T.C. ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

ANALYZING KURDISH POLITICS IN SYRIA: A DEPENDENT NATIONALISM

THESIS

Dilshad MUHAMMAD

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Thesis Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Filiz KATMAN

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Not: Öğrencinin Tez savunmasında **Başarılı** olması halinde bu form **imzalanacaktır**. Aksi halde geçersizdir.

To Lulu

FOREWORD

The purpose of this thesis is to study Kurdish politics in Syria. One of the reasons for why I chose this wide subject is the fact that its domain is under-researched. One objective of this thesis, hence, is to shed light on/contribute to the realm of Kurdish studies in Syria in general and Kurdish politics in Syria in particular.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Assist. Prof. Dr. Filiz Katman for her excellent teaching skills, insightful comments and overall unforgettable support throughout my enrollment in the program of M.A. in Political Science and International Relations at Istanbul Aydin University. I also would like to thank all other instructors and professors who taught at the Institute of Social Sciences at the same university.

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April 2015 Dilshad MUHAMMAD

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ABBREVIATIONS

FSA	: Free Syrian Army
HRW	: Human Rights Watch
IS	: The Islamic State
ICG	: International Crisis Group
KDPS	: The Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria
KNC	: The Kurdish National Council
KPR	: The Kurdish Political Reference
KRG	: The Kurdistan Regional Government
KSC	: The Kurdish Supreme Committee (Kurdish: Desteya Bilind a Kurd)
PDK	: The Kurdistan Democratic Party (Kurdish: Partîya Demokrat a Kurdistanê)
PKK	: The Kurdistan Workers Party (Kurdish: Partîya Karkerên Kurdistan)
PUK	: The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
PYD	: The Democratic Union Party (Kurdish: Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat)
SCP	: The Syrian Communist Party
SNC	: The Syrian National Council
SSPN	: The Syrian Social Nationalist Party
TEV-DEM	: The Western Kurdistan Democratic Society Movement
UAR	: The United Arab Republic
YPG	: The People's Defense Units (Kurdish: Yekîneyên Parastina Gel)

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ANALYZING KURDISH POLITICS IN SYRIA:
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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes Kurdish politics in Syria from 1946 to 2014. It shows how the Kurdish political movement in Syria has been emerged and developed. One key finding of this study is that Syrian Kurds did not fundamentally produce their own ethnic nationalism but rather they were under great influence of other Kurdish movements in Turkey and Iraq; their nationalism was dependent and not independent. Not only ethnic dynamics, but also policies by Syrian governments alienated Syrian Kurds and made them to develop a distinctive identity. Although the thesis studies Syrian Kurdish politics after Syria's independence in 1946, it offers political and tribal histories of these politics under the French Mandate in Syria. This study dedicates a considerable part to the organizational aspect of the Kurdish political movement in Syria. Interventions of non-Syrian Kurdish actors, lack of democracy and personal agendas are among reasons behind the numerous splits among Kurdish parties and their umbrella organizations. The subject of the thesis is important as it studies a rarely-studied subject on the academic level. It is also important, because today Kurds of Syria are representing a key player in so called the Syrian civil war.

Keywords: *Syria, Ethnicity, Kurds, Kurdish Politics, Nationalism*

SURİYE'DEKİ KÜRT POLİTİKASI ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME: BAĞIMLI BİR MİLLİYETÇİLİK

ÖZET

Bu tez, 1946-2014 yılları arasında Suriye'deki Kürt siyasetini incelemektedir. Suriyedeki Kürt siyasi hareketinin nasıl ortaya çıktığını ve geliştiği üzerinde çalışmaktadır. Çalışmanın önemli çıkarımlarından biri, Suriyedeki Kürtlerin kendi başlarına bir etnik milliyetçilik kurmaktan ve yürütmekten çok Türkiye ve Irak'taki Kürt hareketlerinin etkisi altında kaldıkları ve bu sebeple Suriye'de bağımsız bir Kürt milliyetçiliği bulunmadığı ve Türkiye ve Irak'taki hareketlere bağımlı kaldığıdır. Etnik dinamiklerin yanında Suriye devletinin politikaları Suriyeli Kürtleri kendilerine yabancılaştırmış ve farklı kendilerine özgü bir kimlik oluşturmalarına sebep olmuştur. Bu tez, tarihsel olarak Suriye'nin bağımsızlığından sonraki dönemi çalışıyor olmasına rağmen, hareketin 1946 öncesi Fransız Mandası dönemindeki siyasi ve kabile tarihine de değinecektir. Çalışmanın önemli bir kısmı Suriye'deki Kürt siyasi hareketinin organizasyonel yönüne ayrılmıştır. Suriyeli olmayan Kürt aktörlerin müdahalesi, demokrasinin yetersizliği /sorunları ve kişisel sorunlar Suriye'deki Kürt siyasi partileri ve onların çatı örgütlerinin arasındaki bölünmelerin sebeplerindendir. Akademik alanda az çalışılmış olması, bu tezin konusunu önemli kılmaktadır. Tezin konusunu önemli kılan bir diğer nokta, Suriyeli Kürtlerin günümüz Suriye iç savaşında önemli aktörler olmaları ve bu aktörlerin tezin çalışma konusu olmalarıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Suriye, Etnik köken, Kürtler, Kürt Siyaseti, Milliyetçilik*

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies and academic works on Kurds have traditionally been centered on Kurds of Turkey, Kurds of Iraq and slightly on Kurds of Iran. Kurds of Syria have been very rarely studied. This thesis, as its name suggests, analyzes the political situation of Kurds of Syria. The subject of the thesis represents a case study of minority ethno-politics; that is why the thesis elaborates on notion of nation, nationalism and ethnicity. The thesis does not have any presumed argument. That is, the study conducted within its framework analyzes and elaborates on different sides of the topic. Nevertheless, by the end of this study, the thesis features key aspects of the Kurdish political movement in Syria. Since its emergence and until now, this movement has been fundamentally affected by / under the patronage of Kurdish political actors in Turkey and Iraq. Organizationally, the movement experienced a lot split among it parties.

The objective of this study is to show dynamics behind the Kurdish political movement in Syria, its development and key aspects. The aim of the thesis is to shed light on an area that used to be under-researched. The thesis attempts to contribute into the recent small academic efforts for studying Kurds of Syria. As such, the content of the thesis is important because it offers a detailed account for Kurdish politics in Syria. As these politics are inter-related to Kurdish politics from other states, the topic under study is also important because it is, ultimately, a sufficient example of transborder mobilization and transnational politics. Moreover, Kurds in Syria has become, today, one of the main actors in "the Syrian Civil War" and play a decisive role in shaping the conflict in Syria, or in an important part of Syria.

The research question of the thesis is how the Kurdish political movement in Syria has been emerged and developed. In order to reach an answer for such a question, the thesis starts to raise sub-questions of what is nationalism, nation, nation-state and ethnicity and how those four notions have been interacting. After reviewing the conceptual history of these notions, the thesis moves on by exploring nationalism

currents in Syria. As such, the Kurdish nationalism in Syria is studied taken into consideration the very Syrian contexts.

As it is mentioned, the theoretical framework of this thesis consists of four edges; nation, nationalism, ethnicity and nation-state. Chapter One reviews theoretical literature on these four notions to pave the way for the study to be carried out. Many parts of the thesis show the importance of communication in shaping and building nations and nation-states. The lack of such a communication impedes building homogenous nations and nation-states where all citizens are equal. Moreover, ethnic minorities which are not assimilated and/or integrated into the state where they exit, tend to develop their own demands and gradually produce their own politics. What is noticeable in this regard is that Kurds in Syria have a distinctive political identity not only due to objective factors like language but also due to subjective and rational-choice factors. Hostile policies by many Syrian governments pushed Kurds to identify themselves with a narrow ethnic identity rather than a wider Syrian identity.

The thesis is made up of three chapters. Chapter One consists of two parts. The first part deals with reviewing the literature of notions of nation, nationalism, ethnicity and nation-state. This part sets the theoretical framework and the conceptual base for the subject of thesis. The second part of this chapter relates these theoretical and conceptual themes to basic aspects of nation and nationalism in Syria and among Kurds as an ethnic minority there.

Chapter Two which consists of four parts features a wide-span background of Kurdish politics in the Syrian state. The first part explores historical dynamics behind the state formation in Syria and the nature of Syrian politics in the pre-independence era. It also explores the settlement of Kurds in major Syrian cities since Saladin era and the tribal nature of Kurds in the north of Syria. The second part elaborates, in details, on the organizational structure of the Kurdish political movement in Syria. This part seeks to map Kurdish political parties in Syria, the parties which are in a constant organizational change since the establishment of the first Kurdish party in Syria in 1957. The third part analyzes why only few parties were, relatively, successful in being active while the majority remained idle. The fourth part sheds light on how different Syrian governments have treated what can be called the

Kurdish issue in Syria. This part analyzes the influence of the complex regional context on Kurdish politics in Syria.

Chapter Three focuses on more contemporary aspects of these politics. It covers the rise for The Democratic Union Party, PYD and how it becomes the sole Kurdish player during The 2011 Syrian Uprising. The chapter also covers the confrontation between The PYD and The Islamic State, IS and its consequences in the Kurdish region in Syria.

To avoid confusion, the naming process or the nominal terms, throughout the thesis, are adopted basing on what different actors call themselves. All names of parties, groups and territories in this thesis will only have lingual meanings denuded from any political connotations. For example, the term The Islamic State should not entail any reference to Islam as a religion. And Rojava is used to refer to the regions overwhelmingly populated by Kurds in north of Syria. Terms of "Syrian Kurds," "Kurds of Syria" and "Kurds in Syria" are interchangeably used throughout the thesis.

As far as methodology is concerned, a qualitative method is applied. The thesis conducts content analysis and assessing previous available literature on the topic. Primary resources of this thesis are agreements, official statements, interviews and maps; one map was photographed in Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris in January 2015. In October 2014, an interview with a Syrian Kurd activist was carried out via Viber smartphone application. As far as some aspects of Kurdish parties in Syria are concerned and as some related-issues lack credible resources, the thesis, in very few occasions, bases on the author's personal experience.

For the secondary resources, the domain of Kurdish politics, and other Kurdish subjects, in Syria lacks research and expertise. This decreases chances for consulting and assessing other works. Nevertheless, the Routledge-published Syria's Kurds: History, Politics, and Society by Jordi Tejel remains an indispensable guide for studying Kurds of Syria. While local and non-academic Syrian Kurdish resources are usually biased, the Berlin-based Kurd Watch platform, in spite of some shortcomings, provides useful inputs and information for any research in this domain.

2. NATION AND NATIONALISM

The attempt to answer the question of "which one is older; *nation* or *nationalism*?" is probably the best way to go through for defining nationalism. It is attempt because, until present, there is no clear cut unanimity among scholars on what do nation and nationalism actually mean; and hence there is no unanimity about when to they [nation and nationalism] date back. This question is crucial for defining nation and nationalism because each term is usually definable in the light of the definition of the other.[1] There are views which consider nationalism as the political modernization process of the *already-exited* nations and/or ethnic groups. And there are views which consider nations as products of the overall social and economic modernization of communities and political and legal modernization and standardization of the state. What is clear in this debate is that *nationalism* is a modern phenomenon.

2.1 Nation

According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, the English term of "*nation*" is derived from the Latin term *Nationem* (nominative *natio*) which means "birth, origin; breed, stock, kind, species; race of people, tribe," literally "that which has been born". Oxford Dictionary of English[2] defines *nation* as "a large body of people united by common descent, history, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular state or territory." Among the meanings of "*nation*" that Websters' Unabridged Dictionary presents are:

1. A people connected by supposed ties of blood generally manifested by community of language, religion, and customs, and by a sense of common interest and interrelation.

2. Popularly, any group having like institutions and customs and a sense of social homogeneity and mutual interest … A single language or closely

[1] According to Roger Brubaker the thinking of Nationalism should be carried out "without [thinking of] nations" (Smith, 2010: 10).
[2] Oxford Dictionary of English, 3rd Edition, edited by Angus Stevenson.

> related dialects, a common religion, a common tradition and history, and a common sense of right and wrong, and a more or less compact territory, are typically characteristics [of nation]; but one or more of these elements may be lacking and yet leave a group that form its community of interest and desire to lead a common life is called *a nation*.
>
> 3. Loosely, the body of inhabitants of a country united under a single independent government; a state.

It is clear from the above extracts that leading dictionaries of English, both British and American, relate nation to a wide spectrum of meaning and concepts. This wideness is a signal of the difficultly of defining *nation*. This definition process is considered one of the most difficult tasks in domains of humanities and social sciences (Smith, 2010: 10) (Tilly, 1975: 6) (Winderl, 1999: 17). In this regard, scholars of political thought in general and of *nationalism* in particular, and statesmen in some cases, adopted different understandings of *nation*. While some of them argue that nation is existed due objective factors like language, others argue that nations are no more than subjective entities; people decide whether to be a nation or not. Many other scholars stayed in between and argued for the importance of both objective and subjective elements in shaping nations.

According to Thomas Winderl (1999: 17), Joseph Stalin insisted on "simultaneous coalescence of four elements (language, territory, economic life and psychic formation) for a nation to be existed." Stalin defined *nation* as "a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture" (Stalin, 1953: 307). It seems that those four elements set by Winderl were the same reason that made Anthony D. Smith (2010: 11) to see Joseph Stalin's definition of nation as an objective one.[3] In addition to Stalin, Edwards Shils, Harlold Issacs and Clifford Geertz see ancestors and family ties as significant factors in shaping one's identity of belonging to a group and consequently nations (Llobera, 1999: 1-2).

[3] Joseph Stalin (1878-1953) is considered the second most important figure in the Soviet Union after Vladimir Lenin, he also, by his writings, effectively contributed to Marxism. However, the adjective "Marxist" is deliberately not attached to Stalin's definition of *nation*. That is because, according to Llobera (1999), there are other "Marxist-inspired" understandings of nation and nationalism like those of Tom Nairn and Michael Hechter. As such, there is no single fixed Marxist understanding of nation but rather many various Marxist understandings.

Contrary to such understanding, the French thinker Ernest Renan (1990: 20) describes nation as:

> "Man is a slave neither of his race nor his language, nor of his religion, nor of the course of rivers nor of the direction taken by mountain chains. A large aggregate of men, healthy in mind and warm of heart, creates the kind of moral conscience which we call a nation."

From this description, it is clear that Renan attacks those who believe that objective factors of language, religion and geography/territory (rivers, mountains) are important in shaping nations. Renan, as such, sees that only subjective factors like rationality and moral attitudes among a group of people can made them a nation. More recently, the British Marxist historian and scholar Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012) [4] argues that the essential meaning of nations is political and it is associated with "modern territorial state" (Hobsbawm, 1992: 9, 18).

In between those two radical" understandings of nation, one as totally objective and the other as totally subjective; many scholars believe that nation cannot be defined or understood in the absence of any type of the mentioned factors. For example, Max Weber (1864-1920) has a mixed way of seeing nations. Although, Weber gives great importance to the role of natural and blood ties in society, he nevertheless, sees nations "as groups united in a common program of social action" (Motyl, 2001: 579). According to Alexander J. Motyl, Weber was never able to decide "which one was important for defining "the Nation," ethnicity or politics" (Motyl, 2001: 579). Other scholars who see nations both objectively and subjectively are Benedict Anderson and Karl W. Deutsch (Winderl, 1999: 17). While relating the evolving of nation to modern ages and that it is something emerged due modern mode of society and economy (subjectivity), Benedict Anderson, throughout his *Imagined Communities* confirm that language is the key base which nation is based on (objectivity). Anderson states that "from the start, the nation was conceived in language" (Anderson, 2006: 145).

According to Smith, pure subjective approach and pure objective approach failed in defining the term nation independently. While there are objective concrete aspects of nations like language, customs and territory, there are also subjective aspects like

[4] The Guardian, 01 October 2012. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/oct/01/eric-hobsbawm

attitudes, perceptions and sentiments (Smith, 2010: 11). According to him, the solution for this failure "has been to choose criteria which span the "objective-subjective" spectrum" (Smith, 2010: 12). While being closer to objective approach, Smith utilizes the mentioned "solution" in his definition of *nation*. He defines it as "a named human community residing in a perceived homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a distinct public culture and common laws and customs for all members" (Smith, 2010: 13).

To sum up, while there are scholars who look at nation as being primordial and have a set of objective characters like language and religion, there are others who see nation as mere products of modern conditions. However, recently, works of different scholars show that nation cannot be perceived if both objective and subjective conditions have not been taken into consideration.

2.2 Nationalism

Anthony D. Smith starts his work *Nationalism* (2010) by offering what he describes "the most important usages" of nationalism since the 20th century. Smith sets five meanings of nationalism: "(1) a process of formation, or growth, of nations; (2) a sentiment or consciousness of belonging to the nation; (3) a language and symbolism of the nation; (4) a social and political movement on behalf of the nation; (5) a doctrine and or ideology of the nation, both general and particular" (Smith, 2010: 5-6). As it is clear from these five "usages", it is the *nation* which *nationalism* is concerned with. Although this fact may look axiomatic especially as *nationalism* is, linguistically, derived from *nation*, still what is significant in this regard, is the interaction between both. For example, while some usage (1) shows nationalism as process of nation "formation", another usage (4) shows nationalism as an act "on behalf of the nation"; i.e. the nation *forms* nationalism. In fact, the debate between some scholars is revolving on which term is the cause and which one is the result. Many other scholars see both at the same time. That is, both nation and nationalism affect each other and emerged simultaneously.

Josep R. Llobera (1999) refers to three types of theories on nationalism; 1) Primordialist and Sociobiological Theories, 2) Instrumentalist Theories and 3) Modernization Theories. This classification is useful in having a board view on theories of nationalism. However, while the first type and the third type represent

two different, yet complementary, orientations, the second types seem to be useful on another level of analysis. In other words, classifying theories on nationalism into primordialist and sociobiological theories on the one hand, and into modernization theories, on the other is useful in understanding the nature of nation and/or nationalism. That is, the first type definitely sees natural, irrational and biological attributes as key factors in shaping ethnic and/or national activities of nations and hence shaping nationalism. On contrary, modernization type, totally or partially, associates nations and nationalism to modernism. And that they are rational and modern state-related phenomena. In short, primordialist and sociobiological theories relate nationalism to totally past/old dynamics and that nationalism is something "perennial" (Llobera, 1999: 9). Modernization theories relatively relate nationalism to specific era; modernity. Going back to the instrumentalist type, this approach is a goal-oriented and not a time-oriented one. Instrumentalist theories seek to understand *how* nationalism is being utilized and not *when* to nationalism dates back. Hence, it can be argued that this type is better not be classified with both Modernization type, and primordialist and sociobiological type.

Primordialist and sociobiological theories focus on the natural and sometime genetics factors in the overall shaping of nations. Examples of scholars from this type include R. Paul Shaw, Yuwa Wong, Clifford Geertz,[5] Harold Isaacs and Pierre van den Berghe (Llobera, 1999: 2-3, 5). But this kind of theories, according to Llobera, "often fail to account for the formation, evolution and eventual disappearance of nations" (Llobera, 1999: 7).

On the other hand, the great majority of scholars more clearly relate notions of nation and nationalism to modern times (Llobera, 1999: 9) (Smith, 2010: 95). Llobera divides modernization theories into three sub-categories; a) Social Communication theories, b) Economistic theories and c) Politico-ideological theories. Social communication scholars argue that the contact between people in a given society has a great role in shaping the national manifestation of that society. And since such a contact was maximized during the modernity period, due to industrializational communication techniques, those scholars relate national manifestations to

[5] According to Anthony D. Smith, Clifford Geertz is "unjustifiably misunderstood" when scholars associate him to pure primordialism. According to Smith, Geertz, alongside with primordial elements, has also focused on the importance of "secular and civil ties and [the role] of industrial society" (Smith, 2010: 56-57).

modernism. Among scholars who were labeled by Llobera as socio-communicationists are Benedict Anderson and Karl W. Deutsch (Llobera, 1999: 10-11).

Anderson in his famous work *Imagined Communities* refers to the importance of printed materials in shaping modern nations and their activities. People became, thanks to the print press and books, more connected and eventually they started to, virtually,[6] know each other. Anderson argues that these materials were been circulated in great number/copies due to the capitalist mode of production (Anderson, 2006: 41, 61, 133). Based on such understanding, Anderson states that "Print Capitalism", as he puts it, was the major dynamic behind both emerging the nation and frameworking its ideology i.e. nationalism (Anderson, 2006: 43-46). The second scholar, Karl W. Deutsch (1912-1992), agrees with Anderson on the importance of communication in the formation of nationalism. For him, the ability of communication is "the determining factor in the development of nationalism (Smith, 1954: 47).

One of the most influential scholars in the domain of nationalism is Ernest Gellner (1925 - 1995). Gellner, in his *Nation and Nationalism*, states that nationalism is "primarily a political principle" (Gellner, 2006: 1). And that "nationalist sentiment is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment. A nationalist movement in one actuated by a sentiment of this kind" (Gellner, 2006: 1). Another characteristic added by Gellner, is that nationalism "requires nation-state" (Winderl, 1999: 12) because, for Gellner, an ethnic group, due to nationalism, "should dominate a state" (Eriksen, 2010: 119). And as such, a nation-state is constructed. Gellner relates all these processes to economic conditions of the modernity; industrialism. For him, nationalism is the political embodiment of needs and economic conditions of industrialism. Jonathan Spencer explains this process, in Gellner's argument, as follows:

> "Industrial society is based on a necessary cultural homogeneity which allows for continuous cognitive and economic growth. In order to ensure that homogeneity, the state takes control over the process of cultural reproduction, through the institution of mass schooling. Nationalism, an argument for the political pre-eminence of culturally

[6] "Virtually" is used here based on Anderson definition of "nation"; for him nation is an "*imagined* political community" (Anderson, 2006: 6).

> homogeneous units, is the political correlate of this process" (Spencer, 2002: 591).

While Gellner does not neglect ethnic aspects (Winderl, 1999: 18) (Erikson 2010: 119), he clearly states that nationalism "invents nations" (Gellner, 1964: 169) (Walker 2003). As a result, nationalism, according to Gellner, can be described as: a modern political ideology that emerged in the modern ages due the very economic dynamics of the time.

Going back to the question of which one is older, nation or nationalism, the answer may not be white or black. Some scholars argue that the modernization has characterized the society of a given geographical space with common and homogenous features. It made the society to have bonding factors like law and common interests. At this stage, such a society was called nation. In fact, the political ideology associated with modernity period was responsible for mobilizing those societies, both politically and culturally, till they became nations. In this sense, this ideology, nationalism, founded nation and was directing its political orientation and performance. On the other hand, some other scholars argue that societies with shared characteristics existed long time before modernization. Those human societies since *old* ages were bonded by factors like language, religion and/or shared collective memory. And that those societies have experienced different periods and different conditions among them are modernity and modernization. For them, the political ideology of modernization did not created nation but rather nation itself produced political ideology which is labeled as nationalism. And in this sense, nationalism is a product of the nation and it serve to achieve autonomy and unity and shape an identity for it (Smith, 2010: 13).

Taking these two arguments into considerations, many scholars like Gellner and Anderson argue that nations were existed due to modernization and its political ideology of nationalism. But at the same time, those scholars refer to the significance of the role of already-acquired *old* characteristics like language and culture in paving the way for nationalism to work. As such, nation and nationalism are in an interactive relation; each one of them is affecting the other and affected by the other.

2.3 Ethnicity

Ethnicity is "the fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition."[7] The noun ethnicity and the adjective ethnic became popular since 1950s.[8] According to Enoch Wan and Mark Vanderwerf there are three basic approaches to understanding ethnicities; Primordial, Instrumental and Constructivist. Primordialists see ethnicity "fixed at birth", Instrumentalists see it as "based on historical and symbolic" memory and it is created and used by leaders and others in the pragmatic pursuit of their own interests" (Wan & Vanderwerf, 2009). For Constructivists, ethnic identity is something created by people in specific social and historical contexts to further their own interests" (Wan & Vanderwerf, 2009).

