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C-thesis

Uprisings of Syria

A comparative study of two separate rebellions in Syria

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Abstract

Since 1976, Syria has suffered two separate but in nature similar rebellions which was different in terms of spreading, impact and size. The existing literature fails to compare these rebellions and answer the question on how two similar uprising can produce different outcomes. The objective of this study is to answer that question and produce a foundation that is usable when studying future uprisings in the Middle East and Syria. This is a qualitative research that uses multiple case studies that are compared in order to fulfil the objective of this study. The research if a desk study and uses an abductive approach. Two different theoretical concepts have been used in order to understand the dynamics that shaped the two rebellions. These are Frank H. Zimmerman's theory *on why insurgencies fail* and Frederick D. Miller's *model of movement decline*. The authors pinpoint different factors that makes a uprising prone to failure or success and these factors has been used as a lens when analysing the findings of this essay. The findings of this essay suggest that key differences that made an impact on the conflicts where the amount of local support, external support and the role of social media. In order to fully understand the dynamics that shapes modern rebellions, further research on the role of globalisation and social media is conflict must be conducted.

Keywords

Syria, Muslim Brotherhood, Syrian civil war, uprising, repression, external support, local support, social media, Baath party, regime, conventional war

Acknowledgement

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

At the time of writing, the Syrian civil war has been raging for almost eight years and has developed into one of the worst humanitarian catastrophes in modern time. Nobody knows for sure how many people have deceased. UN stopped their death count in 2014, due to the chaotic situation in Syria and the difficulties regarding confirming the increasing number of casualties (Gucturk, J., 2015, p. 31). Other sources claim that over 10 % of Syria's population has been killed or injured and that over half of the Syrian population has been forced to flee their homes (SOHR, 2018). The civil war in Syria has had a huge global impact, involving numerous states including Russia, the U.S. and several regional powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey (Solace Global, 2017).

A few decades before the civil war, another uprising with similar features did occur in Syria, namely the Muslim Brotherhood uprising of 1976-1982 (henceforth, this uprising will be referred to as the MB uprising). The MB uprising enjoyed some initial success during the conflict, but it soon became obvious that the Muslim Brotherhood was unable to muster enough support and military capacity in order to defeat the Syrian army. The uprising was therefore crushed by Syrian security forces at a relatively early stage, compared to the ongoing Syrian civil war. Much research regarding the events that happened during this time lack details, since information about the uprising is rather scarce compared to other uprisings in the region. In fact, it is one of the least studied insurgencies in the Middle East. Unlike the current civil war, the MB uprising was not able to seriously challenge the authority of the Syrian regime and the revolt did never spread across the country at the same scale as the current civil war. The MB uprising did

neither attract as many foreign actors as the current war in Syria (Lia, B., 2016, p. 1).

Even though both conflicts took place in different time settings, they are similar in several ways. Both rebellions were conducted against the Baathist government of Syria which wrestled control over the country in 1963 (Harvard Divinity School, 2019). Dissatisfaction with government policies was also the claimed reason for their revolt by the opposition during both conflicts. Civilians were targeted by both sides during both conflicts as a mean to repress the enemy side. Similar battle tactics were also used during both conflicts, the opposition relied on raids and ambushes (Lund, A., 2014, p. 57), while the regime used siege tactics and terror bombings (Lund, A., 2011(a), p 87), (Lund, A., 2014, p 314). The MB uprising was relatively short-lived, and the rebels were never able to hold captured territory for long, while rebels during the ongoing conflict have been able to seriously challenge the authority of the Baath regime (Lia, B., 2016, p. 1).

1.2 Literature review

Most literature on the MB uprising are rather new, most likely because the current conflict has brought Syrian politics into the light during recent years. The MB uprising is something of a taboo in Syria and is not frequently spoken about in the public sphere. Therefore, most scholars that have produced research material on the conflict are from Western countries. One example is Brynjar Lia, who is a Norwegian professor specialised in Middle Eastern affairs and has produced material on the MB uprising and its legacy (Lia, B., 2016). Lia describes the events that occurred during the conflict in order to create an understanding on the impact that the conflict has on the Syrian society today. Other authors, such as Raphaël Lefèvre from France, has written more extensively on the conflict. In Lefèvre´s book, "*Ashes of Hama*" (Lefevre, R., 2013(b)), he describes the events of the conflict from the MBs point of view. The findings in his literature is largely based on

interviews with former members of the MB. <u>Nikolaos Van Dam</u> is another author who has wrote the book "*The Struggle for Power in Syria : Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*". He describes different power dynamics in Syria as well as mapping different political actors. A lot of emphasis is given to the MB and their rebellion, and he explains the course of the conflict as well as why the MB was not successful in overthrowing the Ba'ath government (Dam, N., 2011).

There is no lack in research material regarding the ongoing conflict in Syria. Multiple researchers and analysts from various countries have examined the conflict and its impacts. The Syrian civil war is regarded by many as a global war, since it involves actors from across the globe. Fighters have also travelled in tens of thousands to participate in the conflict on behalf of different parties involved in the conflict Syria. It is therefore not strange that the conflict has received a lot of attention from different scholars around the world (Dostal, M.J., 2018). One of these researchers is Aron Lund from Sweden. He has conducted several studies on Syrian politics as well as the current war. In his book "*Syrien Brinner*" he maps different political and military actors in Syria as well as regional and global powers in the country. Lund describes their different goals and purposes in the ongoing conflict (Lund, A., 2014). Charles Lister from U.S.A is another author who has written extensively on the Syrian conflict, and the armed opposition in particular. In his article, "*The Free Syrian Army: A decentralized insurgent brand*", the origins of the armed resistance against the government is presented. Lister chronologically discloses the events that that has shaped on of the largest rebel groups. He also pinpoints important events that has shaped the uprising (Lister, C., 2016). Research on the opponents of the opposition has also been conducted. Kheder Khaddour has conducted research oriented towards the Syrian regime and their role in the current civil war. His research on the subject is presented in the article "*The Assad Regime's Hold On The Syrian State*" (Khaddour, K., 2015).

There is, however, an overall lack of comparison between the two conflicts. The comparative studies that has been conducted regarding the conflicts are limited to comparing isolated events that occurred during the conflicts, or simply explain which differences and similarities the nature of the conflict has, without explaining how and why the most recent conflict could spread and cause such an global and regional impact. The available literature does also fail to give a satisfactory explanation regarding which dynamics made the Syrian uprising of 2011 more successful compared to the MB uprising in terms of public approval and mobilization (Lund, A., 2011(a), p. 71-102). In the "*British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*", Dara Conduit has conducted a comparative study regarding specific events that occurred during the MB uprising and the current civil war in Syria (Conduit, D., 2016(b), p. 74). A comparison between the two conflicts were also conducted by Aron Lund in 2011. In his article "*The ghost of Hama The Bitter Legacy of Syrian´s Failed 1979-1982 revolution*", he pinpoints similarities and differences between the two conflict in order to draw a conclusion regarding the outlook of Syria's future (Lund, A., 2011(b), p. 3). What both fails to do is to explain why and how the current civil war became more widespread and violent than the MB uprising. Moreover, there is no other available study that explains how the current conflict could develop into a full-scale civil war with several global actors engaging in the conflict, while the MB uprising was rather short lived and limited in terms of spreading and impact.

1.3 Research problem and relevance

As the available literature suggests, there is sufficient material that covers the events of the MB uprising and the uprising of 2011. The problem is that no study has been conducted that explains how the MB uprising could be far more limited than the current uprising. It is important to conduct a research that could provide an answer on the question of how two conflicts, which

took place in a very similar setting, could take two completely different directions. Such research would create an understanding on which dynamics that may shape a rebellion and drive it towards a certain direction. Between 1950-2005, over 30 % of all post-conflict countries relapsed back into war within 5 years (Höglund, K., 2011) there is a serious risk that Syria will fall back into civil war in the foreseeable future, it is therefore highly relevant to identify the factors that makes a rebellion prone to success or failure. Therefore, the ambition is to contribute to a research foundation that may be relevant when studying any future uprisings in the Middle East and Syria in particular, such a study would facilitate the identification of factors that may affects the outcome of a uprising. As mentioned above, previous scholars have not compared the conflicts sufficiently in order to be able to draw any deeper conclusions regarding the factors that made the conflict differ on spreading and impact. This study aims to fill this existing gap in the literature, and to do so an in-depth analysis will be conducted in order to identify the components that makes two similar conflicts produce different results.

