise of *takfir* (excommunication). When someone is an apostate, the resulting punishment is death. This means that the vast amount of Muslims all over the world has been marked with a death sentence by IS. And of course the real infidels outside of Islam are not much better off. It is not difficult to see why Obama (and indeed a lot of Western Muslim organizations) would call IS anti-Islamic.

As a religious subgroup, Islamic State and their religious motif qualify for Berger's analysis. The interesting thing is that IS does not have a very different idea from mainstream Sunni Islam about what God is. It is mainly in the way you practice Islam and how you venerate God. Its position in the *Conversion* category is there for an interesting one. Islamic State is the physical entity that embodies the believe in the caliphates of the early period. The religious experiences and perspectives are therefor as similar as they think they can make it to that period. Most of the things that have been written about Islam are dismissed as wrong or even apostate. In other words, it is a very different religious experience.

Out of all the categories in Berger's theory there is only one that does not substantially differentiate IS Salafi's from regular Sunni Muslims. The *Catholicism*, or universality of god, is exactly the same. They believe in the same divinity of God, the only difference is that IS members will not allow the scriptures of anyone who has written on this subject outside the Salaf. Therefore they stick close to what they believe is the most literal interpretation, but in this respect that does not change a lot.

In contrast, its *Gnosis* is very different. The truth as the Salafist IS members see it, is one that is identical to the early days. Since that perspective is widely different from that of other Muslims, but religious people in general, it creates a truth that is only understandable for the Salafist members. They have created a geological location where you only belong if you adhere to their superior belief system. The *Authority* this elite holds, reflects on every person, but Muslims especially. Islamic State is convinced that Caliph al-Baghdadi is the only true Muslim leader in the world. Thus, every Muslim should adhere to his authority, or they will become subject to *takfir*. This as immediate implications for the *Community* of IS as well. Berger has stated that the community factor is the one that is most susceptible to change, but always consists of true followers to the sect. To IS, the community they hold authority over needs to change back to how it was and only adhere to God and the Prophet. Only that community will unite the Muslims and pave the way for Judgement Day. True *Salvation* can only be achieved through the way of the Salaf. This includes the penalties and rewards as they have been written/told and nothing else. This seems quite similar to more mainstream interpretations. However, IS attaches more value to Judgement Day in the light of salvation. They, like most Muslims, believe a day will come where God files his final judgement over humanity. IS believes that the only people who adhere to the Salaf and live in the Caliphate are eligible to pass God's judgement and thus reach salvation.

While this day of Judgement sets IS apart concerning its *Eschatology*, its firm believe in the old days are what makes it different completely. It is that historic basis that not only defines the group, but

it is supposed to be the group itself. In the *Apologetic* and *Seelsorge* categories these ideas are reflected as well. Arguments against the Salaf are impossible. The Salaf is always right and if you don't agree or change your ways you need to die. The same can be said for doubt. The mechanism of doubt within Islamic State faith is that you can find every answer you need in the scriptures. If Sharia law cannot tell you what to do, the Qur'an or the Hadith probably have something on it. There is no other way.

After this, it is clear that Islamic State can be viewed as a sect and its resulting violence is clearly a result of its religious believes. What is important to note, is that Islamic State is not fighting the Assad regime because of religious differences. They believe that a caliphate should exist and Syria and Iraq have provided the perfect opportunity for that. So while we can speak of violent sectarianism from IS' side, it is not answered from the regime in a sectarian way, leaving the grounds for a sectarian civil war between those two fighting sides precarious.

§2.3 – The Opposition & The Kurds

As has become clear in chapter 1, the opposition in the Syrian civil war is difficult to define. However, has this paper has argued there, there is a distinction to be made between recognized and Islamist opposition. This is problematic because half of the opposition is not eligible for further assessment through Berger's model. The SNC is not bound to any religion, but merely against a continuation of Syria under the Assad family. They aim at a united Syria not based on anything but democracy. This inherently means that the SNC is not sectarian and not fighting for a sectarian or religious cause. That leaves the Islamist factions among the opposition. Almost all Islamist factions in the opposition are jihadist in nature and, much like IS, want territory to create their own Salafi state. The most significant way they differ however, is politically. Where IS has proclaimed their caliphate because they felt like they had the manpower and the funds to do it, other factions like Jabhat al-Nusra (known for their allegiance to al-Qaida and comparable tactics to IS) and Ahrar al-Sham (the second biggest opposition force after the Free Syrian Army) want to clear the Assads first, and then take over Syria to declare an Islamist State. While their politics differ, their Salafi convictions are the same as IS' convictions. So, it is fair to state that while the SNC and their immediate allies form no sectarian front, the Islamist side do and therefore significantly increase the amount of sectarian violence that is associated with the Syrian civil war.

