

New Wars and State Building

A case study on the changed dynamics in New Wars and how
it can affect state building in Syria

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Abstract

The experience drawn from the wars in the early modern era in Europe suggest that interstate wars lead to centralization of power and resources. These wars are also strongly associated with state building and were a crucial component in the formation of the modern state. Though another dynamic can be perceived in contemporary warfare. The wars we see today differ in actors, motives, methods of warfare and the way they are financed. The New War theory challenges the dominating Clausewitzian perception of war and argues for a fundamental change in the logic of wars and shows that contemporary wars have to be understood in the context of globalization. Tendencies of new war can be seen in the Syrian war. This study examines how the new dynamics in new wars can shape the future in Syria from a state building perspective. I argue that the high presence of external actors and their increased interference in new wars affect state building. The result suggests that the presence external actors and their involvement prevents centralization of resources and power, and decrease the state's monopoly on violence and this decentralization and privatization in new wars indicates on fragmentation of the state rather than state consolidation.

Key words: New Wars, Old wars, Syria, State Building, External Actors

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1 Introduction

“We took the wrong steps for a problem that we didn’t understand”

- Michael Flynn, former US national security adviser in the documentary *Cries in Syria*, about Al-Assad and the Syrian war in which he commented on the American approach to the war (Afinejevskij, 2016).

The inter-state wars in the era between early 18th and mid 20th century, in this study referred as Old wars, were a crucial component in the formation of what we today know as the modern state. The international competition and high frequency of warfare at this time required a mobilization of resources and people in order to win the wars. This contributed to state building in terms of administrative efficiency, a more complex and organized bureaucracy, an expanded taxation system, a sense of patriotism within states and legitimate use of violence. All these components led to an overall centralization and nationalization in both power and resources, and laid the foundation for a state building process (Sprout, 2002:135-137, Kaldor, 2005:492, Bates, 2010, Tin-Bor Hui, 2005)

So we’ve learned from history that the dynamic in wars sometimes can tell us what effect they will have on state building. Though the wars we can see in the Post Cold era seem to have another dynamic compared to the conventional wars. They are characterized with a higher numbers of actors, both internal and external, the motives are identity based, change warfare methods and they way the wars are financed differ a lot from the wars in the early modern era (Kaldor, 2012, 2013). Policy makers around the world seem to have a hard time understand these wars and find an appropriate way to approach them. The war scholar Mary Kaldor introduced the concept ‘new wars’ and argued for a fundamental change in the logic of wars and that contemporary wars have to be understood in the context of globalization (Kaldor, 2013). One significant difference, which this study will focus on, is that in contrast to the old wars do new wars seem to lead to a fragmentation of states rather than contribute to the state building process (Münkler, 2005:8-10).

Tendencies of new wars can be seen in the current conflict in Syria that started in 2011 as a nation-wide movement of demonstrations against the strict authoritarian control under the dictator Bashar Al-Assad (Afinejevskij, 2017). It is one of our time’s most complex wars, with a combination of transnational width and historical depth. The

number of actors, both internal and external, all with diversified goals, motives and way of fighting the war speaks well to the new war theory, which I elaborate in this study.

I argue in this study that the presence of external actors, their role in the conflicts and their financial support and military aid perpetuate the conflicts and change the effects on state making in new wars. I then apply that argument to the on-going war in Syria, to see how the external actors have perpetrated that specific war. The analysis and result based on the new war theory and empirical evidence suggests that the financial involvement of external actors and their direct participation in the warfare prevents state formation from all sides of the conflict in Syria. Old wars led to centralization of resources and power and this was a clear indication on state building. In new wars, an overall decentralization can be recognized which indicates that this will lead to a rather fragmented state.

1.1 Purpose and research question

War has for a long time been considered as a crucial component in the formation of the modern state and its state capacity. “*The war made the state, and state made the war*” (1975:42) is a well-known illustration from the prominent war scholar Charles Tilly based upon the traditional conception of war that have dominated the war discourse for the past two centuries and summarizes the general perspective on the correlation between war and state making (Cohen, 1984:331-332). In the early 1990s Mary Kaldor introduced the concept of ‘new war’ with the conviction that contemporary wars have to be looked at in another perspective and approached differently in order to get a deeper knowledge and understanding. What we know about war and how we understand them today is drawn from experiences from the wars in the early stage of the modern state. Kaldor argues that many of the wars we see today need to be understood in terms of globalization. Even though old and new wars still have many similarities, they do differ in some aspects which points towards a change in the logic of the wars (Kaldor, 2012). One of the differences new wars scholars emphasize on is the effect new wars have on the state building. New war scholars generally agree on that new wars have a state disintegrating effect on the state, rather than a state building, as the wars that led to the modern state had (Kaldor, 2013:3, Münkler 2005:8-10). Though exactly what mechanism in the new wars it is that induce to the state fragmentation is not fully examined. The ambition with this

study is to on a deeper level look into what possible mechanisms in new wars indicates on a state fragmentation. The aim is to sort out the mechanisms that in old wars led to state building and examine why they don't seem to emerge the same way in the new wars we see today and therefore not have the same impact on the formation of the state. So the research question is as follows:

How can the changed dynamics in new wars affect state building?

There are two purposes with this study. The first one is to show why the war in Syria, that is going to be the case this study will look at, can be considered a new war based on the new war theory. The second one is to elaborate what effects the new wars can have on state building, based on the mechanisms in old wars that were crucial in the state formation process and see how corresponding mechanisms in new wars differ from these and what this indicates.

1.2 Methodological framework

What I aim to examine is how the mechanisms, that in the early stage of the modern led to state building, is effected by the presence of external factors in the new wars and the way internal actors are being funded. My ambition is that the result will tell us something about new wars and how the presence of external actors affects state building. This study will therefore will be a qualitative within-case analysis with thick description (Teorell & Svensson 2007:247). The use of case study opens up for a deeper analysis and the opportunity to examine the mechanism in a specific process, which is an advantage in this study.