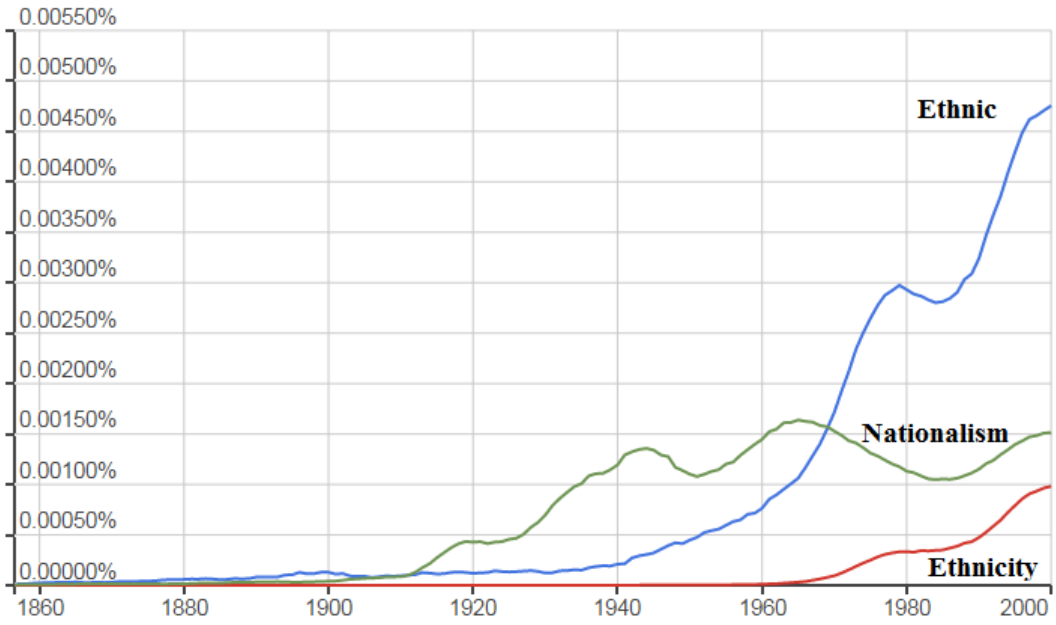

Figure 2.1: The Rate of Usage of "Ethnic," "Ethnicity" and "Nationalism" in English

This figure indicates the frequency of usage of mentioned terms in books written in English since 1860 and indexed by Google Books service. Hence it does not necessarily represent all English books since 1860. Nevertheless, the figure gives a sufficient overview of the frequency of the use of "ethnic," "ethnicity" and "nationalism"

In his comprehensive study of the role of ethnicity in stimulating separatism-oriented actions, Henry E. Hale differentiates between ethnicity itself and ethnicity-

[7] Oxford Dictionary.
[8] See Figure 1.1.

related politics or ethnopolitics. Hale, in the theoretical part of his *The Foundations of Ethnopolitics*, states that "ethnicity is about uncertainty, whereas ethnopolitics is about interests" (Hale, 2008: 33). For him, ethnicity is the product of the uncertainty the humankind face in the touch with the outside world (Hale, 2008: 3). Ethnopolitics is not ethnicity; Hale states that the highest interest of people is "maximization of life chances" by making "wealth, security, and power" (Hale, 2008: 3). Basing on this understanding, Hale argues that the level of economic development and not ethnicity or identity determines separatism (Hale, 2008: 252). And this explains why "patterns of ethnic behavior occur in some instances but not others" (Hale, 2008: 3). Moreover, Hale also refers that there are plenty of scholarly studies that shows the separatism is related to underdevelopment in the postcolonial developing world (Hale, 2008: 252).

2.4 An Interaction

While agreeing that nationalism is a modern phenomenon, pre-modernists and modernists perceive the type of state, nation-state, associated with nationalism within the context of modernity. For both of them, nation-state is a state which is usually based on a homogenous nation (Gellner, 1964: 165-166) (Connor, 1994: 196) (Llobera, 1999: 9). As paraphrased by Thomas H. Eriksen, Gellner's account of nation-state entails that this state is characterized by markers (like language or religion) of an ethnic group (Eriksen, 2010: 119).

In his elaboration on nation-state, Karl W. Deutsch states that during the process of nation building "subordinated" *ethnies* (or national minorities)[9] are absorbed and assimilated into the main social group of the nation-state (Deutsch, 1965: 25-26) (Llobera, 1999: 9). Deutsch justifies his argument by giving examples of how the Gaelic-speaking community of Glasgow started to use English and how the Bretons in France learned French (Deutsch, 1965: 26-27). On the other hand, Deutsch refers that "the fast … breakup of colonial power led to unassimilated populations" (Deutsch, 1965: 73) in the so called Third World. According to Deutsch, the developments of "language, mass audience, literacy, industrialization must *eventually* be achieved" otherwise if these developments, which are crucial in the

[9] For Will Kymlicka "ethnic group" and "national minority" are not the same; an ethnic group is an immigrant community or descending from an immigrant community.
For more information see: http://uregina.ca/~gingrich/j2699.htm

process of nation building, condensed "into the lifetime of one generation or two, the chances for assimilation to work are much smaller" (Deutsch, 1965: 73).

Referring to the same phenomenon, Walker Connor shows how the relatively-recent doctrine of "self-determination of nations" has been "widely publicized and elevated to the statue of a self-evident truth" and that this doctrine is basing on ethnicity (Connor, 1972: 331). Agreeing with Deutsch and Connor, Will Kymlicka states that many "groups have maintained their distinct identity, institutions and the desire of the self-government" during the 20th century (Kymlicka, 2001: 242). Moreover, Thomas H. Eriksen argues that many ethnic minorities since the last two decades of the 20th century raised their ethnopolitical "demands" because they were not "assimilated" in the countries they exist in (Eriksen, 2010: 155). And that those minorities tend to "establish organization[s]" for this purpose and produce "ethnopolitics vis-à-vis the authorities" (Eriksen, 2010: 158)

Jumping to the nation-state realm, it is worth to mention that building nations and/or nation-states was relatively more successful in the west than it was in the east. Syria as a sovereign state was created as a result of the process of de-colonialization, and which its border was set based on agreements between colonial powers of France and The Kingdom of Great Britain. After 1946, the date of the independence of Syria from the French Mandate, Syrian political powers could not produce a well-structured homogenous *Syrian* nation/nationalism. Arab nationalism in Syria, as one of the most dominant nationalism throughout the Syrian state history, was based on the idea that Syrian people is part of the Arab people and that that Syria is part of the Arab World.[10] It may be not precise to call the Syrian state as a nation-state; it has ideological loyalty to some other beyond-state entity. Attempts to *Syrianize* the Arab Nationalism in Syria by Hafez al-Asad (1930-2000) was relatively unsuccessful; authoritarianism and family/clan-rule labeled that process. These nationalizing attempts for shaping a homogenous nation was particularly unsuccessful as the state did not recognize ethnic groups (or national minorities in Kymlicka's words). On the other hand and not only as a reaction to the denial by the state, the main ethnic minority, Kurds of Syria, have also developed a distinctive identity. Lack of communication between Syrian Kurds and other Syrian components (Karl W.

[10] The Arab World refers to areas inhabited by Arabs. Today there are 22 Arab countries which, together, are members of The Arab League.

Deutsch), state's "coercive" attempts to assimilate Kurds into the Arab *melting pot* (Kymlicka, 2001: 248) and transborder influence of Turkey's Kurds and Iraq's Kurds over Syria's Kurds have all been significant factors in shaping this distinctive identity.

3. POLITICAL HISTORY OF KURDS IN THE SYRIAN STATE: 1946 - 2011

3.1 Historical Background

3.1.1 The Formation of Syria and Syrian Nationalisms

There is no consensus on how the term "Syria" exactly appeared. Yet there are concrete references that it is a Greek term. According to Lamia R. Shehadeh, "Syria" was coined by the Greeks who derived it from the name "Assyria" and it was used in late 6th century BC (Shehadeh, 2011: 18, 25) (Pipes, 1990: 13).[11] Syria was named by its different conquerors according to their vantage point; *Ebernari* (Beyond the River) by Persians, *Al-Sham* (To the Left) by Arabs and *Outremer* (Beyond the Sea) by Crusaders (Shehadeh, 2011: 26). In all cases the term was *loosely* referring to parts of Eastern Mediterranean. The first time the term Syria officially associated with a *territory* was under the Ottoman Vilayets System of 1846 (Choueiri, 1989: 26) (Celik, 2013: 706). According to an Ottoman map printed in 1893, "Syria" was covering both Vilayet of al-Sham (Damascus) and The Mutasarrifate of al-Quds (Jerusalem).[12] Syria became a State under the French Mandate and became a sovereign state since 1946.

[11] Other possible etymological origins of "Syria" are the Cuneiform *Suri*, the Ugaritics *sryn* and Hebrew *Siryon*. (Shehadeh, 2011: 18).
[12] See Map 2.1.

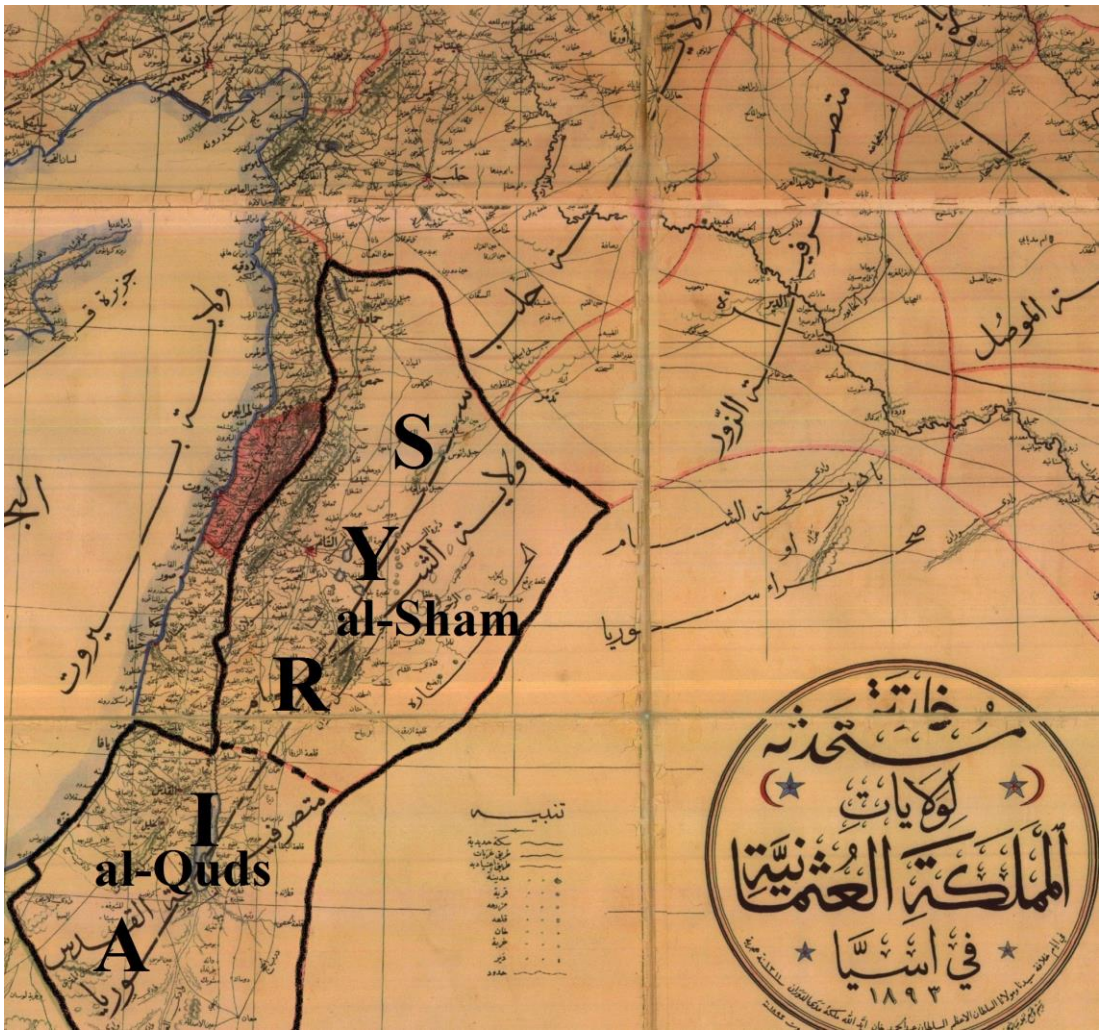

Figure 3.1: The Ottoman Map Of Syria After 1846.

Details:

Extract from “Kharita Mustahdatha li Wilayat Al Memlekah Al Othmaniya fi Asia 1893” (English: an updated map for Vilayets of The Ottoman “Kingdom” in Asia 1893).

Publisher: The American Press of Beirut 1893

For strategic military and economic reasons, European imperial powers were increasingly interested in the Middle Eastern regions during the nineteenth century. According to Dietmar Rothermund, Europeans "wanted to advance their economic interests. [And] the opening of Suez Canal in 1869 was an important event in this context. It [Suez Canal] literarily cuts across the Ottoman Empire and facilitated the spread of European colonialism" (Rothermund, 2006: 102). As a colonial rival to the

Kingdom of Great Britain, which managed to increase its presences in Egypt, the way to its important colony of India, the French Empire, to counterbalance this presence, started to seek a foothold in the region. This rivalry however, did not cause a conflict between the British and the French but rather, it resulted in a broad multi-level understanding. This had taken a form of signing many agreements like The Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, San Remo Conference of April 1920 and The Treaty of Sevres of August 1920. In May 1916, The British represents by Mark Sykes and The French represented by François Georges-Picot signed the Asia Minor Agreement, which is also better known as Sykes-Picot Agreement.[13] Basing on these political *deals*, European colonial powers divided the post-Ottoman East Mediterranean region into many territories. The British and The French managed to have the ultimate leverage over the region. By setting borders by those colonial powers, these territories will later on be transformed into "modern" states in a decolonization process. Simultaneously with signs of dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in early twentieth century, Syria, which was under the control of this empire, became a focal point for The French Republic.[14] Although it had been *Status quo* before, France has *legally* reinforced its ultimate leverage over Syria by an *official* recognition by the League of Nations of its presence in Syria in 1922. The French control over Syria was labeled as *Mandate*, through which The League of Nations, without setting a timetable, asked the French authorities to "facilitate the progressive development of Syria [and Lebanon] as independent state[s]" (Yapp, 1996: 86).

Throughout the period of the Mandate in Syria, French authorities adopted sectarian-based measures on a large scale. Mandate authorities were keen in dealing with Syria's different religious, ethnic and tribal components as separate *sovereign* entities and these authorities had set their policies accordingly. The classical colonial approach of *divide and rule* became the major attribute of The French Mandate. In the Syrian case, this approach has explicitly had its roots in the French claims of protecting minorities in general and protecting Christians in particular (Khoury, 1987: 5). One of the major first steps the Mandate authorities have taken was to

[13] The Sykes-Picot Agreement has been signed secretly. After the fall of the Tsar of Russia, whom his government partially involved in the agreement, the Bolsheviks exposed the version of the agreement which they have found in the Russian archive.

[14] From 1852 to 1870 France's official name was The [Second] French Empire. From 1870-1940 it was called The French [Third] Republic.

divide, where applicable, the Syrian[15] territory into many statelets. Along with The State of Greater Lebanon and The State of Hatay, The State of Syria (including Damascus and Aleppo), The Alawite State and The State of Jabal Druze were created (Provence, 2005: 50). Each of these statelets had its own territory and its own flag. They have been *easily* created because each statelet's territory was overwhelmingly populated by one homogenous [religious] community. Moreover, other minorities who had not been *granted* a state like Christians, Kurds, Circassians and Bedouin tribes were still treated on their ethnic and/or religious identities by the French Mandate authorities. All those minorities were usually represented by their religious, ethnic and tribal leaders like clergymen and sheikhs. This kind of representation was promoted by both parties: minority leaders and Mandate authorities. Local leaders were taking advantages of this situation to consolidate their leadership over their groups and the French authorities were maintaining a continuity of a deep sectarian division among the Syrian *societies*. For example, the French policies prevented the Syrian "Christians who were not hostile to [Syrian patriotic] nationalism" to be integrated in the political life. (White, 2011: 56).

The roots of such a kind of representation can be traced back to the Ottoman *Millet*[16] System. Mandate authorities and Christian clergymen preferred to continue a *Millet-like* system as a way of dealing with each other. That was because the *Millet* System granted the clergymen not only a religious leadership on behalf of their minorities but also political advantage as they were the sole representatives of their groups (White, 2011: 55-56). It is important here to mention that the local Syrian political power, under the foreign mandate, was not totally restricted in the hands of religious, ethnic and tribal leaders. Other individuals like merchants and urban notables played significant role in the politics of that time. This trend was, however, much more popular among Sunni Arabs. And this can be attributed to different reasons. First, Sunni Arabs were not a minority, both ethnically and religiously, hence their politics could not be easily manipulated as it happened inside other minorities. Second, they inhabited in relatively vast geographical space, the fact that did not facilitate building an *inner* sect-based central stronghold. Third, which is related to the previous reason

[15] At early twentieth century, Syria was a common name for today's Syrian Arab Republic, State of Lebanon and Turkey's province of Hatay.
[16] "Millet" is a Turkish term meaning "community" or simply "people". Ottoman Millets used to be used to refer to non-Muslim minorities who lived in the Ottoman Empire.

and is the most important, is the fact that Syria's most important cities at that time were locating in the geographical space largely inhabited by Sunnis. The last factor does not necessarily entail that people from other minorities were not inhabited in the Syria cities.

Early nationalism thoughts in Syria started to appear in the Syrian cities by the late of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. These thought were probably affected by a series of political developments throughout the world. As Anthony D. Smith (2010: 7) and Miroslav Hroch (1985) state that nationalism does not appear by armed struggle but rather but cultural and intellectual evidences, nationalist sentiments in Syria were articulated by intellectuals like thinkers and writers.[17] Those thinkers according to many scholars were influenced, in their turn, by notions of nation-state and nationalism in Europe, which, as mentioned before, were results of modernization (Farah, 1963: 144). In addition to the European factor, the rise of Turkish nationalism during the very last period of The Ottoman Empire (and Kemalism in The Republic of Turkey), was another crucial developments in this regard.[18] Eventually, the notion of nationalism in Syria was developed into two directions: Pan Syrianism and Arab Nationalism. However, both of them fell victim to the mandate" and process of de-colonialization as the created Syrian state was not fulfilling their political ambitions (Gelvin, 2011: 215). Nevertheless, Arab nationalism remained the most powerful nationalism in the Syrian political scene since then.[19]

Aspects of modernization in The Ottoman Empire like Tanzimat decrees, new market conditions, standardizing institutions and attempting to set norms for the public and private domains increased communication between (citizens) of The Ottoman Empire. Transportation and modern technologies further eased this communication and made many social groups to develop social, economic and cultural ties. These ties created a shared social, economic and cultural "spaces". Such

[17] This was the case for both Pan Syrianism and Arab Nationalism (Shlaim, 2003) (Groiss 2011: 41-44) (Hajjar 2011: 182).

[18] As far as Arab Nationalism is concerned, another factor can be added here; colonial powers, especially The Great Britain had an influential role in provoking Arab nationslim against The Ottoman rule. See n24.

19 According to Daniel Pipe, Pan Syrianism was not successful because, as being a secularist and led by Christians, it failed to attract Sunni Muslims who form the majority of Syrian people (Pipe 1990: 43).

spaces, in some case, contributed in forming regions like The Greater Syria[20] (Gelvin 2011: 211). Greater Syria gradually become a "distinct economic unit" and "a British-built telegraph connected Aleppo, Beirut and Damascus" (Gelvin 2011: 211). Taking into consideration Benedict Anderson and Karl W. Deutsch's focus on the importance of communication in shaping and making nations and James L. Gelvin's previous *communicational* account, the Greater Syria witnessed the emergence of what is called Pan Syrianism as a nationalism of that region. Pan Syrianism is a political ideology that sees that the region of the Greater Syria has a nation; Syrians.[21] Pan-Syrianism started to flourish by the early twentieth century (Pipes, 1990: 3). This version of nationalism was concerned not with an ethnicity or religious but with a geographical zone so to speak. According to Pan-Syrianists, people of the Greater Syria are eligible to be a nation. This version of nationalism did not identify itself with Arab nationalism (Pipes, 1990: 41). The key ideological and organizational leader of this nationalism was the Christian Lebanese Antun Saadah,[22] the founder of Syrian Social Nationalist Party, SSPN.[23]

On the other hand, another version of nationalism dominated the region of Syria since the late 19th century, Arab Nationalism. As it is mentioned before, the political conditions of World War I in general and the Ottoman Empire conditions in particular, had encouraged the Arabs to act nationalistically. Pushed by the British[24] and led by Hussein bin Ali (1854-1931), Arabs revolted against the Ottoman rule in 1916. While being led by an Arab from Hijaz (today a part of Saudi Arabia), The Arab Revolt, to a great extent, took place in today's Syria and other neighboring countries. Bin Ali's offspring like King Faysal settled in Damascus and was politically active there. These actions in Damascus highly contributed in the spread of Arab Nationalism in Syria. After the independence in 1946 and until the union

[20] Greater Syria is a geographical term that refers to today's Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and Palestinian Territories. It also contains Sanjak of Alexandretta (Hatay Province in The Republic of Turkey).

[21] According to the most influential thinker and politician of Pan Syrianism Antun Saadah, Syrians are a complete nation and they are not part of larger nations [Arabs] (Pipe 1990: 41).

[22] Antun Saadeh was born in 1904 and executed by the Lebanese authorities in 1949.

[23] Some argue that Pan-Syrianism used to be headed by Christian figure like Butrus al-Bustani and Saadeh. They argue that Pan Syrianism was promoted by Christians to prevent Sunni Arabs and *their* nationalism (Arab Nationalism) to dominate the Syrian political scene (Pipes, 1990: 41-42).

[24] Henry McMahon, British High Commissioner in Egypt had promised Hussein bin Ali, the leader of The Arab Revolt (1914-1916) that the British will support the Arab independence from the Ottoman Empire. This was done through a series of letters between the two parts known as McMahon–Hussein Correspondence.

with Egypt in 1958, Syria witnessed political disorder; series of military coups were carried out. The first coup took place in March 1949[25] and a shift happened in the Syrian politics; the traditional elite was somehow pushed aside and "the tables [were] turned on" it (Chaitani, 2007: 127). Since then and until 1958, the political power in Syria was in ebb and flow movement between traditional elites, Pan-Syrianists, Communists and Arab Nationalists, and all struggled to rule the country.

Arab nationalists succeeded to overcome their political opponents in that struggle. Benefiting from the high popularity of Arab nationalism at that time in other Arab countries, The Arab Socialist Baath Party in Syria managed to become the main political player in Syria. At that time, the Arab nationalist Egyptian president Gamal Abd al-Nasser (1918-1970) was the most popular Arab leader and "no other Arab leader approached his status" (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013: 291). To overcome its main rival (the Syrian Communist Party, SCP), The Baath Party "approached Nasser about a union" (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013: 304). As a result, Egypt and Syria were unified in February 1958 under The United Arab Republic, UAR. This republic however, did not last long and broke up in 1961. During the period of The UAR, dramatic shifts in Syrian politics continued. Fundamentally dominated by Egypt (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013: 304), UAR has excluded lots Syrian political movements. Minorities for example, "nearly disappeared from the four Syrian cabinets of the UAR years" (Pipes, 1990: 155).

After the collapse of UAR, the Baath Party regained the rule in 1963 by a military coup carried out by Hafez al-Asad (1930-2000) and other Baathist military officers. Al-Asad however, conducted an inner coup in his own *ruling* party in 1970 and seized the rule alone since that time. After the last coup, Syrian politics again dramatically shifted and entered into a different era. Al-Asad has crucially destroyed the urban Sunni elites, who were big landowners at the same time, by promoting land and property reforms (Pipes, 1990: 178). It can be argued here that al-Asad as coming from a rural background, promoted agricultural and land-owning reforms in

[25] The military coup has been conducted by Husni al-Zaim on 30 March 1949. Some arguments relate this coup, among other reasons, to the American role in TAPLINE Project (The Trans-Arabian Pipeline) of 1946. This was a pipeline intended to carry oil from the Arabian American Oil Company, Aramco in Saudi Arabia to the Mediterranean cost of Lebanon passing through Jordan and Syria. Youssef Chaitani states that "the Syrians [on the contrary to Americans] were not enthusiastic" to the project and made many excuses to avoid signing the Pipeline Convention (Chaitani, 2007: 74). Al-Zaim, however, after seizing the power, has swiftly ratified the TAPLINE project (Chaitani, 2007: 132).

the interest of his Alawite sect which its majority was villagers. This however was not the case for other Syrian rural communities. William L. Cleveland and Martin P. Bunton state that "the majority of Syrian peasants remained landless" as a result of these reforms (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013: 419). Since 1970 and on, Al-Asad has strengthened his rule by posing his Alawite and family figures in important state institutions. The state under his control was "stifling, inefficient and oppressive." (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013: 420). Bashar al-Asad came to power in July 2000 after the death of his father Hafez in June of the same year. Bashar al-Asad also started his rule by initiating social reforms. But, like father like son, these reforms have, ironically, further alienated many social structures in Syria (Cleveland & Bunton 2013: 531-532). In early 2011, Syria has witnessed huge popular uprising demanding the change of the political regime. Gradually, the uprising turned to a severe armed conflict.