After the opposition's forces, there is still the Kurds fighting in the north of Syria. Are the Kurds a sectarian group? Again, we must consider the religiosity of the group fighting. What becomes apparent immediately is that the Kurds, while ethnically different from Arabs, generally share their religion. A large majority is Sunni Muslim, with the rest divided between Shi'ism, a couple of very small branched of sects from Shi'ism and a rest category mainly consisting out of Yazidi's. While this last group has been persecuted a lot by IS, this has mainly happened in the Iraqi based territories of IS. Within Syria, only about 70.000 Yazidi's live and many of them don't consider themselves Kurdish. Being a Kurd,

and fighting for Kurdistan is an ethnic fight and not religious. While their position is important to the position of Syria in for example the CH-model, they are not relevant in a sectarian civil war.

Chapter 3 – Greed and Grievance in the Syrian Civil War

Collier & Hoeffler have used the Lebanese civil war in their data set for their initial research on the Greed vs. Grievance question. For Syria this is of course not the case since this is a recent conflict. The difficulty in determining if Syria's civil war has been explained largely so far. This chapter will try to apply Collier & Hoeffler's model on greed and grievance in civil wars in a qualitative way. Originally, this model is meant as a mixture between quantitative measuring and qualitative data gathering. However, as Collier & Hoeffler put it themselves: "[Ethnic and religious] *hatreds cannot be quantified, they can evidently only occur in societies that are multi-ethnic or multi-religious and so our proxies' measure various dimensions of diversity.*"[161] Although the sectarian nature of this civil war is still in debate, it is important that we do assess it as objectively as possible which can only be done if we accept the limitations of the theory we use. For sectarianism, as we have seen in Part 2 of this paper, the grievance side of the debate is by far the most important. Additionally, sectarian fractionalization is not new, but in the data set Collier & Hoeffler used it is usually paired with ethnic violence. Different ethnicities have shown to come with different religious convictions, which has caused a lot of the friction in other civil wars. Sectarian wars without ethnic problems, like in Lebanon, show a very slim chance of civil war. In other words, the grievance side of this debate is very hard to capture in numbers, especially since ethnic and religious fractionalization are usually tied together. This chapter will therefore assess the Syrian conflict on a qualitative level, similar to how Makisu & Sadiki have done for Lebanon. However, since the Syrian conflict can also be a non-sectarian civil war, it would also be wrong to cast aside the greed side of this debate. Since the CH-model measures the chance, or rather, the opportunity for civil war, the greed side could still help explain the Syrian conflict.

§3.1 Greed in Syria

As we have seen before, greed is measured in economic terms and in terms of social opportunities. The combination of how well a country is doing economically and what the chances for a population are concerning work and education are the focal points. Collier & Hoeffler than add the opportunities for rebels to grow to a coherent group and how easy it is for the national army to combat these rebellious groups.

So how does Syria rate in the greed category? In 2010, Syria had a GDP per capita of $4684, 72 with a growth rate of 3.23%, while the average growth rate since 2005 had been 4.89%.[162] Although the growth rates are not bad, the GDP per capita itself was. Based on figures from the World Bank, Syria's GDP was rated sixteenth out of all 22 Arab-league members, only leaving Sudan, Mauritania, Yemen, Djibouti, Comoros and Somalia behind them.[163] And this is before the civil conflict. Chances of a civil war occurring increase when the country's economy is highly dependent on primary commodities. In

---

[161]Collier & Hoeffler, 571

[162] Trading Economics. "**Syria GDP Annual Growth Rate**." http://www.tradingeconomics.com/syria/gdp-growth-annual.

[163] Central Intelligence Agency. "The World Fact Book: Syria." https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sy.html.

Syria droughts have decreased the share of agriculture to 21%, which is still a lot but not rare in developing countries. This is completed by a 27,3% share in the GDP contributed by the industrial sector, 92% of which is oil and gas production (25,1% of the total GDP).[164] This means that 48,3% of Syria's economy before the war was determent by primary commodities.

While the state of the economy is a good predictor for social unrest, there also needs to be ground for that unrest to grow. Syria's population consisted of about 21 million people, of which 65% was under 35 years of age and 40% even under 15.[165] Of the Syrian population, about 20% is unemployed.[166] Interesting enough, the enrolment into secondary education is 72%, which means that Syria has a very young but educated population.[167] According to Collier & Hoeffler the opportunities for civil war increase if a young educated population (especially boys) lives in a country with a bad economy and few chances of recovering.