1.4 Objective and research questions

The overall objective of this study is to create an understanding on why the Syrian uprising of 2011 developed into a civil war with huge global and regional impact, while the MB uprising was quelled rather soon after it started. The main research questions of this study are:

1. Which internal factors affected the conflicts?
2. To what extent did external factors shape the conflicts and their outcome?

1.5 Analytical framework

The analytical frameworks of Frederick D. Miller (Miller, F., D. 1999) and Frank H. Zimmerman (Zimmerman, F., H. 2006) will be examined in order to complete the objective of this study and answer the research questions. Both authors have identified several factors which they claim can determine the outcome of an uprising as well as the likelihood for oppositional groups to succeed or not. These factors will be presented in chapter three.

1.6 Methodological framework

This paper will present a qualitative desk study with an abductive approach. A comparative method will be used with multiple case-studies. This methodological framework will be further explained in chapter two.

1.7 Structure of the study

This following chapter will present the methods used in this study followed by the section were Miller and Zimmerman's analytical frameworks are described. In the following chapter, the findings will be presented and Miller and Zimmerman´s frameworks will be applied on the MB uprising and Syrian civil war - and a comparison of these will be presented. The results will be summed up in the conclusion.

2. Methodological framework

2.1 Methodology

This is a *qualitative research* and the methodology of this thesis will be guided by a *comparative design* with an *abductive approach*, *multiple case-studies* will also be part of this research. This thesis is a *desk study*, which means that the material used in this research is collected by other researchers and scholars.

2.2 Qualitative method

Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative methods focus mainly on text data instead of numerical data. Qualitative methods are suitable in research when the author has the ambition to create in-depth knowledge by studying the impact of a phenomenon, mainly in the social realm in contrast to quantitative method who often examines phenomena in the natural scientific world. Qualitative methods aim at answering questions such as *why* and *how* phenomena in the social ream occur. The ontological position used in qualitative methods does also propose that social attributes are the result of interactions between individuals, or in other words, that phenomena in the social world are not separated from the actions of those who contribute to its creation (Bryman, A., 2016, p. 375).

This research provides an in-depth analysis of the chain of events connected to happenings in the social world, in this case, two conflicts in Syria. Text data will also be the sole contributor to research material in this thesis, thus, a qualitative approach is the method that will guide this research. The research conducted in this thesis does not intend to produce a new theory regarding uprisings or conflicts, therefore, the method cannot be regarded as an *inductive approach*, neither, it will not test any existing theories in order to examine the validity of any theory as in a *deductive approach.* Rather, existing theories will be used as lenses in order to understand the outcomes and impacts of the MB uprising and the ongoing conflict in Syria. This thesis will therefore use an *abductive approach* (Danermark, B., et. al., 2002, p 88).

2.3 Comparative design

A comparative design will be the methodological tool used with the intention to fulfil the objective of this essay. This design is useful when analysing two or more cases with the intention to compare their result and outcome (Bryman, A., 2016, p 64). Comparative design may be used as a

methodological framework within both qualitative and quantitative research (Bryman, A., 2016, p 65). When a qualitative research strategy is being used within the comparative design it takes the form of a *multiple-case study*. The cases that will be examined by the researcher can be selected based on similarity or difference. The strength of using a multiple-case study based on similarity is that the cases are similar from the onset, that in turn indicates that distinct results from the study cannot be attributed to the pre-existing conditions of the cases (Bryman, A., 2016, p 68). This in turn, can be a useful foundation for future researcher who may have the ambition to create new theories or develop existing ones (Bryman, A., 2016, p 67). Some scholars have expressed scepticism regarding the usefulness of multiple-case study research. Some argues that researchers who use this design tend to pay insufficient focus on the context of their cases and more on the different way their cases may be contrasted (Bryman, A., 2016, p 68).

2.4 Sources

When the research is conducted, the selection of sources is of paramount importance, especially if historical events are discussed and analysed. When sources are evaluated, there are four criteria that the writer should bear in mind during the research process, these are: *Tendency, time, dependency* and *authenticity*. When looking on tendency, the writer should ask; could this source be biased or written in order to gain some sort of advantage? Sources that are presented long after the events it covers should be avoided if possible, since it becomes harder to verify information the longer the time has passed. Therefore, time is crucial when selecting sources. The author should also examine the dependency of the sources used, in other words; how dependent are the sources used on other sources? Are they primary or secondary? The authenticity of the sources is also important. Are the sources what they claim to be and is the information that they provide genuine? The sources used in this study have been selected with these criteria in mind. The

data used in this research will mainly be drawn from well-known and acknowledged scholars in order to minimize the risk of inaccurate or biased information. Examples of such sources is the work of Aron Lund. Lund is a researcher on Middle Eastern affairs and is specialised on subjects regarding Syrian history and politics. His publications include several books which addresses the current and past conflict in Syria, two of these books are; *Drömmen om Damaskus* (2010) and *Syrien brinner* (2014)*, these will be used when studying the cases of this thesis. Another prominent research is Raphaël Lefèvre, who is an expert on Islamist movements, his book *Ashes of Hama: The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria* (2015) will be used when examining the MB uprising and its implications. Propaganda is frequently used in Syria, both by the Syrian regime, opposition groups and activists. Unfortunately, much of what is quoted in media comes from sources in Syria such as these. There is a potential risk that information drawn from media outlets are biased and twisted (Ahmed, N., 2018, p 140). Therefore, any media outlets that comment on the current conflict in Syria will be avoided.

2.5 Limitations and delimitations

The overall objective of this thesis is to provide knowledge regarding the dynamics that shaped the impact of two similar, but separate conflicts. While examples of other conflicts may be used in order to strengthen arguments of points, the overall focus of this study will be conducted against the MB uprising and the ongoing civil war in Syria and not on other conflicts inside or outside of Syria. The in-depth analysis of this research does also have the goal to investigate if Miller and Zimmerman's theories regarding movements and uprisings can provide the answer for the research questions of this study, therefore, others theories then these will not be examined in this study.

Much information regarding important events of the MB uprising has been concealed by Syrian authorities. For example, foreign journalists were banned from Syria during many years of the conflict and the Syrian

government has made great efforts to cover up events and happenings during the MB uprising (Lia, B., 2016, p. 17). Much of what is written on the conflict has been produced years after the MB uprising. The sources used on the MB uprising is therefore limited to new studies which was not conducted at the time of the actual events.

3. Analytical framework

The two Syrian conflicts will be analysed through two different theoretical frameworks. Firstly, the *model of movement decline* developed by Miller will be examined and described (Miller, F., D. 1999). Secondly, Zimmerman's theory on why insurgencies fail will also be presented in this chapter (Zimmerman, F., H. 2006). These theories will not be tested or developed since this is an abductive study. The theories will be used as lenses in order to achieve the objective of this thesis. Both theories explain how and why movements and rebel groups fail or decline, they will therefore be useful when analysing the findings.

Another range of literature discusses the dynamics that makes an uprising prone to success or failure. John Mackinlay and Alison Al-Baddawy wrote "*Rethinking Counterinsurgency".* In chapter five, they use the British experience of counter insurgency to explain why some rebellions are harder to combat than others. They also list a number of conditions that may favour the prospect of a successful rebellion (Mackinlay, J.& Al-Baddawy, A., 2008). One of the most crucial components required if a rebellion is to succeed is, according to the authors, the support of the local populace. An uprising is almost impossible to quell if the rebels have the support of large and significant parts of the population. (Mackinlay, J.& Al-Baddawy, A., 2008, p. 11) Göçer Akder, who is an influential Dr. in Middle Eastern studies, analysed the Arab uprisings of 2011 (more known as Arab Spring) and concluded his findings in "*Theories of Revolutions and Arab Uprisings:*

The Lessons from the Middle East". During the Arab Spring, some countries, such as Tunisia and Egypt, saw regime change as a direct result of the uprising. While other regimes, such as Bahrain, were able to hold on to power. Akder lists a number of factors that proved to be crucial for the outcome of the uprisings. One example is the role of the military. In Tunisia and Egypt, the military was more passive during the revolutions than in Bahrain, which received military reinforcements from Saudi Arabia that were able to quell the uprising in Bahrain (Akder, G., 2013, p 88). Akder also argues that international intervention, regardless if it is military, political or economic, can affect the course of an uprising. If other countries have interests in the country affected by uprising, it is more likely that they intervene (Akder, G., 2013, p 103). However, these theories will not be used in this study. Miller and Zimmerman's concept where chosen because of their richness in detail as well as the vast numbers of factors they list that may affect the course of an uprising.