As it has been shown above, Syria has not enjoyed a stable democratic political atmosphere. And Syrian politics have not produced a nation-wide sense of nationalism accepted by all Syrians. This situation can be related to differed reasons. First, it may be argued that the Syrian state itself was not an ideal medium for building a coherent state. Current Syrian state was *artificially* created by colonial powers and did not come into existence *naturally*; it was not Syrians who set their country's today borders. Second, the French Mandate policies have hugely contributed to the social and sectarian division among Syrians. These policies contributed to the inflaming of "the traditional sectarian conflict" as Philip S. Khoury puts it (Khoury, 1987: 5). Third, the traditional elite, Pan Syrianists and Arab nationalists have adopted exclusionary policies the thing that prevented them from building a "strong" state.

According to Nazih N. Ayubi, a strong state should not be hostile to its society. For Ayubi, the Syrian state has never been "strong state" but rather it was a "fierce state" (Ayubi, 2006: 447-450). Elaborating on Ayubi's argument, Toby Dodge says that the Arab state [like Syria] although was "fierce" yet it "lacked the institutional power and political legitimacy to implement government policy effectively. State intervention in society was often unwelcome; regarded by the population at best to be a necessary evil and at worst as an illegitimate intrusion" (Dodge, 2012: 7). That is,

although seeming immune against any risk, the Syrian state was fragile from inside and was ready to collapse and fall apart.

3.1.2 Kurds in Syria

Kurds are the largest ethnic group in Syria making around 9 per cent of Syria's population (Library of Congress, 2005). Geographically speaking, Kurdish population in Syria can be divided into two groups; those who inhabited in major Syrian cities like Damascus[26] and inhabitants of more rural areas in north of Syria, or Rojava.[27] Rojava[28] in its turn, is consisted of three separated enclaves; Jazira, Kobane and Afrin.[29] Ethno-politically speaking, Kurds of Syrian cities tended to be arabized, modernized and assimilated in the societies of these urban centers. On the contrary, Kurds in Rojava were more tribal and *indigenous*.[30]

[26] Kurds in Aleppo are mainly coming from Afrin region, north to Aleppo on Syrian-Turkish border. There is also a small Arabized Kurdish community in Hama like Barazi and Selo families.
[27] See Map 2.2
[28] Many Syrian Kurds, today, call the northern parts of Syria which dominated by Kurdish population as *Rojava*. In Kurdish, Rojava means west. According to Kurdish narratives, Kurds' homeland Kurdistan has been divided into four parts: North in Turkey, East in Iran, South in Iraq and West in Syria. Hence, Rojava refer to Western part. Although Rojava is officially adopted by PYD and some other parties, any use of Rojava in this thesis does not imply any endorsement with any party. That is, the term will be used only on lingual bases to avoid long expressions like "Northern parts of Syria which are dominated by Kurds" or "Kurdish populated areas in North of Syria".
[29] Jazira or Upper Jazira is a geographical region of Hasaka Governorate. Kobane is also known as Ain al-Arab, while Afrin used to be called as Kurd Dagh.
[30] Kurds of Rojava maintain more ethnic aspects than Kurds of Damascus and other Syrian cities. While urban Kurds speak Arabic and assimilated in the Syrian Arabic culture, Kurds of Rojava speak Kurmanji Kurdish and some of them still wear traditional costume.

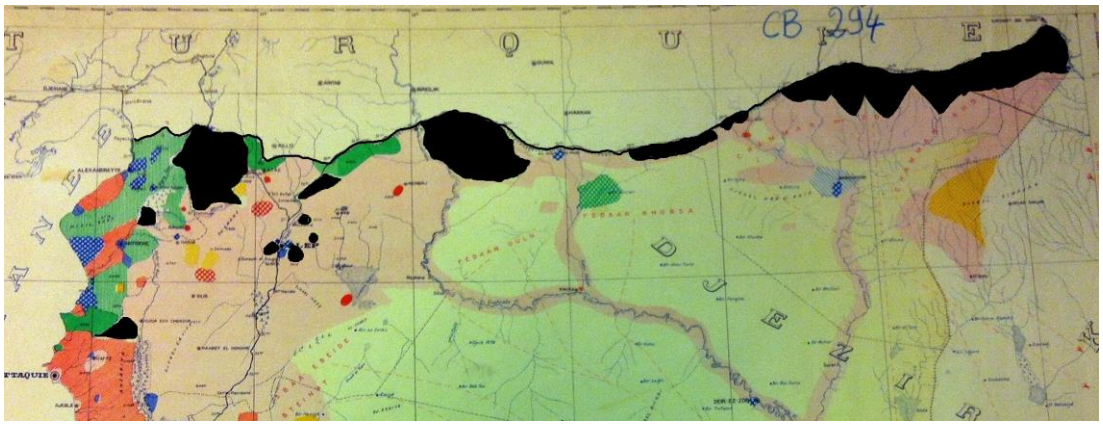

Figure 3.2: The Religious and Ethnic Map Of Syria Under The French Mandate

- Extract from "Syrie & Liban: répartition par races et religions des divers groupements habitant les États sous mandat français" (English: Syria and Lebanon: Races and religions of various groups inhabiting the [two] states under The French Mandate).
- Solid black areas are areas inhabited by Kurds in northern Syria in 1935.

Source: Bureau topographique des Troupes Françaises du Levant, 1935.

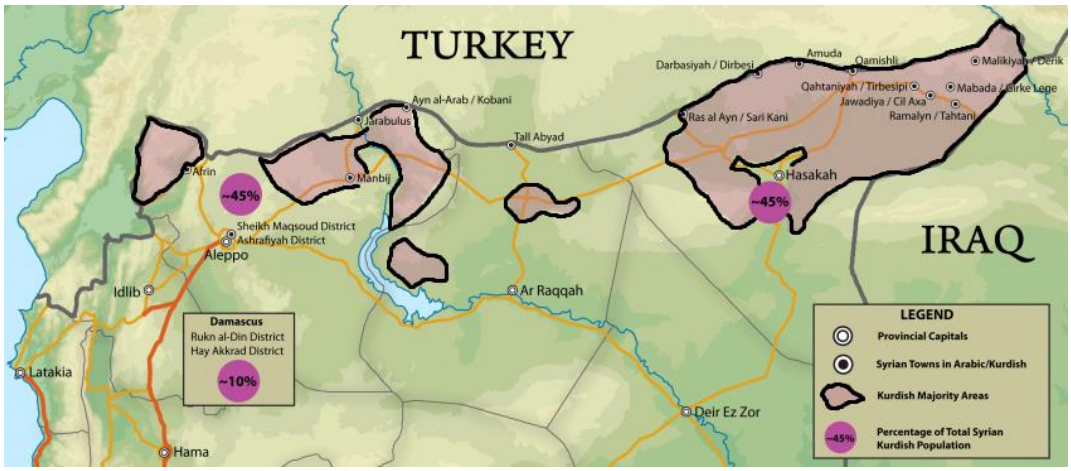

Figure 3.3: Kurdish-Populated Areas in Syria

The map shows the Kurdish-populated areas in Syria in 2012

Source: Institute for the Study of War

In spite of the absence of clear-cut historical references, the first group, urban Kurds, is usually associated with Saladin (1174–1193).[31] In the thirteenth century, Kurdish members of Saladin army as well as his descendants have settled down in many parts of Damascus. The main Kurdish neighborhood in Damascus *Hayy al-Akrad*[32] during the French Mandate was inhabited by approximately 12.000 inhabitants (Tejel, 2009: 10). Kurdish urban communities, like other Syrian urban societies, were basically been ruled by rich families and notables. Urban elites, during the French Mandate, were almost the only class which practiced and monopolized politics. Kurdish elites in Syrian cities did not show a distinct ethnopolitical identity or practiced ethnicity-based politics. In a study on Kurds of Damascus in 1930s, Benjamin Thomas White (2010) agrees with Jordi Tejel (2009) that rich Kurdish families and notables in Damascus were not concerned with any pro-Kurdish politics. But rather, they were utilizing their ethnicity for individual and "clientelist" interests.[33]

It is important to mention, however, that while traditional urban Kurdish elites were producing traditional politics of notables, some Kurdish individuals in Damascus represented different types of politics. In fact, Communism in Syria was developed and flourished under the rule of its secretary general Khaled Backdash who was a Kurd from Damascus. Later on, other Kurdish individuals from military ranks played significant roles in shaping the Syrian political scene. Husni al-Zaim and Adib al-Shishakli, both are Kurds, had conducted the first military coups in Syria.[34] Bakdash, Zaim and Shishakli were, however, Arabized Kurds and were not affiliated with Kurdish *agendas*. Moreover, the population density of Kurds in Syrian cities did not help them to maintain ethnic identities. On the contrary to Kurds of Rojava, urban Kurds who have settled in Syrian cities for centuries were "more assimilated to Arab culture than the Kurds in the northern Kurdish areas" (Montgomery, 2005: 7). As

[31] Salah al-Din al-Ayoubi (1174-1193), who led the Muslim armies against Crusaders in the Middle East, is transliterated in English as Saladin.
[32] Hayy al-Akrad is the Arabic term for "neighborhood of Kurds". The neighborhood is also known as Rukn al-Din: (Rukn al-Din Mankors, Wali of Damascus in the Ayyubid Era 1174–1250, was buried in a mosque in the neighborhood).
[33] In White's work, there is a reference that Kurds of Damascus were supporting demands of Kurds in Jazira in 1930s. In his work, White shows that this solidarity by Damascene Kurds was not due to ethnic sentiments, but rather it was due to social, economic and local micropolitics of Damascus. For details, see White's (2010) *The Kurds of Damascus in the 1930s: Development of a Politics of Ethnicity*.
[34] See Table 2.1.

such, those Kurds of first group did not have fundamental influences on the Kurdish political movement in Syria, especially in its current form.

Table 3.1: Military Coups in Syria

No	Date	Leader/Leaders	Result
1	30 March 1949	Zaim	Success
2	14 August 194	Hinnawi	Success
3	19 December 1949	Shishakli	Success
4	29 November 1951	Shishakli	Success
5	25 February 1954	Atasi, Abu Assaf, Jadid, Hamdu	Success
6	28 September 1961	Kuzbari, Nahlawi, Dahman	Success
7	28 March 1962	Nahlawi	Success
8	31 March 196	Badr A'sar	Success
9	1 April 1962	Alwan	Failure
10	13 January 196	Nahlawi	Failure
11	8 March 196	Hariri	Success
12	18 July 1963	Alwan	Failure
13	23 February 1966	Jadid, Hatum	Success
14	8 September 1966	Hatum	Failure
15	25 February 1969	Hafiz al-Asad	Success
16	13 November 1970	al-Asad	Success

Source: (Beeri, 1982: 80-81)

In Rojava, the situation was totally different. Before setting the international border between Turkey and Syria in 1921, Rojava was a geographical leverage space for Kurdish tribes which the majority of them was based in today's Turkey.[35] Those tribes, along with Arab Bedouin tribes from the south, were in constant movement from and to Rojava for seasonal grazing (Yildiz, 2005: 25). The tribal aspect of Rojava does not mean that the area was totally nomadic. There were some small sedentary centers like Amude, Qarmaniye and Til Shaeir (Barout, 2013: 21). In 1920s and 1930s, political circumstances in Turkey like the failure of Kurdish revolts made many Kurds to leave Turkey and settle in Jazira (Barout, 2013: 21).[36] Good relations between some of those tribes and the French authorities pushed them to settle down in Syria after the border was set (Barout, 2013: 28). In its turn, The

[35] Examples of these tribes are: The Millis, The Dakkuri, The Heverkan, The Kikan, and The Mirans in Jazira, The Alaedinan, The Shedadan, The Sheikan, The Kitkan, and The Pijan in Kobane and The Amikan, The Biyan, The Sheikan, and The Jums in Afrin (Tejel, 2009: 9).

[36] Barout also refers to economic reasons that pushed people from Diyar Bakir, Turkey and its surrounding region to migrate to Syria. According to Barout, Diyar Bakir region was suffering from high rates of unemployment. As it was lacking workforce for its flourished agriculture industry at that time, Rojava become an attractive destination for those unemployed from Diyar Bakir region (Barout, 2013: 24).

French Mandate authorities encouraged such settlements which were meeting the French interests. By encouraging settlement of minorities in Syria, French authorities were counterbalancing the emerging Arab nationalism in Syria (Barout, 2013: 28). That is, political conditions in Turkey and policies by French mandate stimulated immigration waves from Turkey to Syria. Since then, urban aspects started to spread throughout Rojava while trans-state family and tribal ties have remained very strong among Kurds of Rojava and Kurds of the south of Turkey (Lowe, 2011).

On the political level, many Kurdish political activists and intellectuals moved into today's Syria. Those includes but not limited to: Jaladat Badirkhan[37], Osman Sabri, and Cigerxwin. Many of those activists were leading and/or establishing Kurdish forums like Khoybun. Khoybun, based in Syria and Lebanon, was a political and cultural organization in 1920s and 1930s which promoted Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. Although it was concerned with Turkey, Khoybun had great influences on Kurdish nationalism in Syria (Tejel, 2005: 17) (Yildiz, 2005: 29).[38] In 1927 there were at most 45 Kurdish villages in this region, by 1939; they numbered between 700 and 800 "agglomerations" of Kurdish majority (Tejel, 2009: 144). The increased Kurdish population in Rojava, existence of Kurdish intellectuals from Turkey who *brought* Kurdish nationalism to Syria all made Rojava a suitable medium for developing Kurdish nationalism and politics in Syria.

3.2 Organizational Structure of Kurdish Political Movement in Syria[39]

3.2.1 Declaration of First Kurdish Party

The Kurdish political movement in Syria officially came into existence after a decade of country's independence. Different internal factors led to the declaration of the first Kurdish party in Syria in 1957; The Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria, KDPS. The party experienced serious discords during its initial stages due to organizational, ideological and more importantly *interventionist* reasons. In fact, both the rise and the fall of the party were largely due to *non-Syrian* dynamics.

[37] Jaladat Badirkhan is a Kurdish nationalist leader, linguist and diplomat. He introduced the Latin-based alphabet of Kurdish dialect of Kurmanji.

[38] According to Barout (2013: 49), Khoybun was established under the French patronage. French Mandate authorities had also brought Kurdish activists and Armenian Tashnak Party together to coordinate the then ongoing revolt in Agri/Ararat region of Turkey in late 1920s.

[39] Chapter two focuses on all Kurdish parties in Syria except for the Democratic Union Party, PYD. Those parties will be referred to as traditional Kurdish parties. For PYD, see Chapter Three.

Traditional social and political system in Syria was challenged by new movements. Non elite classes increasingly engaged in politics and populist parties became powerful. At that time, the only populist party which did not adopt restricted version of nationalism[40] was the Syrian Communist Party, SCP. As the majority of them were descending from agrarian rural and tribal communities, many Kurdish individuals were dramatically attracted by SCP.[41] For some of them, SCP represented salvation from tribal dominance and a platform for practicing politics as well. This, gradually, made the Kurds one of the major blocs in SCP.

The Kurdish presence in SCP did not bring any *pure* Kurdish objectives into the SCP's agendas. At the same time, the escalating rise of Arab nationalism in Syria made Kurds alien to this main political current in Syria at that time. This current "denied the multiethnic and multi-religious make-up of the country" (Yesiltas, 2014: 181). The ideology and narratives adopted by the Arab nationalist parties positioned the Kurds in the place of *Others*. This was a crucial actor for pushing the ethnic identity of Kurds in Syria to gain more momentum.

In 1956, a Kurdish group agreed on launching a Kurdish party in Syria. According to a report by Kurd Watch, this group was consisting of Othman Sabri, a former Khoybun activist and a former member of SCP,[42] the law student Abdulhamid Hajji Darwish and Hamza Niweran (Kurd Watch, 2011: 4-5). However, it was not only those three who were behind launching the party. Many other Kurds from SCP, like Cigerxwin,[43] were also involved in this launch. According to Jordi Tejel, "communist militants of Kurdish origin (including Rashid Hamo, Muhammad Ali Khoja, Khalil Muhammad, and Shewket Nezan)" were unsatisfied with SCP and saw "it was necessary [for them] to create an organization that was both left wing and [Kurdish] nationalist" (Tejel, 2009: 48).

[40] Comparing to Arab Nationalism, Communism was more appealing for Kurds. This was associated with the idea that communism, as in USSR, is a minority-friendly ideology. However, Patrick Seale thinks that the Kurdish background of SCP's leader Khaled Bakdash was an important factor in attracting Kurds to SCP (Seale, 1965: 160).

[41] It can be argued here that the relationship between Kurds and SCP was mutual. SCP was probably finding Kurds as a suitable popular base for it as Arab nationalist parties, like SCP's rival The Baath, were increasingly gaining popularity. According to Tejel, The secretary general of the SCP used this "Kurdish" resource to spread the party's propaganda and he gained a seat in the parliament during the parliamentary elections of 1954.

[42] Othman Sabri was a member in Society of Pacifist Syrians; an organization defected from the SCP.

[43] Cigerxwin was a Kurdish poet and nationalist. He was born in Batman, Turkey in 1903, raised in Amude in Rojava, Syria and died in Stockholm, Sweden in 1984.

Kurdish politics in Syria were developed by non-Syrian Kurdish actors in the 2nd and 3rd quarters of the 20th century. The involvement of Syrian Kurdish political activists in politics did not, however, end the leverage of non-Syrian actors in the Kurdish political movement in Syria. In fact, those actors have fundamentally contributed in configuring the first Kurdish political party; The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria, KDPS. Many Kurdish political veterans from Turkey and Iraq, who were based in Syria as exiles at that time, played significant roles on the organizational and ideological levels of the newly-born party. For instance Jalal Talabani[44] had a crucial political influence over KDPS. According to Tejel, Talabani's role was "decisive" "in the building up of the KDPS program" (Tejel, 2009: 48). Talabani was also the main factor behind changing the name of KDPS in 1960 (Sinclair & Kajjo, 2011) (Jemo, 1990: 33-34 in Tejel, 2009: 49). Moreover, the presidency of the party went for Nur al-Din Zaza (1919-1988),[45] another non-Syrian Kurd.[46] The establishment of KDPS took place in the house of Rewshen Badirkhan, widow of Jaladat Badirkhan (Tejel, 2009: 151).

By the time the party was established in 1957, disputes between its members surfaced. Three years later, in 1960, the decision of changing the name of the party from The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria into Democratic Party of Kurdistan in Syria[47] has provoked serious discords among party members. Othman Sabri, who will later lead the leftist camp in the party, "opposed this change because it could become dangerous to the party members" (Tejel, 2009: 49). In the same year, the party experienced an existential crisis. Exactly as predicted by Sabri, UAR authorities detained thousands of party members. In custody, party members split

[44] Jalal Talabani, the former Iraqi president, entered and stayed in Syria several times since 1956.

[45] Nur al-Din Zaza, a Kurdish academician and political activist, was born in 1919 in Maden, Elazig, Turkey. After the failure of Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1925 in Turkey, Zaza left Turkey for Syria at the age of eleven. He studied high school in Syria, left for Iraq to join Mustafa Barzani's revolt. Later, he moved to Lebanon. While attending university in Beirut, Zaza met Badirkhan brothers and was active in their Khoybun (Sot Kurdistan, 2011).

[46] Although born outside Syria and spent some time in Iraq, Zaza, later on, was keen in understanding the Syria Kurdish issue in the Syrian framework (Ibid).

[47] According to (Sinclair and Kajjo, 2011), (Kurd Watch, 2011) and (Tejel, 2009) the name was changed from Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria to Democratic Party of Kurdistan in Syria. However, according to (Yilidiz, 2005) the change of the name was the other way; from Democratic Party of Kurdistan in Syria to Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria. Yildiz consolidates his argument by saying that this change was "to avoid allegations that it [the party] advocated the establishment of a Kurdish state which included parts of Syrian territory" (Ibid).

over different issues[48] and consequently the party was divided into two camps; Leftists headed by Sabri[49] and Rightists headed by Zaza. According to Sawah and Kawakibi (2014: 146), the first split in KDPS was a consequence of the schism in the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq, PDK. In spite of actual split in the party since 1959, the official date of its fall was 1965 (Sinclair & Kajjo, 2011). By 1965, two Kurdish parties came into existence; The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Left Wing) and The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Right Wing).

It is worth mentioning that although the majority of party members were left-wing oriented, other members had bourgeois backgrounds. For example, Abdulhamid Hajji Darwish, one of the most active and influential party member and who led, along with Zaza, the right wing, was a son of a rich landowner and had never aligned himself with leftist ideas. Moreover, a close following of party's inner behaviors, shows that there were conflicting agendas among the bourgeoisie and notables components of the party on the one hand and leftist members on the other hand. This conflict, undoubtedly, made the party fragile and lacking enough power to, as Tejel puts it, "neutralize the tensions" between its left and right.

In brief, the first Kurdish party in Syria was born "as reaction to the ascending Arab nationalism in Syria in the 1950s and the exclusionary character of the emerging Syrian national identity" (Yesiltas, 2014: 181) and after *disappointment* with The SCP. In this respect, non-Syrian Kurdish activists and politicians who were taking refuge in Syria had largely contributed to engineering the party both ideologically and organizationally. However, the party fell into two wings due to non-Syrian interventionism and inhomogeneous nature of party's components. And this schism will later open the door wide for numerous splits among the Kurdish parties in Syria as we will see next.

[48] Zaza saw that all party members should, to avoid fierce punishment, state, in the court, that their organization was a cultural association and not a political party. But Sabri and his leftist camp opposed that and insisted on admitting the party's name and goal (Sot Kurdistan, 2011).

[49] There is no source/evident on Sabri's contradicting attitudes. Sabri was, initially, against radicalizing the party's name and goal. However, he insisted on admitting the new adopted name and goal.

3.2.2 Splits and Defections

There are numerous numbers of Kurdish political organizations and parties in Syria. The majority of these parties existed due to splits of previous bodies.[50] The rest was established as unifications between other parties. Sometimes, more than one party held the same name. This organizational *disorder* made mapping the Kurdish politics in Syria labyrinthine. While some of these splits were politically and ideologically justifiable, other splits were not. They happened for ambiguous and sometimes personal reasons.

As the relatively big parties are more known and have at least some reliable sources mentioning hem, smaller parties are actually *invisible*. That is why, in an attempt to determine the exact number of small parties, a limited survey was conducted for this purpose. As result, Arabic webpages and social medial pages listing names for what is supposed to be Kurdish parties in Syria were found. In some case the number of those parties exceeded 30. After failing to find any contact information for those presumed parties, a Syrian Kurdish activist was interviewed.[51] The activist Azad S. could not present fulfilling answers for questions related to the number of Kurdish parties in Syria. It is important here to mention that the lack/absence of contact details like social media pages or a known member for those presumed parties does not mean that they do not exist. Sometimes those parties take form of a closed group consisting of less than 50 members and have no activities and no contact information.

The number of Kurdish political parties in Syria changes very often.[52] That is, counting those parties in any given time will soon need to be updated. This number was fourteen in October 2011 (Kurd Watch, 2011:13), at least seventeen in May

[50] Two Kurdish political organizations in Syria do not have mother party/parties; The PYD and The Kurdish Future Movement in Syria.

[51] On 23rd October 2014, Azad S. a Syrian Kurdish activist based in Istanbul was interviewed via Viber smartphone application. He stated that although counting the Kurdish parties in Syria and tracing their history is not impossible, yet this mission is very complicated. According to Azad there was a group called, the democratic Kurdish party in Syria lived only for four days.

[52] For the most recent information on names and numbers of Kurdish parties in Syria see the Table 2.2.

2012,[53] and until November 2014 this number remained seventeen.[54] Serhat Erkmen *indirectly* elaborating on this issue by stating: "today, it is suggested that there 17 Kurdish parties in Syria" (Erkmen, 2012: 16). Even though Erkmen's work was published by ORSAM,[55] which conducts many interviews with Syrian Kurdish politicians and/or party leaders, the report cannot precisely count the number of Kurdish parties in Syria and use the phrase "it is suggested" for this purpose. In fact, there are many reasons for making such an attempt delusive. It happens, for example, see Table 2.2., that more than one party hold identical names; there were two parties named Kurdish Azadi Party in Syria (Kurd Watch, 2011: 14) and two other parties named Kurdish Leftist Democratic Party (Tejel, 2009: 87). This is mainly because when a split happens in a party, each split claims to be the legitimate successor of the mother party.