New war theory is a relatively new theoretical framework and there is still much to test against cases to either reject or confirm its relevance in the war discourse, which strengthens its' scientific relevance. Moreover, since war and state building are strongly connected, I found it relevant to work with a relatively new theory that offers a new perspective on wars and therefore hopefully contribute to the state building discourse (Teorell & Svensson, 2007:18-19).

The case I intend to study is the ongoing war in Syria. A natural case to pick for the research question this study aims to answer would instinctively be a new war that is

already finished and in which you could see the effects on the state clearly. There is a validity cost of picking an unfinished case that I am aware of. But I do argue that there is a societal relevance to elaborate and make a legitimate prediction about possible effects on state formation since the Syrian case is very present in time and involves many parts of the world and the political landscape (see Teorell & Svensson, 2007:151). Recent terror attacks, the refugee crisis, the unstable situation in the middle east and the increasing tensions between the world's leading powers can all be connected to the war in Syria. It is very much in time right now and what effects the war possibly can have on state building is a relevant to the general debate and can potentially provide new and deeper understanding of the new wars in general and the Syrian case in particular (see Teorell and Svensson, 2007:18). By examining the Syrian war, this study will accomplish two things. First, it will illustrate how new wars theory functions in practice. It will show that, as predicted by new wars theory, the involvement of external actors prevents the elimination of internal actors. This is in contrast to more conventional wars, where internal conflict is resolved either by collaboration against some foreign enemy, or an evolutionary process by which challengers to the central government are eliminated. Second, by examining the Syrian war through the lens of new war theory, this study will shed light on important dynamics in an on-going crisis. This allows me to make some tentative predictions for the long-term outcome of the Syrian war with regard to state building, which will be described in the concluding sections.

1.3 Delimitations and material

State building is a wide concept that can be approached on both a micro and macro level. It includes different elements and explanations, like economical or institutionalism (Spruyt, 2002:135). This study will only focus on state building from a war-making perspective. More specifically on the influence of external actors in wars, how their financial involvement and active participation in warfare affect the building of a state, based on the mechanisms in the old state building wars. The purpose is therefore not to defend the concept of new wars, but to analyze how new wars can affect state building based on the new wars theory and the characteristics of new wars compared with the indicators that in old wars were crucial in the formation of the state. Due to limited amount of time the question will have to be narrowed down by only looking at one case of a new war, which I chose to be Syria (see motivation in 1.2.). The timeframe this study

covers from when the demonstrations in Syria started (spring 2011) to the beginning of 2017 when the process of this study started. I won't be able to reflect over all events or actors, so I will only focus on parts of the conflict I consider important in order to answer my research question and fulfill the purpose of this study.

The empirical material that will be used in this study in order to answer the research question will primarily be secondary sources. To sort out empirical material and highlight what is important in order to answer the research question will be a crucial part of this study. One problematic aspect with secondary sources is their reliability since the contents been evaluated at least once already. Also, the resources used in this study primarily cover a west perspective. To prevent this, only articles from reliable papers written by experts on the area will be used and that are spread over the timeframe this papers covers (see Esaiasson et al, 2012:278-279). I will also use reports from organizations like Freedom House, Rand and Uppsala Conflict Data Program to show the extent of the conflict in Syria and the involvement of both internal and external actors.

2 Theoretical framework and previous research

This chapter consists the theoretical framework for this study and previous research in the area. There will first be a short section summarizing the debate about the transformation of war. After comes a description of what in this study will be referred as old wars, followed by an explanation of how and what mechanisms in these old wars it was that led to state building. With this background in old war, what follows will be easier to understand in which my intention is to explain the concept of new wars, what characterize them and finally what effects they can have on state building based on new war literature.

2.1 Transformation of war

Since the end of the cold war there has been a broad debate among war-scholars about a transformation of war, mainly whether there has been one or not (Williams, 2008:163). The debate has been divided into two sides where one side mean that the formation of war is constantly in alteration, but that the logic of war is the same today as it has been trough history (Kalyvas, 2001). On the other side we find those who are convinced that the logic of wars we see today differ from the wars our knowledge is based on. They argue we need to approach many of the wars we see today differently and see it through a new perspective where globalization is included in order to understand them and deepen our knowledge (Mello, 2010:297, Williams, 2008:165). They are challenging Clausewitz's dominating war philosophy and questioning its relevance in the wars we see today (Sheehan, 2014). One of the main differences is the war in relation to state building. While the old wars are strongly associated with the formation of the state are the new wars claimed to be the opposite, which will be described in following sections.

2.2 Old wars

Old wars is what Kaldor refers to the “style” of the “ideal” types of wars that took place around late 18th and mid 20th century in Europe and are characterized with state actors, big armies and standardized uniforms (Kaldor, 2005:492, 2013:3, Cohen 1984:331). These wars are also the wars strongly connected to state building (Kaldor, 2005:492, Cohen 1984:331). The prominent war scholar Carl Von Clausewitz described these wars as a political and social behavior, and the fundamental nature of war with “*a continuation of political intercourse with a mixture of other means*” (Von Clausewitz, 1975:121) *Violence* can only be called *war* when states constitute the actors, according to von Clausewitz. He also distinguished on the objective and subjective nature of the wars, where the objective nature is the features all wars share, independent of time and place, and where the subjective nature of war is what make each war exclusive. He argues that the subjective features of wars, characteristics and form, change from war to war but that the objective, essential, nature of war don't (Sheehan, 2014:216-217)

2.2.1 Old wars and state building

In the beginning of 19th century the modern European states that we know of today slowly started to emerge. There are many explanations of how and why this happened (Spruyt 2002), but the one I will focus on in this study is the one related to war making. Many European countries had been frequently in war for two hundred years and the international competition was intense. This would come to be a crucial factor in the building process of the states (Spruyt 2002:135, Tilly, 1990). With state building, I refer to the creation of governmental institutions and strengthening of existing ones (Fukuyama 2004:17). War is an organized phenomena and not just accidental violence. It is a very complex social activity and requires well structured organization with large-scale cooperation among the society and has proven to therefor also have an organizing effect (Sheehan, 2013:219).