3.1 The model of movement decline

Frederick D. Miller´s *Model of Movement Decline* theory will play an important role in this research. The theory focuses on factors that contribute to the downfall of organisations and social movements. In his research, Miller was able to identify four different factors that contribute to the decline of a movement. They can contribute to the decline of a movement independently or collectively.

Miller mentions *repression* as the first factor that may cause a movement to decline. Repression is, broadly speaking, acts that prevent individuals from joining a movement or the prevention of the organization's activities. Autocratic governments do often repress political opponents or other elements that they deem as enemies. In some cases, repression is known to have strengthened the movement that has been targeted due to increased solidarity for the group. When repression is successful, the result is

often the opposite: the movement declines or disappear (Miller, F., D. 1999, p. 300). The second factor that causes a movement to decline is *co-optation.* A movement may decline when leaders within the movement are offered important roles within an oppositional movement or different rewards, in order to abandon their original organization and its interests. Movements of smaller size are generally more vulnerable for co-option than larger organizations (Miller, F., D. 1999, p 301).

Miller mentions *success* as the third reason for a social to decline. Miller argues that organizations that succeed with their ambition may become obsolete, when their goal is achieved, they may simply dissolve. This is especially true for movements that only has one goal (Miller, F., D. 1999, p 301-302). Growth of a movement is often regarded as the definition of success, Miller claims that growth of a movement may cause it to decline. When a movement grow it attracts new members, these may steer the organization towards a new agenda that never was the original purpose of the group, the organization may remain but if it changes to radically it has *de facto* declined or vanished. Growing movements may also inspire other groups who creates a similar agenda. Competition between the movements may cause the original group to decline (Miller, F., D. 1999, p 302-303). The last factor that Miller mentions is *failure*. Weak strategies and organizational problems within the movement are the main reasons why a movement may fail. Organizational problems may arise when the group is internally divided. When the individuals within the organization fails to develop a commonly agreed strategy, the movement is unable to reach its overhanging goal (Miller, F., D. 1999, p. 304). The findings of this essay will be analysed through these four different factors.

3.2 Why insurgencies fail

Frank H. Zimmerman's research regarding why insurgencies fail constitutes the second theoretical lens that will be used throughout this study.

Zimmerman has identified six different causes that determines if an insurgency will succeed or fail. *A cause to fight for* is the first factor that Zimmerman has observed. At the initial stages of a rebellion, a cause to fight for is essential since it inspires and rallies support for the rebellion. The importance of this factor declines over time as the insurgent group grows stronger (Zimmerman, F., H, 2006, p. 24). Leaders of rebellions are aware that their cause do not necessarily need to be just or noble, as long as it is convincing it will attract support (Zimmerman, F., H, 2006, p. 25). *Local Populace Support* is also crucial if a rebellion is to succeed. Rebels are often outnumbered and suffers from a lack of military capacity. The support of local population is often the only area where insurgents may have an advantage. T. E. Lawrence is an expert in counter insurgency and stated that one of the most important goals for rebel groups "*is to win over the civil population—whether by kindness or terrorism, by rosy promises of pie in the sky or by burning down dwellings*". The importance of local population for rebels is because they are supplier of essentials such as new insurgents, sanctuary, food and equipment and important information (Zimmerman, F., H, 2006, p 26). *Weakness in Authority* is the third factor Zimmerman claims is crucial if a rebellion is to succeed. A government that is unable to provide security do also lose the support from its population. Rebels do often exploit this weakness and may rally support when the government is unable to uphold its tasks (Zimmerman, F., H, 2006, p 28).

Geographic Conditions is also claimed by Zimmerman to play a crucial role during insurgencies. If the rebels can muster support on the other side of the border, they are able to cross into neighbouring states where they obtain sanctuary and freedom of movement (Zimmerman, F., H, 2006, p 29). Knowledge and utilization of terrain is also important, if rebels are able to master its environment, the group will enjoy an advantage when it needs to hide, escape or ambush its opponents (Zimmerman, F., H, 2006, p 30). During the middle and final phrase of an insurgency, *external support* is

critical. Conventional warfare do often characterize the final stages of an uprising, as previously mentioned, rebels do seldom have the military means to overcome governmental security forces by using conventional military methods, external support is therefore important if rebels seek a direct military confrontation with the government (Zimmerman, F., H, 2006, p 30-31). The last factor that decides the outcome of an insurgency is *information advantage*. Types of information includes surveillance, cultural comprehension, knowledge regarding environment, understanding of informal communication such as rumours, and intelligence. What rebels may lack in military strength, they compensate by gaining an information advantage (Zimmerman, F., H, 2006, p 32). As long as rebels are able to maintain this advantage, they have the initiative and momentum during the conflict (Zimmerman, F., H, 2006, p. 33). These components will be used as a lens when the findings of this research are analysed.

4. Findings and analysis

4.1 The Muslim Brotherhood uprising

During the First World War, allied powers such as France and Britain promised Syrian Arab leaders that they would gain independence if they revolted against their rulers; the Ottoman empire, who sided with the Axis during the First World War. It was later revealed that the British and French leaders had no intention in keeping that promise and when the Ottomans were defeated in 1918 the Syrian territories fell under French mandate instead. The struggle against the French colonial power ended in 1946 when the last French troops left Syria after years of armed struggle. The years of French occupation had fuelled the growing nationalism in Syria and various political movements were formed during the 1940s and 1950s, often with socialist and nationalist agendas. One of these was the pan-Arabic Baath party (Sorenson, D. S., 2016, p. 13, 17). The Muslim Brotherhood had been

active in Syria since the mid-1940s but began to grow steadily after the Baath party seized power through a coup d'état in 1963. The Baathist secular approach to politics was not favoured by the conservative elements among some parts of the Sunni Muslim population. (Lia, B., 2016, p. 4) The politics of Syria also became more sectarian when the young officer Hafez Al-Assad took control over the Baath party and Syria in 1970 (Sorenson, D. S., 2016, p. 18). Al-Assad favoured his own ethnic group; the Alawites, which is an offspring from the Shia branch of Islam. He installed Alawite officers on all high-ranking posts within the military and political branches and the most inner circle consisted of members of the Assad family. Most Islamist elements within Syria did not consider the Alawites as Muslims, and people were outraged that a 'disbeliever' ruled over Muslims (Lund, A., 2011(a), p. 54).

The most influential Islamist group during the 1970s was the Muslim Brotherhood, which organised protests against what they considered as a heretical autocracy (Lund, A., 2011(a), p. 54). During the 1970s, the Muslim Brotherhood had split into two different camps, one that advocated a peaceful strategy and another who favoured armed struggle as a power tool (Lia, B., 2016, p. 4). Between 1970-1976, young Muslims were recruited, and military trained by the more radical elements of the Muslim Brotherhood. These formed what became known as *"The Combatant Vanguard of the Muslim Brotherhood"*, which was the military wing of the Muslim Brotherhood. The first attacks against government troops occurred in 1976, when the Muslim Brotherhood orchestrated the attacks against the military and Alawite civilians (Lia, B., 2016, p. 5). From 1979 and onwards, the attacks by the Muslim Brotherhood escalated and a full confrontation with the regime was inevitable (Lia, B., 2016, p. 5). The regime answered with a massive crackdown on all opposition groups. Heavy weaponry, such as tanks and combat aircrafts, were used against armed groups and also civilians suspected of belonging the Muslim Brotherhood (Lia, B., 2016, p.

5). The Muslim Brotherhood was severely weakened. The final blew came when the Syrian army stormed the city of Hama in 1982, the fifth largest city and a Muslim Brotherhood stronghold in Syria. The three-week long battle left thousands dead and most of the Muslim Brotherhood leaders were either captured or fled Syria (Lia, B., 2016, p. 14). After the Hama massacre, as it is called today, the Muslim Brotherhood was not able to muster enough strength to either organize protests or conduct any more attacks (Lia, B., 2016, p. 15).