[53] In addition to The PYD which is not a KNC, there were sixteen Kurdish parties as members of The KNC. See Carnegie Endowment Middle East: http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48502

[54] Although it seems that number of Kurdish parties in Syria has not been changed from May 2012 to November 2014, it is important to mention that this period has witnessed splits and merges processes. And hence, the seventeen parties of 2012 are the same seventeen parties of 2014.

[55] ORSAM is the Turkish acronym for The Ankara-bases Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies.

Table 3.2: Kurdish Parties in Syria

No.	Name of Party	Establishment - Dissolution	Led by	Mother Party / Parties	Remarks
1 [X]	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (KDPS)	1957-1965	Nour Al-Din Zaza (1958 - 1960)	None	- First Kurdish party in Syria - Split into Right Wing (2) and Left Wing (3) - A committee has been formed from The Right Wing KPDS (2) and The Left Wing KPDS (3) to reunify the two wings. However, the committee failed and became a new party called Kurdish Democratic Party (Provisional Command) (4).
2 [X]	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Right Wing)	1965 - 1983	- Nur Al Din Zaza: 1965-1967 - Abdulhamid Haj Darwish: 1967-1983	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (KDPS) (1)	- Renamed in 1983 as The Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria. (5)
3 [X]	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Left Wing)	1965 - 1975	Osman Sabri: 1966-1968 Salah Badrudin: 1968-1975	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (KDPS) (1)	- Renamed in 1975 as Kurdish Democratic Left Party in Syria. (14)
4 [X]	Kurdish Democratic Party (Provisional Command)	1970-1972	- Daham Miro: 1970-1972	Formed from the above mentioned committee. (3)	- The party renamed in 1972 as Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (6).
5 [✓]	**Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria**.	1983 - Now	- Abdulhamid Haj Darwish: 1983 - Now	Kurdish Democratic Party (Provisional Command) (4)	The party has born due to a process of renaming another party; Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Right Wing) (3)
6	Kurdish	1972-1981	- Daham	Kurdish	- The party

[X]	Democratic Party in Syria.		Miro: 1972-1973 - - Mustafa Ibrahim: 1976-1977 - Ilyas Ramadan: 1977-1978 - Kamal Ahmad: 1978-1981	Democratic Party (Provisional Command) (4)	renamed in 1981 as Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty) (7).
7 [X]	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty).	1981- 2013	- Kamal Ahmad: 1981-1996 - Nasruddin Ibrahim: 1996-1998 - M. Nazir Mustafa: 1998-2007 - Abdulhakim Bashar: 2007-2013	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria. (6)	-In 2013 the party merged with Kurdish Democratic Party – Syria (28) – The born party named The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty). (29)
8 [X]	Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria.	1992-2008	Aziz Dawud: 1992-2008	Defected from the Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria. (5)	The party renamed in 2008 as Kurdish Democratic Equality Party in Syria (10)
9 [✓]	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria		Youssef Faysal	Defected from the Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria. (5)	
10 [✓]	**Kurdish Democratic Equality Party in Syria**	2008-Now	Aziz Dawud: 2008-now	Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria. (8)	
11 [✓]	**Kurdish Democratic Patriotic Party in Syria**	1998-Now	Tahir Sifuk: 1998-Now	Defected from the Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria. (8)	
12	Kurdish	1975-1978	Shaykh	Defected	Renamed in 1978

[X]	Democratic Party in Syria		Muhammad Baqi: 1975-1978	from Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria. (6)	as Syrian-Kurdish Democratic Party
13 [✓]	**Syrian-Kurdish Democratic Party**	1978-Now	- Shaykh Muhammad Baqi: 1975-1997 - Jamal Muhammad Baqi: 1975-1997	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (12)	
14 [X]	Kurdish Democratic Left Party in Syria	1975-1980	Salah Badrudin: 1975-1980	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Left Wing) (3)	Renamed in 1980 as Kurdish Popular Union in Syria (15)
15 [X]	Kurdish Popular Union in Syria	1980-2005	Salah Badrudin: 1980-2003 Mustafa Jumaa: 2003-2005	Kurdish Democratic Left Party in Syria (14)	In 2005, the party merged with Kurdish Left Party in Syria (17) and both formed Kurdish Azadi Party in Syria (32)
16 [X]	Kurdish Democratic Left Party in Syria	1975-1998	Ismat Sayda: 1975-1991 Yusuf Dibo: 1991-1993 Khayrudin Murad: 1994-1998	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Left Wing) (3)	Renamed in 1998 as Kurdish Left Party in Syria (17)
17 [X]	Kurdish Left Party in Syria	1998-2005	Khayrudin Murad: 1998-2005	Kurdish Democratic Left Party in Syria (16)	In 2005, the party merged with Kurdish Popular Union in Syria (15) and both formed Kurdish Azadi Party in Syria (32)
18 [✓]	**Kurdish Left Party in Syria**	1977-	Muhammad Salih Gado: 1977-2002		
19 [✓]	**Kurdish Left Party in Syria**	1998 - Now	Muhammad Musa Muhammad: 1998 - Now	Kurdish Democratic Left Party (16)	
20 [X]	Kurdish Popular Union in Syria	1991-1993	Mustafa Othman: 1992-1993	Kurdish Popular Union in Syria (15)	
21	Kurdish	1982-1993	Sabghatullah	Kurdish	

[X]	Toilers' Party in Syria		Sayda: 1982-1993	Democratic Left Party in Syria (16)	
22 [X]	Kurdish Democratic Left Party in Syria	1989-1990	Sadiq Shirnakhi: 1989-1990	Kurdish Democratic Left Party in Syria (16)	
23 [X]	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria	1981-1983	Muhiyudin Shaykh Ali: 1981-1983	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty) (7)	Renamed in 1983 as Kurdish Democratic Labor Party in Syria (25)
24 [X]	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria	1998-1990	Ismaail Omer: 1998-1990	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty) (7)	
25 [X]	Kurdish Democratic Labor Party in Syria	1983-1990	Muhiyudin Shaykh Ali: 1983-1990	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (23)	
26 [X]	United Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria	1990-1993	Ismaail Omer: 1990-1993	- Kurdish Democratic Left Party in Syria (22) - Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (24) - Kurdish Democratic Labor Party in Syria (25)	The party emerged after three parties (22), (24) and (25) unified.
27 [✓]	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty)	1998- Now	Nasruddin Ibrahim: 1998-Now	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty) (7)	
28 [X]	Kurdish Democratic Party – Syria	2004 – 2013	Abdurrahman Aluji: 2004-2012 Lazgin Fakhri: 2012-2013	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty) (7)	The party merged with The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty) (7) and formed Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty) (29)
29 [X]	Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty).	2013 – 2014	Abdulhakim Bashar: 2013- 2014	-Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty) (7) - Kurdish	

				Democratic Party – Syria (28)	
30 [✓]	**Kurdish Democratic Union Party in Syria (Yakiti)**	1993 – Now	-Ismail Omer (Chairman): 1993-2010 - Muhiyudin Shaykh Ali, Secretary: 2001 - Now	- United Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (26) - Kurdish Toilers' Party in Syria (21) - Kurdish Popular Union in Syria (20)	
31 [✓]	**Kurdish Yekiti Party in Syria**	1999 – Now	- Abdulbaqi Yusuf: 1999 – 2003 - Hasan Salih: 2003 – 2007 - Fuad Aliko: 2007 – 2010 - Ismaail Hami: 2010 – Now	Kurdish Democratic Union Party in Syria (Yakiti) (30)	
32 [X]	Kurdish Azadi Party in Syria	2005 – 2014	- Khayrudin Murad: 2005 – 2011 - Mustafa Khidir Oso: 2011 – 2014	- Kurdish Left Party in Syria (17) - Kurdish Popular Union in Syria (15)	
33 [X]	Kurdish Azadi Party in Syria	2011 - Now	- Mustafa Jumaa: 2011 – Now	Kurdish Azadi Party in Syria (32)	
34 [✓]	**Democratic Union Party (PYD)**	2003 – Now	- Fuad Omer: 2003 – 2010 - Salih Muslim Muhammad: 2010 – Now	None	
35 [✓]	**Syrian-Kurdish Democratic Reconciliation Party**	2004 - Now	- Kamal Shahin: 2004 – 2005 - Salih Biro: 2005 - Fawzi Shangali 2005 - Now	Democratic Union Party (PYD) (34)	

36 [✓]	**Kurdish Future Movement in Syria**	2005 – Now	- Mishaal Tammo: 2005 – 2011	None	
37 [✓]	**Kurdistan Democratic Party Syria**	2014	Soud al-Mulla	- Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty). (29) - Kurdish Azadi Party in Syria (32) - Kurdish Azadi Party in Syria (33)	
38 [✓]	**The Kurdish Democratic Wifaq Party**		Nash'at Muhammad		
39 [✓]	**The Syrian Democratic Kurdish Party**		Sheikh Jamal		
40 [✓]	**Kurdistan Yekiti Party**		Abdulbaset Hamo		
41 [✓]	**Kurdish Democratic Union Party in Syria (Democratic Yakiti)**	2014 – Now	Kamiran Haj Abdo	Defected from Kurdish Democratic Union Party in Syria (Yakiti) (30)	According to some pundits, this party defected from its mother party due to the fact that the leadership of the mother party headed by Shaykh Ali started to develop very close ties with The PYD.

Details:

[X]: Merged with other parties/dissolved parties

[✓]: Active parties

The first split in the Kurdish movement in Syria was in 1965 when KPDS split into two parties; Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Right Wing) and Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Left Wing). In 1970, Mustafa Barzani[56] (1903-1979) established a committee to reunify the party. The KDP forced the two wings to be unified under a committee/temporary party called Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria, The Provisional Command (Kurd Watch, 2011: 12). However, this attempt failed and ironically The Provisional Command itself became a third party. These three parties were source-parties for new parties. In today's Kurdish political party map of Syria there exist at least fourteen parties due to defections and breakaways, at least two parties due to unification of other breakaways and only two do not have mother parties. The Kurdistan Democratic Party in Syria and Kurdish Democratic Union Party in Syria (Yakiti) were formed as results of merging between other splits. The PYD and The Kurdish Future Movement in Syria have been both *originally* formed; i.e. without descending from previous parties.

Having a wide spectrum of parties in any given political space may refer to the democratic nature of that space. In such a situation, each party may have its own ideological, organizational and/or instrumental point of views. However, this is not the case for all Kurdish parties in Syria. For example, parties like The Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria, The Kurdish Yekiti Party in Syria and The Future Movement do represent different political orientations. Their policies and goals differ from each other. And hence, their existence is *understandable*. On the contrary, parties like the simultaneous existence of The Kurdish Democratic Left Party in Syria, The Kurdish Left Party in Syria and Kurdish Left Party in Syria almost adopt the exact political stance and behavior.[57] In the street, people used to differentiate between such parties by replacing parties' names with their leaders' names.[58] This phenomenon can also be understood in the context that many parties were born after personal, and not political, discords in the leadership of other parties.

[56] Barzani was the leader and founder of Kurdistan Democratic Party, KDP (1946-1979) in Iraq. Since 1979, KDP is ruled by his son Massoud Barzani.

[57] As it has been referred to before, there are two parties named the Kurdish Left Party in Syria.

[58] I cite this attitude basing on personal experience. For example, the public use expressions like "Muhammad Musa's Group" to refer to one of the Kurdish Left [Parties] in Syria. This phenomenon however, is not only used for parties with identical policies and names. The public also use terms like "Hamid's Group" to refer to The Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party since this party is personalized by its sole leader Abdulhamid Hajji Darwish who rules the party since early 1960s.

This personalization of Kurdish parties in Syria shows the non-democratic nature of the most of these parties. In this regard, Kurd Watch report says:

> The inner organizational structure of the Syrian Kurdish parties blatantly contradicts the commitment to democracy. The numerous splits—mostly personal, in a few cases motivated by the program—make it clear that the various parties still have not managed to establish a structure in which it is possible to resolve conflict through discussion or, in case of doubt, through a majority decision within the party. Some party leaders have held this office since the formation of the party, in other cases; a successor was only elected or appointed because his predecessor died.
>
> (Kurd Watch, 2011, pp. 18)

On justifying the disunity of Syrian opposition, Abdulhakim Basher, a leader of one of most powerful Kurdish parties, stated that "this kind of disunities are quite normal in dictatorial systems." In supporting his opinion, Bashar went further by saying that "in a democratic system, small parties will melt in bigger parties, because these parties will not be necessary anymore" (Bashar, 2012). Basing on Bashar's previous *generalized* statements, it can be taken that Bashar understands the fragmentation of Kurdish parties, which are also opposition parties, as a result of the dictatorship of the Syrian regime. However, Jordi Tejel thinks that it is not convincing to relate the fragmentation of Kurdish parties entirely to the Syrian regime. Tejel does think that the regime used to set *non-fixed* margins for the Kurdish parties to play in (Tejel, 2009: 90).

Two of the previous three resources see the fragmentation as a result of the inner non democratic policies in those parties. Kurd Watch assumes that the lack of democracy in the Kurdish parties does not give some party members titles and positions they think they deserve. And this, simply, makes those individuals in the party to break away and establish their own parties. Agreeing with Kurd Watch report, Jordi Tejel confirms that margins given to Kurdish parties by the Syrian regime is enough for those parties to carry out some democratic activities, like having party elections. However, Abdulhakim Bashar relates the notion of disunity to an *external* factor which is the authoritarianism of The Syrian Regime.

By assessing the previous extract from Kurd Watch report, Tejel's argument and Bashar's interview, it can be argued that there is a major reason behind the fragmentation of the Kurdish political movements in Syria. This reason is the lack of inner democracy which leads to personal discords. In the absence of inner democratic means, the volume of support/popularity of each individual involved in these discords cannot be determined. Such individuals just leave the party and establish their own new organizations.

3.2.3 Umbrella Organizations

Due to their numerous numbers, Kurdish parties in Syria used to, and still, form umbrella organizations under which they can work collectively. From 1994 to 2009 there were three major umbrella organizations existed simultaneously. 1) The Kurdish Democratic Alliance, 2) The Kurdish Democratic Patriotic Front and The Coordinating Committee. In 2009, the Kurdish Democratic Patriotic Front and Coordinating Committee formed The Kurdish Political Council. In May 2011, the Kurdish Political Council, The Kurdish Democratic Alliance and other parties formed The Kurdish Patriotic Movement. In October 2011, all Kurdish parties except the PYD formed The Kurdish National Council, KNC in Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq.[59] In July 2012, an umbrella organization was formed to bring The KNC and The PYD together. This was called The Kurdish Supreme Committee, The KSC.[60] In December 2014, another umbrella organization was formed under the name of the Kurdish Political Reference (Kurdish Political Decision-Making Council) in Dohuk, Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

[59] By March 2011, many youth coordination committees were formed to organize anti Syrian government activities. As these committees become popular, many parties launched their own "youth committees". Such committees joined The KNC representing the youth.

[60] This was formed after signing an agreement known as Hewler (Erbil) Agreement One, between The KNC and The PYD. See Annex 2.1.

3.2.3.1 Kurdish Umbrella Organizations Formed Since 1994:

A) The Kurdish Democratic Alliance, formed in 1994, included;

1. The Kurdish Democratic Union Party in Syria (Yakiti).
2. The Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria.
3. The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty), led by Nasruddin Ibrahim
4. The Kurdish Left Party in Syria, led by Muhammad Musa.

B) The Kurdish Democratic Patriotic Front in Syria, founded in 2000, included;

1. The Kurdish Left Party in Syria, led by Muhammad Musa.
2. The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty), led by Nasruddin Ibrahim
3. The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty), led by Abdulhakim Bashar
4. The Kurdish Democratic Equality Party in Syria.
5. The Kurdish Azadi Party in Syria.

C) The Coordinating Committee, founded in 2006, included;

1. The Kurdish Azadi Party in Syria.
2. The Kurdish Yekiti Party in Syria
3. The Kurdish Future Movement in Syria

D) The Kurdish Political Council, founded in 2009, included;

1. The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty), led by Abdulhakim Bashar
2. The Kurdish Azadi Party in Syria.
3. The Kurdish Yekiti Party in Syria
4. The Kurdish Left Party in Syria, led by Muhammad Musa.
5. The Kurdish Democratic Equality Party in Syria.
6. The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty), led by Nasruddin Ibrahim

7. The Kurdish Future Movement in Syria

E) The Kurdish Patriotic Movement, founded in May 2011, included

1. The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty), led by Abdulhakim Bashar
2. The Kurdish Azadi Party in Syria.
3. The Kurdish Yekiti Party in Syria
4. The Kurdish Left Party in Syria, led by Muhammad Musa.
5. The Kurdish Democratic Equality Party in Syria.
6. The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty), led by Nasruddin Ibrahim
7. The Kurdish Future Movement in Syria
8. The Kurdish Democratic Union Party in Syria (Yakiti).
9. The Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria.
10. The Democratic Union Party (PYD)
11. The Kurdish Democratic Patriotic Party in Syria

F). The Kurdish National Council, KNC, founded in October 2011, included;

1. The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty), led by Abdulhakim Bashar
2. The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Alparty), led by Nasruddin Ibrahim
3. The Kurdish Democratic Patriotic Party in Syria
4. The Kurdish Democratic Equality Party in Syria.
5. The Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria.
6. The Kurdish Democratic Union Party in Syria (Yakiti).
7. The Kurdish Yekiti Party in Syria
8. The Kurdish Azadi Party in Syria, led by Mustafa Oso
9. The Kurdish Azadi Party in Syria, led by Mustafa Jumaa
10. The Syrian Democratic Kurdish Party led by Sheikh Jamal
11. The Kurdish Left Party in Syria, led by Muhammad Musa.
12. The Kurdistan Yekiti Party, led Abdulbaset Hamo

13. The Kurdish Democratic Party – Syria, led by Abdurrahman Aluji
14. The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria, led by Yusuf Faysal
15. The Kurdish Democratic Wifaq Party, led by Nashaat Muhammad
16. The Kurdish Left Party in Syria, led by Salih Gedo

G) The Kurdish Supreme Committee, KSC, founded July 2012;

1. The Kurdish National Council, KNC
2. The People's Council of West Kurdistan, PCWK [PYD]

H) The Kurdish Political Reference [Decision-Making Body], founded in October 2014;

1. The Kurdish National Council, KNC
2. The People's Council of West Kurdistan, PCWK [PYD]
3. Independents

The first five umbrella organizations do not exist anymore. Today, there are, officially, three umbrella organizations: (1) The KNC, (2) The KSC and (3) The Kurdish Political Reference. Almost all The KNC's sixteen members are all pro the KRG.[61] As such, The KSC consists of pro-KRG The KNC and pro PKK The PYD. However, the KSC has remained mere ink on paper and contrarily disagreement among its parties "have exacerbated" (Khoshnaw, 2013). In an attempt to stimulate cooperation between The PYD and The KNC, KRG's president Massoud Barzani promoted another deal between the two parties. After negotiations between The PYD and The KNC in Duhok, the parties, in October 2014, launched another body named as The Kurdish Political Reference, The KPR [Decision-Making Body].[62] It is not clear how The KPR will cure the failure of The KSC. Early sings show that The KPR will face the same fate The KSC faced. In first elections held in The KPR, three parties form The KNC, very surprisingly, voted for pro PYD candidates. The KNC,

[61] The majority of KNC's parties are pro Massoud Barzani's PDK. Only The Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria led by Abdulhamid Hajji Darwish is Pro Jalal Talabani's PUK.
[62] Kurd Watch, see: http://kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=3266&z=en&cure=1016

as resulted, dismissed those three parties. Consequently, The PYD and The KNC entered into fierce debate over the legitimacy of KPR-elected representatives.

What can be noticed is that the Kurdish political movement in Syria features increased interest in forming umbrella organizations especially since The 2011 Syrian Uprising. Yet, nevertheless, those organizations only virtually exist and are inactive and dysfunctional.

3.3 Political Activity

Demands and objectives of different Kurdish parties in Syria used to be close to each other. All parties have been calling for what they used to call it a fair solution for the Kurdish issue in Syria by peaceful and democratic means. None of these parties officially present itself as a separatist party. They, for example, have been demanding to grant Syrian citizenship to those who have lost it due to The 1962 Census. Kurdish political movement in Syrian had not witnessed any religious parties; all have been secular. Many Kurdish parties used to be, and still, individualized. Those parties are known by names of their leaders rather by the name of party itself (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2013: 82-88). In spite of these similarities, each party has had its own understanding of what does the Kurdish issue mean. While some parties like the Progressive party prioritize cultural and social aspects of the Kurdish issue and that Kurdish people in Syria is a part of Syrian people, other parties, like Yekiti and The Future Movement, were more radical. They have been declaring that the Kurdish issue should be treated by granting Kurds self-governing area and that Kurdish people in Syria is part of Kurdish people in Kurdistan (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2013: 82-88).

Since 2000, some Kurdish parties become more *visible*. Parties like Yekiti, Azadi and The PYD showed increased activities. On June 25, 2003, Yekiti organized a "parade of children" in front of the UNICEF building in Damascus, on the occasion of the World Children's Day (Yesiltas, 2014: 195). This was among few public activities that Kurdish parties were organizing. In the wake of the 2004 Qamishli Uprising, many Syrian opposition bodies showed solidarity with Kurdish parties. Prominent activists like Riad Darar and MP Riad Saif were arrested in 2004 and 2006 respectively for their participation in Kurdish demonstrations. According to Jordi Tejel, this opening by the Syrian opposition toward Kurds helped in putting the

"Kurdish problem" on the political agendas of the Syrian opposition. This was crystalized explicitly The Damascus Declaration.[63]

3.4 Policies of Syrian Governments Towards Kurds in Syria

3.4.1 Pre-Baathist Period: 1946-1963

The relations between different Syrian governments and Kurds in this period can be described as controversy and problematic. From the 1946, the year Syria gained its independence, until 1958, different political powers in Syria sought to maintain and develop their existence in the new republic. As others, Kurds in Syria actively involved in politics of Syria. However, by the inauguration of The United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1958, Kurds have gradually been marginalized. Although, the pan Arab nationalism UAR experience was demolished by a military coup in 1961, the new government continued the same policies adopted by The UAR regarding the Kurds. Since then, Syrian governments took many legal measurements that further alienated Kurds in Syria and deprived them from some basic rights. These policies and measurements were stimulated by some local "fantasies" and regional realties.

3.4.1.1 Pre-UAR: 1946-1958

The last French soldier left Syria on 17 April 1946 and from that date The Republic of Syria was born. Syrian political powers of that time found themselves operating in a new sovereign state. Ideologies behind these powers were represented by political organizations like parties as well as by powerful individuals like military officers and notables. The structure of political power was complexly networked especially because no single ideology was strong enough to seize the political power alone and maintain political stability (Tejel, 2009: 39). Due to this weakness the fresh Syrian government, represented by traditional powers,[64] could not stand against the new

[63] Damascus Declaration was document signed by the Syrian Opposition in 2005. It demanded "peaceful, gradual, founded on accord, and based on dialogue and recognition of the other" reforms for the "authoritarian and totalitarian" Syrian regime. Signers of this declaration included Leftist parties, Muslim Brotherhood, majority of Kurdish parties, civil society committees and some tribal figures. The full text of the Declaration is available at: http://faculty-staff.ou.edu/L/Joshua.M.Landis-1/syriablog/2005/11/damascus-declaration-in-english.htm

[64] It is meant by *traditional powers* the political bodies that were dominating the Syrian politics throughout the French Mandate and were active during the very early years of the independence. As far as their ideological orientation is concerned, those powers were conservative, non-populist and

challenges she faced. In fact, the failure of introducing political and economic reforms by the traditional powers, led to multi-layer upheavals in late 1940s (Heydemann, 1999: 84). However these upheavals were not only due to internal conditions. According to Katarzyna Krokowska, Syria, at that time, was not "immune to Cold Ward rivalries" (Krokowska, 2011: 81). In this regard, the first military coup in Syria, which took place in March 1949, was stimulated by external factors. According to Patrick Seale, the declaration of Israel in 1948, the monetary convention with France and the United States interests of TAPLINE energy pipeline had all made Colonel Husni al-Zaim to conduct the first military coup in the history of Syrian state (Teitelbaum, 2004: 138). Moreover, this military coup, which was "instigated" by the United States (Seale, 1965: 39-40), neither inspired by a conflict in ideology nor actuated by any kind of class struggle (Kaylani, 1972: 11).