Hendrik Spruyt (2002) emphasizes on the change in warfare technology is his explanation of the connection between state formation and war. Before the modern state, the feudal system was dominating in many European states. It was a decentralized system where the state was dependent on the vassals and barons. The feudal warfare, where the vassals and barons were in private possession of war equipment and much of the resources, later developed into a more state centric system where the government itself

had to finance the war. War equipment, horses, and mercenaries that previously had been on the lower lords and vassals responsibility, now would be in the possession of a higher centralized state apparatus and had therefor to be financed differently. The transformation from the feudal system required economical capital. Wars with mercenaries were costly and therefore were economical resources needed. So in order to fight wars and finance this, the government had to raise the level of taxation. In doing so, the administrative capacity in collecting taxation improved which led to a more extensive organizational ability and institutional capacity (Spruyt, 2002:135-137). Even though the mercenaries had been more efficient and given the states a certain independence from the barons and vassals, the soldier's loyalty could be questioned and they were later replaced with the more trustful standing armies (Kaldor, 2012:18). With increased taxation and the need of men motivated to fight and protect their state in standing armies, the leaders also needed to gain in popular support and win the population's heart and mind. Public service, rights and democracy The leaders needed to gain support in order to mobilize both capital and men to the army, which they did by providing public services and eventually also human rights and influence through democracy (Tin-Bor Hui, 2005:170-171). This, in combination with high frequency of warfare, which characterized this period in Europe, forced a further institutional development and increased the state capacity. Those countries, which couldn't match up with this international competition, couldn't keep up and (Spruyt, 2002:135-137). The difference between the modern state and its predecessors is mainly it's state capacity, which implies on the states' ability to intervene in their societies and secondly its international sovereignty (Spruyt, 2002:128). Legitimate use of violence and mobilization are both close tied to the violent parts of wars, so violence is therefor a key element in the consolidation of security, nationalization and formation of the state (Blank, 2016:2, Bates 2010).

In conclusion, there were basically three main components in old wars that had a direct effect on the state building process. These were advancement in bureaucracy, an increased and developed taxation system and a nationalistic community in which the people identified themselves with and had a motivating outcome. The result of this change in warfare was illustrated in the state, which had become centralized and where the distinction between public and private, internal and external, civil and military were clear (Kaldor, 2005:22). Though the direct war-making itself is not always necessary. The threat of war and military rivalry has in Latin America proved to have the same effects on the state building as the old wars had (Thies, 2005). So old war itself didn't provide state consolidation but rather the change in military technology and all the changes it brought with it, like mobilizing troops and capital in order to win battles which all led to a centralization of power and resources (Cohen 1984:337).

2.3 New wars

Since the end of the WW2 we've been witnessing a sufficient decrease of inter state wars, and just as remarkable increase in the numbers of intra state wars (Williams 2008:156). In addition to this have the violence in war with deadly outcome markedly increased (Williams 2008:162). The new war theory emerged in the early 90ths in connection to the wars that arose after the Cold War. Most of the new wars emerge out of already weak states, as the ones in some Africa states, the war Balkan-Herzegovina (Kaldor 2005:491) or later also the war in Iraq (Kaldor 2012:151). New wars theorists argues that the not only the subjective nature of wars have changed, but also the objective nature of wars. They mean that we are witnessing a fundamental change in wars, a change in which the dominating theoretical Clausewitzean understanding of warfare isn't as applicable on today's conflicts as it was on traditional, old wars. The main idea with the new war concept is to change the fundamental conceptions of war and see the essence of globalization and the illegitimacy in that change the formation of contemporary wars (Kaldor 2012:3) The new war concept is relevant since it offers a new perception of war, where warfare is strongly connected with globalization and the disintegration of states (Kaldor, 2005:491). As Kaldor herself points out: "Attempts to think of the new world in terms of the old prevents us from dealing with the realities of today's globalized world. We can only develop alternative strategies against war if we see how different the new wars are from previous conflicts" (Kaldor 2005:491). The approach of understanding warfare one chooses to adopt is relevant for what direction the analysis later will lead (Williams, 2008:156).

2.3.1 Characteristics of new wars

Since the new wars concept is a relatively new, the definition and what characterize them varies between scholars. Kaldor describes new wars as civil wars with transnational connections and that new wars are a mixture of wars and organized violence, where war usually is defined as violence between states or political groups with political motives and where organized violence have the same violent expressions but between privately organized groups with private, in most cases financial, purposes (Kaldor 2013:6). She argues that new war include and emphasize on the transnational connections in new war, which divide them from traditional civil or internal wars (Kaldor 2012:2). There is a blurry line between these forms of war and violence and there are many similarities

between conventional wars, both inter-state and civil, and the wars we see today. But there are some crucial distinctions between new and old wars that are going to featured in this section that will be divided into actors, goals, methods and the way the new wars are financed. A lot can be said about the new wars and what characterizes them, though the aim in is here to provide a summarized picture of new war that focus on the parts that are connected with state making which will be used later in the analysis.

Actors in new wars

In contrast to traditional wars where states have been the dominating primary actors, we can in new wars observe actors in all kind of formations. Anything between states, non-states, internal, external, formal and informal. We can in the new wars see in example a combination of states, Private Military Companies (PMCs), guerillas, paramilitias, terrorist organizations etc. (Kaldor 2013:2). External actors can be states that participate in conflicts on an internal actor's behalf, either through diplomatic support, direct military participation or indirectly by training or funding internal actors. These external actors become more and more common (Kaldor 2013:4, Münkler 2012:8). New wars often arise in the context of an already weakening state and in the process of an erosion of the monopoly of legitimate organized violence and use of force, which is connected to the increased number of violent non-state¹ or external actors participating in warfare (Mello, 2010:298-299). This erosion can be seen both on an international level with a more globalized military and security alliances between states, and also from on a local level with privatized security (Kaldor 2013:2, 2012:5-6). The globalization and privatization in the new wars can be reflected in all these decentralized profit-making actors participating to a further extent and gaining more and more control and power (Leander, 2005, Taulbee 2002:2-3). Foreign involvement in conflicts they're not initially part of also affirm the idea of that new wars has to be understood in a globalized context where the world is strongly connected in both political and economic levels.