4.2 The MB uprising through Zimmerman conceptual framework

4.2.1 A cause to fight for

The traditional political and economic elite in Syria was constituted by wealthy Sunni Muslims, who lived in the larger cities of Syria. Other minorities, such as the Alawites, had lived in poverty in rural townships (Lund, A., 2011(a), p. 23). This changed during the Baathist takeover in 1963. The number of Alawite ministers quadrupled and basically all military posts of importance were held by Alawites. Many Sunnis began to feel marginalized and a sense of "being on the losing team" developed among Sunnis, who felt that they had lost influence over the political and economic life in Syria (Sorenson, D. S., 2016, p. 19). It was no secret that many high-ranking Baathists openly despised the role of Islam and conservative values in politics. For instance, one Baathist officer had written an article in the Baathis newspaper *Djeish el-shaab* in 1967, where he openly expressed his contempt of religion (Lund, A., 2011(a), p. 67).

As protests against the Baathist regime continued between 1970-1976, the security forces became more brutal and torture and arrests of MB supporters and other opposition activists became common. People who openly opposed the regime did also begin to disappear, only to be found dead later on. There is no doubt that people who felt neglected and oppressed by

the regime certainly had a cause to fight for. The MB did skilfully address these grievances when rallying support and members (Lund, A., 2011(a), p. 75). Zimmerman states that an uprising is unlikely to get a foothold at an early stage if there is no clear goal or cause to fight for (Zimmerman, F., H, 2006, p. 24). In the case of the MB uprising, this seems to be very true. Much of the conservative elements in Syria rallied around the MB, as they saw the organization as the strongest opposition alternative with which they shared similar values. The MB did also attract many young Sunni males that felt deprived of their former social status. The religious aspect of the conflict cannot be ignored; the Alawites had been viewed as infidels by influential Sunni theologians for centuries. *"Syria is runned by enemies of Islam"* was an effective statement used by the MB and it did indeed attract many radical elements to their ranks (Lund, A., 2011(a), p. 75). Hence, socioeconomic deprivation among Sunnis, regime brutality and religious propaganda created a cause that people were willing to fight for and the MB took advantage of this fact when recruiting members and fighters.

4.2.2 Local populace support

The MB gained its support mainly from Sunni landowners who belonged to the "old aristocracy" and conservative Sunnis from the middle classes who did not own land. These were often the ones who composed the majority of the fighting force. It is important to clarify that far from all Sunnis shared the radical views of the MB. The secular and socialist parties that grew during the 40s and 50s attracted vast number of Sunnis as well (Lund, A., 2011(a), p. 75). Hafez Al-Assad had also secured the loyalty of certain Sunni groups, by granting their members significant posts within the state apparatus (Sorenson, D. S., 2016, p. 19).

   The MB was, however, able to target many Sunni Muslims through the *Ulama*, which is clerics and local sheiks that wield great influence over the Sunni population of Syria. The Ulama has traditionally supported the MB

and contributed to the spreading of their message in mosques and other venues (Lefevre, R., 2013(a), p. 15). When the MB leadership decided to declare *jihad* (Islamic term meaning 'holy war') against the regime in 1979, thus going into open conflict, they believed that many Sunnis in Syria would rally around their cause (Lia, B., 2016, p. 2).

Even though the MB enjoyed sufficient support in order to mount a rebellion, they did not attract enough support for enduring a prolonged conflict with the much better armed and organized Syrian national army. For instance, the MB leadership believed that Sunni soldiers within the Syrian armed forces would defect *en masse* when regime atrocities against parts of the Sunni population became known, but no such defections happened. Support for the rebellion never occurred on a national level, it was rather local and limited to conservative towns such as Hama, which also proved to be crucial for the outcome of the rebellion, since the regime never had to spread its forces across the country but could instead concentrate their forces in areas where the militants had a presence (Lund, A., 2011(a), p. 87). Zimmerman's claim regarding support and the success of rebellion finds support in the case of the MB uprising. The lack of broad support was a crucial factor that contributed to the ultimate failure of the rebellion. It is very likely that the result of the uprising would have been very different if the MB had been able to attract a majority of the Sunni population in Syria, which consists of roughly 60 % of the population (Lefevre, R., 2013(a), p. 1).

4.2.3 Weakness in authority

A weak authority is the third factor Zimmerman mentions as an important factor if a rebellion is to succeed or not. There is evidence that the MB actually underestimated their opponents and believed that they were weaker than they actually were. After the Syrian independence in 1946 until Hafez Al-Assad's takeover in 1970, Syria was constantly shaken by coups and power struggles. Most Syrian leaders did only last a couple of years before

they were overthrown by party comrades or officers from the army. During this time, 'the law of the jungle' prevailed and the ones who could muster enough military support were the ones in power (Lund, A., 2011(a), p. 15). The MB believed that the Baath rulers would collapse as easily as their precursors, if enough military might could be mustered. Many also regarded the Syrian armed forces as poorly trained and led, because of Syria's humiliating defeats against Israel in the wars of 1967 (Fraser, T. G., 2015, p. 85) and 1973 (Fraser, T. G., 2015, p. 105). These were all factors that made the MB misjudging the strength of the regime.

The truth is that Hafez Al-Assad had prepared for internal power struggles and uprisings since the day he became president. He had transformed Syria to an authoritarian police state and made sure that all posts of importance were seated only by his most loyal supporters and family members. He also created army divisions made up by loyal Alawite soldiers and officers and granted these the most modern equipment available (Lund, A., 2011(a), p. 56). Hafez Al-Assad is described as pragmatic and intelligent by people who knew him. He was well aware of Syria's history of power struggles and coups and surely knew that his years at power would not go unchallenged (Lund, A., 2011(a), p. 56). The MB uprising did come to a halt because the MB underestimated the regime and its military capabilities. Just as a weak authority will enhance the prospect of a successful rebellion, a strong authority will do the opposite. Zimmerman claims that people may support the rebel cause if the authorities are not able to provide security and provide for its citizens (Zimmerman, F., H, 2006, p 28). It is very likely that the MB would have attracted far more support if the regime proved to be incompetent and unable to uphold its primary tasks.

4.2.4 Geographical conditions

The geographical conditions did favour the rebels of Syria during the MB uprising. During the initial phase of the rebellion, the MB had established

various sleeping cells in Syria, mostly in the northern parts of Syria around Hama and the largest city Aleppo (Lia, B., 2016, p. 2). These groups conducted ambushes and sneak attacks against government troops and Baath officials. Since they were mostly locals, they could easily blend in with the civilian population and their local knowledge made it possible to conduct "hit and run" attacks. Their knowledge regarding geographical condition in Syria made it also possible to set up camps were fighters could be trained and resupplied. They were able to create such secret camps in the coastal province of Latakia, which is an Alawite stronghold and birthplace of Hafez Al-Assad.

The border regions were also utilized by the MB. Camps were set up in both neighbouring Jordan and Iraq (Lefevre, R., 2013(b), p. 408) and made it possible for MB fighters to go into hiding, train and recruit fighters (Lia, B., 2016, p. 6). Thus, the geographical conditions were in favour of the militant rebels. This would, according to Zimmerman, have provided them with a great advantage during the conflict. When analysing the events, it is clear that the MB suffers its most severe defeats when they tried to hold on to territory as they did in Hama and Aleppo. This forced them into open confrontation with the regime and thus losing their geographical advantage. Just as Zimmerman claims, this can have disastrous effects for a rebel group that is not prepared for this kind of warfare.

4.2.5 External support

The MB is an international organization with affiliates all over the Muslim world, and was therefore able to gain a lot of support in form of donations from sympathisers. The MB did also receive state support in form of training, funds and political support from nations such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia and partly Egypt (Lia, B., 2016, p. 6). The heaviest support, however, came from an unexpected state, namely the Baathist Iraq. Even though Syria and Iraq were ruled by the same political party, the relationship between the two

countries went sour after Saddam Hussein's takeover in Iraq by 1979. When a war broke out between Iran and Iraq in 1980, Syrian authorities decided to support Iran. In turn, the Iraqi regime supported the MB and their armed struggle in Syria. Saddam Hussein allowed these Syrian militants to freely cross the border and set up training camps on Iraqi territory. Baghdad did also work as a headquarter and safe haven for the MB leadership (Lefevre, R., 2013(b), p. 409).

Even though the MB enjoyed substantial foreign support during the conflict, they were not able to break the Syrian regime or even get the upper hand during the course of the uprising. Zimmerman explains that foreign support is most important during the middle and final phase during an uprising since it is often then rebels fight the government conventionally (Zimmerman, F., H, 2006, p 30-31). The rebels had enough funds, knowledge and weapons for guerrilla warfare, which they also conducted during the early years with success, but when they fought with the government conventionally, as in Hama and Aleppo, they suffered stunning defeats, which also proved to be factors that sealed the coffin for the rebellion. The foreign support was therefore not enough in order for the rebels to fight a conventional war with the regime in the end, and just as Zimmerman concludes, this is crucial if a rebellion is to topple the regime.