What matters our theme here is that the new Syrian rulers, between 1946 and 1949 did not adopt a systematic hostile policy against Kurds. And that the would-be discriminatory official anti-Kurdish policies were not rooted in the initial stages of the Syrian state (Tejel, 2009: 44). What also matters is that the first military coup in the Syrian history was led by Husni al-Zaim who was coming from Kurdish origins. This fact made some key Syrian political players to take suspicious, if not antagonistic, attitudes towards al-Zaim and consequently towards Kurds. Arab Nationalists perceived the al-Zaim's junta as a "Kurdish military regime" (Tejel, 2009: 45). Such a point of view was also produced by the Muslim Brotherhood who saw al-Zaim favoring non-Arabs to Arabs in his "Kurdish Republic" (Teitelbaum 2004: 140). In spite of the fact that al-Zaim was descending from a Kurdish background, he, however, had never expressed any pro-Kurdish sentiments. In his *The Struggle for Syria*, Patrick Seale assessed the claims that saw al-Zaim was setting up "an independent Kurdish state" as being *fantasies* and that al-Zaim's practices were evident that he was by no means setting pro-Kurdish policies (Seale 1965: 60). Agreeing with Seale, Raymond Hinnebusch went further when called al-Zaim as an "Arabized Kurd" (Hinnebusch, 1990: 84). For Hinnebusch, it was normal that a minority member could manage to conduct a military coup. This was due to the fact that the then Syrian army was the successor of *Les Troupes Speciales Du*

revolving around notables and rich families. In 1940s, the leading traditional powers were The People's Party and The National Party.

Levant in which the French Mandate authorities "deliberately recruited from minority groups" (Hinnebusch, 1990: 81). Al-Zaim was not the only Kurdish character that caused such controversies. Adib al-Shishakli (1909-1964), who carried out the third military coup in the Syrian history in December 1949, was also coming from a Kurdish origin. And like al-Zaim, al-Shishakli had also "never acknowledged his Kurdish origins and demonstrated a rather uncompromising attitude toward Kurdish cultural activities" (Tejel, 2009: 45).

Military juntas ruled Syria from March 1949 to February 1954. After an attempt to overthrow Adib al-Shishakli from power, al-Shishakli decided to resign from the office "ostensibly to prevent Syria from the continued Syrian bloodshed" (Moubayed, 2012: 107). Since then and until the unity with Egypt in 1958, Syria witnessed democratic parliamentary rule especially by introducing the secret ballots system as a new electoral technique (Krokowska, 2011: 85). Winners of the free elections of 1954 were the traditional conservative parties like The People's Party and The National Party (Krokowska, 2011: 85). On the Kurdish level, the first Kurdish political party was established in June 1957. From the elaborative organizational details that Jordi Tejel presents, it is obvious that the party was enjoying a kind of freedom in the mobilization process and recruiting new members. At the same time, the party did not promote any separatist thoughts and rather adopted "Syrianized" policies (Tejel, 2009: 86). Moreover, Kurds had their independent members of the parliament. Some of those members were members of families of tribal Kurdish notables like "sons of Ibrahim Pasha and Hasan Hajo" (Tejel, 2009: 86).

In brief, the Syria politics were enjoying a kind of democracy during the period of 1954-1958. In this period, Kurdish politics in Syria flourished and was active thanks to the electoral parliamentary system. Before that, instability and political upheavals were dominating the Syrian political scene. At least four military coups occurred between 1949 and 1954 of which three of them were led by officers descending from Kurdish backgrounds. The last fact may have led some Arab nationalist parties like the Baath Party and Muslim Brotherhood to negatively react against the Kurds in Syria. It is very important here to mention that the ruling structures of 1954-1958 were opponents of Baath and Muslim Brotherhoods.

3.4.1.2 The United Arab Republic: 1958-1961

Although the general elections of 1954 re-brought the traditional conservative parties to power, these elections witnessed rise of non-elite populist parties like The Syrian Communist Party, SCP and The Arab Socialist Baath Party. Along with the popularity The SCP was enjoying, The Baath Party raised its seats in the parliament form only one seat in 1949 to 22 in 1954 (Krokowska, 2011: 85). As mentioned before, the failure of traditional powers in introducing reformist policies has paved the way for those two parties to compete with each other to dominate the political scene in Syria. To overcome The SCP, The Baath Party decided to go on with a unity project with Egypt (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013: 304).[65] The Arab nationalist Baath Party thought that merging with Egypt under the phenomenal and charismatic leader Gamal Abd al-Nasser would give the party the upper place in Syria politics. As a result, the unity between Syria and Egypt was proclaimed in January 1958 under the name: The United Arab Republic, UAR. One of the most preconditions President Nasser demanded in order to go with the Baath Party's project for union was the dissolution of Syria's political parties (Van Dam, 2011: 22).

Like other Syrian parties The Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria, KDPS which was established in June 1957 was banned. The UAR authorities "imposed a heavy crackdown" on the Kurdish party and arrested large numbers of its members (Yesiltas 2014: 183). Sentiments against the Kurds in Syria noticeably increased after the union between Syria and Egypt in 1958 (Yesiltas 2014: 183). As The UAR was adopting a radical version of Arab Nationalism as an ideology, "manifestations of non-Arab ethnicity were considered counterproductive to the furtherance of the overriding cause of Arab unity (Entessar, 2010: 78). The discovery of oil fields in "the Kurdish heartland" in late 1950s contributed to government paranoia about *potential* Kurdish separatism (Gambill, 2004). The UAR authorities "fired hundreds of Kurdish military officers, including the army chief of staff, Gen. Tawfiq Nizamaddin, and closed police and military academies to Kurdish applicants"

[65] It was not only the Baath Party who was afraid of the rise of communism in Syria. Western powers who were in touch with the then Syrian president Shukri al-Quwwatli did not object the unity project (Podeh, 1999: 36-39). Moreover, Syrian landlords and rich families were also suspicious of the pro lower class communist rhetoric, and hence they did not object the unity project (Krokowska, 2011: 91). The unity precondition of demolishing Syrian political parties was perceived positively by military officers (Krokowska, 2011: 91).

(Gambill, 2004). Under The UAR rule, Kurdish cultural activities like producing Kurdish music and publishing materials in Kurdish were prohibited. Kurds also accused the authorities to be responsible for an infamous cinema fire in the town of Amude in 1960 where more than 280 children were killed (Tejel, 2009: 48).[66]

It is significant to mention that the crackdown on Kurds in Syria was not only due to the UAR Arab nationalist ideology. This crackdown had two more dimensions; economic and regional. One of the economic policies adopted by The UAR was agricultural and land reforms where the government targeted landlords and feudal individual. As Kurds in Syria in general and Kurdish politics in particular, at that time, were associated with "feudal chiefs" and tribal leaders, The UAR seemed to be keen in eliminating them on the social-class base (Tejel, 2009: 48). On the regional level, Gamal Abd al-Nasser was also concerned with the consequences of any key development in Kurdish insurgency that was going on in Iraq (Jwaideh, 2006: 276-282). Especially as the Kurdish party in Syria, KDPS had extraordinary relations with Kurdistan Democratic Party in Iraq, KDP. Hence Nasser adopted a very restricted policy against Syrian Kurds.

Although it was relatively a short lived experience, three years, the unity between Syria and Egypt has left behind it non-democratic notions and practices in Syria like banning parties and adopting exclusionary policies. On the Kurdish level, Arab-Kurdish interactions had deteriorated in Syria after The UAR experience. In this period, as the UAR policies had alienated and marginalized Kurds, Kurdish politics in Syria, as a reaction, were, to some extent, more de-Syrianized and more ethnopoliticized.

[66] On 13th November 1960, around 300 hundred children were killed in a fire "accident" occurred in a cinema in the town of Amude, located on the Syrian-Turkish border. The cinema was featuring an Egyptian film which its revenue was dedicated to the Algerian revolution against the French colonial rule. There is no concrete evident that the fire was deliberately caused by The UAR authorities as some Kurds claim. According to Kurd Watch report no.2 of 2009, the director of the sub district of Amude ordered that all elementary school pupils in his town must attend the screening. And several screenings had, probably, heated the screening devices and caused fire. Irrespective to the cause of the fire, the accident is actually present, until today, in the collective memory of Kurds in Syria as a cruel discriminatory example of the UAR authorities against them.

3.4.1.3 The Secessionist Period: 1961-1963

Throughout The UAR three years, Baathists did not enjoy the privilege they were expecting. The Baath Party was eventually "marginalized" and "The UAR was dominated" by Egyptian units (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013: 304). Ironically the Baath Party witnessed a counterproductive effect of the unity on it and "instead of consolidating the party, the UAR became a source of division" for the party (Perlmutter, 1969: 836). The marginalization process was actually not only applied on Baathists but rather this process was anti any Syrian element in The UAR. Egyptians, by "behaving with a high-handed arrogance" over Syrian units, "infuriated the Syrians" (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013: 292). In September 1961, the unity between Syria and Egypt ended by a military coup.

Although Syrians left the unity due to The UAR policies, policies of Syria's new government concerning the Kurds, again, did not change. On the contrary, the discriminatory aspects of The UAR over Kurds in Syria dramatically escalated. For the first time since its independence, Syria was *constitutionally* described as an Arab republic. Instead of "The Republic of Syria" before The UAR, Syria was proclaimed as "The Syrian Arab Republic" (Young, 1962: 483). This symbolic shift of the state's name was paraphrased by Ozum Yesiltas as an official denial of non-Arabs in Syria (Yesiltas, 2014:183). In fact, anti-Kurdish policies after UAR were well embodied by a major measurement the Syrian government took: The Census of 1962.

The Census of 1962:

> In 1962, an exceptional census stripped some 120,000 Syrian Kurds --20 percent of the Syrian Kurdish population -- of their Syrian citizenship. They were left stateless, and with no claim to another nationality. Decree No. 93, issued in August 1962, ordered that a census be carried out in Hasakeh governorate in northeastern Syria for the purpose of identifying "alien infiltrators."
>
> (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 1996: 3)

The above extract summarizes the *exceptional* population census for the predominantly Kurdish-populated of Hasaka governorate. This census was conducted in only one day. To be registered in the new citizenship registry, people had to prove that they were living in Syria before 1945. Those who could prove that were considered Syrian *Arab* citizens and those who could not were considered *Ajaneb Al*

Hasaka (foreigners of Hasaka). Who could not attend the census process, were later labeled as *Maktomin* (The Concealed) (Ziadeh, 2009: 2). As a result, in 1996 between 140.000 and 200,000[67] Kurds in Syria were stateless; this number raised to 300.000 in 2013 (International Crisis Group, 2013, pp. 6).[68] Technically speaking, and apart from any political, ethnic and/or ideological agendas behind it, this census was arbitrarily carried out and without any professionalism. The HRW report lists names of some Kurds who born in Syria in 1935 and before it and were not granted the Syrian citizenship (HRW, 1996: 14). Other examples show families with some of its member were regarded as citizen and other members were regarded *Ajaneb* or *Maktomin* (Albarazi & McGee, 2013: 15-16).

The Syrian government justified conducting such a census by stating that "alien infiltrators" from Turkey had crossed into Syria and that they are not Syrian citizens (Lowe, 2006: 3). Jordi Tejel refers to another possible factor that may have made the Syrian government of 1962 to carry out such an anti-Kurds census. According to him Syria was afraid of losing the Kurdish territories of Syria as a consequence of the success the Kurdish revolt was achieving in Iraq (Tejel, 2009: 49-50).[69] The Syrian concern over the developments in Iraq reached its peak when the Syrian government sent troops to assist the Iraqi army in its war with Kurdish rebels (Natali, 2005: 53).

3.4.2 The Baathist Period: 1963-2011

In March 1963, Syria has witnessed a coup conducted by Baathist officers. The inner conflict in The Baath Party, however, was the reason behind carrying out two more coups in 1966 and 1970 respectively. Each coup was associated with a shift of power in The Baath Party. The 1966 coup paved the way for the Alawites[70] to rule the party and The 1970 coup consolidate the Alawite presence in party under al-Asad family rule. In 1966, a Baathist group called "regionalists" carried out a military coup against the mainstream Baathists. This group, which was dominated by Alawites, was called the regionalists because they were seeing that their party policies should

[67] In its report of 1996, The HRW cites two sources for the number of stateless Kurds in Syria. According to the Syrian government, the number was 142,465, while Kurdish source counted them to be over 200.000.

[68] In April 2011, the Syria government has granted the stateless Kurds the Syrian citizenship. For more details, see *C. During the 2011 Syrian Crisis* of this chapter.

[69] Tejel says that Syrian government fear was because the county had already lost territories and does not want to lose more. In this respect he most likely refers to the Hatay province and Golan Heights.

[70] Although some scholars differentiate between Alawites and Nusayris, Alawites of Syria are also called Nusayris. The debate over the naming is, in any case, out of the scope of the thesis.

focus on the region of Syria more than focusing on the Arab world (Devlin, 1991: 1403-1404). As in the case of the UAR and then the Secessionist government, anti-Kurdish measurements and policies under different Baathist governments continued to rise. At the same time, the relations between Kurds in Syria and Syrian government became more complex mainly due to regional interactions.

3.4.2.1 Non-Asad Baathism

Form 1963 till 1970 Syria was solely ruled The Baath Party which came to power by military coups. During this period Syrian governments continued to see Kurds as a threat to the Syrian national security and dealt with them accordingly. According to Salah Badradin, a radical Kurdish politician, 43% of all land seized under Syria's agrarian reform laws was in the governorate of Jazira (Hasaka). By doing so, Baathist governments of 1960s were utilizing the land reforms to destroy "the economic power of [Kurdish] traditional elite" (Gambill, 2004). In attempt to minimize and contain the "Kurdish threat," the Baathist rule adopted Arabization policies in the Kurdish region. In November 1963, Lieutenant Muhammad Talab Hilal, head of Secret Services in Hasaka, prepared a study-report on the "the Kurdish threat" (Vanly, 1992: 152). In his study, Hilal recommended the government 12 measurements to deal with what he called "the Kurdish treason". These were: (1) displacing Kurds, (2) denial of education, (3) handing over wanted Kurds to Turkey, (4) conduction anti-Kurdish propaganda campaigns, (5) denial of employment possibilities, (6) deportation of Islamic clerics, *Ulama* with Kurdish background, (7) implementing divide-and-rule policy, (8) colonization of Kurdish lands by pure Arabs, (9) arming Arabs of the region, (10) preparing farms for the new Arab settlers, (11) depriving voting rights for non-Arabic speakers, (12) denial of Syrian citizenship for any non-Arab wishing to live in the area (Vanly, 1992: 156) (Tejel, 2009: 61).

Basing on these recommendations, the Syrian government, in 1965, decided to implement what will later be known as "Arab Belt" (Kurd Watch, 2009: 13). The Arab Belt was a plan to create a cordon separating Kurds of Syria from Kurds of Turkey in the Syrian-Turkish border region. This cordon starts from the town of Ras al-Ayn (west), alongside the Turkish border, to the east (Lowe, 2006: 3). The cordon, which it length was 280 kilometers and with 10 to 15 kilometers wide, "anticipated

the massive deportation of 140,000 Kurds, most of whom had been deprived of their Syrian citizenship in 1962" (Tejel, 2009: 61).

As it has been shown, Kurds-related governmental policies under the Baathist rule did not weaved from the policies adopted by previous governments since The UAR period. Moreover, these policies became legalized and institutionalized on large scale as the state adopted more radical version Arab nationalism. At the same time, the regional context that encouraged the Baathist governments to take such policies stayed the same, since the UAR time, especially the Kurdish insurgency in Iraq.

3.4.2.2 Al-Asad, the Father

In November 1970 the Baath Party informed Hafez al-Asad that he was dismissed from his all governmental posts and that he was not a party member anymore. Al-Asad rejected these orders and as a reaction conducted a bloodless coup (Devlin, 1991: 1403-1405). After his coup, Asad gave himself ultimate authorities in military, executive and some legislative bodies of the state. He consolidated these authorities by constitutionalizing them in the Permanent Constitution of Syria of 1973. By doing so, al-Asad retained the essential powers in his hands and gave ceremonial functionality to state's different institutions (Seale & McConville, 1990: 173-174). Again, although al-Asad had made some change like ceremonial institutionalizations, he continued to apply the same Kurdish policies applied by previous governments. In 1970, Asad's authorities started to Arabize names of Kurdish cities and towns. And under his rule, Kurdish areas were "woefully underdeveloped in comparison to the rest of Syria" (Gambill, 2004). What al-Asad added in this concern, was utilizing Kurdish leaders from Iraq and Turkey to discourage Kurds in Syrian in relation to any political act.

Article 1 of the permanent constitution of 1973 stated the identity of Syria as being an Arab state and that the Syrian people is a part of the greater Arab people. Backing on the Arab nationalism as a state ideology, al-Asad applied the already-decided the Arab Belt project. The Syrian authorities built model villages for the new Arab settlers (HRW, 1996: 13).[71] The total number of those new comers was around 24,000

[71] It seems that the date of application of the Arab Belt was related to building a major dam over The Euphrates in a region highly populated by Arabs. The completion of the dam caused floods covering large areas of land and made hundreds of Arab families homeless (Montgomery, 2005: 12). Those people were brought to Hasaka region and settled in the Arab Belt project. Until today, those Arabs

(Barout, 2013: 41). In 1976, however, the settlement campaigns were halted by al-Asad (Barout, 2013: 41). Until this stage it seems that anti-Kurdish measurements slowed down under al-Asad rule. Huge discrimination projects like The Census of 1962 and the Arab Belt were not introduced anymore under his rule. According to Tejel, al-Asad adopted a pragmatic policy concerning the Kurdish matter. In fact, al-Asad was applying a balanced way to keep Kurds under pressure and crackdown. Al-Asad did not want to totally cut off ties with Kurds and he rather was interested in having a kind of control over the Kurdish political movement in Syria to prevent it from having any "revolutionary" aspect (Tejel, 2009: 62).

After structuring and securing his rule, al-Asad started to involve in regional politics more and more. As al-Asad was not having good relations with both Iraq and Turkey, he hosted opposition groups from those two countries. Since the time al-Asad was in power in 1970, Kurds in Iraq had already been in an armed conflict with the central government. Al-Asad hosted and supported Kurdish leaders from Iraq as a way to attack the Iraqi regime. By the time The PKK started an armed conflict against the Turkish government in 1984, Hafez al-Asad was already supporting and hosting the organization and its leader Abdullah Ocalan.

As it has been showed previously the Kurdish political movement in Syria had existential relations with Kurdish powers in Iraq. Started by the declaration of the KDPS in 1957 and not ended until today, Kurdish parties in Iraq played, and are still playing, a huge multi-level role in establishing traditional Kurdish parties in Syria and shaping their ideologies and policies. More than half of major Kurdish parties are openly adopting what they call it "Nahj al-Barzanii alkhaled" (The Approach of The Immortal Barzani) (Welati, 2014) (Sawtalkurd, 2012) (Birati, 2014) (Khalil, 2014) (Malla, 2014). Less influential than Barzani family, Jalal Talabani and his PUK have also clients among the Syrian Kurdish parties as well. On the top of these parties comes the Abdulhamid Hajji Darwish's the Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria (Van Wilgenburg, 2013). The extraordinary cliental relations the Iraqi Kurdish leaders had over Kurdish politics and the good relations Hafez al-Asad had with those leaders, enabled al-Asad to indirectly monitor Kurdish parties in Syria and eventually controlling them.

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are known the *Alghamr* "the covered" the term which appeared to refer that water covered their original lands.

Such an interaction was, more explicitly, evident in the case of PKK's leader Abdullah Ocalan. From 1979 till 1998, Hafez al-Asad gave refuge to Abdullah Ocalan as a leader of an armed organization in Turkey (Starr, 2014). On the contrary to Kurdish parties of Iraq, Ocalan had not any "cliental" relations with Kurdish parties in Syria. But rather, Ocalan's influence was embodied in direct mobilization of Syrian Kurds for his insurgency in Turkey.[72] According to James Brandon from The Jamestown Foundation there were thousands of Syrian Kurds in the rank of the PKK and that the PKK Qandil Camp had around 1000 Syrian Kurds in 2007 (Brandon, 2007).

> "Asad proposed to Barzani that he allow the PKK militias to set up camp inside his enclave on the Turkish border. This would enable them to move into Turkey, where they would foment rebellion among Turkey's 10 million Kurds. In return for assisting PKK, Barzani would receive arms and financial support from Damascus"
>
> (Pelletiere, 1992: 79)

> "Barzani wanted Asad to be his protector."
>
> (Pelletiere, 1992: 79)

> "Syria had no Kurds of its own and … those living there were all refugees from Turkey" said Abdullah Ocalan in 1996.
>
> (McDowall, 2004: 479)

> "With Syrian dictator Hafez al-Assad's patronage, he [Jalal Talabani] formed the PUK"
>
> (Rubin, 2012)

The above extracts are very helpful to understand the complex relations Hafez al-Asad was maintaining with Kurdish political and armed parties in both Iraq and Turkey. Al-Asad was actually killing two birds with one stone. While he was using these parties as geopolitical cards of Syria, al-Asad was utilizing these parties on the internal level. All Kurdish parties in Syria which had strong ties with Kurdish parties of Iraq kept their political objectives as low as possible. That is, the majority of these parties were demanding some cultural and citizenship rights in Syria. Those parties had never raised the level of their goals under Hafez al-Asad rule and hence the

[72] Until 2003, there was no pro PKK Kurdish political party or organization in Syria. However after the relations between PKK and the Syrian regime started to deteriorate since 1998, pro PKK Syrian Kurds launched the Democratic Union Party, PYD. For more details, see Chapter Three.

Kurdish areas remained calm for decades. By the same token, the PKK, directly or indirectly, applied similar policies but with different techniques. By recruiting Syrian Kurds in the PKK's insurgency in Turkey, the PKK was helping al-Asad to get rid of radical hawkish Syrian Kurds who may disturb the situation in Kurdish territories in Syria. And hence, the PKK contributed in placation of Syria's own Kurdish population (Phillips, 2011: 35). In fact, Hafez al-Asad was using Kurdish parties in Iraq and Turkey to direct the attention of Syria's Kurds to "true Kurdistans" in Iraq and Turkey.[73] According to David McDowall, Kurdish leaders in Iraq and Turkey "either denied the legitimacy of a Syrian Kurdish movement or dismissed it as a small-scale movement that distracted from the "real struggle" for Kurdistan" (McDowall, 1998: 69-70 in Tejel, 2009: 78).

3.4.2.3 Al-Asad, the Son

Hafez al-Asad remained the president of Syria from 1970 until his death in June 2000. His son Bashar succeeded him and became the president of Syria since July 2000. Syrian state's institutions were all mobilized in order to remove any legal and constitutional obstacle in Bashar's way to presidency. After one day of his father's death, Bashar was promoted to be Lieutenant-General and the Supreme Commander of the Armed forces. According to the Syrian constitution, it is only the right of the Baath Party to nominate a name for the post of the presidency. The constitutional article 83 that stated that the age of president should be at least 40 was changed. As Bashar was 34 years old in 2000, the updated version of article 83 stated that the age of the president must be 34 (Van Dam, 2011: 132-133).

As other Syrians, Kurds received the appointing the new London-educated young president with optimism. Bashar al-Asad visited Hasaka governorate in August 2002 and met with a number of Kurdish individuals (HRW, 2010: 24). This step was considered a big opening to the Kurdish issue in Syria. As Bashar did not carry out any concrete reform for Syrians in general and for Kurds in particular, the Human Rights Watch concluded one of its reports by stating that Bashar al-Asad was simply extending his father's doctrine of governing by repression (HRW, 2010: 24).

[73] The influence of Kurdish parties of Turkey and Iraq over Syrian Kurds had another dimension. Dominated by Kurdish and Kurdistan-rhetoric, the ethnic identity of Syrian Kurds was maximized at the expense of their Syrian identity.

What has been changed under Bashar's rule was the geopolitical context. In June 2000, the Turkish president Ahmet Necdet Sezar visited the Syrian capital Damascus. This was the first time a Turkish president visits Syria since its establishment in 1946 (Hale, 2013: 234). Although this visit was on purpose of participating in Hafez al-Asad's funeral, it was considered as a sign of rapprochement between Syria and Turkey. In this regard, Bashar al-Asad in his turn visited Ankara in 2004 (Hale, 2013: 234).This rapprochement came after the Syrian government expelled Abdullah Ocalan from its territories in 1998 and claimed that it cut all previous relations with PKK. On the Syrian Kurdish level, these developments led to radicalized activities by some Kurdish parties. Since 2000, the Kurdish Union Party in Syria (Yekiti) tended to be more radical after former pro PKK Syrian Kurds joined the party. This trend continued and pro PKK Syrian Kurds established their own party in 2003, the PYD. As a response, the Syrian authorities conducted a special oppression over those two parties (Yesiltas, 2014: 190-191) (Tejel, 2009: 117-118).

On the Iraqi level, Syria had also gradually lost its connection with Kurdish parties there. This was mainly due the United States war over Iraq in 2003. Moreover, changing the Iraqi regime made the Kurdish parties there less interested in any support from Syria. At the same time, the Syrian government perceived the military existence of the United States on its border as a threat. And hence the Syrian government reduced its relation with Kurds of Iraq who were then pro the United States. This mutual *coldness* between Iraqi Kurds and the Syrian government will contribute, although slightly, in the radicalization of Kurdish movement in Syria. This was well embodied in the 2004 Qamishli Uprising.

The 2004 Qamishli Uprising: A Regionalization

On March 12, 2004, clashes between two football team supporters erupted in the Kurdish-populated city of al-Qamishli in the north eastern corner of Syria. The match was between al-Futuwa team, the guest, and al-Jihad team, the host. Started as usual football verbal clashes between supporters of both side, these clashes immediately turned to be physical. Supporters from both sides, started to throw stones at each other and the security forces intervened using live fire. Respond by Syrian security forces was fierce. In an attempt for calming down, the police used shotguns but the

result was 5 Kurds killed and many wounded (Danish Refugee Council [DRC], 2007: 5).[74] The second day, at least 100 thousands held funeral for 9 people killed the day before (Kurd Watch, 2009b: 6). Security forces also violently intervened while some angry demonstrators burned the Baath party offices and destroyed statues of Hafez al-Asad. The crackdown by security authorities resulted in 32 killed, many wounded and around 2,000 detainees (Kurd Watch, 2009b: 6).

The reason of referring to the 2004 Qamishli Uprising in this thesis is not only to feature an example of the repression by Syrian government against Kurds or as an embodiment of "historical tensions" in Rojava, but also and more importantly, to refer to the Kurdish regional influences over the Kurdish movement in Syria. As it had been mentioned before, the PKK, the PDK and the PUK contributed in keeping the Kurds in Syria silenced as long as the Syrian regime was supporting them. But as of 1998 in case of the PKK and 2003 in the case of PDK, relations between the Syrian regime on one side and those two parties on the other side started to deteriorate.[75] From that time and on, both PKK and PDK, although PKK's voice was louder, changed the tune of their political voice concerning the Syrian Kurds.

For example, the pro PKK satellite television channel ROJ TV dedicated a great deal of its broadcast to cover, sometime exaggeratingly, what she called it the revolution in Syrian Kurdistan. Recalling PKK's leader statement of "Syria has no Kurds" in 1996 (McDowall, 2004: 479), this was a clear evidence of the shift in PKK's attitude concerning Kurds in Syria. According to Kurd Watch report, ROJ TV played a decisive role in mobilizing Kurds throughout the Kurdish region in Syria (Kurd Watch, 2009: 9).

On the other hand, author of this thesis had personally heard from members of pro Barzani's PDK Kurdish parties in Syria, that Massoud Barzani "will not remain silent" and that he will "defend us". Such statements were actually produced by those members only weeks after Barzani used the term "Syrian Kurdistan" (Wieland, 2006: 53). Using such an expression was a dramatic rise in PDK's rhetoric. The time context in which both the 2004 Qamishli Uprising and Barzani's statement occurred

[74] Other sources refer to 7 and 13 killed on March 12.
[75] Although PUK of Jalal Talabani was not in need any more for a Syrian support, the party maintained better relations with the Syrian regime comparing to Massoud Barzani's PDK.

is of great significance. On 8th March 2004, a new constitution of Iraq was signed by the Iraqi Governing Council. The new constitution, for the first time in Iraq's history, defined the country to be a federal republic[76] and recognized a federal region for Kurds.[77]

All in all, the 2004 Qamishli Uprising represented the rise of Kurdish activism level in Syria. It also represented the escalation in the level of repression by the Syrian regime. In May 2005, the Syrian security authorities were accused with killing of Sheikh Mashuk Khaznawi. Khaznawi (1957-2005) was a Kurdish Islamic scholar who was participating in demonstrations and giving speeches in different Kurdish occasions. Many sources, however, do not only relate Khaznawi's death to his Kurdish political activism. They make references to Khaznawi's relations with Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, which is a political redline for the Syrian regime, and his attempt to bring Kurds and the Brotherhood to one front (Wikas, 2007: 17) (Freedom House, 2006). Another example for the escalation of repression was the presidential decree no 49 of 2008 which put restrictions on "establishment, transfer, modification or acquisition" of any property in border regions. Kurdish parties saw this decree attacking the Kurds.[78]

Going back to the regional dimension of the 2004 Qamishli Uprising, there is an interesting finding concerning al-Futuwa football team of Deir al-Zor governorate. Supporters of this team allegedly raised photos of Saddam Hussein, the ousted Iraqi president. Benjamin Thomas White (2011) in the very beginning of his work about minorities and nation state in French Mandate Syria challenges his readers with a puzzle. White refers to a report prepared by a civil servant during the French Mandate about a Syrian region and its population who does not show any Syrian aspect or any loyalty for the Syrian state and who have strong relations with a neighboring country. Before saying which region this region is, White says that this region is not the Druze area, Alawite region or the Kurdish region. But rather it is Deir al-Zor area and its people who, like the majority of Syrians, are Sunni Arabs.[79]

[76] Article 116 from the Iraqi constitution
[77] Article 117 from the Iraqi constitution
[78] See Annex 2.2.

[79] White presented this example to defend his argument that the modern "minority groups" do not naturally or indigenously exist. But rather they are existed due to political and contextual circumstance.

And that those people have good relations with people of its neighboring county, Iraq (White, 2011: 92-93). In fact, Syrians in Deir al-Zor areas and Iraqis in al-Anbar province have rough terrain and cross-border kinship and tribal links (Hokayem, 2013: 131). The significant thing is that, after decades of that report, we saw people of the same region holding posters of the previous president of their neighboring county. Much more significant is that they did so to provoke other Syrian people who were also, in their turns, associated with another political party, Iraqi Kurds, of the same neighboring county. Such issues, of course, raise concerns about the formation of both Syria and Iraq as post-colonial states. The Qamishli Uprising shows also show how fragile such countries are where the national loyalty is mixed with loyalties to other countries.

Since 2005 and until the 2011 Syrian Uprising relations between the Syrian government and Kurds in Syria continued to be tense. In 2009, HRW in its report "Group denial, repression of Kurdish political and cultural rights in Syria", asked the international community to put pressure on the Syrian government concerning human rights for Kurds (Al-Arabiya, 2009). In its turn, the Syrian government had promised, in many occasions, to treat the Kurdish issue but according to Scheller these promises “seemed to be vanished from the agenda, and it was to return only with onset of the revolution” (Scheller, 2013: 27).

4. CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE PYD AND THE IS

4.1 The Revival of the PYD

4.1.1 Founding, Orientation and Structure

The Democratic Union Party in Syria (Kurdish: Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat, PYD), was founded in 2003. This party is considered to be an offshoot of The Kurdistan Workers' Party (Kurdish: Partiya Karkerên Kurdistani, PKK). Ideologically speaking, the party presents itself as an anti-capitalist Kurdish party in Syria. On the organizational level, PYD has complex structures and introduces *vague* projects.

As it has been featured under Chapter Two, the Syrian regime under Hafez al-Asad's rule was maintaining a good mutual relation with the PKK. Benefiting from this relation, the PKK was enjoying the advantage of recruiting Syrian Kurds for its fight in Turkey. During late 1980s and early and mid-1990s, PKK members were active in Syria in general and in Rojava in particular (Yesiltas, 2014: 186). This activity was mainly serving the spreading of PKK's propaganda among Syrian Kurds as well as collecting donations. In their touch with locals of Rojava, PKK members were adopting traditional attitudes.[80] By traditional attitudes it is meant that PKK members were acting according to customs of a rural and tribal society like that of Rojava. PKK members were usually hosted as guests by some Syrian Kurdish families. Couples, sometime a group of three, of PKK members, at least one of them female, were visiting those families, having meals with them and spending one or more nights there. Sometimes people out of those families were also invited to dinners or lunches offered by these families. In such meetings, PKK members were having discussions and friendly chats with the local about politics and Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. Syrian and/or Syrian Kurdish topics were absent from the agendas in such discussions and chats. While arguing and defending PKK's and its Kurdish

[80] As far as the social interaction between PKK members and locals in Rojava is concerned, all presented details are based on author's accumulated *verbal* knowledge of the issue. This includes some *random* chats with locals in the past.

patriotism, PKK members were also presenting appealing and romantic aspects of PKK's "Berxwedan"[81] like natural landscapes of Kurdistan and [imagined] images of "Çiya"[82].

Mentioning such techniques adopted by PKK, should not waive the attention from the fact that many of Kurdish circles in Syria were gradually starting to identify themselves with PKK narratives. Although PKK members were much more active and having initiatives, the social relations between PKK members and their supporting families and communities in Rojava may roughly be described as mutual. This relation reached its peak in early 1990s. From this time and on, thousands of Syrian Kurds in Rojava openly started to identify themselves as being pro PKK. They were, for example, following both Kurdish and Turkish politics in Turkey much more than being aware of/interested in Syrian issues or Kurdish issues in Syria. Many of those pro PKK Syrian Kurds were showing interest in learning Turkish language as well.

Until 2000, Syrians were only permitted to watch two state-run television channels. Satellite-dish television sets were both illegal and expensive in Syria (Blecher, 2002: 13-14). Syrian communities in border regions (Syrian-Lebanese borders and Syrian-Turkish borders) were using special devices called *Muqawi* (TV signal amplifier) to receive TV channels from neighboring countries. Due to the geographical location of Rojava,[83] increasing households there used to watch Turkish TV channels instead of Syrian ones. This media dimension, in spite of being complementary and not essential, was another factor helped PKK to attract Syrian Kurds attention to its *domain* in Turkey. Moreover, the absence of other media means like newspapers more isolated the local from Syrian affairs and further pushed them to Turkish TV channels. While almost all of these channels used to present anti-PKK content, PKK was utilizing this attitude to gain more sympathizers among the Syrian Kurdish community from which some parts were consequently and eventually became more familiar with Turkish affairs than Syrian ones.

[81] In Kurdish, *Berxwedan* (also *Şoreş*) means resistance.
[82] In Kurdish, Çiya means mountain. In PKK's narrative, mountains, where PKK was/is active, have symbolic meaning like shelter, dignity and friendship.
[83] Almost all cities and town of Rojava are directly located on the Syrian-Turkish border. Centers of Kobane/Ayn Al-Arab, Sere Kaniye/Ras al-Ayn, Derbassiya and Qamishli, are only less than 1 kilometer away from the border. In case of other cities like Amude and Derik/Malikiya this distant is up to 5 kilometers.

It should be taken into consideration, however, that the PKK activists would not have been able to have all these activities if the Syrian authorities were not allowing them. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the Syrian regime was "supporting" PKK's activities concerning Syrian Kurds, as they were weakening Kurdish political movements in Syria (McDowall, 1998: 69-70 in Tejel, 2009: 78) (Phillips, 2011: 35). All these conditions and aspects contributed to the process of *de-Syrianizing* Kurdish politics and society in Syria.

After PKK-Syrian regime axis started to collapse in 1998 and the Turkish-Syrian relations started to improve since 2000, the PKK found itself moving from the position of a regime-friendly organization into a hostile one. From this time and on, the PKK was concerned to act against the Syrian regime. Although the PKK was mobilizing and directing all efforts towards Turkey, its years of action in Rojava left *social structures* with pro PKK mentality/identity behind it in Syria. Eventually and by the time PKK the directed its front against the Syrian regime, those social structures started to produce multiple-dimension politics. While maintaining substantial and strategic ties with PKK headquarter in Qandil Mountain in Iraq, Syrian PKK structures, for the first time, formed a political party in Rojava, the PYD in 2003. According to Ozum Yesiltas, the PYD, since its establishment, was a key "radical" Kurdish party in Syria (Yesiltas, 2014: 200, 206, 207).

To sum up, the PYD was created after the PKK revived its social heritage and organizational remnants in Rojava. The party was born strong as it was the only Kurdish party which had "a cadre of trained fighters" and because "its allegiance to Ocalan [as a symbol] helped to rally sympathizers and avoid internal splits" (International Crisis Group, 2014: 1).

In its Rules of Procedures,[84] the PYD defines itself as "a populist party, refuses nationalist Chauvinist concepts and believes in pluralism and freedom of belief." The party adopts "the paradigm of ethical society and democratic politics as a doctrine for its struggle." The party's main goals are: "solving the Kurdish issue in The West of Kurdistan and in Syria in a justly democratic way, organizing the Kurdish society on the base of "Democratic Self-Governance", and establishing a democratic con-

[84] PYD's Rules of Procedures are available in Arabic at:
http://www.pydrojava.net/ar/pdf/reznameya_navexwe_ya_pyd.pdf

federalist Middle East Union." In Article Two, "The Whatness of Party", of the Rules of Procedures, it is stated that "PYD accepts the leader of Kurdish people Abdullah Ocalan as its leader, and considers The Kurdistan People's Congress, (KONGRA-GEL) as the supreme legislative authority for the Kurdish people. [The party] also considers The Movement for a Democratic Society (TEV-DEM) as the democratic system for the Kurdish people in the West of Kurdistan." In its 25-page Political Program,[85] the PYD, in spite of the absence of terms like "socialist" and "socialism", *negatively* mentions "capitalist/capitalism" 48 times.[86]

In its report, International Crisis Group mentions that the PYD belongs to the Union of Communities in Kurdistan (Koma Civakên Kurdistan, KCK) (ICG, 2014: 5).[87] Another report states that "the top three names in the KCK executive committee also are the PKK's principal leaders" (ICG, 2013: 20).

Organizationally, PYD is consisted of: [88]

1. The Congress: The Congress is the highest apparatus in the party and is held each three years. The congress has authorities to change the Political Program, Rules of Procedures and present and strategic policies of the party. Presidents of party as well as other members are all elected in The Congress.

2. The Conference: The Conference is held when it is necessary. It acts like The Congress but cannot change the Political Program, Rules of Procedures, and Presidency of the Party.

3. The Presidency of Party: the Presidency of the Party consists of two members; a male and a female. They are responsible for all activities of the party and have authorities to from different committees.

4. The Council of Party: The Council of the Party consists of 25 members among them are the two presidents. The council, which is held each three

[85] The PYD's Political Program is available in Arabic at:
http://www.pydrojava.net/ar/pdf/bernameya_siyasi_a_PYD.pdf
[86] For example, the PYD relates the "bad" political and social conditions in The Middle East to capitalism and its colonialist approaches.
[87] The KCK is an umbrella organization that includes the PKK and its affiliates in Iran, Iraq and Syria.
[88] The organizational structures of the party are mentioned in its Rules of Procedures.

months, is responsible for leading and guiding different levels of party structures.

5. The Executive Committee: The Executive Committee is responsible for all operative processes of the party like following up the party performance organizing the committees and coordinating between them. The Executive Committee acts as the Presidency of Party if the later fails to act. This committee also takes part in setting the diplomatic, political and ideological policies of the party.

6. The Provincial Administration: The Provincial Administration is a ruling body consisting of 5 to 9 members. It is responsible of the Regional Administration.

7. The Regional [town] Administration: The Regional Administration is a body consisting of 5 to 9 members. It is responsible for many smaller town administrations and local representatives.

8. The Local Administration: The Local Administration is a body responsible for the local members. It consists of representatives of party cells.

In its "Democratic Self-Governing Project for The West of Kurdistan" [89], PYD rejects all centralized ways of governing. Interestingly, the party does not find federalism as a sufficient alternative. PYD rejects federalism because it does not enable communities to "govern themselves". According to the same document, federalism "has statist authorities from the [central] state while democratic self-governing is adopting the formula of (state + democratic institutions) as a base." Basing on such understandings, it is likely that PYD supports a special kind of federalism; a federalism where the federal entity itself is decentralized. Nevertheless, a report by ICG describes PYD's governing bodies and their "terminologies" as unclear and "vague" (ICG, 2014: 13).

[89] PYD's "Democratic Self-Governing Project for The West of Kurdistan" is available at: http://civiroglu.net/the-constitution-of-the-rojava-cantons

The incomplete[90] withdrawal of Syrian regime from Rojava in June 2012 left a governing void there (O'Byrne, 2012) (Demirtas, 2012) (Markey, 2012).[91] The militarily powerful PYD was the only party which could fill this void with "speed and relative ease" (Dehghanpisheh, 2012). PYD took this opportunity to apply its theoretical governing doctrines like "Democratic Self-Governing". By 2012, PYD had already established Rojava Democratic Society Movement (TEV-DEM) which includes: the Women's movement (Yekîtiya Star), youth and student organizations, cultural foundations and artisans' collectives (Dicle, 2013). TEV-DEM also includes PYD itself as an entity "in charge of political affairs" and People's Defense Unites (YPG) as a "defense" institution (ICG, 2014: 12). On PYD's continuous modification of its structures and renaming its institutions, ICG report states that when PYD introduced "transitional administration" in September 2013, the party did not mention "three federated areas".[92] The three federated area were first mentioned in November 2013 (ICG, 2014: 13). In March 2014 PYD made another step in institutionalizing its presences in Rojava. "The Social Contract of Rojava ... Cantons" was published as a constitution for what it is called "Democratic Autonomous Regions of Afrin, Jazira and Kobane."[93]

On the inner organizational level, PYD is totally imitating PKK. Both parties establish umbrella organizations for themselves (KONGRA-GEL, KCK, and TEV-DEM). Both parties keep changing and renaming their inner structures. Both parties establish bodies for women. Moreover and basing on extracted quotes from PYD's official primary documents of "Political Program", "Rules of Procedures", "Democratic Self-Governing Project" and "The Social Contract of Rojava", it is clear that PYD is ultimately affiliated with PKK if it was not an official offshoot of it. And that PYD's "democratic self-administration" is, as ICG report puts it, "an outgrowth of Ocalan's theory of community-based local governance" (ICG, 2014, pp. 6). In addition, there are many claims that PKK's Qandil leadership exerts authority over the YPG (ICG, 2013: 2). According to a source with close ties to the

[90] For example, the regime still control al-Qamishli International Airport, directorate of education for Hasaka Governorate and small security centers in al-Qamishli.
[91] According to PYD officials, the regime did not withdraw voluntarily, but after an "ultimatum" issued by PYD (Dehghanpisheh, 2012).
[92] The current PYD administrative of Rojava consists of three "cantons": Jazira, Kobane, and Efrin.
[93] The full text of the "The Social Contract of Rojava" is available at": http://civiroglu.net/the-constitution-of-the-rojava-cantons/

PYD, "PKK sent 1,000 armed fighters to establish the PYD's military wing, the YPG" (ICG, 2013: 2). All in all, while PYD is active in Syria, it shows bulk of evidences that the party has loyalty to PKK and that PKK has high authorities in PYD.

4.1.2 Political Performance

The political performance of Democratic Union Party, PYD can be divided into two phases; first, as *a* key Kurdish opposition party in Syria from 2003 to 2011 and second as *the* leading actor in Rojava from 2011 and on. In the first phase, PYD adopted clear oppositional policies and experienced heavy crackdown by the Syrian government. In the Second phase, i.e. during the 2011 Syrian Uprising, PYD seized all political, military and economic domains in Rojava and became the most powerful Kurdish actor. This shift raised questions about PYD-Syrian regime relation in post 2011.

Immediately after it was established in 2003, PYD demonstrated increased political activity. The party adopted a louder political voice than other traditional parties and "joined the ranks of the radical wing" of Kurdish political movement in Syria (Yesiltas, 2014: 200). These radical activities became clearer when the 2004 Qamishli Uprising sparked. On the contrary to the majority of traditional Kurdish parties, PYD fully supported the *Serhildan*[94] of 12 March and rejected the calming down declaration of other parties (Kurd Watch, 2009: 16-17).[95] Since the 2004 Qamishli Uprising and along with few other parties, PYD did not show enthusiasm for developing relations with other Syrian non-Kurdish opposition powers. Damascus Declaration for example, was not perceived by PYD as sufficient step for Kurds in Syria. PYD did not sign the declaration because it did not contain an "explicit reference to the recognition of Kurds as an independent nation along with the Arabs in Syria" (Kurd Watch, 2009: 20). PYD was also asking for an "administrative decentralization in Syria" (Yesiltas, 2014: 207). After the 2004 Qamishli Uprising, the PYD showed some "certain forms" of violence during its

[94] PYD adopted the Kurdish term *Serhildan* for naming the Qamishli Uprising. *Serhildan* can be translated as: rebellion, revolt or uprising. It is worth mentioning that the exact term used by PKK for its demonstrations in Turkey (Human Rights Watch, 2010, pp. 27).

[95] Traditional Kurdish parties, to avoid further clashes between Kurds and security authorities, asked the Kurdish community not to celebrate Nawroz Festival on 21st March. PYD, however, mobilized its supporters and celebrated the festival.

activities (Tejel, 2009: 122). The open and ultimate support for the 2004 Qamishli Uprising by PYD brought a "brutal retaliation" by the regime (ICG, 2014: 4). Syrian authorities arrested several PYD officials and forced others into exile (Tejel, 2009: 126). This response was going on while the regime was "favor[ing] relations with certain [other Kurdish] parties" (Yesiltas, 2014: 209).

This situation changed by the outbreak of the Syrian Uprising in March 2011. Simultaneously, the Syrian regime adopted conciliatory policies concerning Syria's Kurdish population and political movement. Among these policies was the milestone step of grating the stateless Syrian Kurds of 1962 Census the Syrian citizenship.[96] The head of the Syrian regime, Bashar al-Asad, for the first time, invited Kurdish parties for talks in June 2011.[97]According to an ICG report, the regime released several Kurdish political prisoners in October 2011 as part of deal with PYD (ICG, 2013: 8). During the period between April 2011 and July 2011, the regime released at least 65 PYD members who were in custody and did not finish their detention periods.[98] All these steps paved the way for PYD to establish its rule in Rojava. The return of PYD's president Salih Muslim, who was sentenced to life imprisonment, from exile in PKK's headquarter in Qandil Mountains to Syria in April 2011, was a symbolic evidence that PYD is preparing itself to govern Rojava (ICG, 2013: 1-2) (Carnegie, 2012). PYD succeeded in seizing power in Rojava for many reasons. The party's military background, ability to mobilize masses, its strong inner structure and its historical ties with the Syrian regime all, combined, put PYD in an unchallengeable leading position among Syrian Kurds. By the time the party seized power, it started to undertake building institutions on security, legislative, municipal, economic and social levels. In November 2011, PYD organized elections for

[96] On 7 April 2011, Bashar al-Assad issued a legislative decree granting "Syrian Arab nationality" to people registered as "foreigners" in Hasaka, the northeastern region where Kurds reside. Available at: http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/meast/04/07/syria.kurdish.citizenship/index.html?_s=PM:WORLD
It is worth mentioning that couple of days before this step, PYD called for demonstration for releasing prisoners on Thursday 7 April 2011, the same day in which the decree was issued (Rojhilat, 2011).

[97] Syria's Assad invites Kurdish parties for talks, report says. Available at: http://www.todayszaman.com/news-246481-syrias-assad-invites-kurdish-parties-for-talks-report-says.html

[98] Detailed information about the release processes is available at:
http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=1214&z=en&cure=232
http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=1417&z=en&cure=232
http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=1434&z=en&cure=232
http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=1440&z=en&cure=232
http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=1782&z=en&cure=232

People's Council of West Kurdistan, PCWK. PCWK was considered as "a new alternative system of government to the Baathist regime Kurdish areas" (Lowe, 2014: 228). The PYD's "ambiguous" stand toward the Syrian Uprising[99], fast and bloodless seizure of Rojava (Lowe, 2014: 228) and some military ties with the regime (ICG, 2014: 8) have all raised serious concerns over the alleged alliance between PYD and the regime.[100] However, other views see that the situation is more complex than a simple patron-proxy relation between PYD and the Syrian regime. That is, it was the political coincidence that led interests of both PYD and Syrian regime to be intercrossed. This was supported by PYD's leader, Salih Muslim's statement that "both [PYD and the Syrian regime] are fighting" against the same enemy [Jihadists] but for "different reasons" (ICG, 2014: 8).

4.2 The Islamic State, IS

4.2.1 A Definition

In *the-islamic-state.blogspot*, a blog believed to be run by IS media team; The Islamic State lists 8 articles under a paragraph entitled "The Identity of The Islamic State."[101] According to these articles IS's goals are 1) installing the [Islamic] religion and spreading the oneness [of Allah], 2) establishing the caliphate and arbitrating the law of [Allah] God and this cannot be done without Jihad and with a guiding-book and a winning-sword, 3) releasing Muslim prisoners and 4) distributing fortunes justly among people. In the blog, each of these goals was supported by one or two verses [Ayat] from The Quran.

Apart from the above "self-definition" or self-prescribed goals, scholars, journalists, pundits, etc. usually use a set of terms in the definition process of IS. Key adjectives that are usually used for this purpose are; radical, armed, Jihadist, Salafi-Jihadist and terrorist. While "radical" and "armed" are more unanimously agreed on, Jihadist, Salafi-Jihadist and, to some extent, terrorist remain controversial (Tuman, 2010: 24-25) (Brachman, 2009: 5). The Oxford Dictionary, OD defines *Jihad* as "a war or

[99] The Kurdish Democratic Union Party, 2012. Available at : http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48526

[100] A leaked document shows that The Air Force Intelligence Service, Syria's most powerful intelligence [Mukhabarat] branch, was in contact with PYD's leader Salih Muslim since November 2011. See Annex 3.1.

[101] IS and many internet providers are in an endless cat and mouse game of launching and closing internet platforms. That is, IS keeps publishing its material from new platforms as its old ones are continuously being closed. In October 2014, Iceland shut down the domain *www.khilafah.is* which is believed that it was used by "the jihadist organization Islamic State" (Holm, 2014).

struggle against unbelievers" and *Jihadi* as "a person involved in a jihad; an Islamic militant". As IS shares the same ideological identifications with other similar organizations across the globe, Al-Tamimi adds the adjective of "global" to IS. According to Al-Tamimi, IS, Al-Qaida, Tehrik-e-Taliban of Waziristan [and others] are together forming what "might [be termed as] the "Global Jihad" and hence IS is a part of global jihad (Al-Tamimi, 2013: 19) (Lister, 2014: 89). Taking into consideration that IS is operative in both Syria and Iraq, the adjective of "transborder" can be added to its definition.

Basing on the aforementioned two ways of understanding IS, the organization can minimally be defined as: an armed radical transborder [sword, militant] organization which is a part of global jihad and which is labeled as terrorist by many states and world organization.[102]

4.2.2 The Emergence

Today's The Islamic State, IS, as an organization, was established in 2013 under a different name. In its initial stages, this organization called itself, in Arabic, as (al-Dawla al-Islamiyah fi al-Iraq we al-Sham). This name was translated into English in four ways; 1) the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, ISIS, 2) the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham, ISIS, 3) the Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria, ISIS, and 4) the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant, ISIL (Al-Tamimi, 2013) (Tharoor, 2014) (Beauchamp, 2014).[103] On 8 April 2013, the leader of Al-Qaida offshoot in Iraq Abu Bakir al-Baghdadi announced that his organization and Jabhat al-Nusra, JN,[104] were merged to form the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham, ISIS (Al-Tamimi, 2013: 20-21). Two days after this announcement, JN's leader Abu Muhammad Al-Jawlani[105] dismissed such unification and asserted that his organization is only a part of Al-Qaida main organization headed Ayman Al-Zawahiri and has no organizational but ideological ties with the Iraqi Al-Qaida (Al-Tamimi, 2013: 20-21) . Al-Baghdadi,

[102] IS is considered a terrorist organization by The United Nation, European Union, United Kingdom, United States, Australia, Canada, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, UAE, Egypt, India, Iraq.

[103] This depends on how the term "al-Sham" is translated. In Islamic narratives, "al-Sham" refers to today's Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and Palestinian Territories. This region is also sometimes called Greater Syria or The Levant. Due to this controversy, this thesis will use the term "al-Sham" without translating it; the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham, which also can be abbreviated as ISIS

[104] Jabhat al-Nusra is an Al-Qaida affiliate Syrian Jihadist organization.

[105] Abu Muhammad Al-Jawlani is a Syrian jihadist who was a member of Al-Qaida offshoot in Iraq. Al-Jawlani returned to Syria after the 2011 Uprising started.

however, did not withdraw his announcement and rather he continued calling his organization as ISIS. According to Aymenn Al-Tamimi, many JN members alongside with other Syrian individual Jihadists joined ISIS and this was in fact what enabled Al-Baghdadi to keep his Iraqi-Syrian organization (Al-Tamimi, 2013: 20-21). Since then, ISIS was acting as a transborder jihadist group in Iraq and Syria alongside with JN which was operating in Syria only. On 29 June 2014, as ISIS was already transborderly active in both Iraq and Syria, it proclaimed itself as The Islamic Caliphate or The Islamic State, IS (Sly and Morris, 2014).

This step came after the organization made huge military and financial gains in summer 2014. In early June 2014, ISIS had dramatically captured many Iraqi cities and territories. Cities like Samarra, Mosul, Tikrit and others were under ISIS's control within days (The New York Times, 2014). By capturing these cities, ISIS seized advanced and a lot of military armory which the Iraqi army left behind it. For example, IS overtook Soviet-built T-72 tanks, US-built Humvees, M198 Howitzer and Type 59-1 Field Gun (Bender, 2014). In addition, ISIS, within days, took around $425 million in cash from banks and other Iraqi funds and institutions (McCoy, 2014). Before this $425 million, ISIS had cash and assets worth $875 million (Tran, 2014). In addition, IS has had the capacity to earn as much as $2 million per day from the energy resources under its control (Lister, 2014: 75).[106] Pushed by such a multi-layer win, the organization proclaimed itself as The Islamic State on 29 June 2014.

4.2.3 Structure and Effectiveness

According to many sources, members of IS are estimated at more than 30 thousands (Sciutto et al., 2014) (Barret, 2014: 58). This includes at least 9 thousands, none Syrian or Iraqi, foreign fighters (Abu Hanieh, 2014). Out of the total members, IS has 15 thousands professional fighters (Abu Hanieh, 2014). Structurally speaking, IS is consisted of 9 hierarchical bodies. These are: 1) Caliph, 2) Shura [Consultative] Council, 3) Ahl al Hal wa al Aqd [notables, scholars and wise men], 4) Sharia [Islamic Law] Council, 5) Media Council, 6) Bayt al-Mal [house of money, or the Financial Council], 7) Military Council, 8) Security Council, 9) Al-Wilayat

[106] As far as IS's oil revenues are concerned, the German Foreign Intelligence Agency, *Bundesnachrichtendienst*, stated that the estimation of these revenue are "hugely overblown" and that the annual revenue may be less than $100 million (thelocal.de).

[Provincial Council] (Barret, 2014: 24) (Abu Hanieh, 2014). According to Hasan Abu Hanieh, IS is one of rare, if it was not only, jihadist organizations that merges the ideological Islamic way of organization with modern bureaucratic institutionalized notions. On the local level, IS today provides municipal services like transportation, healthcare and maintenance of local infrastructure for civilians under its control (Lister, 2014: 80-81).

Moreover, IS has effectively utilized contemporary means like social media outlets for its propaganda. IS dedicates professional staff for running its median activities. Only few trusted and selective members are in charge for updating IS media outlets (Klausen, 2015: 2). In her study of Twitter accounts which are believed to be run by IS members, Jytte Klausen (2015) argues that what looks [IS Tweets and Twitter accounts] to be random and "spontaneous stream of self-publication using social media is, in fact, controlled communications". Agreeing with Klausen, Charles Lister says the IS is using a professional multi language propaganda on social media to attract Western members who in their turn run other social media accounts to attract more fighters and so on and so forth (Lister, 2014: 80-81). It is worth mentioning that while IS is committing terrifying acts like beheadings, the organization, especially via its western members, publish what called labeled as *appealing*, *cool* and *soft* content. For example, pro IS social media accounts have published multimedia materials showing IS fighter having Nutella chocolate, ice cream and playing with their pets (Speri, 2014) (the Mail, 2014) (Wyke, 2014). Such youth-attracting acts are actually new and no previous Jihadist had acted similarly.

As it was shortly presented above, IS is more than an armed organization with limited influence. IS, with its huge financial wealth, professional fighters and advanced armory, successful up-to-date propaganda and administrative and municipal structures, has many statist characteristics. And it seems that it was not something arbitrary when its head, the PhD degree holder, Al-Baghdadi[107] called it The Islamic *State*. As a *state* and representing what Jasper and Moreland (2014) call it "hybrid threat", any effort to counter IS entails to be multi-layer. That is, this effort shall "include [among other things] regionally-led military counteroffensives … and … [protect] persecuted minorities" (Jasper and Moreland, 2014: 8). Such an

[107] Al-Baghdadi holds a PhD degree in Islamic Studies from the Islamic University of Baghdad, Iraq (Lister, 2014: 76).

understanding of how to counter IS, is exactly what is going on now. The United States since summer 2014 is leading a regional coalition against IS and this coalition is collaborating with a local minority, Kurds in Syria and Iraq, which is already fighting IS.

4.3 Anatomy of Confrontation Between PYD and IS

Ideological, political and economic reasons have led to antagonism between PYD and IS. As the two most powerful not-state actors in today's Syria, both PYD and IS are concerned with having leverage in north and north eastern Syria. However, major armed clashes between the two groups were sparked due to IS offensives against PYD. While putting PYD in a defensive position, this aspect helped in depicting PYD as the protector of Rojava and its people.

The concentration of clashes between the Syrian regime forces and Free Syrian Army, FSA[108] in the western half of Syria made the eastern half vulnerable for emerging another type of confrontation; a confrontation that emerged between non-regime and non-opposition parties.[109] Those two parties are Jihadist organizations and Kurdish militias. As it has been mentioned previously, the Syrian regime ceded from Rojava in summer 2012 and consequently YPG, the armed wing of PYD, controlled that region. Shortly after PYD's control over Rojava, Islamist groups launched a series of attacks against the former. The first clash between PYD and Islamist groups in Syria started in late November 2012 when around 200 fighters from the al Qaida affiliate JN entered the town of Ras al-Ain[110] and clashed with YPG.[111] ISIS started to participate in battles against PYD (Hall, 2013). In 2014, tens of clashes occurred between PYD and ISIS/IS; the two parties were vis-à-vis in Kobani in September 2014 (Perry, 2014) (Perry & Cakan, 2014).

Since the official declaration of the first Kurdish political party in Syria, KDPS in 1957, the Syrian Kurdish movement aligned itself with secular and usually leftist

[108] Free Syrian Army, FSA is a loose term describes the non Islamist Syrian opposition forces. The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, the Syrian major opposition body, adopted this term to name its affiliate armed groups.
[109] PYD officials regularly state that they are neutral and represent a third line in Syria. Jihadist groups state they are against the regime as well as against FSA as it does not adopt Islamic and Sharia-based goals.
[110] Ras al-Ain is a frontier town inhabited by Kurds, Arabs and Chechens as well as religious minorities like Christians and Yezidis.
[111] More details are available by Syrian Observatory For Human Rights, SOHR, at:
http://syriahr.com/en/2012/11/Syria_rebels_take_swathe_of_east_but_clash_with_Kurd_militia

thought; Kurdish parties never adopted or applied religious (Islamic) doctrines and approaches (Tejel, 2009: 90) (Yesiltas, 2014: 204-206, 219). Today's most powerful Kurdish party (PYD) is also identifying itself with secular leftist thoughts.[112] Moreover, PYD is especially famous for adopting gender-equality policies (Abu Zahr, 2014). On the contrary, IS adopted a very religious doctrine based on radical understanding of Islamic teachings. As it has been previously mentioned, IS is aiming at installing the Islamic religion in the area under its controls. IS also believes in male superiority over female. There is a widespread assumption that IS fighters even do not think they be martyrs, as they believe, if they were killed by females (Crilly, 2014). For IS, as well as for other Jihadist groups, Kurds and especially PYD are infidels who should be fought (Harding, 2012). In short, PYD and IS represent two conflicting ideologies which do not share any common features. Hence, the antagonism between them is deep-rooted and their ideological bases act as a continuous source for confrontation.

Politically, IS sees PYD as an "acting agent" for the Syrian government and keeps using this rhetoric in justifying its attacks against PYD (al-Tamimi, 2013: 26). At the same time, PYD used to see IS and other Jihadist groups as proxies of Turkey which are attacking it basing on Turkish orders (Zaman, 2013). In fact, PYD's assumption is based on the long history of hostility between its mother-party PKK and Turkish government.[113] Moreover, as it has been mentioned previously, PYD has gradually institutionalized its rule in Rojava. The party's declaration of its Democratic Autonomous Rojava in March 2014 may have pushed IS to proclaim itself as a state in June 2014. That is, in addition to the mutual proxy-accusations between PYD and IS, each of them see the other as a threat for its governing and administrative project (Weiss, 2013). In addition, the fact that IS has in its ranks many former Saddam-era Iraqi army senior members was another factor that fuels the war between it [IS] and PYD (Lister, 2014: 75). This was based on the assumption of historical hostility between Kurds and the ousted Saddam Hussein's regime.

Syria's oil resources are concentrated in two eastern governorates; al-Hasaka and Deir al-Zor (Wood, 2013). While al-Hasaka is under PYD's control, Deir al-Zor is

[112] In its Rules of Procedures, PYD does not make any reference to any religious aspect. In this regard, the party only refers that "it believes in the freedom of belief"

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[113] This assumption by PYD is indirectly entailing that the party sees itself as an affiliate of PKK.

under IS's control or at least IS is the major player there. While IS and other Jihadist groups launched several offensives against PYD in al-Hasaka, PYD did not, or could not, act similarly.[114] In May 2013, PYD stated that it controls some 60 percent of Syria's oil wells (Heras, 2013: 25). In an attempt to "support the opposition," the European Union lifted the oil embargo on "liberated regions in Syria" in April 2013 (Glioti, 2013). But according Glioti, this step provoked tensions between Kurds and Arabs as oil exporting to neighboring countries and black-market dealing was revived. Hostility against PYD rose after leaked governmental documents showed that the Syrian regime is asking PYD and its YPG to patrol oil and gas field in Hasaka Governorate.[115] However, as far as oil business is concerned, oil producing, marketing and protecting go through a very complex and invisible networks (Abdul-Ahad, 2013). That is, not only PYD and the Syrian regime are involved in making oil-based deals. In addition to them, local tribes, Jihadist groups like IS and some individuals are all involved in this business (Abdul-Ahad, 2013) (Glioti, 2013). The revival between different parties including PYD and IS to seize energy resources triggers more confrontation between them. In short, as those parties seek to consolidate their rule by economic revenues from these resources, the so called the *Oil Curse* seems to keep warring parties in a continuous hostility.

Since the Syrian Uprising has sparked in 2011 and as it eventually tended to be a civil war, PYD was the only Kurdish armed group which involved in this war. After several attacks by Jihadist groups against Rojava, PYD gained more and more support from the local community. Terrifying acts by the Jihadists groups like beheading of some Kurds and calls for extermination the Kurds, expanded the PYD's support base especially within secular Kurds (Wagner & Cafiero, 2013). The several clashes between those Jihadists groups like IS or JN undoubtedly bolstered PYD's image as the only protector of Rojava and its people (al-Tamimi, 2013: 27). Moreover, this image made PYD to seize more popular background and helped it to

[114] This is due to the fact that the *diverse* al-Hasaka governorate has some Arab tribal communities which are affiliated with IS. That is, IS has some sympathizers in this governorate especially in near Rumeilan and Suweidiyah oilfields. On the contrary, Deir al-Zor is more homogenous and does not have any PYD supporters. Hence, IS is able to act in some region of al-Hasaka and PYD is not able to operate in Deir al-Zor.

[115] A series of documents signed by Syrian Premiership, Ministry of Oil and Resources and YPG's representative Muhammad Ibrahim Ibrahim, shows that those parties were coordinating about patrolling and protecting oilfields in al-Hasaka Governorate. Samples of these document are available at: http://orient-news.net/index.php?page=news_show&id=2407

consolidate its rule and increased its monopoly of the power in Rojava as the sole active player.

5. CONCLUSION

Theoretically speaking, it is important to refer that applying Eurocentric tools, so to speak, on non-European fields may not give optimum results. That is, studying nationalism and nation-state in the traditional European sense may not be the best choice for studying nationalism and ethnopolitics in Syria especially, if we know that the majority of literature on nationalism is conducted in the European context. However, this huge literature, especially the part produced by scholars who are aware of Eurocenterism shortcoming, is still useful in understanding nationalism and ethnopolitics in countries like Syria. In this regards, other theoretical perspective of the topic like post-colonial point of view is very narrow comparing to the European one. Moreover, such a point of view is especially not useful in the Syrian case because it is usually based on case studies of African and Asian countries like Nigeria and India.

Kurds of Syria make around 10 percent of country's population. The majority of them live in the northern part of Syria. Since 1950s, Syrian Kurds have organizationally been a politicized ethnicity. Regional and local dynamics were behind this politicization. Transborder influence of Kurdish parties in Turkey and Iraq has had a great role in shaping the ethnopolitical movement of Syria's Kurds. Consequently, almost all Kurdish parties in Syria have been dependent on non-Syria Kurdish actors. Policies by Arab nationalist Syrian governments and later the authoritarian rule of al-Asad family have contributed in alienation of Kurds in Syria. The Syrian Kurdish political movement used to be weak and fragmented. However, taking advantage from multiple factors, the PYD seized the power in Rojava during the 2011 Syrian Uprising. One major finding of this analytical thesis is that the Kurdish political movement in Syria is not *sui generis* movement and dependent on other non-Syrian Kurdish actors

The gradual and economy-related social transformations that are associated with the modernity have resulted in changing politics in Europe. Modern states have been emerged and each of them was having its nation. Nations of these modern states have been relatively homogenous in terms of having one language, defined territories, common interests and other identity aspects like cultural characteristics. This was not the case in the Middle East. On the contrary, the emergence of the majority of Middle Eastern states was not due to local social, economic or political dynamics and/or interests of the Middle Easter peoples. Those countries have been set by European colonial powers.

Syria has become a state only in 1946 a result of de-colonializational process. In the newly born state, mainly two currents of nationalism dominated Syrian politics of that time. Pan-Syrianism was a kind of territorial nationalism that saw people of today's Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Palestinian Territories and Turkey's province of Hatay as one nation. It is argued that a nation that deserves a state in what pan Syrianists call it the Greater Syria. Pan Syrianism, however was not popular and powerful enough to compete with the other trend of nationalism; i.e. Arab Nationalism.

Arab Nationalism was very popular in Syria for different reasons. The majority of Syrians who used to be Sunni Arabs were suspicious of Pan-Syrianism as it was traditionally led by non-Muslim figures. The majority of them, as relatively being conservative, were also not familiar with other types of ideology like communism. In addition to that, Arab nationalist thoughts were very widespread in other Arab countries like Egypt. The charismatic leader Gamal Abdul Nasser and his Pan-Arab nationalist policies were another supporting factor for flourishing Arab nationalism in Syria. Moreover, significant early Arab nationalist activities like the Arab Revolt of 1916 against the Ottoman rule took place in today's Syria. Such activities that were led by Arab figures from different Arab areas left its Arab heritage in Syria in general and in Syrian cities in particular.

However, in a country with multiple and diverse religious, ethnic and cultural components, such an ethnic (Arab) nationalism, which was the official ideology of different Syrian governments, could not build a homogenous nation-state in the European sense. That is, post-colonial states like Syria failed to imitate the European

model of nation-state. This failure was not only due to the very nature of Arab nationalism. The artificial nature of the Syrian state as a post-colonial state and its sudden emergence resulted in many unassimilated communities within the country. Hence, no homogeneous nation was shaped and consequently no strong and stable state was built. This became even worse as consecutive Syrian governments were non-democratic and some of them were fiercely authoritarian.

Kurds of Syria as, as many other Syrians, found themselves in a country which was designed for them by other powers. Even Arabs were looking forward to have one Arab country. But the de-colonialization process undermined their ambitions. Repressive policies by different Syrian governments against Kurds pushed them to develop a distinctive both cultural and political identity. Policies like the 1962 Census, the Arab Belt of late 1960s and early 1970s and the 2004 al-Qamishli Uprising provoked Kurds of Syria to develop their own ethnopolitical movement.

However, such discriminative policies were not the only dynamics behind developing such a movement. The extraordinary huge influence, ideologically and organizationally, of Kurdish political movements in Turkey and Iraq was a very significant dynamic in this regard. After the failure of Kurdish rebellions in Turkey like the Ağrı Dağ (Mountain Ararat) rebellion, many Kurdish intellectuals, activities and notables fled to Syria and became refugees there. While continuing their activities, supported by the French Mandate, against the Turkish state, those Kurdish figures of Turkey and their organizations and forums like Khoybun greatly contributed in setting ideological bases and nationalistic sentiments for Kurdish ethnopolitics in Syria. Moreover, organizationally speaking, Jalal Talabani, a veteran Kurdish politician from Iraq, had a decisive role in establishing the first Kurdish party in Syria in 1957, The Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria. Even the name of this party was changed because of Talabani's will.

More recently, the role of Kurds of Turkey and Iraq was maximized mainly due to geopolitical conditions. During 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, Kurdish movements in Turkey and Iraq were involved in armed insurgencies against governments of those two countries. As Syria under Hafez al-Asad rule was not having friendly relations with both Turkey and Iraq, the country became a base for PKK, PDK and PUK political and armed operations. That is, al-Asad and those Kurdish parties in both

Turkey and Iraq were allied apparently due to shared interests. This kind of relations had counterproductive consequences on the development of the Kurdish political movement in Syria. In this regards, some scholars of Kurdish studies argue that Kurdish leaders in Iraq and Turkey either denied the legitimacy of a Syrian Kurdish movement or dismissed it as a small-scale movement that distracted from the real struggle for Kurdistan.

Although the alliance between Hafez al-Asad, who ruled Syria for 30 years, and Kurdish parties of Turkey and Iraq has backfired the Syrian Kurdish political movement, those parties maintained their influence, sometimes patronage, over this movement. It is very significant to mention that such a transborder boss-client relationship has contributed in preventing Syrian Kurds to totally be assimilated in the Syrian society. It is clear that the nature of the influence of non-Syrian Kurds over Syrian Kurds has been shifted during Hafez al-Asad era. While they were ideologically and organizationally supporting the Kurdish movement in Syria before al-Asad rule, they tended to placate any rise of radical voice in this movement after al-Asad seized the power.

Today, majority and key political parties in Syria are under huge ideological and organizational leverage of Kurdish parties in Iraq and Turkey. This is currently very evident in the polarized situation in the Syrian Kurdish political scene. The tense relation between the Kurdish National Council and the PYD is actually representing the historical rivalry between the KRG parties from one side and the PKK from the other side over having the leading role in Kurdish politics in general.

During the ongoing Syrian conflict, PKK affiliate PYD seized all aspects of powers in the Kurdish region of Syria. The weak traditional pro KRG Syrian Kurdish parties, the suspicious relation with the Syrian regime and the military background are among the most significant factors that enabled the PYD to monopoly the power and become the sole representative of Syrian Kurds. In addition, the cease fire between PKK and Turkish army and so called Peace Process in Turkey, offered the chance for PYD to mobilize PKK fighters from Turkey and northern Iraq to consolidate its *de facto* rule in the Kurdish regions on Syria. As the future of Syria itself is not clear, the status of Kurds in general and of the PYD in particular in Syria is vague and uncertain.

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ANNEXES

Annex 2.1. Erbil (Hewler) Declaration

إعلان هولير

بين المجلسين

(المجلس الوطني الكوردي في سوريا ومجلس الشعب لغربي كوردستان)

صلاح الدين 2012/7/11

إستكمالاً لما تم الاتفاق عليه في وثيقة هولير بتأريخ 2012/6/11 بين (مجلس الشعب لغربي كوردستان و المجلس الوطني الكوردي في سوريا) وبرعاية السيد مسعود بارزاني رئيس إقليم كوردستان، بهدف وضع الآليات اللازمة لتفعيل الإتفاق وبلورة مشروع سياسي موحد يرتكز على الثوابت الوطنية والقومية للشعب الكوردي في سوريا والعمل مع جميع مكونات الشعب السوري من أجل إسقاط النظام القمعي الإستبدادي الذي أوصل البلاد الى مستنقع الحرب الأهلية، وبناء سوريا ديمقراطية وفق دستور جديد يقر بالتعدد القومي والإقرار الدستوري بالشعب الكوردي وبحقوقه القومية حسب العهود والمواثيق الدولية وحل القضية الكوردية في إطار اللامركزية السياسية وإلغاء كافة القوانين والمراسيم الإستثنائية العنصرية وإزالة آثارها وتعويض المتضررين.

فقد إستأنف المجلسان إجتماعاتهما يومي 9-2012/7/10 بإشراف د.فؤاد حسين رئيس ديوان رئاسة الإقليم، وتوصل الطرفان الى:

1- إعتماد وثيقة هولير والبناء عليها وتفعيل البنود الواردة فيها و وضع الآليات اللازمة لتنفيذها.

2- تشكيل هيئة عليا مشتركة (الهيئة الكوردية العليا)، مهمتها رسم السياسة العامة وقيادة الحراك الكوردي في هذه المرحلة المصيرية، وإعتماد مبدأ المناصفة في هيكلية كافة اللجان والتوافق في إتخاذ القرارات.