Goals in new wars

Competition for scarce resources like land, geographical location, labor and mineral resources, have for a long time seen as cause for warfare in traditional wars (Cohen, 1984:333). As well have ideology and political motives have been central elements in explaining the continuation in conflicts (Mello, 2010:300). So in contrast to old wars

¹ Violent non-state actors are organizations or groups, separated from the state that engage in organized illegal violence (Geeraerts, 1995)

where territorial or ideological conquer have been the main ambitions, is the motivation and goals many times identity based in of contemporary warfare. The internal non-state actors are often groups, identified with a religion, tribe or ethnicity. The logic in new wars have changed to a more identity based concentration where the goals rather are to mobilize around an identity, like religious, ethnic or racial, and gain access to state power, instead of using mobilization as a tool as was the case in old wars (Kaldor, 2013:4, 2012:79). The identity politics in new wars can be explained as a reaction to the more and more globalized world that can be perceived as something unfamiliar and dangerous. A globalization where it is easy to be excluded from, feel left out and which generates an insecurity and where mobilization around an identity prevents this (Kaldor 2012:86). Kaldor argues that the identity politics with identity motives in new wars tend to be fragmenting and backward looking in terms of state building (Kaldor, 2012:80).

Methods of warfare in new wars

There has been also been a significant change in the demography of war victims. In contemporary warfare the majority of deaths are so called indirect deaths, which means civilians who die from war-related injuries. It is at the moment the least studied and understood type of war related deaths. This is in new war theory argued to be an effect of the changes in contemporary warfare that can be observed in new wars. Not only has the numbers of civilian deaths in war increased, but more specifically the number of women (Williams, 2008:162-163) This is connected to the changes in goals and motives in new wars. Since the wars are no longer driven by geo-political motives but more identity based, the warfare methods are adapted and focuses on the control over people rather than fight outside enemies. The violence against civilians is in new war theory explained as a way of maintaining control over territories and people (Kaldor, 2013:3). New wars also tend to be globally spread and lack a center of gravity. They are not necessarily tied to one certain location or battlefield but can be played out at unpredictable places and are globally spread (Münkler, 2005:12). Moreover can a change warfare strategy can also be observed in the new wars. The most prominent is the terrorism, with a hit-and-run kind of tactic. Since there are less traditional battles where the “biggest army win”, the need of a traditional massive military force has decreased. The role of media, communication and transnational connection plays a crucial role in the new wars, not the least in acts of terrorism. With today’s great ability to reach in to a big scale of people in a short time is a great tool for spreading fear and threats. The world wide and efficient possibilities of fast communication are also used to recruit volunteer from all over the world to participate in the new wars (Kaldor 2013:4).

How new wars are financed

Another characteristics that diverse old wars from new wars are they are being financed, this in particular has to be understood in the context of globalization. The war economy has gone from a state centric and centralized economy to become much more decentralized and globalized (Kaldor 2012:10). Instead of like in the old wars, where there was a centralized war economy in which primarily all the war related funding's come from the active participating war driving state-actor, the way new wars are being funded is way more decentralized. Since tax collecting and domestic production decrease in today's globalized economy with international competition, the fighting units have to be financed through other means (Kaldor, 2012:106). The state actors still have a central financial role in contemporary warfare, but fighting units primarily get their financial income through means like plunder, black market, donations from external actors (state and non-state) or other criminal activity (Kaldor 2012:107-108).

This is also considered to one of the driving sources to the continuation of the conflict. All these illegitimate ways of gaining capital can only maintain through an ongoing of violence (Kaldor 2012:10), which prevents the conflict to end. So contemporary new wars have been privatized to a way further extent than what previous conventional wars were, and many actors are highly dependent of external resources (Kaldor, 2012:108-109).

Another crucial aspect connected with the economy of the new wars and how they are financed is how it tends to reinforce the violence and therefore also affect the duration of the war (Mello 2010:300). While some new war scholar argue that the new wars are driven by identity based motives other mean that the new wars has to be understood from a perspective of political economy, where economic aspirations is the fundamental cause to new wars (Mello, 2010:300). Here the new wars scholars divide a bit. But I understand it as a part of the complexity in new wars and that it can be both, depending on the conflict. What scholars generally agree on is that the economic part is a more central aspect and can't be excluded.

Summary

The new wars have changed in both their shape and also what drives them according to the new war theory. Economic, political and technological globalization can all be reflected in contemporary warfare (Kaldor, 2012:72). As confirmed earlier can many of the characteristics in new wars also be seen old wars, like plundering, violence against civilians, external actors and so on. Changing character of warfare can be recognized in all wars through the history, though the change in warfare isn't the point itself with the new war theory. Again I'd like to emphasize on the understanding of new wars in a

context of globalization where the world's states are in symbiosis (Sheehan, 2014:226-227).

2.3.2 New wars and state building

In contrast to old wars in Europe, that led to centralization and therefore had consolidated effects on the state, do new wars tend to be rather state disintegrating. The new wars are generally hard to put to an end and seem to increase rather than decrease by extending over to other weak states close by (Kaldor, 2013:2). We have already noted that new wars usually emerge in weak states. A valid distinction between old and new wars that Münkler (2005) emphasizes on is also associated with globalization and external actors, which he refers as 'shadow globalization'. New wars tend to continue for a much longer time than old wars did. Old wars usually ended when they ran out of supplies and the countries were ruined to the ground. The internal actors were self-financed and weren't kept alive through external forces. But due to globalized aspect in new wars, where the world market and economy is strongly connected and the involvement of external actors, new wars continue for a much longer time. The world's states are in symbiosis through the globalized economical and political system, so war ends first when all actors end and there are no driving forces left. So because of this change in the war economy and politics that comes with globalization, new wars vary for a much longer time, which prevents the state building (Münkler, 2005:8-10).