4.2.6 Information advantage

The rebels did to some extent have an information advantage over the government. They had knowledge regarding the locations of army barracks and checkpoints and could therefore attack these and swiftly blend in with civilian populations (Lefevre, R., 2013(b), p. 240). Both sides tried to win parts of the Sunni population over to their side. Even though the regime managed to attract some elements of the Sunni population, they failed to address large parts of the more conservative urban Sunnis, which lost political and economic power due to Baathist reforms in the 1970s (Lefevre,

R., 2013(b), p. 202). The MB was able to address and attract this group, much thanks to their religious and cultural affiliation. Informal communication proved to be an important factor in this matter, since the MB reached these people in mosques and other venues (Lefevre, R., 2013(b), p. 280).

As mentioned in 4.2.4, the rebels did also have vast knowledge about the terrain and could therefore utilize the momentum of surprise. The information advantage was eventually lost during the battle of Hama and Aleppo. When the rebels took ground in the cities, the regime knew exactly where they were located and could therefore utilize their greatest strengths, superior numbers and firepower (Lefevre, R., 2013(b), p. 409). This case study supports the claim put forward by Zimmerman: As long as the rebels have the information advantage, they will most probably have the initiative during the conflict. One cannot solely blame the loss of this advantage as the main contributor the outcome of the conflict, but it is obvious that the rebels lost one of their greatest strengths; the information advantage, when they decided to face the regime on a battlefield which favoured the regime.

4.3. The MB uprising through Millers theoretical framework

4.3.1 Repression

Harsh retaliation against anyone who challenged the authority had been commonly conducted by the Syrian regime since the Baathist takeover. It escalated further when the uprising began to form in 1976. People who were suspected MB supporters were subjects to arbitrary arrests, summary executions and torture (Lund, A., 2011(a), p. 75). The level of repression increased dramatically after 1980 when the MB stepped up their attacks. During the eighth Baath Party congress, it was decided that the MB was to be purged completely (Lefevre, R., 2013(b), p. 357). Membership in the MB had been outlawed for some time, but in July 1980, being a member to the MB became punishable with death (Lefevre, R., 2013(b), p. 360).

The regime did also begin to use heavy weapons on a larger scale (Lia, B., 2016, p. 5). The Hama massacre of 1982 became a symbol that represented the brutality of the regime during the course of the conflict. The city is described to have been "collectively punished". The city was bombarded merciless with artillery, tanks and airplanes before the ground assault began. For several days, mass executions occurred throughout the city and many neighbourhoods had been literally grinded into dust (Lefevre, R., 2013(b), p. 406). According to several authors, the main reason that contributed to the suppression of the rebellion, as well as the MB withdrawal from the political arena in Syria, was the harsh repression conducted by the Syrian regime (Lund, A., 2011(a), p. 90, Lefevre, R., 2013(b), p. 424, Lia, B., 2016, p. 15). Repression was one of the largest contributors to the decline of the MB as a political actor in Syria. Miller claims that this is often the reason why many movements disappear, and in the case of the MB uprising, this is very true (Miller, F., D. 1999, p 300).

4.3.2 Co-optation

Miller describes co-optation as a tool used to integrate parts of the opposition into your own organisation, in order to weaken the movement (Miller, F., D. 1999, p 301). There is no data that suggests that leaders or individuals within the MB were offered positions within the state apparatus or other rewards by the regime on the condition that they left the MB and joined the regime side, Hafez Al-Assad did, however, seduce parts of the Sunni economic and political elite, who were given important positions within the government and the Baath party. In exchange, Hafez Al-Assad gained the support and loyalty from influential parts of the Sunni population. If this powerful elite would have been disfavoured by the regime, they may have very well supported the rebellion instead, just as other neglected groups within the Sunni community did. One could therefore argue that the Syrian regime co-opted potential supporters of the MB (Lefevre, R., 2013(b), p. 202).

Many MB members did agree to lay down their weapons in exchange for amnesty. This proved to be very effective and MB members surrendered in the droves of thousands, even before the Hama massacre. These former members proved to be very valuable. Many of them provided the regime with information regarding other members and hideouts. They were also broadcasted on state television where they participated in interviews where they blackmailed the MB and described it as a tool for foreign powers (Lia, B., 2016, p. 11). Co-optation did not occur during the MB uprising exactly the way as Miller describes it, but it is clear that the regime weakened the MB by attracting potential supporters of the MB to their side. Rewards and benefits were used to bolster support for the regime and at the same time diminish the opposing force. Was co-optation an important factor that lead to the decline of MB in Syria? It did weaken the group to some extent, since it is estimated that 1.200 members accepted the amnesty and many Sunnis of influence decided to side with the regime. However, co-optation cannot be deemed as crucial. MB members accepted the amnesty out of fear, since their membership in the group would lead to execution upon arrest. Potential supporters did not join the MB because of rewards from the regime, it was largely fear of reprisals that kept them out of the conflict (Lia, B., 2016, p.12).

4.3.3 Success

Miller mentions success as a factor that may lead to the downfall of an organization. If the goal of the group is accomplished, the movement tends to diminish (Miller, F., D. 1999, p. 302.). The goal of the MB was to topple the regime and obtain political power in Syria (Lia, B., 2016, p.5). As the findings suggests, this did not happen, and therefore, success cannot be regarded as a contributing factor to the decline of MB as organization in Syria.

4.3.4 Failure

According to Miller, failure is an important component that causes an organization to decline or disappear. Organizational problems and/or ineffective strategies are often factors that strongly contributes to the failure of the movement. Miller mentions factionalism and encapsulation as two forms of organizational problems. He describes factionalism as a disagreement within a movement and their disability to form a common agenda. Encapsulation is the phenomenon when a group creates an ideology or agenda that is not attractive to potential supporters, when encapsulation occurs, the movement will find it hard to recruit new members (Miller, F., D. 1999, p. 303). Ineffective strategies and organizational problems, as Miller describes it, was important factors that led to the downfall of the MB in Syria. As previously mentioned, one of the MBs major tactical mistakes was the decision to take over and try to hold the city of Hama. After the MBs takeover, the regime forces could easily surround the city and clear it of militants (Conduit, D., 2016 (a), p. 4).

Factionalism did also become a problem for the MB. Already in the early 1970, the MB was divided into two branches. One was situated in the Syrian capital Damascus and advocated peaceful means as a tool for in Syria, while the other was situated in northern Syria and Hama in particular, which saw armed struggle as the only option against the regime, the MB was, however, not divided but rather faced internal difficulties on an organizational lever (Lia, B., 2016, p. 5). The sectarian rhetoric of the MB was also polarised in nature. It divided the population of Syria into Muslims and enemies of Islam. Many high-ranking profiles within the MB did also call for the purge of some minorities in Syria. The rather extremist approach to politics made it hard for the group to find members outside of the conservative core of Sunni Muslims in Syria, thus making encapsulation a problem for the group as well (Dam, N., 2011, p. 90).

4.4 The Syrian Civil War

The MB uprising had consequences for the governance of Syria in the future. The uprising and a coup attempt by the president's brother, Rifat Al-Assad, made President Hafez Al-Assad more suspicious and more power was given to the security service. Syria had transformed into one of the most authoritarian Middle Eastern dictatorships. Not only did the political life and civil society suffer during the 1980-1990s in Syria, but the economy had also declined heavily due to Syria's involvement in the Lebanese civil war and its arms race with Israel (Lund, A., 2014, p. 54-55). After years of bad health and isolation, Hafez Al-Assad died in 2000 in his home in Damascus. His son, Bashar-Al Assad was appointed as his successor. Bashar Al-Assad was rather unknown for most Syrians at the time but rose in popularity during his first year at power due to policies he implemented that purpose to liberalise the economy. Bashar Al-Assad. He did also release some political prisoners and withdrew the security service from the public sphere.

During the early years of Bashar Al-Assad's reign, there was a sense in Syria that change was on its way (Erlich, R., et. al., 2014). The favourable winds made many opposition groups go a step further in their political activities. In 2005, the so-called Damascus declaration was published, which was written by various opposition groups, including the MB. It called for democratisation, freedom of speech, releasement of more political prisoners and that the martial laws that had been in effect since 1967 should be abandoned. The regime's answer came quickly; it arrested and harassed members of the groups who had signed the document. In 2007, the progressive opposition and advocates of the Damascus declaration had been either arrested or driven into exile (Björklund, P., et. al., 2015, p. 29). Three years later, protests erupted in Tunisia and Egypt against the regimes. Inspired by their counterparts, Syrian took the streets in March 2011 to protest and demand civil rights, democratisation and an end to the martial law (Khan, W., 2018, p. 5). At the early stages of the uprising, the regime

introduced reforms in order to meet some of the demands (Lund, A., 2014, p. 84). When protest continued the regime leaned back to the same strategy as they used to suppress opponents during the MB uprising 30 years earlier: brute force. The military was sent in to quell the protest and opened fire on unarmed protestors in numerous cities in Syria during the spring of 2011 with hundreds of casualties as sequence (Lund, A., 2014, p. 102).Wounded and arrested protestors were subjects to torture and execution in the regime's prison and detention centres. As the violence escalated, so did the resistance against the regime.

During the summer of 2011, the Free Syrian Army was formed. An insurgent group made out of regular army deserters and armed civilians that had the intention to topple the regime and bring democracy to Syria (Lister, C., 2016, p. 5). By early 2013, it looked like the regime was about to fall. Large swaths of land had fallen from government control and various insurgent groups had been formed in order to fight the government. The regime was able to hold on to power thanks to its regional allies, the Lebanese militia Hezbollah and Iran. Between 2013 and 2015, heavy fighting occurred throughout Syria. At the end of 2015, the rebels again gained the upper hand (Lister, C., 2016, p. 9). In October 2015, Russia intervened on the regime side - and the regime has since then retaken considerable areas from rebel groups (Pierret, T., 2017, p. 1). As of 2019, nobody knows for sure how many people that have died in the conflict, but it is estimated that the number is between 370.000 and 580.000 people. The regime controls roughly 60 % of Syria while rebels, IS and Kurdish guerrilla fighters control the rest. As it seems today, the regime advantage is obvious, but the war will most likely go on for a couple of more years before any side can claim an ultimate victory (SOHR, 2019).

4.5 The Syrian civil war through Zimmerman conceptual framework

4.5.1 A cause to fight for

One could definitely say that activists and rebels had a cause to fight for in Syria. There had been a growing stream of opposition groups in Syria ever since the Hama massacre and the regimes economical failure in the 1980s-1990s. The opposition constituted of both secular and more Islamist elements. After the events in Hama 1982, it looked like the regime was invincible. When revolutionaries were able to topple the regimes in Egypt and Tunisia in early 2011, a new hope was lit for those who hoped for political change in Syria. Inspired by other revolutions in the Arab world, many Syrian believed that the regime of Syria also could be changed through protests and civil uprising. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Arab Spring of 2011 worked as inspiration in Syria and it did also produce a cause to fight for: The downfall of the century old Assad regime (Lund, A., 2014, p. 31).

Unlike the MB uprising, rebels during the 2011 uprising were able to takeover and hold vast amounts of territory in Syria. The insurgents areas were often locals aided by army defectors who lived and had their families in the areas they "liberated" from the regime, so when regime offensives were conducted against these areas, they meet fierce resistance and a highly motivated enemy. The rebels were determined to defend their hometowns and villages as they feared for harsh reprisals if the regime were able to retake these areas. For many, this was a fight for survival and not only democracy and regime change (Lund, A., 2014, p. 290). The most effective fighters on the opposition side was, however, not armed civilians and army defectors but Islamist groups. In 2012, the leadership of Al-Qaeda decided to form a fighting force in Syria and sent veterans from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to do so. It became known as "*Jabhat Al-Nusra*". Unlike the Free Syrian Army and other rebel groups in Syria, Jabhat Al-Nusra constituted of

highly disciplined and religiously motivated warriors and soon became one of the most effective fighting forces in Syria. Their case was religiously motivated, and they had the intentions to create an Islamic State in Syria (Björklund, P., et. al., 2015, p. 132). These religious fighters have since 2012 been the primary challenger to regime authority in Syria. Several other fundamentalist groups have been formed in Syria or joined the fighting, the most notorious being IS (Björklund, P., et. al., 2015, p. 148).

4.5.2 Local populace support

There is evidence that suggests that the support for a regime change is huge in Syria. At the early stages of the uprising, protests occurred in every single province and major city and attracted numbers between 10.000 up to 500.000 (Cavallo, S. L., 2012, p. 104). In Hama for instance, over 500.000 people took the street to protest at one point, which is huge given that the city has 700.000 inhabitants (Cavallo, S. L., 2012, p. 104). The nationwide crackdown against protestors did not have the effect the regime intended. The massacres of unarmed protestors seem only to have bolstered the support for the uprising, even within the regime itself. At the beginning of 2012, around 60.000 soldiers had defected from the Syrian army and many were joining the newly established rebel groups (Lister, C., 2016, p. 5), including several high ranking profiles such as Manaf Tlass, who was the right hand of President Bashar Al-Assad and commander of the elite republican guard, one of the most loyal units within the Syrian army. The Prime Minister of Syria as well as several other high-ranking officers and generals defected from the regime during the summer of 2012 and either fled Syria or joined the opposition (Lund, A., 2014, p. 290).

The resistance against the regime was not limited to conservative Sunnis, but people from all religions and different political factions took to the street to protest. However, the regime still had strong support among the minorities of Syria, particularly the Alawites. As the conflict took a more

sectarian turn at the end of 2012, and groups such as IS and Jabhat Al-Nusra entered the stage, the support for the regime also grew among the Sunnis of Syria (Lund, A., 2014, p. 292). The support of either the rebellion or the regime was divided in geographical areas, with the larger cities as exception. The rebels were able to conduct raids and warfare successfully in areas where they had support but struggled to conquer and hold areas where the population supported the regime (Lister, C., 2016, p. 8). In line with Zimmerman's claims, the rebels had great success in areas where they were supported by the local population and struggled in areas where they did not, just as the regime did. If the oppositional forces would have been able to attract more members from the regime-core and from the Syrian minorities, it is very likely that the regime would have faced total collapse in 2012.

4.5.3 Weakness in authority

In 2010, a year before the uprising, the regime seemed to be stronger than ever. The democratic opposition that formed the Damascus Declaration was crushed, the threat of U.S. invasion that followed the Iraqi war of 2003 had been averted and Bashar Al-Assad's popularity had risen vigorously after he supported the Lebanese militia Hezbollah, which fought a successful war against Israel in 2006 (Lund, A., 2014, p. 72-73). When the conflict began, it looked like the Syrian regime would be able to overcome their opponents rather easy. The regime was able to swiftly break the first demonstrations that occurred, and cities taken by insurgents at an early stage was surrendered and retaken in weeks, just as the regime had done in Hama in 1982 (Lister, C., 2016, p. 4).

Zimmerman claims that the strength of an authority will be a determining factor during the early stages of a rebellion (Zimmerman, F., H, 2006, p. 28). He is partly right when it comes to the Syrian civil war. However, the regime relied on its military power and brute strength, but this proved to be its weakness as well. During past turbulence in Syria, police

brutality and crackdown on protests had a deterrent effect, but this time it had the opposite effect. When the repression grew, so did the protest. As previously mentioned, ordinary people as well as influential people within the government began to rally around the opposition when regime atrocities became known. In other words, the regime created its own weakness in the wake of its brutality. The defections and loss of support made the regime weak, and this was exploited by opposition forces and they were able to control several cities and vast amounts of territory, which is in accordance with Zimmerman's theory regarding the connection between a weak authority and the success of an uprising.

4.5.4 Geographical conditions

The geographical conditions seem to have favoured the rebels in Syria, especial during the initial phase. Since most of the insurgents operate in their local areas, they have a rather good knowledge on the terrain and how to utilize it. Hit and run attacks and ambushes where the attackers disappear has been a problem for the army since start (Holliday, J., 2012, p. 22). The mountainous terrain at the Lebanese border in the west, the vast desert areas in eastern Syria as well as the unguarded northern border with Turkey made the smuggling of arms and fighters easier for the rebels (Holliday, J., 2012, p. 30). The success of many rebel operations is due to the geographical conditions, since rebels often conduct operations inside Syria and then sneak across the border into Turkey or Lebanon, where they are safe and able to regroup and plan for further operations (Holliday, J., 2012, p. 14).

The importance of utilization of the terrain and geographical conditions cannot be ignored. The regime possesses the advantage of superior firepower and greater number of highly trained soldiers; however, rebel forces have been able to challenge the Syrian army throughout the country, much thanks to their knowledge regarding the terrain as well as having freedom of movement at the borders and in desolate areas. The rebels

have, however, faced hardships in the face of regime offensives on towns and cities. When trying to hold a settlement, the rebels lose their freedom of movement as well as the option to strike and go into hiding, if they don't want to lose the city they defend. It can be concluded that the rebels are more successful when fighting the regime on their own conditions, or in other words, when the geographical conditions favours them. It is, thus, apparent that Zimmerman's claim that geographical conditions is a crucial part of success on the battlefield finds support in the case of the Syrian civil war (Zimmerman, F., H, 2006, p. 29).

4.5.5 External support

Several regional and global actors have engaged in the Syrian civil war since the beginning of the war and both sides have relied heavily on external support during the course of the conflict. The largest supporters of the rebel cause are Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. These states have provided the rebels with funds, weapons and political support (Barnes-Decay, J., 2013, p. 5). Western powers such as France, Great Britain and the U.S. have also been arming and training Syrian insurgents during the course of the war (Cockburn, P., 2016, p. 285). The support has proved to be a crucial factor that made it possible for the rebels to face the regime army. As mentioned earlier, the regime army is far superior in terms of manpower, arms and numbers, but the support the rebels have received has even the odds. For example, the Syrian government possessed the sixth largest number of tanks in the world. To counter this, the U.S. provided some rebel groups with advanced anti-tank missile systems. These has been operated skilfully during the conflict and made it possible for rebels to halt armoured attacks by the regime (Janovsky, J., 2018).

A steady flow of international volunteers has bolstered the ranks of the rebels as well. In 2016, it was estimated that over 25.000 foreign fighters have travelled to Syria to join the fight against the regime. Most of the

fighters have joined extremist groups such as IS (El-Said, H., et. al., 2017, p. 7). The external support for the rebels in Syria goes in line with the statements of Zimmerman, namely that conventional warfare is a possible conduct for the rebels since they are heavily armed and funded by foreign powers. The external support for the rebels has been their blessing and their curse, since it has made it possible for them to conduct a conventional war against the regime, but the allies of the regime have also increased their support in order to counter this development. For instance, when the regime was heavily pressured in 2015, Russia intervened in Syria on the side of the regime. Iran did also send thousands of fighters and military equipment in a bid to crush the rebel forces. The regime has since then been able, with the help of their allies, to retake many areas held by the rebels and IS, including Aleppo which is the largest city in Syria (Pierret, T., 2017, p. 1).

4.5.6 Information advantage

It is hard to determine which of sides that have enjoyed the advantage of information during the conflict. The findings suggest that the information advantage has been mostly in favour of the regime, even though the opposition have utilized its rather few means of information. During the initial phase, the opposition was able to organize themselves much thanks to informal communication. Social media has been frequently used as a platform to organize, inform and set up strategies by the opposition. They have also been able to channel their message as well as information regarding the events in Syria to the outside world (Dicker, K., 2019, p. 5). The Facebook group *The Syrian Revolution 2011* have millions of followers inside and outside of Syria, and it has played a crucial role during the course of the conflict. The group has frequently posted reports and information regarding the early events of the conflict as well as video clips that show atrocities committed by the regime. Thanks to its availability and its huge number of followers, the information has reached people all around Syria and

also encouraged further protests against the regime. The regime has tried to shut down the site on numerous occasions but has so far been unsuccessful (Lund, A., 2014, p. 205). The use of internet and social media has made it possible for the opposition to spread information, organize protests and set up strategies outside the radar of the regime's feared intelligence service.

On the other hand, thanks to superior resources and technology, it is fair to say that the regime has had the information advantage during the conflict. The former President Hafez-Al Assad turned Syria into an police state where its citizens were closely monitored. Several intelligence agencies were established during Hafez days and these have been in effect during the current war as well. Thanks to the regime's network of spies and informants, the security services have been able to arrest wanted persons as well as providing the regime with information on rebel whereabouts and movements (Khaddour, K., 2015, p. 5). The regime currently has the initiative in this conflict. Meetings and gatherings of rebel commanders are often being targeted by airstrikes since the intelligence services are able to provide the regime with vital information (SOHR, 2015). One cannot tell how much the regimes victories on the battlefield is due to their information advantage, but it is in accordance with Zimmerman's claim that the part that enjoys the information advantage have the momentum on their side (Zimmerman, F., H, 2006, p. 33).

4.6 The Syrian civil war through Millers theoretical framework

4.6.1 Repression

Hard repression against anyone who challenged the authority has always been commonly conducted by the Syrian regime in times of instability and political turmoil - and the Syrian civil war is no exception. During the early stages of the uprising, the regime did consciously target protestors and individuals linked to the opposition. Unarmed protestors were meet with live

bullets in several cities and hundreds were shot dead by the security forces during the first four weeks of protests (Björklund, P., et. al., 2015, p. 14). Miller suggests that repression often is a tool used by authoritarian regimes with the intention to undermine opposing organizations. Miller does also make another interesting claim regarding repression. He states that repression can have the opposite effect in some cases, since a repressed group can gain support since people may begin to develop sympathies for them (Miller, F., D. 1999, p. 300). This seems to partly have been the case in Syria. During the first two years, support grew dramatically for the opposition. Several high-ranking members of the Syrian regime did also begin to support the opposition and condemn the acts of the regime. Another example is the case of The Free Syrian Army, which was the first large insurgent group to fight the regime. The group was formed by ex-Syrian militaries who refused to engage civilians and opposition activists and instead began to fight the regime (Lister, C., 2016, p. 4).

The repression conducted by the regime did not end when the conflict between the regime and its opponents turned into a civil war in mid-2012. The regime does systematically lay cities that are under rebel control under siege and denies them access to humanitarian aid and food (Schaak, B., 2016, p. 36). The tactics used by the regime also includes relentless bombardment of densely populated areas where a lot of civilians live. It is believed that this conduct is done in a bid to bomb the population of Syria into submission (Schaak, B., 2016, p. 20). It does seem that these cruel tactics have had some effect, since several areas and cities have been recaptured after being starved and bombed for a while. The pressure on the rebels mounts when civilians suffers in the areas they control, and it is not uncommon that rebels give up on areas just so that they will be spared from complete destruction (Björklund, P., et. al., 2015, p. 17).

4.6.2 Co-optation

Even though not commonly conducted, the regime has co-opted certain parts of the opposition during the conflict. One example is the so-called *Golan Regiment* which was a rebel group operating in southern Syria. In 2014, the leaders of the Golan Regiment were offered full amnesty for them and their fighters on the condition that they switched side and fought for the regime. The offer was accepted, and the group has been fighting on behalf of the regime since then (Samaha, N., 2017). During the initial stages of the conflict, the regime did also offer benefits such as subsidies, goods and money to certain groups that it deemed important for political stability in the country. By doing this, the regime rallied supporters among crucial groups that very well may have joined the opposition (Dejuan, A., et. al., 2013, p 12).

The regime does frequently grant amnesty for rebels who surrender. Besides having their criminal record terminated, the rebels who surrendered are often offered local governance roles and can also be allowed to run security in their hometowns. These deals are, however, often struck after a prolonged siege and indiscriminate bombardment of the town or village that the rebels hold. Miller concludes that a movement may decline as a result of co-optation (Miller, F., D. 1999, p 301). However, there is no coherent movement in Syria that is fighting the regime, but rather multiple groups with various ideologies and purposes. It is therefore hard to measure the exact impact that co-optation have had on Syria's opposition. It can, however, be concluded that local groups have declined as a result of co-optation, and the regime has also been able to attract supporters and potential supporters of the opposition through its policies.

4.6.3 Success

According to Miller, a group tend to decline when their goal or purpose is fulfilled (Miller, F., D. 1999, p. 302). The rebel groups fighting in the current

civil war in Syria have not been able to topple the regime, which is their goal. Success can therefore not be seen as an explanatory factor for groups that have vanished or declined in Syria, since the regime is not defeated.