When the first rebellious fighting began the battles were mostly fought in the streets and to this day that has not changed. While Syria is home to a lot of mountains and desert landscape, these are not being used as much as a battlefield, except for the Kurds and IS, who have used the mountains and the desert considerably. In turn, this has made it easier for the Syrian army, but also for the foreign entities fighting in Syria, to combat the rebels. The way the Kurds fight in the northern part of Syria is a good example of how much difficulty armies have when fighting in mountainous terrain. So, while the terrain is a plus to increase the odds of civil war in the CH-model, the reality of this multifaceted war is that the terrain is less important to the outbreak.

What is obvious from the above analysis is that in every category relevant to the Greed side of the CH-model, Syria has a higher chance of civil war. Zlatin Mitkov, who has done research on a comparison between rebelling countries in the Arab Spring, has made a simplified table for the CH-model on Syria, Libya and Yemen. He comes to a similar conclusion as can be seen in Appendix 6, where Syria scores a 'yes' in every category that is relevant for the outbreak of a civil war.

§3.2 Grievance in Syria

Economically the Syrian civil war could have been expected. However, this still does not rule out completely sectarian civil war. In order for that to happen, we must specifically see interesting factors on the grievance side of the CH-model. What the Lebanese civil war has shown however, is that in an ethnically undivided country, religious fractionalization is hard to notice. So, first it is important to distinguish if Syria is an ethnically diverse country.

Out of the 21 million people in Syria, 90% is ethnically Arab and 9% Kurdish. The rest of the groups are made up by mainly Armenians and Turkomans.[168] To put it differently; Syria is ethnically

---

[164] Trading Economics. "**Syria GDP Annual Growth Rate**."

[165] U.S. Department of State. "Syria (09/08/10)." http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/syria/158703.htm.

[166] Ibidem

[167] UNESCO Institute for Statistics. "Syrian Arab Republic: Education." http://www.uis.unesco.org/DataCentre/Pages/country-profile.aspx?code=SYR&regioncode=40525.

[168] U.S. Department of State. "Syria (09/08/10).

very homogeneous so in the CH-model grievance will be undervalued compared to the greed side. The religious divide in Syria is more diverse: Sunni Muslims constitute 74%, Alawis 12%, Christians 10%, and the Druze 3% . The remaining 1% is made up of other small Muslim sects, Yazidis and Jews.[169] As we know, the Alawi's, under the leadership of Bashar al-Assad and his father before him, have total authoritarian control over the country. This means that it is safe to say that Syria shows a large figure in *Political Exclusion*. While Assad has given a few positions to loyal Sunni party members, proving that it is not impossible, all the main positions have been filled by Alawi's. This is common for an authoritarian regime. If we look at the Ba'ath party in Iraq under Saddam Hussain's regime, we see a Sunni majority assume power and rule for decades.

If we consider *Political Repression*, we have to consider Syria's parliament. It consists entirely of parties approved by the regime. In other words, if the regime does not agree with you party, you will not be able to run in the elections. In this sense, Syrian politics is heavily repressed. The parties that have been repressed however, are parties that don't agree with the regime, but this is not necessarily reflected in their religious conviction. The Assads have repressed and excluded everyone who does not see eye to eye with the regime. This includes Sunni people, but also Alawi's, as is for example apparent in Hafez' rise to power.

If we compare these results to the Lebanese build up to civil war, a completely different picture arises. In Lebanon, political exclusion and repression were limited because of the sectarian division their society had established. While the role of president was assured to be a Maronite Christian, who it would be exactly was up for free elections. In Syria however, there were no free elections. There was no one to choose from and the opposition which consisted out of every religion, was still a puppet of the Assads. The Lebanese struggles grew from the political differences that grew from the ingrained sectarian divisions, while the Syrian problems grew out of agitation with an authoritarian ruler. If we broaden the context out of just the grievance side, the influence of the sectarian problems in Lebanon grows even stronger. Economically Lebanon was not the strongest, but it wasn't doing badly either. It was the economic inequality that had grown along sectarian lines, combined with those same problems but politically, that lit the fuse. In Syria, economic inequality was an issue too. However, rather than developing along sectarian lines, only the regime or people affiliated with them got richer, while the common man, Sunni, Alawi or whatever religious conviction they held, was struggling to stay afloat. If we combine this to the already bad and still deteriorating economy of Syria, civil war seems to have been inevitable without a religious divide.