2.3.3 Critique against new war theory

Ever since the concept of new wars was introduced has the arguments for new wars stimulated a forceful debate the transformation of war and the new war theory has been criticized (Kaldor 2012:3). The "new" and the "war" has been questioned (Kaldor, 2013:3-6), it has been criticized for lacking a historical perspective (Newman, 2004), questioned whether there is a fundamental change in wars (Schuurman, 2010:90) and if there is a valid distinction between new and old civil wars (Kalyvas, 2010). All which Kaldor defends in her *In Defence of New Wars*. Again, she recognizes the many similarities in the old and new wars, but continues to argue that new wars have to be understood in a context of globalization and approached in new ways so that policy makers and scholars find a solution since they tend to spread, vary for a longer time and doesn't bring out a clear winner respective loser (2013:3-6).

2.4 Hypothesis

Based on the theories about new wars and state building, I argue in this study that the presence of external actors, their role in the conflicts and their financial support and military aid perpetuate the conflicts and change the effects on state making. External actors and their involvement longer the variation of the war and the change the dynamic so internal actors, that in conventional wars would be eliminated, are now kept alive in an artificial way through the external actors. The mechanism that in old wars led to state building doesn't appear in the new wars. I mean that the dynamic in new wars lead to decentralization rather than centralization on various levels that are significant to the state formation process. Help and support from external actors acting with their own agenda doesn't only lead to a decrease of centralization of power and resources from the people that in turn requires a functional taxation system and developed bureaucracy, but it also decrease the need of popular support from the people. Giving back, in terms of public service in order to motivate the people to participate in wars, pay taxes and collaborate, will decrease. If new war theory is right, that external actors keep internal actors afloat through financial and military support, and if the war in Syria can be considered a new war, what will be seen in Syria are indicators on decentralization and privatization that point towards state fragmentation.

3 The conflict in Syria

What follows is a summarized picture of the conflict history in Syria and the main external actors based on articles, reports and documentaries. I have chosen to focus on the parts of the war that I consider as essential in my upcoming analysis and which will help me answer the research question. Some parts are only briefly mentioned, but will be elaborated more detailed in the analysis section later.

3.1 Background

Syria has been under the strict control of the regime led by Bashar Al-Assad since 2000. Al-Assad belongs to the Syrian minority group Alawite. Before al-Assad's father took control over the power through a military coup and created a dictatorship, the Alawites were oppressed and didn't have much political influence (Vitkine, 2016). But since 1970s the Alawites have been in the possession of the highest positions in political power (Vitkine, 2016). The variety in identities is wide in Syria. Along with national identity is the population in Syria composed of diverse different ethnic, religious, cultural and local identities (Tokmajyan, 2013). Like Sunni, Shia, Christians, Kurds, just to mention a few (Tokmajyan, 2013).

The conflict history in Syria started in March 2011. The wave of democratic liberation movement had already swept over some Middle East and North African countries and is what we today refer as the Arabic Spring. In Syria it started with peaceful demonstrations, inspired by changes in Tunisia and Egypt, people wanted to show their dissatisfaction with the contemporary suppressing regime led by Bashar Al-Assad. The people and activists demanded a new political reform (Afinejevskij, 2017). The Assad regime answered to the peaceful demonstration with military means by attacking them, one-sided violence and the situation quickly escalated (UCDP, 2017). In July the same year, part of the Syrian people, what came to be called rebels, started to mobilize and fight back. Some soldiers abandoned the regime's army and joined the rebels. They constitute one of the main actors in the conflict, called the Free Syrian Army (FSA). The peaceful demonstrations had at this time escalated into a civil war with mainly internal actors (Vitkine, 2016). In 2012 al-Assad decides to release extremists, Jihadists, held in

prison, for the main purpose to create an opposition against the rebels. Among them, also previous Al-Qaida members. In the north parts of Syria, close to the Turkish border, the Syrian Kurds that have been oppressed for a long time started to make resistance against the al-Assad regime as well (Tokmajyan, 2013). So far, the conflict only consisted internal actors with the al-Assad regime on the one side and numerous groups of rebels fighting his army. In 2012 Iran starts to intervene on the behalf of al-Assad, supporting with supplies and equipment in order to win over the rebels (Gordon, 2012). On the other side, in respond to the involvement of Iran, the Gulf States started to support the rebels with capital, mostly through Turkey. Iran gets more influenced and send the Lebanese Shia group Hezbollah to fight along side Assad. The rebel groups had before the involvement of Hezbollah great success and were close to defeat al-Assad and his army. But the support from Iran and Hezbollah was directly decisive and prevented that to happen (Afinejevskij, 2017). Iran helped the al-Assad regime to recruit, train combats and fund al-Assad supporting fighters. In particular has the Lebanese militia group Hezbollah been the most successful and have been a crucial asset for Assad since 2013 (TSI, 2016). Also the Gulf States gets more and more involved and raised their financial support to the rebel groups, now also through Jordan. At this time the conflict is distinctly separated with Sunni Muslims on the one side with the rebels, Gulf States and Turkey, and Shia Muslims on the other side with Assad and the Jihadists, supported by Iran (Afinejevskij, 2017). In 2013 the United States, then with the Obama administration, slowly starts to get actively involved. CIA is accused of train with the rebel groups and provide with warfare equipment. In August 2013 the Assad regime uses chemical weapons for the first time, which was strongly condemned by the international community (Vitkine, 2016). The United States and big parts of the international community then demanded al-Assad's resign and were at this time very close to strike through military means. The Russian president Vladimir Putin supports al-Assad consistently through the war and proposes in the UN Security Council after the chemical attacks that al-Assad should hand over all of their chemical weapons to the international community. By doing so, an attack from the west was prevented (Afinejevskij, 2017). In February 2014, the war takes a new dramatic turn. Parts of what before was al-Qaida and that had been released from captivity started to build a new Islamic extremist organization² and what that are going to be one of the most feared terrorist group in the western world emerges, calling themselves ISIS,

² The terror organization IS was established already in 2003 in Iraq and was originally part of the al-Qaida organization. IS were excluded from al-Qaida in 2014 and (now called) ISIS have since been independent (Globalis).