3- تشكيل ثلاث لجان تخصصية لمتابعة العمل الميداني.

4- التأكيد على وقف الحملات الإعلامية بكافة أشكالها.

5- تحريم العنف ونبذ كافة الممارسات التي تؤدي الى توتير الأجواء في المناطق الكوردية.

6- إعتماد اللائحة الداخلية الملحقة بوثيقة هولير التي تتضمن آليات العمل.

7- تشكيل اللجان خلال أسبوعين من تأريخ التوقيع على الإتفاق.

هذا الإتفاق نص متكامل، لايجوز الإخلال بأي بند من بنوده التي تم إقرارها من قبل الطرفين.

المجلس الوطني الكوردي في سوريا

مجلس الشعب لغربي كوردستان

[English text translated by Kurd Watch]

“Hewler Declaration

Of both councils

(Kurdish National Council in Syria and People’s Council of West Kurdistan)

Salahuddin, 7/11/2012

On 6/11/2012, agreements were reached between the People’s Council of West Kurdistan and the Kurdish National Council in Syria in the Hewler document; as a supplement to these agreements, and under the chairmanship of [Massoud] Barzani, the president of the Kurdistan region, the necessary mechanisms are to be stipulated in order to flesh out the accord and develop a unified political approach based on the immutable values of the Kurdish people as a nation and ethnicity in Syria. All components of the Syrian people should be involved in working towards the fall of the oppressive and despotic regime, which has driven the country into the mire of civil war. A democratic Syria should be built upon the foundation of a new constitution upon which the principle of ethnic plurality shall be anchored. This constitution should recognize the Kurdish people and their ethnic-national rights in accordance with international agreements and conventions. The Kurdish question is to be solved within the framework of political decentralization; all racial laws and special decrees are to be abolished, their consequences are to be eliminated, and those who have suffered are to be compensated.

On 7/9 and 7/10/2012 respectively both councils resumed their talks under the chairmanship of Dr. Fuad Husayn, leader of the presidential office of the Kurdistan region. Both sides agreed upon the following:

1. The adoption of the Hewler document and, building upon that, the fleshing out of the provisions contained within, as well as the creation of the mechanisms necessary for its implementation.

2. The formation of a joint supreme committee (the High Kurdish Committee), which is charged with the task of drafting a general policy and leading the Kurdish movement in this fateful phase; the adoption of the principle of equality in the structuring of all committees and the principle of consensus in the decision-making process.

3. The formation of three expert committees to pursue concrete work locally.

4. The affirmation of the suspension of all forms of media campaigns.

5. A ban on violence and the rejection of all practices leading to increased tensions in the Kurdish regions.

6. The adoption of the bylaws appended to the Hewlêr document, which include the operational mechanisms.

7. The formation of committees within two weeks of the signing of the accord.

This accord is an integral, complete text; a violation against any of its provisions, which were approved by both sides, is prohibited.

The Kurdish National Council in Syria

[Signature: Ismail Hami]

The People's Council of West Kurdistan

[Signature: Salim Mustafa Muhammad]
[Signature: Abdussalam Ahmad]"

Annex 2.2. Decree No. 49

الجمهورية العربية السورية

المرسوم التشريعي رقم /٤٩/

رئيس الجمهورية

بناء على أحكام الدستور .

يرسم ما يلي:

مادة (١)

تعدل المواد التالية من القانون رقم (٤١) تاريخ ٢٠٠٤/١٠/٢٦ وتصبح على النحو التالي :

المادة ١- لايجوز إنشاء أو نقل أو تعديل أو اكتساب أي حق عيني عقاري على عقار كائن في منطقة حدودية أو إشغاله عن طريق الاستئجار أو الاستثمار أو بأية طريقة كانت لمدة تزيد على ثلاث سنوات لاسم أو لمنفعة شخص طبيعي أو اعتباري إلا بترخيص مسبق سواء كان العقار مبنياً أم غير مبني واقعاً داخل المخططات التنظيمية أم خارجها .

المادة ٤- أ- لا تسجل الدعاوى المتعلقة بطلب تثبيت أي حق من الحقوق المنصوص عليها في المادة (١) من هذا القانون ولا توضع إشارتها مالم تكن مقترنة بالترخيص وترد كافة الدعاوى القائمة بتاريخ نفاذ أحكام هذا القانون إذا كان الترخيص غير مبرز في إضبارة الدعوى مع مراعاة أحكام المادة (٣١) من القرار رقم (١٨٦) لعام ١٩٢٦ .

ب- تنفذ قرارات القضاة العقاريين المتعلقة بأعمال التحديد والتحرير للعقارات الكائنة في مناطق الحدود وتسجل في الصحائف العقارية على أن تثقل عند التسجيل بإشارة تقضي بعدم جواز إعطاء سند تمليك أو تنفيذ أي عقد أو إجراء أية معاملة إلا بعد الحصول على الترخيص .

المادة ٥- تخضع معاملات نزع الملكية الجبري للعقارات الكائنة في مناطق الحدود التي تنفذها دوائر التنفيذ بوزارة العدل بالمزاد العلني للترخيص المذكور وفي حال عدم حصول المزاود الأخير على هذا الترخيص تبطل الإحالة القطعية حكماً ويطرح العقار مجدداً للبيع بالمزاد العلني .

المادة ٦- في حال عدم تقديم طلب الترخيص خلال ثلاثة أشهر من تاريخ إيلولة الحق العيني العقاري على عقار في منطقة حدودية أو من تاريخ إشغاله عن طريق الاستئجار أو الاستثمار أو بأية طريقة كانت لمدة تزيد على ثلاث سنوات يعتبر الإشغال باطلاً .

المادة ٧- أ- في حال إشغال عقار في منطقة حدودية عن طريق الاستئجار أو الاستثمار أو بأية طريق كانت لمدة لا تزيد على ثلاث سنوات يتعين على من شغل العقار المذكور إعلام الجهة الإدارية المختصة في موقع العقار خلال المهلة المحددة في المادة السادسة من هذا القانون .

ب- لا يخضع اكتساب الحقوق العينية العقارية على عقار في منطقة حدودية أو حقوق إشغاله عن طريق الإرث أو الانتقال إلا لشرط إعلام الجهة الإدارية المختصة المنصوص عليها في الفقرة السابقة .

ج- على من يستخدم مزارعين أو عمالاً أو خبراء في الحالات المشمولة بهذا القانون إعلام الجهة الإدارية المختصة عن كل ما يتعلق باستخدامهم وفق الإجراءات الواردة في التعليمات التنفيذية .

المادة ١٠- لا تطبق أحكام هذا القانون في الحالات التالية :

أ- أيلولة الحق العيني العقاري أو حقوق الاستئجار أو الاستثمار لصالح الجهات العامة .

ب-معاملات الإفراز وتصحيح الأوصاف .

مادة (٢)

- يلغى كل نص مخالف لأحكام هذا المرسوم التشريعي .

مادة (٣)

- ينشر هذا المرسوم التشريعي في الجريدة الرسمية .

دمشق في ١٠/ ٩/ ١٤٢٩ هـ الموافق لـ ١٠/ ٩/ ٢٠٠٨م

رئيس الجمهورية

بشار الأسد

١٥/ ٥٥٠٥

نسخة إلى : وزارة العدل

دمشق في ٢٠٠٨/٩/١٠

يعمم على السادة القضاة كافة ... ٢٠٠٨/٩/١١

وزير العدل

القاضي محمد الغفري

٢

[English text translated by Kurd Watch]

Decree No. 49

"Syrian Arab Republic

Decree No. 49

The President of the Republic,
pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution,
decrees the following:

Article 1

The following articles of statute no. 41, dated 10/26/2004, are to be changed as follows:

Article 1:

The establishment, transfer, modification or acquisition of any right to a property in a border region or its use for rent or other commercial purpose for a period of more than three years in the name of or for the benefit of an individual or legal entity is prohibited, unless prior permission has been given, and regardless of whether or not the property has been developed, or whether or not it lies within the area designated for land use.

Article 4:

A. Once this law has taken effect, registration of the lawsuit and an entry amending the rights to a property in the land register will not proceed without the permission named in Article 1. The provisions of Article 31 and Decision No. 186 from 1926 will be taken into consideration.

B. The decisions of the real-estate judge regarding the rights to property in a border region and the written record of such rights are to be implemented. A note shall be attached to the entry in the land register that no deed may be issued, no contract completed and no other measures taken without receipt of permission.

Article 5:

The acquisition of property in a border region as a result of forced auctions by the Department of Justice enforcement agency requires the above-mentioned permission. If the highest bidder does not receive this permission, the transfer of ownership will, by virtue of the law, be null and void and the property auctioned again. Article 6: If request for permission has not been made within three months of the date on which the right to a property in a border region has been transferred or the date on which this property has been used for rent or other commercial purposes for a period of more than three years, the transfer of the property or its use is null and void.

Article 7:

A. Should the use of a property in a border region for rent or other commercial purpose take place over a period of no more than three years, the user of the said property for commercial purposes must inform the administrative authorities within the time limit specified in Article 6 of this statute.

B. Whoever inherits the right to a property or the right to the commercial use of a property in a border region is only obliged to inform the above-mentioned administrative authorities.

C. Whoever employs farmers, laborers or specialists in cases that fall under this statute must inform the administrative authorities responsible of all instances pertaining to this employment pursuant to the provisions of the statute.

Article 10:

The provisions of this statute will not be applied in the following cases:

A. The transfer of the right to property or the right to use property for rent or other commercial purposes for the benefit of official offices;

B. separation proceedings and amendments to the land register with regard to the characteristics of the property.

Article 2

Any text that contradicts the provisions of this decree is null and void.

Article 3

This decree is to be published in the official register.

Damascus, 10/9/1429 H, 10/9/2008 AD

The President of the Republic

Bashar al-Assad

[signature]”

Annex 3.1. The Air Force Intelligence Service

الجمهورية العربية السورية

الجيش والقوات المسلحة

قيادة القوى الجوية والدفاع الجوي

إدارة المخابرات الجوية

فرع المخابرات الجوية بالمنطقة الشمالية

الرقم / /

التاريخ ٢٠١١/١١/٣

إلى رئيس إدارة المخابرات الجوية

من خلال متابعتنا لرئيس ما يسمى تنظيم الإتحاد الديمقراطي (ب ي د) المدعو صالح مسلم محمد وافانا احد مصادرنا بالمعلومات التالية :

منذ حوالي اربعة ايام التقى صالح محمد بمدينة دمشق بمطعم مدن البحر الكائن بمحلة جسر فكتوريا بالدكتور /رفيق صالح/ مدير إكساد الزراعية بسورية بحضور مصدرنا وكان هذا اللقاء يرتب له منذ حوالي عشرون يوما تقريبا بمحاولة من الدكتور (رفيق) لإقناع صالح المشاركة بحضور الحوار الوطني وجرى الحديث بينهما حول الأوضاع في سورية وقام الدكتور رفيق بعرض ما لديه بموجب مذكرة (يود عرضها بموجب اجتماع رسمي لمنة استلاذ جامعي مع السيد رئيس الجمهورية) قرأها صالح محمد بشكل سريع وغير مركز وأعطاها للمصدر للاطلاع عليها وطلب الدكتور رفيق من صالح محمد حضور الحوار الوطني وعن رأي هيئة التنسيق الوطني ممثلة بحسن عبد العظيم فكان جواب رئيس مايسمى الإتحاد الديمقراطي إن رأي هية التنسيق هو تغير النظام وليس إسقاطه وبسؤال الدكتوررفيق عن معنى كلامه أجاب صالح محمد إن على السيد الرئيس التنحي وأن يتم سحب الجيش والأمن من كافة المدن السورية وإعادته إلى ثكناته ومواقعه إذ لاحوار والسلاح بالرؤوس وأن يعبر الشعب عن رأيه وأنه بالهيئة خمسة أحزاب كردية وعشرة أحزاب وتيارات أخرى باتجاهات مختلفة والرأي ليس رأيه وحيدا ولن يدخل الحوار إلا برأي هيئة التنسيق كي لايكون مكشوفاً وأضاف بأن سيحاول إقناع الأحزاب الكردية في هيئة التنسيق لتأيده عند طرح أي فكرة تتمحور حول ايجاد طريقة للخروج من الأزمة والدخول في الحوار الوطني . وأضاف إن تنحى السيد الرئيس يعود ويرشح نفسه للرئاسة وإنه لن ينتخب غيره وسيبذل كل ما في وسعه لاقناع الأكراد بانتخاب سيادة الرئيس لأنه الأفضل لسوريين وخاصة الأكراد وإن ذلك التنحي سيكون لإنهاء الأزمة وذلك هو مقصده بالتغير وليس الإسقاط لأن الإسقاط سيكون بتدخل أجنبي خارجي وعنف حتماً.

ولنه ضد التدخل الخارجي وليس معه وليس مع العنف والطائفية وعبر بأسلوب سياسي أن تقوم الدولة باعطاء اهمية للاكراد وان لايبقوا مهمشين في سورية وضرب مثلاً عن لجنة صياغة الدستور تضم شخصاً كردياً واحداً (المحامي عصمت أوسي) وهو غير كفؤ لهذه المهمة بشكل كامل وتمنى لو أن السيد الرئيس اختاره لهذه المهمة لكان الأمر مختلفاً إضافة إلى أنه أنتقد اللجنة لوجود بند لديها بالمرسوم الخاص بها ينص على الحرية التامة للجنة للتشاور مع أي حزب أو شخصية وحتى تاريخه لم يسأل كشخص ذو موقع بالنسبة لأكراد سورية ولم يسأل تنظيم كردي أخر خاصة تلك التي ينظرون الى ال الأسد بالايجابية وأن الإصلاحات لم يتم على أرض الواقع وتأخرت الدولة بها كثيراً وأن الوضع بسورية للاسوء .

وأنهم بهيئة التنسيق يحاولون (إذا قامت الدولة بإعطائهم بعض الصلاحيات والفرصة) جذب اعضاء مجلس استنبول إليهم لأنه يخشى من حدوث العكس إذا بقي الوضع بسورية هكذا أو إذا تأزم أكثر لأنه ضد مجلس أستنبول وكل معارضة خارجية لأنها تنفذ أجندت خارجية . وأنهم بهيئة التنسيق يتعرضون إلى ضغوطات داخلية وخارجية من المعارضة بتوجيه الاتهامات لهم على انهم شبيحة النظام حيث توقف عند هذه العبارة قائلاً : إننا لسنا شبيحة نظام ونتيجة الضغوطات بدأنا نفقد مصداقيتنا الوطنية أمام الشعب السوري صحيح لدينا علاقات استراتيجية مع النظام ولكننا لسنا أداة بيد سورية فعلاقتي مع حزب العمال الكردستاني قوية وأتواصل مع مراد قره يلان بشكل دائم إن العلاقة الاستراتيجية التي تربطنا بالنظام تفرض عليهم دعمنا لتحرك ضد تركيا واؤكد بأننا لسنا كما يفكر البعض بأننا أداة بيد سورية ضد تركيا وهنا أجابه الدكتور رفيق قائلاً : نحن كدولة نثق بالأكراد وبوطنيتهم وبحبهم لوطنهم سورية وهذا مانتج عن التعاون بيننا من خلال دعمك في مواجهة الدولة التركية وأن الأكراد كانوا ومازالوا جزء من النسيج الوطني وأن السيد الرئيس مصر على الإصلاحات والسير بها للأفضل مما يتوقع الشعب السوري والعالم وأطلب منك (بالمونة للحوار) وأن هناك شخص يريد اللقاء بك فأجابه صالح بالموافقة ولايهم إن كانت الشخصية سياسية أو أمنية وبكل أحوال سأتشاور مع زملائي بالموضوع وانتهى الحديث هنا لحضور كل من الدكتور فايز داوود من حمص والدكتور أحمد باسم العلي من دير الزور (كلاهما استاذين جامعيين وفايز يحمل الجنسية الأمريكية) .

والتقيا في اليوم التالي بحضور مصدرنا بمكتب الدكتور رفيق صالح وكان الحوار أفضل من السابق وأقل حدة ولكن اللقاء كان قصيراً جداً ووعد صالح أن يكون هناك أمور افضل في اللقاء القادم بعد التشاور مع هيئة التنسيق واجتمع صالح مسلم محمد بهم مساءً بنفس اليوم بمكتب حسن عبد العظيم ولم يستطع مصدرنا حضور اللقاء بناءً على طلب من صالح لكي لايتعرف عليها أحد من الموجودين من هيئة التنسيق وأعلم صالح مصدرنا هاتفيا قائلا ان الأمور أفضل بالنسبة لحديثنا مع الدكتور رفيق وسأشرح لك التفاصيل عند عودتي من القاهرة .

-٢-

علما أن صالح طلب من مصدرنا عائدا قبل مغادرته إلى القاهرة عدم التواصل معنا وأن يكون تواصلنا مع حزب الاتحاد الديمقراطي عبر زوجته عائشة الفدى والمدعو حصحت شيخ حسن بحيث يبقى المصدر بعيدا عن أجواء عين العرب السياسية لأسباب رفض شرحها على الهاتف .

برجى الإطلاع

اللواء أنيب نمر سلامة

رئيس فرع المخابرات العسكرية بالمنطقة الشمالية

نسخة إلى :

- الرفيق أمين فرع الحزب بحلب
- قيادة المنطقة الشمالية
- رئيس الفرع /٢٩٠/
- رئيس القرع /٣٢٢/
- مفرزة عين العرب
- مفرزة عفرين

برجى الإطلاع وأخذ اللازم

-٣-

[English text translated by Kurd Watch]

“Syrian Arab Republic
Army and Armed Forces
Leadership of the Air Force and Air Defense
Administration of the Air Force Intelligence Service
North Division of the Air Force Intelligence Service
Number / / Date 11/3/2011

To the Director of the Air Force Intelligence Service

In the course of our surveillance of the chairman of the so-called Democratic Union (PYD), Salih Muslim Muhammad, one of our informants sent us the following information:

About four days ago, in the presence of our informant, Salih Muhammad met with Dr. Rafiq Salih, director of the Syrian-based agricultural research institute ACSAD, at the restaurant »Mudun al-Bahr« at the Victoria Bridge in Damascus. This meeting had been set for about twenty days in an attempt by the doctor (Rafiq) to convince Salih [Muslim Muhammad] to participate in the National Dialogue. The two spoke about the situation in Syria, whereby Dr. Rafiq presented a memorandum (regarding an official meeting of one hundred university professors with the President) that Salih Muhammad quickly and inattentively skimmed and then passed on to the informant for inspection. Dr. Rafiq called upon Salih Muhammad to take part in the National Dialogue and asked him about the position of the National Coordination Committee [meaning the National Union of the Forces for Democratic Change], represented by Hasan ʿAbdulʿazim. The chairman of the so called Democratic Union answered that the coordination committee was in favor of a change of the regime, but not its overthrow. After Dr. Rafiq inquired about the meaning of this statement, Salih Muhammad responded that the President must step down and the army and security forces must withdraw from all Syrian cities and return to their barracks and positions, because no dialogue is possible at gunpoint. Furthermore, he said that the people must state their opinion. He explained that the committee represents five Kurdish parties, ten other parties, and groups of very different orientations and that this position is not only his own. He would only enter into the dialogue with the agreement of the coordination committee so as not to expose himself. He added that

he would try to convince the Kurdish parties in the coordination committee to support him in developing ideas for a solution to the crisis and participation in the National Dialogue. He further stated that after stepping down, the President could again stand for election. He would then vote for no one else and would spare no effort in convincing the Kurds to vote for the President, because the President is the best person for Syria, and especially for the Kurds. A resignation would thus only serve to end the crisis. That is what he meant by change, not overthrow, because an overthrow would be the result of external intervention from abroad.

He said that he is against foreign intervention and not for violence or interdenominational strife. He also made political comments to the effect that the state needs to recognize the Kurds and that they cannot remain marginalized in Syria. As an example, he cited that in the committee for the development of the constitution, there is only one Kurdish member (attorney ʿIsmat Usi), who is not competent enough for this task. He expressed the desire that the President select him for the task, this would make a difference. Moreover, he criticized the committee. He said that the decree regarding its establishment gives the committee complete freedom to consult with any party or person. To date, however, neither he himself nor other high-ranking Syrian-Kurdish figures have been approached, nor any organizations, not even those that have a positive stance towards the Assad family. He said that the reforms were de facto incorrectly implemented and the state took its time with them. The situation in Syria continues to worsen.

He said that in the coordination committee, one tries (insofar as the state gives one responsibilities and opportunities) to involve members of the Council of Istanbul [meaning the Syrian National Council], because the opposite is to be feared [meaning the further deepening of the split between the Syrian National Council and the coordination committee] if the situation in Syria stays the same or escalates. He is against the Council of Istanbul and all foreign opposition groups, because they only carry out foreign agendas. He said that the coordination committee is being pressured, both domestically and from abroad, with the accusation that it is a henchman of the regime, to which he said verbatim: »We are not henchmen of the regime. As a result of the accusations, we are losing our credibility with the Syrian people. It is true that we maintain strategic relationships with the regime, but we are not a tool in the hands of the Syrians. I maintain intensive relationships with the PKK

and am in constant contact with Murat Karayılan. A strategic relationship with the regime will force it [the regime] to support us in order to take action against Turkey. I emphasize that we are not, as some contend, a tool in the hands of the Syrians against Turkey.« Dr. Rafiq then responded: »We as a state trust the Kurds, their national sentiments, and their love for Syria. This arises from our support of their confrontation with the Turkish state. The Kurds were and are a part of the national community. The President insists on the reforms and their continued implementation, more than the Syrian people and the world expect. I ask you to support the dialogue. There is someone there who would like to meet you.« Muhammad agreed, regardless of whether the person was a political figure or a representative of the security forces. »No matter what, I will consult with my colleagues in this regard.« At this point, the discussion was ended by the arrival of Dr. Faʾiz Dawud from Homs and Dr. Ahmad Basim al-ʿAli from Dayr az-Zawr (both are university professors, Dawud has American citizenship).

The next day another meeting took place in Dr. Rafiq Salih's office in the presence of our informant. This meeting was better and more relaxed than the previous meeting, but was very short. Salih [Muslim Muhammad] promised that a further meeting would proceed in a more positive manner after conferring with the coordination committee. On the evening of that same day, Salih Muslim Muhammad met with members of the committee in Hasan ʿAbdulʿazim's office. At the request of Salih [Muslim Muhammad], our informant could not attend this meeting, because none of those present from the coordination committee were supposed to recognize him. Salih [Muslim Muhammad] reported to our informant by telephone that things were developing favorably with respect to the conversation with Dr. Rafiq and that he would share the details with him following his return from Cairo.

Aside from that, Salih [Muslim Muhammad] asked our informant on the phone not to contact him again before his departure to Cairo and to communicate with the Democratic Union via his wife, ʿAʾishah Afandi, and ʿIsmat Shaykh Hasan so that the informant keeps his distance from the political environment in ʿAyn al-ʿArab for reasons that Salih [Muslim Muhammad] refused to explain on the phone.

With the request to inspect

Major General Adib Namir Salamah

Director of the North Division of the Air Force Intelligence Service
[signature and stamp]

Copied to:

- The Comrade Party Leader of Aleppo
- The North Leadership –
- The Director of Division 290 with the request to inspect and take note
- The Director of Division 322 –
- The ʿAyn al-ʿArab Group –
- The Afrin Group”

RESUME

Personal Information

Full Name : Dilshad Muhammad
Date of birth : 30 December 1986
Nationality : Syrian
Country of Residence : Germany
E-mail Address : dilshad2255@gmail.com

Work Experience

1. Title : Istanbul-based Freelance Journalist (Turkish Affairs)
   Institution : Deutche Welle TV (Arabic Department)
   Period : November 2011 - November 2012

2. Title : English > Arabic Interpreter
   Institution : Self-employed
   Period : February 2011 – December 2013
   References : - European Environment Agency, INSPIRE Program
   - Iraqi Ministry of Communications (MoC)

3. Title : World News Editor
   Institution : TimeTurk.com
   Period : October 2011 – October 2012

Education

1. Degree: MA in Political Science and International Relations
   Graduation : (expected) Spring 2015 | 1st Year GPA: 3.93/4.00
   Institution : Istanbul Aydin University - Turkey

2. Degree: Bachelor in English Language and Literature
   Graduation : March 2011
   Institution : Tishreen University, Latakia - Syria

   Other educational background:
   One semester at University of Marburg (Germany) in the framework of ERASMUS program: Spring and Summer 2014

Languages

Mother Tongues:

- Arabic and Kurdish (bilingual)

Other Languages:

- English: speaking, reading and writing (very good)
- Turkish: speaking, reading and writing (good)
- German: speaking, reading and writing (basics)