---

[169] Ibidem

Conclusion

According to a combined envoy of the United Nations and the Arab League, an estimated 400.000 people have been killed in the Syrian civil war as of April 2016.[170] On top of that, the latest figures show that about 4,8 million Syrians have fled the country.[171] These numbers staggering and reflect how important it is to properly understand this conflict. After all, there is no solving this conflict without proper understanding. This research paper has attempted to find an answer to the question "*To what extend can the ongoing Syrian civil war be identified as a sectarian conflict?*"

If we look at this conflict, it is easy to see the sectarian problems Syria faces. Islamic State is the embodiment of an extremist sect which has found a way to crystalize its believe set. IS' propaganda machine and its violent attacks not just in Syria or the Levant, but in Europe and Asia as well, have painted an ineffaceable picture of the conflict. People who have read more about Syria know about the Assad Alawi heritage and the struggle the people of his faith have been through. Adding these up then suggests that the Syrian civil war is indeed sectarian. These people however, would be wrong. If we look at the start of this conflict back in 2011, we see demonstrations and rally's against Bashar al-Assad. No-one mentioned his religion, but it is his authoritarian rule that is the subject of protests. Like many other places during the 'Arab Spring', people wanted honest and democratic governments and not a dictator. In Syria, these protests escalated and an armed opposition took it upon themselves to oust Assad. In the wake of this, extremist Salafi's, some under the flag of IS, some for groups like Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham, chose to fight for their own cause. This cause is sectarian in nature indeed. As this paper has proven, these groups are heavily sectarian, in the sense that while their believe system stems from a mainstream religion, its system of meaning shows a radically and violently different approach.

Compared to these sects, the fighting groups in Lebanon during the 1975-1990 civil war there are mild. It is in Lebanon, where we see sectarian violence erupt not as an opportunity within an already established conflict, but as the conflict itself. The very core of the Lebanese civil war was about sectarian dominance, tracing back hundreds of years. These clashes were not ethnic or economic. The political and economic difference that had occurred were all a result of centuries of ingrained religious division. That is also the reason the Lebanese civil war is a case of its own, even among other civil wars. Unlike Lebanon, Syria had a deteriorating bad economy. The old days where Syria was one of the strong holders of the Arab world have long gone. In the meantime however, the Assad's and their immediate following have done really well for themselves. The Alawi community itself is wealthier than they were before, but even they do not agree with the Assad regime. During Ibrahim Pasha's rule over Syria, he had tried to kill them by sending 500 Druze soldiers to the Wadi al-Uyuu'm valley where all 500 soldiers would come to die. In 2012 Assad send his troops to secure the valley. The troops were met with the same

---

[170] Aljazeera. "Syria Death Toll: UN Envoy Estimates 400,000 Killed." *Aljazeera*, April 23, 2016.
[171] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). "Syrian Regional Refugee Response." http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php.

violence they encountered in FSA controlled regions. The Assad regime might be Alawi in name, but it is by no means fighting an Alawi cause. The Assad regime is fighting for the Assad cause and, as we have seen in part three, civil war in Syria was probable anyhow. The revolts following the Arab spring lit the fuse and a political civil war ensued. The Kurds in the north, much like IS, saw an opportunity to free themselves of the yoke they had carried for centuries. Economic troubles and political disgruntlement are the basis for what happened to Syria.

While calling the Syrian civil war a sectarian conflict might be wrong, it doesn't mean IS and other Salafi groups are not relevant. These groups have brought different and sectarian dimensions to this war. Consequently, these can only be dealt with in a sectarian manner, which is the biggest issue facing Syrians and the international community today. To add to this sectarian nature, is the alleged proxy-war between Sunni Saudi Arabia who support some of the Islamist groups in the opposition and Shi'a Iran who have been known to fund the Assads. Although this power play might be an issue in Syria, it does not make the Syrian conflict in its core a sectarian conflict. The funding does not turn Assad into a Shi'ite or Alawi sect member who fights for that cause, nor does it change anything in the attitude or the nature of the Islamist opposition. The nature of the Syrian civil war is not different from dozens of civil wars that have gone before them. An authoritarian ruler has triggered his population by political and economic repression. That mainly foreign extremist sect members have seized the opportunity for themselves is in no way a direct consequence of the underlying troubles in this civil war.

Bibliography

"Lebanon - Constitution." http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---ilo_aids/documents/legaldocument/wcms_125865.pdf (accessed 12/03, 2016).