Islamic State³. IS have proclaimed the goal to create an Islamic state, Caliphate, and starts to recruit sympathizers from Syria, Iraq and diasporas from all over the world (UCDP). The focus of the conflict shifts and now the al-Assad, supported by Russia, the different rebel groups, the United States, Turkey and the Syrian Kurds have a common enemy, which drastically changed the war dynamic. The international community has laid more focus on eliminating ISIS than to remove al-Assad from his position of power (Vitkine, 2016).

3.2 The involvement of external actors

The Al-Assad regime has received essential support from foreign external actors in order to take back control over areas and the Syrian people. The Lebanese Militia Shia group Hezbollah, Iran and Russia are the main al-Assad allied (TSI). The Russian government has supported the Al-Assad regime since the very beginning of the conflict and has so far saved him from meeting the same destiny as some of the other leaders during the Arabic spring (Colym, 2015). Initially only by financial assistance. Later Russia also provided al-Assad with military equipment like warplanes and weapons (Saol, 2014). Russia has also consistently giving al-Assad diplomatic support, like in the UN Security Council where they have used their veto when the rest in the international community wanted to put in military means against the government when they for example used chemical weapons (ForeignPolicy, 2015). In September 2015 the first military airstrikes from Russia hit several targets in Syria. Initially was ISIS the formal target for Russia, but reports and witnesses indicate that the strikes have rather hit against civilians and other Assad-opponents (Quinn, 2016). Also targets like hospitals and other important infrastructural targets have been bombed by both the regime's forces and Russian military, preventing civilians to reach help and provide themselves with basic necessities (Goldman, 2017). There are several possible hypothesis about why Russia supports the Al-Assad regime and what strategic goals they have with it. One can only speculate around the exact right answer and it is probably a combination of them all. The motivation of stopping the Arabic spring as a democratic wave and the establishment of western liberal values with a globalized economy is a possible reason. Preventing

³ The group has changed name a several times. Islamic State (IS), Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) where Levant is a area in Syria (UCDP). I will refer them as ISIS henceforth.

America to gain control over geopolitical areas closer to Russia is from a security perspective is another likely explanation.

On the opposite side to the Al-Assad regime have the National Syrian Coalition, supported by many of the rebel groups, among all FSA, also received financial and military support from the United States, Turkey and the GCC⁴ states, which have been decisive for their success during the war (Zorthian, 2015).

⁴ Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is the alliance of Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

4 Analysis

In this section I start with applying the new war theory on the Syrian conflict in order to see how well it fits with the new war theory.

This follows by an analysis on how external actors perpetrate the war in Syria and what indications that gives on how new wars effects state making, based on the theory about new and the experience of what mechanisms that in old wars led to state building. The first part analyzes how external actors prevent the new war in Syria to end. This is followed by how the changes in warfare dynamics in new wars affect the state making process. Finally I show how the state's security apparatus and monopoly on legitimate violence challenges the state authority and state building.

4.1 Is the war in Syria a new war?

The war in Syria emerged in a context new wars typically develop. In an authoritarian state, unable to fully accept and adapt to the outside and globalized world (see Kaldor, 2012:158). Syria had been strictly controlled by the al-Assad regime since the beginning. The conflict started out with peaceful demonstrations, a collective action challenging the authority that is the Bashar al-Assad's led regime and their strict authoritarian control, which demonstrates a lack of legitimacy for the Syrian government. It later escalated in to a civil war when the army and groups of civilians started to put up resistance. In the beginning of the conflict when the Free Syrian Army and other rebel groups started to grow, and later also ISIS, the Syrian government slowly started to loose control over parts of the state's territory, people and also its' monopoly on legitimate violence, accordingly new war theory. It has been their main goal to regain this control over both territory and monopoly. New wars, just like Syria, take place in states that have been weakened due to a combination of corruption, decline of the state's power and poorly performance (see Kaldor, 2013:4, Sheehan, 2014:224).

Actors

The numbers of actors in Syria and the variety among them suits well to the definition of new wars as civil war with transnational connection, with a broad

combination of fighting units (see Kaldor, 2012). The actors in Syria are internal, external, informal, formal, and private. The al-Assad regime represents the internal state-actor, fighting both the many rebel groups on one side and ISIS on another. The at the moment most involved external state-actors are Russia, Iran, the United States, Saudi Arabia, Gulf States and Turkey. The amount of non-state actors participating in the conflict is really extraordinary. ISIS as a criminal organized terrorist organization, Hezbollah as an external non-state actor, the Free Syrian Army, Syrian Kurds, and many more rebel groups. This is in line with Kaldor's definition of new wars as a civil war with transnational connections and a mixture of war and organized crime. The violence observed in Syria since the beginning of the conflict has been just as brutal like any war even though the actors have both been privately organized groups and states (Kaldor 2013:6) Also the remarkable number of foreign volunteers fighting with non-state actors, mostly Jihadist sympathizers joining ISIS (Jenkins, 2015:20-21), fits well to the idea that new war has to be understood in a context of globalization.