4.6.4 Failure

Failure is an important factor that makes organizations and movements disappear, according to Miller. It seems rather simple; if an organization fails to fulfil its purpose, it tend to vanish after a while. Miller has identified two components that are the main contributors to failure; ineffective strategies and organizational problems. The conflict is currently ongoing, and the outcome is not yet fully clear. Therefore, it is hard to predict if failure on the organizational and strategic level will be what makes the rebel movements' decline. It could also very well be success that dissolves the rebel groups. There are, however, signs that indicate that failure may be what makes the rebel groups disappear in Syria. For example, when Miller talks about organizational problems, he mentions factionalism and encapsulation as part of organizational problems. He describes factionalism as the opposition's failure to unite a common strategy and disagreement within the opposition, while encapsulation is when the opposition's ideology and agenda fails to attract new members and supporters (Miller, F., D. 1999, p 303).

      The opposition has struggled with factionalism since the start of the conflict. The different groups that fights the regime do also compete between themselves, and sometimes fight as well. Several attempts have been made in order to unite the different rebel movements under a single command, so far without success (Lund, A., 2014, p. 343). Encapsulation did also partly occur. More radical rebel groups, such as the IS and the Al-Qaeda linked Jabhat-Al Nosra, expanded quickly between 2012-2013 at the expense of both the regime and other rebel groups. Their extreme ideology made foreign sponsors more careful with their support for rebels, since they feared that money and arms would end up at extremist groups. Moderate elements in

Syria were neither pleased with the sectarian and extremist turn that the uprising took. This favoured Al-Assad's regime, since many felt that the only political options were either Bashar Al-Assad or the increasingly extremist opposition against him (Lund, A., 2014, p. 458).

4.6 Comparison and final discussion

As the findings of this study propose, the conflicts are rather similar on most of the factors that Zimmerman and Miller have identified. There are, however, some key differences that made the current civil war larger and more widespread than the MB uprising. Local populace support is one of these differences. While the MB uprising drew its support mainly from conservative Sunni elements on a rather local level, the uprising of 2011 was initially able to muster support from most religions, political affiliates and provinces of Syria. It was seen by the Syrians as a popular uprising and since it had support across the country, the regime was forced to spread its troops in all of Syria. During the MB uprising, the regime could concentrate its forces to the few strongholds that the rebels possessed, thus making them easier to defeat. The large support during the uprising of 2011 did also facilitated the recruitment of rebel fighters.

Other internal factors such as geographical conditions, potential weakness in authority and a cause to fight for was basically the same during both conflicts. Another internal factor; information advantage, was slightly in the favour of the regime during the present conflict, while it favoured the insurgents during the MB uprising. However, the effects of the advantage seem questionable in both cases. The findings in this study suggests that the regime used similar strategies during both conflicts. Co-optation in the form of sudecement of important groups was conducted during both conflicts, as well as the implementation of amnesties which targeted rebel fighters. The exact effects are hard to measure, but it is clear that the opposition lost potential supporters as well as fighters due to the co-optation strategies used

by the regime during both uprisings. Repression was also a tool used to overcome opposition during both conflicts. What is interesting in the case of regime repression during both conflicts is the outcome differences. Reprisals and harsh treatment of oppositional figures had the wished effect during the MB uprising: people stayed home out of fear and the Muslim Brotherhood was forced into exile. During the current civil war, repression had the opposite effect: protests and opposition against the regime grew dramatically and soldiers defected from the regime in the thousands along with several other high-ranking regime profiles.

The findings suggest that developed communications and the role of social media in particular contributed to the spread of information in Syria during the uprising of 2011. News and video clips that broadcasted the atrocities of the regime were spread in an instant and the opposition was able to organize themselves and rally support on social media, such as Twitter and Facebook. It is easy to understand why Zimmerman would neglect the role of social media in a conflict. He used six different conflicts as case studies when he developed his conceptual framework, all of the conflicts ended before 1977, most of the conflicts he studied were fought during the 1940s-1950s (Zimmerman, F., H, 2006, p. 39). Just like during the MB uprising, the use of social medias was non-existent during the uprising Zimmerman studied. Zimmerman does, however, put some emphasis on the role of informal communication. He argues that informal communication is part of the information advantage, but he never specifically mentions the role of social media in conflict.

The findings regarding the use of social media in the current civil war suggest that social medias could have a larger impact than previously expected. As for external factors, the cases studied in this study suggests that Zimmerman is right when it comes to the effect of external support. The insurgents of both the MB uprising and the current civil war did receive support from abroad in the form of money, training and arms. Zimmerman

stresses that this support is crucial in the middle and final phase of an rebellion, since the insurgents need to fight the regime conventionally in order to win, which is not possible without heavy support from abroad. Even though supported, the MB never received enough support in order to conduct a conventional war against the regime. The rebels in the current conflict have received support that is sufficient for the implementation of such a war, and the international support made the regime stand on the brink of defeat in 2015. What Zimmerman fails to mention is that external support for the government is equally important for the outcome of a rebellion as international support for the rebel cause. Zimmerman only studies the effects of increased support for the uprising and not the opposite. In the case of the Syrian civil war, increased support from Iran and a military intervention from Russia in October 2015 saved the regime from a total collapse and also helped the regime retake most of rebel held Syria.

Another interesting argument that is presented by Miller is the emphasis on unity within an organization if it is to succeed. He claims that failure and ultimately the decline of a movement often depends on its ability to form an united front against its opponents. It is true that the MB did not completely agree on how the organization should rise to power in Syria, since some advocated peaceful means while others wanted to topple the regime by armed struggle. However, the group did never split and was outwardly coherent. Despite this, they never really stood a chance against the regime and as the findings shows, their uprising was quelled without ever posing as an acute threat to the regime. The rebel groups that currently fights the regime in Syria is deeply divided. There are both moderate and extremist rebels on the ground and no attempts to unite these have been successful so far. Rebel infightings have also been common throughout the conflict. In spite of their divisions, the rebels have been able to truly challenge the authority of the regime and taken over fast areas as well as cities and towns throughout Syria. This fact raises questions regarding the credibility of

Miller's claim on the importance of unity among the opposition. Could it be that he overestimates the effects of unity or was the regime simply too strong to tackle at the moment? What is clear is that the subject needs further evaluation and research. Miller also advocates that success can be a factor that may cause a movement to decline, while this may very well be true, the case studies used in this thesis will not produce an immediate answer whether or not that is true. If the rebels of Syria are able to topple Assad in the future and then dissolves their organizations, it can be argued that some support has been found for Millers claim regarding the link between success and movement decline.

5. Conclusion

The similarities of these conflicts are rather striking. When using the concepts of Miller and Zimmerman, it is obvious that they do not differ on many factors. However, the few factors where they differ have been enough to drive the conflict in two different directions. The internal factor that affected the result of the conflicts the most, was the different amount of local support during both conflicts. The current uprising was able to get a foothold since it was able to muster broad support from various secular and religious groups in Syria, while the support for the MB uprising mainly was drawn from rather small conservative circles. Another internal factor that made a huge difference was the use of social media. The Syrian state became known as one of the most authoritarian states in the world after Hafez Al-Assad's takeover in 1970. Citizens and oppositional figures were closely monitored by the regimes intelligence services and new outlets were solely controlled by the regime. During the uprising of 2011, the citizens of Syria were able to spread information and communicate freely on social medias. The regime was unable to control and restraint these informal channels and the opposition could therefore organize protests and spread information on

events that occurred throughout Syria and thus draw support and sympathies from all over the country. As for external factors, different levels of foreign support during both conflicts turned out to be an decisive factor. The MB enjoyed some support from neighbouring states which made it possible to conduct guerrilla warfare against the regime, but not enough to conduct conventional war. Actors all over the globe has engaged in the current civil war including great powers such as the U.S. and Russia. The support the rebels have obtained in terms of advanced weaponry and finance made it possible for them to fight the regime conventionally. At the same time, the support for the rebels did also prompt the regime allies to step up its support for the regime. Unity among the opposition is mentioned by Miller as an important component if an oppositional group is to survive. However, the cases studies above suggest different; the MB was a coherent organization while the rebels of the current conflict have suffered from disunity and infighting since the start of the conflict. Despite this fact, the MB never stood a chance against the forces of the regime and the rebels of the uprising of 2011 has been able seriously challenge the regime. Even though some of the factors from Miller and Zimmerman's theoretical concepts have proved to be useful when analysing the dynamics that shaped both conflicts, further research must be conducted in order to fully understand the dynamics that shapes rebellions and uprisings. Globalisation and the use of social media is rather new phenomenon, and these has not been taken into consideration by either Zimmerman or Miller. In order to further understand the impact of these dynamics, uprisings that has occurred during more recent years should be studied. The importance of unity should also be further evaluated, this can be done by studying uprising where the opposition has been able to unite and compare them to uprising where the opposition is divided.

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