Ajami, Fouad., Dwight, Herbert and Dwight, Jane.,. Working Group on Islamism and the International Order. The Syrian Rebellion. Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 2012.

Al-Ibrahim, Mohammad A.,. "President Al-Assad's July 26th 2015 Speech." http://www.presidentassad.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1454:president-al-assad-s-july-26th-2015-speech&catid=319&Itemid=496 (accessed 02/23, 2016).

Aljazeera. "Syria Death Toll: UN Envoy Estimates 400,000 Killed." Aljazeera, April 23, 2016.

Andersen, Roy., Seibert, Robert F., Wagner, Jon G.,. Politics and Change in the Middle East: Sources of Conflict and Accommodation. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990.

Barrett, Richard., Soufan Group.,. "Foreign Fighters : An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq." .

Batatu, Hanna.,. "Some Observations on the Social Roots of Syria's Ruling, Military Group and the Causes for its Dominance." Middle East Journal 353, (1981): 331-344.

BBC. "Guide to Syrian Rebels." http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003.

Berger, Peter L. "The Sociological Study of Sectarianism." Social Research 51, no. 1 (1984): 367-385.

Bryman, Alan.,. Social Research Methods - 4th Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Central Intelligence Agency. "The World Factbook: Syria." https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sy.html.

Cleveland, William L., Bunton, Martin P.,. A History of the Modern Middle East. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2009.

Collier, P., Hoeffler, A., and Soderbom, M. (2004). 'On the duration of civil war.' Journal of Peace Research, 41, 253-73.

Collier, Paul., Hoeffler, Anke., World Bank., Development Research Group.,. Greed and Grievance in Civil War. Washington, DC: World Bank, Development Research Group, 2000.

Dam, Nikolaos van. 1979. The struggle for power in Syria: sectarianism, regionalism, and tribalism in politics, 1961-1978. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Dana, Nissim.,. "Druze Identity and religion–Tradition and Apostasy." (2009).

Farouk-Alli, Aslam.,. "Sectarianism in Alawi Syria: Exploring the Paradoxes of Politics and Religion." Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs 34, no. 3 (2014): 207-226.

Firro, Kais.,. A History of the Druzes. Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1992.

Friedman, Thomas L., Mazal Holocaust Collection.,. From Beirut to Jerusalem 1989.

Friedman, Yaron.,. "Mohammad B. Nosayr." Encyclopaedia Iranica.
    http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mohammad-nosayr.

Glassé, Cyril.,. The New Encyclopedia of Islam. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001.

Ḥarb, Anṭwān Khūrī.,. The Maronites : History and Constants. [Beirut, Lebanon]: "The Maronite
    Heritage", 2001.

Hazran, Yusri.,. The Druze Community and the Lebanese State : Between Confrontation and
    Reconciliation 2014.

Higgins, G. and John D. Brewer.,. "The Roots of Sectarianism in Northern Ireland."

Hinnebusch, Raymond,. Syria, Revolution from Above. London; New York: Routledge, 2005.

Hubbard, Ben & Schmitt, Eric. "Military Skill and Terrorist Technique Fuel Success of ISIS." New
    York Times, August 27, 2014.

Human Rights Watch (Organization).,. "A Wasted Decade Human Rights in Syria during Bashar Al-
    Asad's First Ten Years in Power." Human Rights Watch.

Ibish, Hussein.,. "Is This the End of the Failed Muslim Brotherhood Project?." The National, October
    5, 2013.

International Business Publications, USA,. Syria Country Study Guide. Volume 1, Volume 1, 2015.

Jenkins, Brian Michael,., RAND Corporation.,. The Dynamics of Syria's Civil War 2014.

Kingston, Paul W. T.,. "Reproducing Sectarianism Advocacy Networks and the Politics of Civil
    Society in Postwar Lebanon. " State University of New York Press.

Kurdish principalities
    (http://www.institutkurde.org/images/cartes_and_maps/kurdish_independent_kingdom.jpg)

Lister, Charles R. 2016. The Syrian jihad: Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the evolution of an
    insurgency.

Makārim, Sāmī Nasīb.,. The Druze Faith,. Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1974.

Makdisi, Samir., Sadaka, Richard.,. "The Lebanese Civil War, 1975-90." Understanding Civil War :
    Evidence and Analysis Understanding Civil War : Evidence and Analysis / Ed.by Paul Collier,
    Nicholas Sambanis, ISBN 0821360477 2, (2005): 59-85.

McDowall, David.,. A Modern History of the Kurds. London: Tauris, 2014.