Way of financing the war

The war in Syria hasn't been financed in the traditional way that old wars were. External actors have had a central financial role on both the regime's side and the opposition. Russia and Iran have had a crucial part in financing the warfare on the behalf of the al-Assad regime. On the other side have the Gulf States, Turkey and the United States been essential to the opposition through financially support. ISIS has financed the war mainly through natural resources like oil and gas on the black market, criminal activity and also outside financiers (CAT, 2015). Overall have all the most important actors in the war relied on external support through different means, especially financially. This is, as already declared, typically in new wars, that the violence and war is kept alive through external actors and resources (Kaldor 2012:107-109).

Identity motives and goals

In opposite to old wars, where mobilization was used as a tool to organize the people and collect capital through fiscal system in order to win battles and wars, is the mobilization of people part of the aim in the new wars. The goal is to mobilize people around an identity that could be either a religious, ethnic or racial way and thereby claim state power (Kaldor, 2012:79-82). Identity based motives which characterize new wars are clearly shown in the Syrian War. Even though the conflict started as a movement of liberation inspired by the Arab Spring, has the war turned out to be a war where evident religious and ethnic groups have been turned against each other (Tokmajyan, 2013). The tension between different groups is clearly demonstrated in the conflict and is argued to

be one an underlying reason to why the war continues (Vitkine, 2016, Jenkins 2015:11). As I earlier mentioned has the conflict consistently been separated between Sunni Muslims on the one side with the rebels, Gulf States and Turkey, and Shia Muslims on the other side with Assad supported other Syrian Shia oriented groups and Iran (Afinejevskij, 2017). The identity-based motives are also observable at the actor ISIS whose ultimate goal is to create an Islamic state and seems want to “erase” non-extreme Muslim’s societies (Jenkins, 2015, see Kaldor 2012:117). The success have had ISIS can be explained as a reaction to the world moving towards a globalized world, many times with western values spreading. The transnational network of people that ISIS actually is has to be understood from a perspective globalization (see Kaldor, 2012:73-74). Also an identity based motive can be observed in al-Assad’s persistent attempt in maintaining the Alawiten power at any cost (Badran, 2012).

Methods of warfare

I will highlight three main aspects regarding method of warfare in the war in Syria that points towards new war. Firstly, the Syrian forces are moving way beyond modern warfare, by bombing against targets like hospitals or roads and using chemical weapon against civilians (Goldman, 2017, SiegeWatch 2016). It indicates on al-Assad’s intentions on keeping control and oppresses the people by isolate them from help and supplies. It weakens the opposition and prevent more civilians join the rebels. In new war warfare is violence directed against civilians typically in order to maintain control over territory and people (Kaldor, 2013:3). The second aspect includes the uncountable terrorist attacks in that have taken place in Syria. The civilians in Syria have consistently suffered from unpredictable and spread terrorist attacks (Lister et. al, 2017). Terror as a warfare method is a way to reach political goals with the instrument to spread fear and to weaken the opponents on a psychological level rather than physical way (Münkler, 2005:100). It is a way to take control over people. This method of warfare has been highly adapted by ISIS (Lister et. al, 2017). Last argument regarding method of warfare that points toward a new war in Syria is that there is no main center of gravity with a clearly defined battlefield. Some areas have had a higher intensity of violence related to the war, like the city Aleppo where the rebels and the regimes forces have fought over the control of the city. Since the demonstrations occurred in many Syrian cities, so did the violence between the army and rebels. Moreover can terrorist attacks in Europe and North America be connected to ISIS and the war in Syria, which indicates on the globally spread warfare that characterize new wars (Münkler, 2005:12).

To sum up, based on the analysis above where the actors, goals, warfare and the way the war in Syria have been financed have been tested against the characteristics in new wars, I argue the war in Syria can be considered a new war. All of the new war characteristics applied on the Syrian conflict I would say illustrates an ongoing privatization and decentralization in many levels, which will be further discussed in sections that follows.

4.2 Why doesn't any actor win?

One crucial condition for state building is for the war and violence to end. The conflict in Syria has been going on for 6 years and is still counting. Why doesn't any actor win? Or, even more precise, how have all actors survived the conflict so far? Here follows aspects on how external actors involvement effect the variation and therefore also the state formation process.

4.2.1 How external actors feed the war

Münkler points out that the state building wars in Europe and North America (which he refers to the war of independence and Civil war) took shape in clinical circumstances without any particular involvement from external actors that interfered with their own agenda and self interest (Münkler, 2005:8). This could be considered as inevitably in a globalized world with economies dependent on the global market that connects every corner of this world. As the state building wars in Europe took form in more clinical circumstances without any influence of external actors with an own agenda and that acts out of self-interests, are new wars characterized with quite the opposite. Syria is a very clear and speaking example of this, where the numbers of actors, both internal and external consistently have increased since the start of the conflict and there are still many actors left (Jenkins 2015:18) The war has been going on for 6 years and there is no end within sight (Jenkins 2015:18). Weak actors that are loosing more and more power, control, combats and financial resources, that in old war probably be facing a loss, seem to hang on and prolong the conflict due to support from external actors. This phenomenon can be observed consistently through in the Syrian war. Al-Assad suffered a string of defeats during the first four years of conflict and lost control over more and more territory. The Syrian Army couldn't stand against the rebel groups and lost their grip over the five biggest and most important cities. It looked like al-Assad was loosing and about

to face the same destiny as the authoritarian leaders in Egypt and Libya. But with support from Russian, Iran and the militia group Hezbollah the winds slowly changed for al-Assad and he started to regain control. Maybe the most speaking example was the battle of Aleppo where Al-Assad, completely reliant on the help from the Lebanese group Hezbollah, took back the control of the city after it had been in the control of the rebel groups for a long time (Perry, A-Khaladi, Miles 2016). That victory was very important for al-Assad and his further success. So Al-Assad and his regime have been totally dependent on the allied during the whole conflict and the same concerns the rebel groups who have been reliant on their allies in order to sustain and continue the fighting.

4.3 How external “sponsoring” prevents centralization

Because of the high frequency of warfare in the early beginning of the modern era and the need gain capital and mobilize people and resources, it enforced the state to develop and organize a system with extended taxation system and bureaucracy in order to finance the wars and which eventually led to centralization (Spruyt, 2002:135-137). We have already seen that most of the internal actors in Syria are allied with external actors, who provide then with financial support, military aid and other supplies. The internal actors, for example al-Assad, doesn't then have the need to enforce this administrative development and mobilization in order to finance the war, since the resources already comes from external actors like Russia and Iran. The Syrian regime has even had external actors like Hezbollah doing the actual warfare on their behalf, which indicates that they don't even have the need to finance their own armies.

So in new wars, the presence and both direct and financial involvement of external actors, which we didn't see in old wars, indicates that the need for capital by increased taxation and domestic production in order to win the wars, is decreased. Which then logically doesn't lead to centralization. When external actors like Russia supports al-Assad, both financially and later even direct intervene in the conflict rather seem to lead to a fragmentation of the state. This is one dynamic in the Syrian new war that indicates on a state disintegrating effect in the long-run. So the presence of external actors in new wars and their financial “sponsoring” and direct military participating does not only, as showed above, contribute to the long variation in new wars. It also tends to prevent the enforcement of mobilization of resources and people in order to win the war.

4.4 Changes in the warfare dynamic and need of armies

The theory drawn from the experiences in the rise of the modern state in Western Europe, suggesting that states emerge in the context of wars follows from the understanding that actors in the old wars tended to have a more centralized apparatus especially in terms of military forces. In order to win and be effective on the battlefield, the actors in old wars needed to gain a capital that would cover all costs that came with standing armies and war equipment. That's what pushed the bureaucracy development, the centralization of power and resources, increased taxation and nationalism within the states (Spruyt, 2002:135-137). But the warfare dynamic has changed in new wars and the traditional western way of approaching a conflict with large armies isn't as efficient in these new wars (Meilinger, 2007). Since battles in the shape of large scale military armies between two actors, normally states, doesn't appear in the same extent in new wars, the need of these big and expensive armies with mercenaries is decreased. The value of superiority military has decreased since the conflicts no longer rest only in the ability to inflict massive destruction in a specific battle (Schuurman, 2010). So the need for the al-Assad leading regime to mobilize a big standing army and independently finance the war isn't the way the war have proceed so far. There have been battles in Syria, spread over the state that the regime's army hasn't been able to win on its own. In Syria we don't see these big armies with battles on one specific battlefield, and the way Syria is financing the war right now is totally dependent on external actors. Not only financially, but also actors actively participating in the warfare. So again, even though the change in warfare dynamic has changed have Al-Assad's national Syrian army has failed and is currently totally dependent on external help.

4.5 Erosion of monopoly on legitimate violence

Not only can decentralization be recognized in the ways of financing the war in Syria. The state building wars in the early modern era led to monopoly on legitimate violence and a consolidated security arrangement in form of centralized and unified military. The state's monopoly on the use of violence is a crucial component in the state's authority and state building. Standing armies and mercenaries were much cheaper and efficient than what the feudal system had been like, and the state had control and prevented other

groups to gain influence (Spruyt 2002:135-137, Tilly, 1990). PMCs, PSCs, Russian military intervention, Iran, the militia group Hezbollah and all actors that militarily intervenes on the behalf of al-Assad indicates that the new war in Syria is a decentralized security apparatus. The use of violence by decentralized groups of armed forces, external actors and militia, indicates on a shift in power and fragmented institutions (Jenkins 2015:12). This can be challenging in a state building perspective and contribute to less control and further violence (see Blank, 2016, Jenkins 2015:12). Also the non-state actors, who use illegal violence, are distinguished from state-actors by their lack of state legitimacy on the use of violence (Kaldor 2012:95-97). They use violence in order to achieve their goals, based on their identity, which is also distinguished from the state and the state interests (Geeraerts, 1995). So the decentralized and privatized security apparatus in Syria and the erosion on the state's monopoly on legitimate violence gives indications on how new wars effect state building.

4.6 Summary

The Syrian conflict fits well to the new war theory presented above. This opens up for a new way to approach the war and deepen the understanding. The overall tendency that can be recognized in analysis is that there have been a sufficient decentralization and privatization in many parts and levels of the conflict due to the external actors and change in warfare dynamic. This decentralization and privatization indicates that new wars have other effects on state building than the old wars had, and that it points toward a fragmentation.

5 Conclusion

One purpose of this study was to examine the Syrian war to see how well it responds to the new war theory. I have showed through characteristics like actors, methods of warfare, motives and ways of financing the war Syria fits with the new war theory. I came to the conclusion that the Syrian war in many aspects can be considered a new war. This I argue is an important acknowledge since it opens up for another perspective and further studies in order to gain more knowledge and to approach new wars conflicts in a more appropriate way.

The second purpose was to, by examining the Syrian war, elaborate how new wars can affect state building based on how old wars led to state building. My hypothesis was that the involvement of external actors and they way they perpetuate wars change in the dynamic and prevent state building, which I applied to the Syrian case. I have come to the conclusion that war itself doesn't lead to the formation of the state. It is the centralization in power and resources as a consequence from the coordination and control of warfare and the need of increased economic capacity in order to win battles. In new wars, when the financial sources, war equipment and combats come from external actors who provide the internal actors with all necessary assets, the centralization of power and resources doesn't occur. Moreover points the high frequency of actors towards a decentralized security apparatus and increased erosion of the monopoly of legitimate violence, which was an essential element of state building of the modern state.

The war in Syria is still ongoing and exactly how it will affect the formation of the state cannot be fully observed until long after the end of the conflict. Though based on previous theory drawn from the early modern era and the indicators that at that time led to a consolidation of the state compared to the new war in Syria, we can make a legitimate prediction that the indicators examined in this study points towards a decentralization on different levels in Syria that unlikely would lead to a consolidation of the state like the state building wars that led to the modern states did.

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