Mitkov, Zlatin. "Civil War After the Arab Spring: A Comparative Study of Lybia, Syria and
    Yemen."Central European University, 2015.

Moosa, Matti.,. Extremist Shiites : The Ghulat Sects. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1987.

Moosa, Matti.,. The Maronites in History. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1986.

Natali, Denise.,. "Ottoman Kurds and Emergent Kurdish Nationalism." Middle East Critique 13, no. 3 (2004): 383-387.

National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces. "Fact Sheet." http://en.etilaf.org/about-us/fact-sheet.html (accessed 05/20, 2016).

Nizameddin, Talal.,. "Squaring the Middle East Triangle in Lebanon: Russia and the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah Nexus." The Slavonic and East European Review 86, no. 3 (Jul., 2008): 475-500.

Oxford Dictionaries. "Sectarianism - Definition of Sectarianism in English from the Oxford Dictionary." http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/sectarianism (accessed 05/31, 2016).

Phillips, Andrew.,. "How Al Qaeda Lost Iraq." Australian Journal of International Affairs 63, no. 1 (03/01, 2009): 64-84.

Phillips, Christopher.,. "Syria's Torment." Survival 54, no. 4 (2012): 67-82.

Potter, Lawrence G.,. Sectarian Politics in the Persian Gulf 2014.

Rabasa, Angel.,. Beyond Al-Qaeda. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp., 2006.

Reilly, James A.,. "Ottoman Beirut: Crisis, History, and Sectarian Memory." Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East 31, no. 1 (2011): 164-171.

Smith, Lydia. "Arab Spring 5 Years on: Timeline for the Major Events and Uprisings in the Middle East." International Business Times, January 23, 2016.

Solomon, Jar & Spindle, Bill.,. "Syria Strongman: Time for 'Reform'." The Wall Street Journal, January 31, 2011.

Statement by the President on ISIL, September 10, 2014. (https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-isil-1)

Stephanous, Andrea Zaki.,. Political Islam, Citizenship, and Minorities : The Future of Arab Christians in the Islamic Middle East. Lanham: University Press of America, 2010.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.,. Sipri Yearbook 2015 : Armaments, Disarmament and International Security. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Syria's War: Who is Fighting and Why. Directed by Vox.

The Soufan Group. "the Greatest Threat in the Middle East." http://soufangroup.com/tsg-intelbrief-the-greatest-threat-in-the-middle-east/ (accessed 02/23, 2016).

Topal, Ömer Faruk.,. "Foreign Fighters Involvement in Syria and its Regional Impacts." USAK Yearbook of Politics and International Relations no. 6 (2013): 285-289.

Traboulsi Fawwāz.,. "A History of Modern Lebanon." Pluto Press ; Distributed in the United States of America exclusively by Palgrave Macmillian.

Trading Economics. "Syria GDP Annual Growth Rate." http://www.tradingeconomics.com/syria/gdp-growth-annual.

U.S. Department of State. "Syria (09/08/10)." http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/syria/158703.htm.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics. "Syrian Arab Republic: Education."
http://www.uis.unesco.org/DataCentre/Pages/country-
profile.aspx?code=SYR&regioncode=40525.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). "Syrian Regional Refugee Response."
http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php.

Weaver, Mary Anne.,. the Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi. The Atlantic, July 2006.

Whitaker, Brian.,. "Revealed: Al-Qaida Plan to Seize Control of Iraq." The Guardian, October 13,
2005.

Zelin, Aaron Y.,. "The War between ISIS and Al-Qaeda for Supremacy of the Global Jihadist
Movement." The Washington Institute for Near East policy.
http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-war-between-isis-and-al-qaeda-for-
supremacy-of-the-global-jihadist (accessed 23/02, 2016).

Appendices

Appendix 1

Table 4 Grievance model

	1	2	3
Ethnic fractionalization	0.010	0.011	0.012
	(0.006)*	(0.007)*	(0.008)
Religious fractionalization	−0.003	−0.006	−0.004
	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Polarization $\alpha = 1.6$	−3.067	−4.682	−6.536
	(7.021)	(8.267)	(8.579)
Ethnic dominance (45–90%)	0.414	0.575	1.084
	(0.496)	(0.586)	(0.629)*
Democracy	−0.109	−0.083	−0.12
	(0.044)***	(0.051)*	(0.053)**
Peace duration	−0.004	−0.003	−0.004
	(0.001)***	(0.001)***	(0.001)***
Mountainous terrain	0.011	0.007	−0.0001
	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Geographic dispersion	−0.509	−0.763	−1.293
	(0.856)	(1.053)	(0.102)
Ln population	0.221	0.246	0.300
	(0.096)**	(0.119)**	(1.133)**
Income inequality		0.015	
		(0.018)	
Land inequality			0.461
			(1.305)
N	850	604	603
No of wars	59	41	38
Pseudo R^2	0.13	0.11	0.17
Log likelihood	−185.57	−133.46	−117.12

Notes: All regressions include a constant. Standard errors in parentheses. ***, **, * indicate significance at the 1, 5 and 10% level, respectively.
Column 1: the two measures of fractionalization and ethnic dominance are not jointly significant.
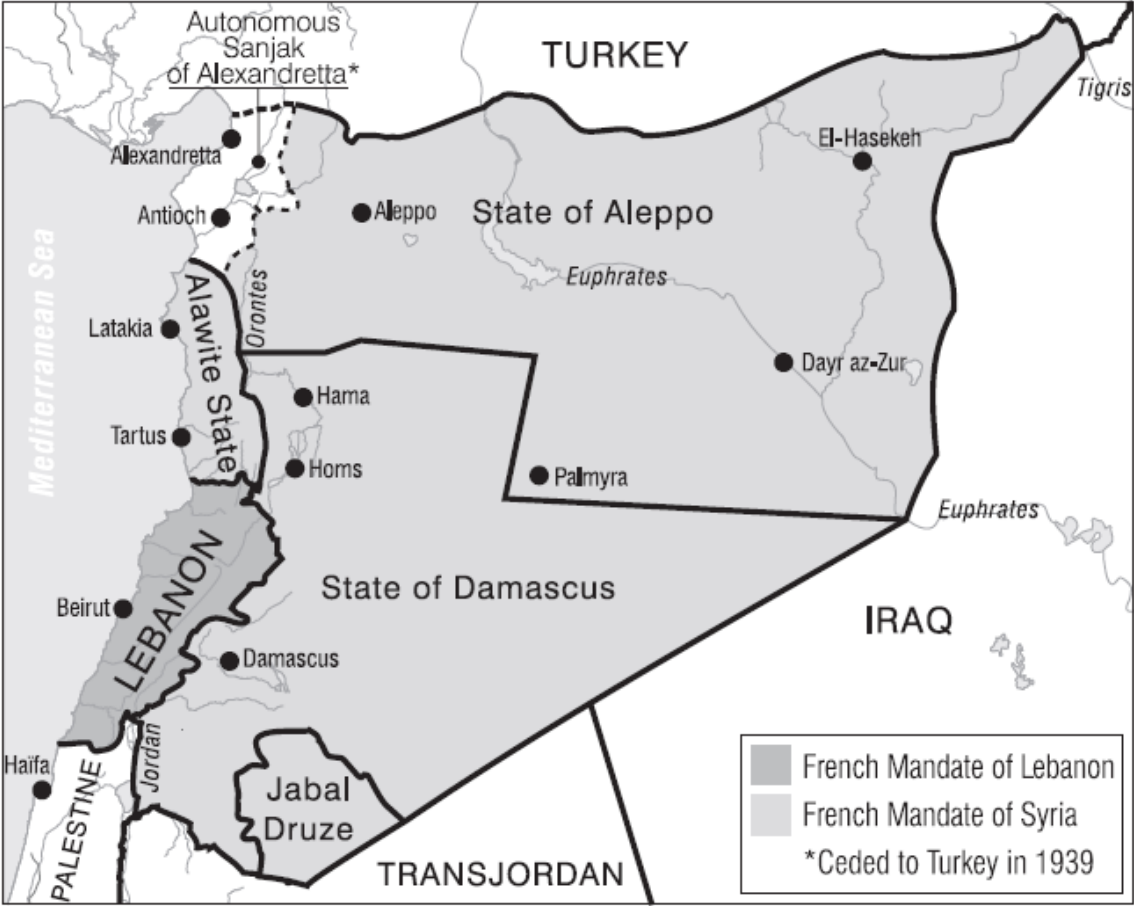
Appendix 2

Militia's in the Lebanese civil war.[172]

War Period Militias

Major militias

Name	Dominant religious affiliation	Strength	
		Fighters	Total military and civilian personnel
Amal	Muslim Shi'a	3,000–4,000 (1)	10,000 (3)
Hizbullah	Muslim Shi'a	4,000–4,500 (1)	18,000 (3)
Lebanese Forces	Christian Maronite	8,000–10,000 (1)	20,000 (3)
Palestinian Militias		8,000 (2)	
Progressive Socialist Party	Druze	5,000–6,000 (1)	16,000 (3)
South Lebanon's Army	Christian and Muslim Shi'a	2,000–2,500 (1)	
Estimated Total		30,000–34,000	64,000

Minor militias

Name	Dominant religious affiliation	Strength (number of fighters)
The Marada Brigade	Christian Maronite	700–800 (1)
Zghorta Liberation Army	Christian Maronite	700 (2)
The Guardians of the Cedars	Christian Maronite	500 (4)
National Liberal Party	Christian Maronite	2,000 (2)
National Bloc	Christian Maronite	200 (2)
Baath Party	Muslim	500 (1)
National Syrian PPS	Secular	800–1,000 (1)
Saiqa		500 (2)
The Communist Action Organization	Secular	100–150 (1)
Lebanese Communist Party	Secular	600–700 (1)
Lebanese Arab Army (LAA)		2,000 (4)
The Najjadah	Muslim Sunni	300 (4)
The Murabitun (The Sentinels)	Muslim Sunni	3,000 (4)
Firqat an Nasr (Victory Divisions)		1,000 (4)
Waad Party	Christian	600–700 (1)
Tanzim Sha'bi Saida	Muslim Sunni	500 (1)
Arab Democratic Party	Muslim Alawi	500 (1)
The Order of Maronite Monks	Christian Maronite	200 (4)
Estimated Total		14,700–15,250

Appendix 3

Map of the French partition of Syria.[173]

173

Appendix 4

National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (NSC) Goals and statements.

Mission Statement:

Because of the deep crisis in Syria, our country, and the struggle our people are facing, all political opposition factions and have come together in unity with the goal of overthrowing the Assad regime, ending the suffering of the Syrian people, and to make the transition towards a free and democratic country. This coalition will comprise of leadership that will mobilize efforts to support and strengthen our people and represent the goals of this revolution in the best way possible. The coalition will do everything in its power to reach the goal of overthrowing the Assad regime and bring victory to the revolution both inside and outside of Syria. In the period leading to the formation of the coalition, many oppositional groups and members, as well as politicians, met to discuss options and ways to unify the effort. These discussions were well received on the international platform. These meetings culminated during a three -day period in Doha beginning on November 8th, 2012, which resulted in an agreement between the oppositional groups and the Syrian National Council to establish "The National Syrian Coalition".

Goals:

The goal of the National Syrian Coalition are to establish an executive branch that will carry out the following goals:

- To unify support for the joint leadership of the military council, the revolutionary council, and the FSA (Free Syrian Army)
- To generate a fund to support the Syrian people through international coordination
- To create a Syrian National Legal Committee
- To establish a transitional government after receiving international recognition

http://en.etilaf.org/about-us/goals.html

Appendix 5

Manifestations of God

Mana	Ism	Bab
Abel	Adam	Gabriel
Seth	Noah	Yail Ibn Fatin
Joseph	Jacob	Ham Ibn Kush
Joshua	Moses	Dan Ibn Usbaut
Asaf	Solomon	Abd Allah Ibn Siman
Simon Peter	Jesus	Rawzaba Ibn al-Marzuban
Ali	Muhammad	Salman al-Farsi

Appendix 6

	Pre-2011 Libya	Post- 2011 Libya	Pre-Post- 2011 Yemen	Pre-Post 2011 Syria
Increased grievances – high inequality and minor political rights	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Commodity based economy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes The growth rate of the economy in the previous period
Diaspora funds	Yes – not clear whether they are vital	Yes – vital	Yes – not clear whether they significantly affected the outcome	Yes – vital
Support from a foreign country	Limited to anti-terrorist cooperation and oil contracts – practically no foreign support for the pre-2011 regime after the first protests	Yes – several – for both camps	Yes – for both camps	Yes – several – for both camps
Large numbers of young men with low income – lowering the costs of recruitment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Possession of military equipment by the group	Not significant in pre-2011	Significant	Significant pre and post 2011	Not significant in pre-2011
Presence of mountains	Yes – used by the rebels	Yes – used by the opposing sides	Yes- used by the rebels	Yes – but limited strategic use by the rebels
Large groups with social cohesion	Yes – urban masses	Yes – mainly tribes	Yes – tribes, ethno-religious groups, and urban masses in both pre and post-2011	Yes – urban masses and ethno-religious groups
Ethnic or religious hatred	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political repression	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political exclusion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes