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Lights on the emergence backgrounds of the de facto autonomy of North and East Syria (NES). Its features of quasi state and interdependence with roots of the Kurdish question in Syria

Introduction

The outbreak of the Syrian uprising in March 2011 has gradually turned into a comprehensive civil war to put the country on a path of fragmentation and dissolution, simultaneously creating a scope of repercussions that put the international community in front of serious challenges, among them the acute humanitarian crisis facing the Syrian society, the widespread of violence and terror actions based on religion extremism, as well as the massive waves of internal displacements (IDPs) and external migration (REACH Initiative, 2022).

In the narratives of Syrian crisis, the Kurdish issue in Syria has repeatedly been focused and discussed, mainly by media sources, as Kurds presented an exceptional example, different from other components of Syrian society, by not being drawn into its events of the civil war, at the same time they protected own regions from imminent Islamic religious extremism, moreover succeeded to maintain civil peace among various ethnic and religious population of North and East Syria (NES), efforts that gradually created a kind of de facto autonomy called Rojava, having a well-organized and strong-armed forces, to successively be transformed into main partner of the International Coalition in the fight against jihadist groups, especially the Islamic State ISIS (Wilgenburg, 2016).

The emergence of Kurdish autonomy in NES, also the specific role of Kurdish Women Armed Forces (YPJ) in fighting ISIS, attracted a lot of attention, as it raised many reflections on the unique structure of Kurdish society, compared to their neighbours. It also prompted many scholars to search for the roots of the Kurdish issue in Syria – topic that scientific research rarely touched upon before 2011. However, focus on the Kurdish issue in Syria sparked a lot of polemics and different opinions. It also raised question about why the Kurdish question in Syria has been hidden all this time from the eyes of the international opinion. Perhaps it is the same reason that motivated Professor Michael M. Gunter to name his book, being in the frame of same reflections over the sud-

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den emergence of Kurdish autonomy in NES, *Out of Nowhere – The Kurds of Syria in War and Peace* (Gunter, 2014).

This study is part of a research series that attempts to shed light on the emergence backgrounds and existence mechanisms of the de facto autonomy that Kurds established in NES and the interdependence between its demonstrated features of quasi states and roots of the Kurdish question in Syria.

The main dilemma of this research is to search for the reasons that transformed the Kurdish question in Syria from being an issue of ethnic group semi-integrated with Syrian society and its political formations, until a late stage of the First Syrian Republic (1932-1963), to a deep conflict of ethnic basics, and to get the shape of complex Kurdish knot starting from the emergence of the Second Syrian Republic in 1963. Meanwhile the main hypothesis of the research says that repressive methods adopted by state apparatus against Kurds in the process of national fusion aimed at transforming Syria into a single Arab nation-state had a retroactive effect, as the attempt to erase the ethnic identity of Kurds and to change the demographic structure of Kurdish regions in Syria led to more deepened ethnic divisions of Syrian society. On the other hand, repercussions of these policies have also inflated pan-Kurdish mods and severed antagonisms between state apparatus and Kurdish political movement crating a case of indigenous disintegration aspirations currently presented by leadership of the de facto autonomy in NES in postulates of federal statehood form for future Syria.

On the other hand, the research theory sees that the Syrian National Army, that was created in post-colonial period, has been politically indoctrinated, which determined the army engagement in existing ideological and sectarian disputes among different currents of Syrian political spectrum, to make permanent inter-engagements between the army and policies a significant characteristic of Syrian contemporary political system (Al Zghayare, 2020: 101). Moreover continuing fights between these currents to size the power and preserve own political hegemony have deprived the political system of possibilities to implement real political and economic development plans that could move Syria towards a statehood form based on principles of citizenship and state of law. It simultaneously turned Syria into an abominable police state ruled by military dictatorships and wide spread corruption manipulated by oligarchies. All of these factors together have led to the deepening of the horizontal class divisions and the vertical, ethnic and sectarian divisions, within Syrian society, which also laid the foundations for the failure and non-reversal fragmentation of Syrian state, obviously disclosed by the existing ethnic and sectarian indigenous secession attempts, very evident during Syrian civil war.

The adopted mythologies of theses serial research is first to make chronologic historical presentation of micro- and macro-events simultaneously with analyses and syntheses of these narratives and interactions in order to expose the analogies between deteriorations of Kurds situation and fluctuations of Syrian modern political system. Furthermore, the comparative methodology is adopted to follow the legislative amendments of

Syrian constitutions in order to see how Syria formal identity was gradually pushed toward one-nation Arabic state and to examine its general impact on the Kurdish question as well as changes to postulates of Kurdish national movement in Syria, from demands of civil rights and cultural rights in the period before 2011 to became a request of formal recognition of the federal autonomous political entity announced in 2016 – a political entity that also demonstrate similarities to de facto or a quasi state, like the one emerged in Iraqi Kurdistan in the period 1992-2004 (Natali, 2010).

Part of this research is also based on ten years of follow-ups and observation, as well as field assessments made by the scholar under his duty as a humanitarian worker in the NES regions. Questions posed by this part of research are as follows: What are the roots of Kurdish question in Syria? How fluctuations of political system in contemporary Syria have turned the Kurdish question into a Kurdish knot? Which are the micro- and macro-factors determining direction of these fluctuations that inflated pan-Arabic trends and empowered their manipulation of the political spheres of Syria? What was the one Arab-nationalist-state vision and what kind of oppression policies have been adopted to abolish Syria its ethnic diversity, and also how these policies have affected the Kurds and what was the Kurds reaction to these policies?

The first part of the serial research covers Syrian Kurds' situation in the period from the start of French mandate period through the live cycle of the First Syrian Republic 1932-1963. The second part covers the Kurdish question in Syria from the formation of the Second Syrian Republic in 1963 to the outbreak of Syrian crisis in 2011, while the third part is analyzing the emergence backgrounds and existence mechanisms of the de facto autonomy in similarity to quasi states.

Case background

As Syrian state started losing control over large parts of territories to the benefit of extremist Islamic jihadist groups and in a tactical attempt to consolidate its increasingly desperate position in 2012, the government in Damascus abruptly withdrew its troops from the major Kurdish areas in Syria – an action that led to sudden emerge of an autonomy ruled by Syrian Kurds, representing the second largest ethnic group in Syria, being previously almost forgotten (Gunter, 2014: 1).

The withdrawal of Damascus armed forces from NES has created a power vacuum that needed to be filled. In these circumstance Kurds of Syria chose an unique path, actually they organized a local armed forces to defend their own territories against attempts of Islamic jihadists aimed to extend toward NES regions, and also formed a regional political body to manage the administration of areas under their control. Those efforts have gradually led to non-formal territorial secession of Kurdish areas in north Syria from the central government in Damascus to gradually create a kind of de facto territorial autonomy called Rojava, which in turn, successively transformed into Auto-

conomic Administration of NES (AANES), that also hopes to get international recognition for its autonomous project (Wilgenburg, 2016).

The areas of AANES started to enjoy relatively better security and stability as well as economic prosperity compared to the rest of Syria, which made it a safe haven for 89% of IDPs of Syrians fleeing the exacerbations of the civil war in other parts within the country. The IDPs streaming to AANES regions has affected the demographic structure of NES, as in May 2022 the number of IDPs in the regions controlled by AANES was nearly 630,000 individuals, representing almost one quarter of the over 2.7 million of its population, which also posed significant challenges for the autonomy administration and the international community alike (REACH Initiative, 2022).

AANES collaboration with the International Coalition against ISIS

As the US had launched its campaign against ISIS in the mid of 2014, the Pentagon declared its need to “competent partners” on the ground to combat ISIS (Glenn, 2016). One year after, that partner was the Kurdish-dominated, Syrian Democratic Forces SDF, created in October 2015 with the US support, as a multi-ethnic coalition of Kurdish, Arabic, and Christian fighters, but dominated by the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG), announced in 2012 in this way and by the end of 2015 had the SDF established itself as the West’s main partner in the fight against the jihadists groups, in particular the Islamic State ISIS (Wilgenburg, 2016).

Almost five years of collaboration with the International Coalition in war against ISIS and jihadists groups has turned SDF into a key powerbroker operating through AANES. However, a 100% defiance of ISIS, announced by President Donald Trump in March 2019, was only the first step for SDF in a long-running war of attrition against ISIS, because of still existing fears of ISIS recovery again. Actually, the direct military defeat of ISIS did not mean it had completely disappeared, especially with the presence of its sleeper cells in NES (*Two years after the defeat, what is left of ISIS in Syria?*, 2021).

In the period of post-victory announcement of 2019, a scope of new challenges started to reveal, facing both AANES and the international community. The first category of these challenges was related to the general acute humanitarian crises in NES and displacement camps, in particular Al Hol Camp, as its population swelled from 10,000 in 2018 to nearly 75,000 in 2019, mostly streamed after last battle of Bughouse Mountain, considered as an ISIS stronghold. Al Hol Camp also comprised some 12,000 detention suspected ISIS fighters and the rest of women and children with perceived ISIS affiliation – from those 70% of children under age of 18. Meanwhile, the population of Al Hol was roughly divided into Iraqis (48%), Syrians (37%) and foreigners from 60 countries (15%) (Yacoubian, 2022)¹.

¹ Al-Hol Camp is allocated near to Iraqi border in southern part of Al Hassakah province in NES. The establishment of this camp dates to 1991 when it received Iraqi refugees from the First Gulf War (Yacoubian, 2022).

The second challenge was the fate of the detained war prisoners of ISIS fighters, in particular those holding foreign citizenship, as most of countries refused to take back their own citizens being former ISIS fighters or their families, even children. The international community also rejected proposal presented by AANES to try those prisoners through an international court that would take place in regions of NES – a refusal position that was based on fears of giving international legitimacy to the de facto autonomy of AANES (Wilgenburg, 2016).

The additional deteriorations of humanitarian crises in NES, after the defeat of ISIS, as well as repercussions of interactions between acute humanitarian crises and still unstable security situation, considered as the most essential aspects boosting moods of religious extremism, prompted the international community to consolidate its collaboration with AANES, therefore, starting from March 2018, and in order to increase international support aimed at the stabilization, humanitarian, economic and military assistance to secure the final defeat of ISIS, the International Coalition lunched the second step of support to AANES (*Trump Administration on ISIS. Al Qaeda*, 2018). These plans stumbled on several problems, such as the logistics related matters based on challenges including the transport of aid items and goods into Syria through the official border-crossings, because of the embargo imposed on Syria in August 2011. Another aspect was the fact that some of the official border crossings are located in areas under the control of AANES being internationally not- recognized, to officially deal with – a challenge that could not reach a solution because of the stance of pro-Russian Damascus regime. Yet another obstacle came from Turkish intransigent position on AANES, as Turkey accuses its main military and political power pillars, the military formations of the YPG and the Kurdish political party, Democratic Union Party PYD, with affiliation with the Kurdish PKK organization (Wilgenburg, 2016).

The hostile position of Turkey, a NATO state member, on AANES created a paradoxical situation as the International Coalition against ISIS represents countries being NATO members. On the other hand, repercussions of this antagonism, as well those internal ones between NATO member states, and also antagonism between Russia-Iran-Damascus alliance on one side and the International Coalition on the other, have benefited AANES. In these undergoing events, the de facto autonomy of NES has reputedly been subject of international relations with functioning mechanism very similar to quasi states – indeed AANES already had features and shape of a quasi state even before these events as it poses all practical and theoretical dimensions of such an entity, for example: it controls a geographic area being approximately 1/3 of Syrian territory; it has a population of approximately 2.7 mln people, this including mentioned 630,000 of the IDPS; it has own well-organized armed forces, estimated in 2016 to approximately 45,000 fighters; it has a political body in form of local government, which is sub-divided into bodies resembling ministries, for example, the Interior and Defence Commission, the Education Commission, the Economy Commission, the Social and Humanitarian Affairs

Commission and the Health Commission; it also has own tax and education system as well as trade and economic relations with abroad; moreover, it has offices of semi-diplomatic representations in several countries, such as the US, France and Sweden. Considering these structural components of AANES we can state that it exists and preforms same as other examples of quasi states, also like most of other examples of de facto political entities – it just lacks an international recognition that gives it legitimacy of sovereign state. To sum up in short, the de facto autonomy of NES literally is a political entity that presents a new and unique case of quasi states (Kolstö, 2006; Natali, 2010).

Moreover, the traditional patterns of strategies adopted by international community toward AANES are also similar to patterns identified by researchers dealing with unrecognized territorial-political units, such as de facto and quasi-states. Coppering Scott Pegg's assumptions in the case of AANES, we can state that the International Coalition has adopted the role of the patron, a protecting state, with a moderate acceptance strategies based on mutual interest of fighting ISIS, while the parent state, Syria in this case, chose a combination of ignorance and utilitarian cooperation strategy, which is different from pure combating strategy that parent states usually adopt. Meanwhile, the most exceptional is the Turkish state strategy toward AANES, which is a pure combating strategy, even that Turkey is not the parent state in the case of AANES (Pegg, 1998: 4).

To understand the Turkish state stance toward AANES, we need to go back to historical events of post-World War I period, to expose the backgrounds of Turkish territorial claims on NES, and also to point the overlapping aspects of Kurdish issues in Syria and Turkey, but most importantly for this research is to disclose the roots of Kurdish question and to prove that the indigenous secession attempts, conceded as one of micro-aspects that usually stand behind the emergence of unrecognized de facto entities (Pegg, 1998: 5-6) is the same aspect that lays behind the emerge of AANES and camouflaged un-announced session attempts, as well as to prove that indigenous secession attempts of Kurds are inherited by prolonged internal conflict of ethnical background between Kurds of Syria and state apparatus, which implications has created a case of Kurdish Knot in Syria in period before 2011, and moreover to use the existing practical data in combination with the prognostic methodology to examine the most probable option for the coming fate of AANES.

The existing practical option chosen by contemporary international political system shows that unrecognized de facto entities can have different fate. First option is to obtain an international recognition and to transfer into a sovereign state like South Sudan and Kosovo. The second option is to integrate with the patron state – example of this option can be the existing relations between Turkey and the marionette government of the Republic of North Cyprus, but this option is unlikely for AANES. The third option is to agree to an independent status within one's parent state, e.g., by maintaining the status of a federal part of the parent state or to get some kind of autonomy – example of this option is the case of Iraqi Kurdistan after 2003 that became federal part of Iraq.

Fourth option is to be reabsorbed by the parent state – example of this option are the cases of two little quasi states, the case of Katanga secession from Congo in central Africa (1960-1963) and secession of Biafra from Nigeria in west Africa (1967-1970) (Kolst , 2006: 169).

Performance of AANES shows it is not a state-oriented entity that seeks to obtain international recognition to become sovereign state, and simultaneously it struggles in order not to turn back the clock for the Kurds of Syria to the pre-2011 stage. In 2016, AANES announced itself a federal part of Syria (Wilgenburg, 2016). This step indicates that AANES chose the third presented options and it struggles to achieve this status. This goal was adopted by AANES in accordance with the lessons learned, study of principles and guidelines of functioning mechanisms within the contemporary international political system. It is also clear that AANES is taking example of the Iraq case. The goal pointed by AANES also seems to be the most appropriate vision of solution to Kurdish knot in Syria.

The Kurdish question in Syria under French mandate period (1920-1946)²

Roots of the Kurdish question in Syria goes back to the post-World War I period, when a part of the Kurds homeland was annexed to the new Syria, a modern state whose emergence is linked to the partition process of the Ottoman Empire, which took place in the period of 1918-1922 (University of Central Arkansas, 2022, Palmer, 1994)³.

In the post-World War I era and after that, the Kurds had hoped to get some autonomy or an independent state, in ordnance to the Articles 62, 63, 64 of Sevres Treaty from 1920, mentioning the Kurdish autonomy in the frame of Ottoman Empire, that also could be transformed into a sovereign Kurdish state alongside Armenian and Arab states. The Kurds were deprived of this rights in the subsequent Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 (Jejarnes, 1924).

The partition of the Ottoman Empire and demarcation of new borders happened with an excessive randomness – faraway from basic principles of the new established League of Nations, as the boundaries demarcations were fashioned by the secretive British-French Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 (Zaki, 1948, Gunter, 2014: 9), as plans of this treaty were generated under World War I, when ethnic settlement maps of origin populations presented secondary considerations. Nevertheless, based on Sikes-Picot agree-

² The mandate system was considered the antithesis to colonialism, with the governing country acting as a trustee until the inhabitants were able to stand on their own. The mandate would terminate and an independent state would be born (Jeranes, 1924).

³ The partition of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East was based on a series of geopolitical arrangements made by Allied Powers in the course and aftermath of World War I as Germans-Ottomans alliance lost the war. This process led to assignation of Ottoman Mesopotamia (current Iraq) and part of Ottoman Syria (Palestine and Transjordan) to become a British mandate while the rest of Ottoman Syria (Lebanon, current Syrian state territories, and Alexandretta-Hatay) to be under French mandate (University of Central Arkansas, 2022; Palmer, 2014).

ment, the Kurds of Ottoman Mesopotamia were divided between new emerged states of Syria, Iraq and Turkey with exceptional randomness that also saw the rise to shaky states structures (Gunter, 2014: 9) as it simultaneously laid foundation to sizable territorial disputations, ethnic and religious conflicts, as well as turned the Kurdish people into the second largest ethnic groups in these states, considered as one of the main factors behind prolonged and chronic instability of the Middle East⁴.

In 1920, French Mandate Authorities (FMA) subdivided its mandate regions into six sectarian sub-states, but as the Kurds presented ethnic minority, not a religious or sectarian one, they could not count on getting own sub-state or even an autonomy, despite demands of it, formally submitted by Kurds in a project proposal to the FAM (Gunter, 2014: 12)⁵.

The unification of Syria's sectarian-sub states happened gradually in the period 1925-1936 and the final state territorial shape was established in 1939, in which the Kurds became the second largest ethnic group of Syrian population, mostly concentrated in three non-contiguous areas, North Syria, al Hassakah province, Afrin and Kobane⁶.

Many Kurds also live in major cities and urban areas of the country, for example, in Damascus and Aleppo. Most of the Kurds are Sunni Muslims, some of whom are Yazidis as well as a small number of Christians and Alawi Kurds. There are no official statistics about the number of Kurds in Syria, but David MacDowell mentions that they constitute 9% of Syrian population (MacDowell, 2014: 3), while other sources – 10% of slightly more than 2.2-million Syrian population (Gunter, 2014: 2).

The Kurdish region in NES has been main contributor to economic sectors of Syrian state, mainly in sectors of agriculture, livestock and oil production, this is also presented by many Kurdish scholar as one of main backgrounds behind states policies towards the Kurdish region aimed to change its demographic structure and repeated confiscation of the land of the Kurdish farmers(Sweid, 2016)⁷.

⁴ In conjunction with the Ottoman expansion into Mesopotamia and Eastern Anatolia, the Kurds and their homeland were first divided into two parts. The Ottoman attempts had started a prolonged armed conflicts between Safavid state in Iran and the Ottoman Empire that started with the Battle of Chaldiran of 1514. The conflict ended by "Qasr Shirin" treaty in 1639. In the result, the Kurdish settlements area became a part of the Ottoman Empire and functioned as independent small states or autonomous principalities such as Baban, Botan, Hakkari, Soran, Ardelan and Bedlis (Zaki, 1948; Hassan, 2020).

⁵ Damascus (1920), Aleppo (1920), Alawites (1920), Jabal Druze (1921), the autonomous Sanjak of Alexandretta (1921, modern-day Hatay after 1939), and the State of Greater Lebanon (1920), which became later the modern country of Lebanon. The drawing of those states was based in part on the sectarian makeup of Syria (Jejarnes, 1924).

⁶ The Kurds regions are clustered in the Upper Jazeera. In NES, in cities of Qamishli, Derik (Malkiya), Tirbe Sipi (Qahataniyah), Amuda Darbasiyeh, Al Hassakah, Sere Kaniye (Ras Al Ayn), od regions of Afrin and Kobane as well some other regions of north Aleppo (Gunter, 2014: 2).

⁷ The production of the eastern governorates amounted to about 2,147,826 tons of wheat in 2011, and this amount constituted 55% of the total Syrian production of wheat that year, which total amount was 3,858,331 tons, while the production of cotton from the eastern governorates in the same year amounted to 522,966 tons, which represents 78% of the total cotton production in Syria, which amounted to 671,668 tons.

Kurdish national movement in Syria under the mandate period

Some researches dealing with the Kurdish question, in particular these made by some scholars of Arabic origin, one might find as an attempt to present the Kurds of Syria as a group of immigrants who fled from oppression of the Ottomans during World War I or after the failures of Kurdish rebellions against Turkish state in the period 1925-1930 (Al-Gaylani, 2016; Abdo, 2016).

Indeed, these researches include inaccuracy or a deliberate denial of historical facts and modern studies that prove the presence of the Kurds in regions of current NES before World War I, as these region were just southern periphery of Ottoman Mesopotamia or Ottoman Syria and the traditional settlements regions of the Kurds for centuries. On the other hand, one has to acknowledge the demographic and geographical fluidity of both NES regions and south Turkey in the first two decades of French mandate period. Also, the final borders between Turkey and Syria were definitively not drawn before 1939 (Hassan, 2020)⁸.

Other category of researches claim that the Kurds were favoured by the French Mandate Authorities, which resulted in strengthening the Kurds influence in NES by changing the demographic structure of the region to the advantage of the Kurds. One also can notice that repeated argument they refer to is the Cadastraux action implemented by FMA, starting from 1922. Indeed, going back to the studies focusing on this matter one finds that Cadastraux action was aimed to reform land ownership legislations being forced by Ottomans in 1858 and the Cadastraux only moved state ownership of lands from the hands of the state to the people who were living and working in it before the French mandate period (Al-Saleh, 2020). It is also worth mentioning that these reforms covered most of Syrian geography, not only NES⁹. But to find backgrounds of these claims one has to present Ali al-Saleh, a specialist in this field, who presents two main French strategies on NES. The first one is called “the French petty policy” adopted in the period 1920-1930, whose vision was based on building networks of loyalties and empowerment of particular segments of sectarian minorities considering them as

Al-Hassakah Governorate alone produced in that year 239,396 tons of cotton, which represented 35% of Syria's total cotton productions (Sweid, 2016).

⁸ *Al Jazeera Al Ulja* the (upper island) that refers to regions of NES formed the centre of a conflict between France and Britain, the mandate over Iraq, and the young Turkish Republic, which did not initially accept the dispossession of Mosul, before France later ceded it to Britain, see capture III of Muhammad Ali Al-Saleh, *Managing the Syrian Economy in the Time of the French Mandate (1918-1946) – Its Post-Independence Effects*, Chapter Three – Mandate Society Publications of the French Institute for the Near East 2020. The final demarcation of the borders between Syria and the Turkish state took place in 1939. Derik al-Malikiyah region in the far NES until 1930 still was under the control of the Turkish states. This way the period between 1920-1939 was characterized by a demographic fluidity in North-Eastern Syria (Hassan, 2020).

⁹ About the idea of Cadastraux action and specifics of NES geopolitical position for French strategies in the Middle East in difference from other regions of Syria Muhammad as a link that is more effective in the system of its mandate hegemony, this shift comes when the economic-social transformations inside Syrian indicates crystallization of statehood structures lobbied by young, educated generation of Syrian politicians and create greater pressure on mandate authorities (Al-Saleh, 2020).

tools to consolidate and sustain mandate's hegemony system in NES. Meanwhile, this strategy got replaced, approximately, in 1930, for the strategy of the "Great French Policy", which says that France's interest requires reliance on the majority before the minorities (Al-Saleh, 2020). This might also explain liquidation of sub-sectarian states of Syria and turning down request of autonomy in NES presented by the Kurds to the FMA as Kurds did not present a sectarian minority only an ethnic one. That way Kurds were not really included in the networks of loyalties created by the FMA.

The historical events also prove that claims about the Kurds being favoured by the FMA, are not correct, as presented demands of Kurdish autonomy in NES, happened in a very sensitive period of France-Turkey tensioned relations, in particular when the NES regions still were disputed border-areas between Turkey and France. Furthermore, the heavy armed clashes in July 1923 between the Kurdish clans and the FMA in the NES regions prove existing conflicts between the Kurds and the FMA as well as are signs of the Kurds intensive demographic presence in NES at that time (Hajo, 2022)¹⁰.

Furthermore, emphasizing the religious aspects, not the ethnic ones, it is clear that the mentioned sub-sectarian territorial divisions of Syrian implemented in 1920 are also partly reason of turning down by the FAM the project of the Kurdish autonomy in NES submitted by Kurdish parliament deputies in 1928. The pretext of the FMA was that "Kurds do not represent a religious minority like the Alawites and the Druze" (Gunter, 2014: 12). Also, the Kurds' request to provide Kurdish education system in NES was turned down, and even the Kurds' appeal to establish Kurdish charity organization was rejected (Gunter, 2014: 12).

Going back to the Kurdish national movement in Syria under the mandate period one can also find some researches questioning the existence of Kurdish nationalist awareness or a clear Syrian-Kurds identity in an early phase of French mandate (Martin Strohmeier, cited in: Gunter 2014: 13). However, these opinions seem to be based on categorical separation of the Kurdish national movement, in what was previously called Ottoman Mesopotamia and Ottoman Syria, and between what after World War I became Syrian and Turkish states. This approach seems also to not be correct, because the formal separation made by frontier lines established by the Sikes-Picot treaty was not mirrored in practice until the final destiny of NES was established, at least not until 1930, as Derik province in northeast east part of NES still was under the control of Turkish state and the borders separating south Turkey from NES were drawn in 1939 (Hassan, 2020). Simultaneously, it is hard to expect an immediate spiritual separation between the Kurds of Syria and Turkey based on the provisions of the Sikes-Picot treaty, or to expect crystallization of separate Syrian-Kurds identity before the reveal of Syr-

¹⁰ The Battle of Bayandur on July 28, and the Battle of Abbas River, on July 31, 1923. During these battles 3000 clan members participated in the attack against a French Army. In the first battle, 9 France soldiers were killed, and in the second 31 soldiers and 3 French officers were killed (Hajo, 2022).

ian statehood features, at least not before the announcement of the First Syrian Republic in 1932. Furthermore, it is a paradoxical approach to make a positive assumption of the pan-Arab irredentist vision of the Greater Syria project, or even the Fertile Crescent projects that ignore frontier lines drawn by the Sikes-Picot treaty – both projects are advocated by some of pan-Arab enthusiasts, and at the same time deprive the pan-Kurdish national movement the right to similar assumptions and methods of struggle that ignore frontier lines – borders that, in many cases, divided same Kurdish clan or tribe, even made members of the same family citizens of two different countries, Syria and Turkey (Gunter, 2014: 9).

Therefore, it will be more academic approach to see the national consciousness of Syrian Kurds in the frame of wider perspective of the Kurdish national awareness that was existing in Ottoman Mesopotamia-Ottoman Syria before World War I, and also to follow its signs and clear demonstrations with starting from second half of 19th century and continuing to get more institutionalized shape by the establishment of the Kurdish movement *Khoybun* (“be yourself” or “independence”) in October 1927 in both Turkey and Syria – a movement that is considered as a transitional Kurdish political party (Gunter, 2014: 5, 12).

Despite the fact that programme and postulates presented by *Khoybun* in the frame of wider pan-Kurdish visions that reject Lausanne realities, the movement had constructive role in the emergence of an individual political identity of Syrians Kurds, as their activities in form of collaboration with Syrian National Bloc¹¹, led to the election of five Kurdish delegates to the Syrian parliament in 1928 (Gunter, 2014: 12).

The Kurdish delegates lobbied for the Kurdish rights in the frame of Syrian state, such as demands of the Kurdish educational system in NES, and in 1928 submitted a project to the FMA demanding the Kurdish administrative autonomy in NES. Furthermore, *Khoybun* initiated the establishment the first Syrian-Kurdish monthly journal *Hawar* (The Calling) in 1932, that promoted cultural and Kurdish education materials and became a pan-Kurdish national and cultural platform. But *Hawar* was banded in 1937, as well as members of *Khoybun* sent to exile by the FMA, which also exiled many other Kurdish personalities with political and social influence in their regions (Ahmed, 2020)¹².

¹¹ The National Bloc was a Syrian political movement established in 1928 by a group of Syrian politicians, of them many of Kurdish origin like Ibrahim Hananu and Najib Barazi. The movement made many clear inputs in struggle for Syrian independence and establishment of Syrian statehood institutions like the parliament of 1928. The movement witnessed signs of a split in 1941 that later became two parties: People's Party and the National Party (Al Zghayare, 2020: 69).

¹² Political activists such as: Osman Sabri, Hajo Agha and the brothers Mustafa and Bozan Shaheen Agha, Qaddour Bey, Rasul Agha and his brother Ageed. These actions were according to a Turkish desire on the mandate authorities in Syria, or in the context of mutual deals between Turkey and the mandate authorities at the expense of the Kurds (Ahmed, 2020).

The period of World War II

In June 1939, France suspended the Syrian constitution from 1930 and dissolved the parliament; also state of emergency and martial law was announced to last in Syria for most of World War II period. In this period, some of Syrian politicians and political orientations collaborated with the Nazi Germany through pro-Nazi government of Vichy in France (1940-1944) (Al Zghayare, 2020: 98). Starting from 1943, Syria gradually returned to parliamentary political life. Simultaneously, this period confronted the political establishment with a very tensioned internal economic situation caused by World War II realities and its implications – the repercussions that lasted to the end war also to the final French withdrawal from Syria in April 1946 (Al-Saleh, 2020).

Summarizing the French mandate period, one can state that most of Syrian Kurds, in particular those settled in urban areas descending from high educated aristocracy and landowners, have been an integrated part of Syrian society and its political formations. Mainly they were members of the National Bloc to the mid-1950s, which tell a lot about backgrounds of Syrian political establishment under- and post- mandate period (Al Zghayare, 2020: 69-72). The Kurds also participated in repeated uprisings against the French mandate, which in turn created for Syrian Kurds illusory perception that in post-mandate period they would be partners in a homeland called Syria, but the winds of political transformations went against their expectations, turning them into an oppressed ethnic minority deprived from most basic human rights. Therefore, when the opportunity upraised, during the Syrian civil war, they did not hesitate to seize it to serve their own interests.

The Kurdish question in contemporary Syria

The immediate post-independence period is characterized by rapid dynamics mainly drawn by undergoing geopolitical macro-aspects and internal micro-power polarizations between conflicting political orientations and sectarian fraction of Syria in the realities of Arab-Israeli conflict, and also in lights of revalidation between two main regional blocks, Egypt-Saudi Arabian against Hashemite Dynasty ruling in Iraq and Jordan Al (Al Zghayare, 2020: 129). Those two blocks adopting different loyalties and with affiliations to polarizations of international powers in an early phase of the Cold War, put the political system of Syria on a path of dramatic fluctuations headed towered military dictatorships and police state. It also caused fluctuations that encountering remarkable changes aimed at erasing Syrian ethnic diverse identity to turn it in one-nation Arabic state – a direction of transformations that have been very unfavourable for ethnic minorities, in particular Kurds. The course of these changes started to be clear from the

first military coup in Syria carried out in 1949 by Hosni al-Zaim¹³, to whom Faris al-Khoury said “May God forgives you, you have opened a door that will be difficult for history to close it”¹⁴.

In an early phase of post-colonial period, one can follow clear features of ideological disparities, sectarian and class divisions among the new generation of Syrian political elites, even that those features had already begun to appear during the World War II, in analogies to differences of Syrian political orientations on positions towards France or Nazi Germany and stance towards Israel state, that created a scope of divisions to get more clear shape after Syrian independence, then to become a real struggle on power manipulations between the parties. Nevertheless, the contexts of Arab-Israeli conflict had clear impact on the dynamics of these fluctuations, in particular after the war of 1948, as the severe division between political orientations was first shaping disclosed in the final split of the National Block 1947-1948 – a movement considered to be the largest political actor in the Syrian political scene during the mandate period. This split created two main conflicting fractions presented by the People’s Party, with clear affiliations to the pro-British Hashemite Dynasty ruling in Iraq and Jordan, and second fractions, the National Party, oriented toward cooperation with Egypt-Saudi alliance and France-USA axis (Al Zghayare, 2020: 56-62; 129-130). The polarization of political power also reflected signs of micro-regionalism, sectarian and ethnic divisions that forms were inherited from sub-sectarian state divisions of Syria in a previous mandate period. Other political orientations such as Muslim Brotherhood and the Syrian Communist Party also played essential role in these transformations, as they get increased popularity by advocating, each from own ideological front, the interests of the downtrodden social classes affected by the deep economic crises, which Syria witnessed in the beginning of the 1930s and in particular under the period of World War II (Al Zghayare, 2020: 84-87).

Divisions among political orientations and elites also get mirrored in granulations within the Army formations, as the dynamics and intensity of conflicts of political establishment were reflected in narratives of the three successive military coups, in March, August and December of 1949 (Seale, 1965: 61-63). The first military coup was carried out by Hosni al-Zaim of Kurdish origin and clear affiliations with the National Party. Al-Zaim pointed Muhsin al-Barazi, also of Kurdish origin, to be the head of his government. Both al-Zaim and al-Barazi conceded the necessity of normalizing relations with Israel and to focus on economic and political development in the country (Al-Gawadi, 2020). Based on this vision Syria signed armistice agreement with Israel in July 20,

¹³ Hosni al-Zaim (1897-1949) a military leader of Kurdish origins, the leader of the first military coup in Syria, and the Syrian President for a short period, is a controversial figure, but despite the short period of his rule, he began important reforms in the structure of the First Syrian Republic, proving that he had a clear vision of the need to implement political, economic and educational development in Syria. The first leader in the Arab world who granted women the right to vote for the first time in 1949.

¹⁴ Faris al-Khoury (1877–1962) is considered as the godfather of modern Syrian politics and Prime Minister of Syria (10.1944 -10 1945; 10.1954-02.1955) (Al-Gawadi, 2020).

1949. The second coup happened on August 13, carried out by Sami al-Hinnawi at the instigation of the People's Party to execute both Hosni al-Zaim and Muhsin Barazi accusing them for great betrayal (Seale, 1965: 68). Meanwhile, the third military coup took place on December 19, 1949 to bring Adib al-Shishakli to power, making him the main manipulator of state apparatus until his forced resignation in 1954. At the beginning, al-Shishakli, tried to consolidate his rule through political, economic and social reforms in the country, to shortly after, from December 1951, turn the political system into a typical police state ruled by his direct military dictatorship. The signs of the turn of events came in April 1952, when he prohibited all political parties and civil society activities to manipulate the political spheres by his own political body, the Arab Liberation Movement, (Al Zghayare, 2020: 98). His dictatorship and his clear affiliation with the regional Egypt-Arab Saudi alliance raised internal unrests, of which these main provocations came from banned political parties, also from Druze, a sectarian minority in Syria and Lebanon, supported by the Hashemite Dynasty in Iraq-Jordan and the British. This antagonism generated serious internal turbulence and conflicts that put the republic on a path of civil war between the Druze and state apparatus. These events finally forced al-Shishakli to resign on February 25, 1954, and then to choose life in exile (Torrey, 1964: 161-162).

The macro-events, such as those related to the preparations to establishing Pact of Bagdad (The Middle East Treaty Organization; METO) in 1955, had essential impact on political transformations under the period of al-Shishakli rule, as Syria was under pressure from regional and international powers to join the pact (Al Zghayare, 2020: 133). This period also presented another turning point in the contemporary history of Syria as it determined the one-state Arabic character of Syria through adaptation of the new constitution in 1950. The new constitution had for the first time officially pointed the shift of Syrian identity to make it pure Arabic. It was also used as legitimate tool in the hands of the authority to later change the name of Syria from the Syrian Republic to the Syrian Arabic Republic. The new constitution was also a legislative backup to be used in attempts to abolish the ethnic diversity of Syria in next decades¹⁵.

In general, the period from the independence in 1946 to 1954 rule has introduced new model of power exercising that made the inter-engagement between politics and army a permanent characteristic of Syrian power structures, also power shifted to be coupled with violence in following decades – a door that the history could not close.

¹⁵ Syrian constitution dated September 5, 1950 stated that "Syria is an Arab, democratic, representative republic, we are the representatives of the Syrian Arab people, and we declare that our people are part of the Arab nation, who are striving to fulfil their sacred wish to gather our Arab nation into one state. The Arabic language is the official language. The state declares its adherence to Islam and its ideals, and Islamic jurisprudence is the main source of legislation and the religion of the President of the Republic is Islam" (Al Sharq Network for Legal Database, 2022).

The Kurds under the period of Syrian “democracy spring” (1954-1958)

It is very often that one finds opinions considering the pre-Egypt-Syria unity period 1954-1958 to be the period of “democracy spring” and turning to parliamentary life in contemporary Syria, after a previous period of frequent military coups and al-Shishakli dictatorship. The famous Syrian Kurdish politician Hamid H. Darwish claims that: “despite the significant role of the army in the state of the fiftieth, Syria was a relatively democratic country, under which many political parties operated freely” (Darwish, 2000: 21), however the undergoing social and political transformations in shadows of regional macro-aspects put their heavy mark on the structure of Syria state apparatus, and also initiated a new wave of deterioration course for ethnic minorities, in particular for the Kurds. The oppression features that gradually started to reveal from the parliamentary elections in 1954, as the extreme Al Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party sought to impose its own extreme Arab nationalist leftist visions on the shape of state through manipulations of political scenes and infiltration of army formations (Al Zghayare, 2020: 56-58), which got even more disclosed after 1956, when Al Ba’ath members sized both the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs posts in the government, that was previously established in 1954¹⁶.

Backgrounds of the army role in politics of Syria

Two generations of military elite played pivotal roles in contemporary Syrians political scenes between 1946-1970. The first generation, which members first had received an Ottoman education, then continued their education under the French system and joined Syrian armed forces under the mandate period. This generation played role in Syrian political transformations to the mid-1950s. Among this generation one can find some of Kurdish origin, also one can read out within the characteristic conglomerates of this generation signs of regionalism and roots of mentioned state-sectarian subdivisions made by the FMA in early phase of the mandate period (Torrey, 1964: 169). Meanwhile, the second generation appeared in the post-independence period, mainly as the Syrian National Army was established after 1946. This generation became susceptibility to politicization as they were militarily moulded and intellectually indoctrinated in nationalist ideologies, that increased even more by repercussions of the Arab Israeli war of 1948. The influences of young military generation increased even more when they

¹⁶ Al Ba’ath Arab Socialist Party was originally founded in 1947 by Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar as Al Baath (renaissance) Arab Party. In 1952, it united with the Arab Socialist Party, that was in 1950 founded by Akram al-Haurani, to become Al Ba’ath Arab Socialist Party. The Al Ba’ath Party started to manipulate Syrian political realities when it became the second biggest party of Syrian parliament after its victory in the parliamentary elections of 1954. In 1956, it sized two important posts in the government, the Prime Minister and the foreign ministry posts. Al Ba’ath took over power through military coup in Iraq 8 February 8, 1963 and in Syria on March 8, 1963 (Jamsheer, 2007: 102-104). See also more details about Al Ba’ath History (Al Zghayare, 2020: 78-82).

started to join various political parties seeking alliances with the new emerging political elite, being divided between main political orientations, communist leftist, Arab nationalist leftist and righties and Muslim Brotherhood – a new political establishment that was seeking to overthrow the dominations of the old-traditional political establishment. These fractions were also mirrored in loyalty division and fractional split among young officers representing the new military establishment that also was divided into different conglomerates such as: the army fraction Al Ba'ath, the left-wing fraction influenced by the Communist Party, the army fraction of Syrian Nationalist Party, the Damascene Shwam officers, considered to be 'independent', and the fraction of conservative officers influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood. However, from the mid-1950s, as Al Ba'ath started to play essential role in power joints, the younger and more radical nationalist-leftist generation of officers also started to dominate the army formations (Al Zghayare, 2020: 101-103).

These micro-transformation of Syrian political realities and these inter-engagement with successive empowerment of the army role took place in the narrative of macro-events of the same period, such as mentioned Arab-Israeli conflict, which inflated the popularity of Arab nationalist moods, not only in Syria but in other Arab countries as well, in particular after Jamal Abdel Nasser's coup in 1952, which overthrew the monarchy of Egypt and adopted a pan-Arab nationalist agenda called Nasserism, gaining wide popularity even in Syria. Another important historical event is the final emergence of military alliance of Pact of Baghdad in 1955, making a clear sign of presiding locomotion of power polarization specific for the Cold War into depths of the Middle East. Next event is the crisis of Suez Canal of 1956-1957, also accepted by many scholars as date of final withdrawal of Great Britain from the Middle East region to be replaced by the USA, considered to be legitimate heir to British influence in this region. The pressure created by these events terminated Syrian rush to strengthen its relations with the Eastern Bloc and to fix its position in the polarization structures of regional powers being harmonized with characteristic antagonisms of the Cold War era, which, on internally levels, paved roads for the final army domination over politics in Syria (Al Zghayare, 2020: 132).

Syria started to procure armament from the socialist countries and ZSSR, in turbulent and hostile regional conditions after 1952, this also determined its clear affiliation with the Socialist Block. In turn, this course started a deep and long-drawn conflict with Turkey, a NATO member state, to shape Syrian-Turkish tensioned relations and lay grounds for mutual proxy wars for the following decades (Brecher, Wilkenfeld, 1997: 344-346).

The next milestone was the establishment of the Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (KDPS) announced in 1957. It was the first Syrian political party with the Kurdish identity in contemporary Syria. It is also an important event, as forms of the Kurdish move-

ment in Syria, after Khoybun until 1957 had a character of associations, such as Kurdish Association of Democratic Youth formed in 1953, the Association of the Resurrection of Kurdish Culture created in 1955, the Kurdish Knowledge and Cooperation Association and others (Darwish, 2000: 14; 21-22; Tejle, 2009: 13).

The structure of the KDPS was a combination of different generations – those who represented the old Kurdish political establishment, bearing the remnants of Khoybun political heritage, like Osman Sabre, high-educated Dr. Norradin Zaza being absolvent of Sorbonne University and a younger generation of politicians and activists such as Hamid H. Darwish. Shortly after the establishment of the KDPS, it became a political platform attracting the Kurdish activists from different generation and political visions, having one common denominator, which is to advocate for the Kurdish question in a very sensitive period of second half of the 1950s, inside and outside Syria, also in analogy to undergoing fluctuations and political transformations heading to very unfavourable situation for the Kurds.

However, the inconsistent composition of different generations and political visions gathered under the umbrella of the KDPS led to factionalism phenomena based on ideological differences within the party, to crystallize three main fractions inside the KDPS. The first was the conservative fraction represented by a group that was still thinking in orbits of the post-Lausanne complexes, also advocating for trans-border irredentist pan-Kurdish nationalism. The second fraction consisted of leftist-socialist oriented group advocating a visions of solutions to Kurdish question based on principals of self-determination, and the third fraction was considered as moderate fraction representing the most consistent assumptions to reality and peculiarities of the Kurdish issue in Syria. Nevertheless, the initial ideological profile of the KDPS was dominated by the conservative pan-Kurdish fraction, which deepened factionalism inside the KDPS and also led its first split in the period 1964-1965 and to multiple splits in next decades (Darwish, 2000: 82-86).

The emergence of the KDPS with dominated pan-Kurdish profile raised reflections about its vision being a kind of reaction to the empowerment of extreme Arab nationalist trends, which revealed in the same period. On the other hand, it is essential to acknowledge that the KDPS irredentist aspirations and clear affiliation with the KDPI (Iraq) exacerbated the sensitivities of Syrian state apparatus towards the Kurdish issue, and led to a severe confrontation between the KDPS leadership and security forces as the party leaders were repeatedly arrested and tortured (Darwish, 2000: 39-42).

The combination of the presented micro- and macro-events had a basic impact on acceleration of Arab nationalists plans to form a kind of front able to face these threats, turbulences and regional hostilities by establishing rushed, inaccurate union between Syria and Egypt in 1958 (Al Zghayare, 2020: 57).

The period of Egypt-Syria union 1958-1961

The union between Egypt and Syria was proclaimed on February 22, 1958. The name of the new political entity became the United Arab Republic (UAR), with a new state form demonstrating a very centralized power structure in the hands of Jamal Abdul Nassir, being the head of the UAR state, based in Cairo, while Syria lost its previous formal identity when its name became the Northern Regions of the UAR (Fyderek, 2011: 43).

The features of the UAR indicating it to be an authorial state revealed in early stage of union emergence, which most obvious expressions was banning of all political parties in Syria, including the Kurdish KDPS. But leaders of the Kurdish party refused to dissolve it, which also led to confrontations between the KDPS and the UAR security apparatus. Referring to these events Darwish claims that: "Abdel Nasser had a positive position on the Kurdish issue in Syria and Iraq, but the biggest stumbling block against Kurds was the position of the Al Ba'ath Party" (Darwish, 2000: 57). Meanwhile, the Chairman of PDKS, Noureddine Zaza, seems to have a quite different opinion in this regards, as under his arrest in 1960, when he was asked about the reason behind establishing the PDKS he answered: "because Arab nationalism, presented by the Al Ba'ath party and supported by Abdul Nasser, is nothing more than fascism, whose sole purpose is to smelt national minorities in Syria" (Tammo, 2005).

The union period, in general, is also associated with a serial of other restrictions of civil liberties and final liquidation of relatively advanced tradition of parliamentary democracy in Syria of previous periods. This course also was remarkably unfavourable for the Kurds as the period of relatively openness toward them proceeding in Syria before UAR periods witnessed a fundamental shift.

The idea of the URA, being not adequate to the needs of countries with diverse ethno-religious structures like Syria, shows how banner of nationalist agenda imposed by one ethnic component led to deeper defragmentation of Syrian society. Furthermore, the socialist economic course adopted by the UAR government in 1959, in contexts of the agrarian reforms and nationalization of the economic sectors, provoked a new wave of unrest in Syria advocated by the layers of the Syrian bourgeoisie and feudalists being affected by these reforms, which also led to deep turbulences in the URA government (Al Zghayare, 2020: 113).

Another milestone in the UAR history is the police state tradition that Nasserism established in Syria when Abdel Hamid Sarraj, a hard-core pan-Arab enthusiast became the Minister of Internal Affairs in 1958. Then he sized the post of Deputy President of the UAR. By being appointed to be the Chief of the Northern Regions of UAR (Syria) Sarraj started to play the role of Abdul Nassir's right hand. He also was known for the ruthlessness and use of extensive methods of torture against internees from his previous position, as the Chief of Syrian Military Intelligence that he had occupied in March 1955. In the position of Deputy President of the UAR, Sarraj played a decisive role in

rising the cult of widespread violations against human rights and use of torture to be linked forever with the Syrian security service apparatus. This is documented by memoirs of the Kurdish leaders arrested and tortured in that period describing it as the one of worst stages of the Syrian state's barbarism against its own citizens (Darwish, 2000: 39).

The UAR was dissolved on September 28, 1961 by a military coup to successively bring more radical nationalist orientations to the power that were planning the next military coup under the command of Al Ba'ath Military Committee (Fyderek, 2011: 46).

Deteriorations of the Kurds' situation starting from depriving the Kurds of citizenship in 1962

The new post-union shaky government that was manipulated by Al Ba'ath started to expose its extremist Arab nationalist profile by going back to the text of constitution of 1950 to changing the name of Syrian republic to Arab Republic, and next to start implementing systematic Arabization process of Syrians based on oppressive policies aimed at completely eliminate ethnic diversity of the country. The regional macro-events came to serve as acceleration factor to the nationalist plans, as the outbreak of the Kurdish-Barzani uprising started in September 1961 in Iraqi Kurdistan to put the Kurds of Syria face to face with new forms of unprecedented aggressive policies aimed to erase their ethnic identity (Tejle, 2009: 69). "Thousands of people went to sleep as Syrians and woke up to find that they no longer were [citizens]" (*Syria. The Silenced Kurds*, 1996).

In October 1962 and based on Decree No. 93, Syrian government stripped 120,000 Syrian Kurds (20 % of the Kurdish population at that time) of their Syrian citizenship in an exceptional census carried out only in Hasakeh governorate – NES. The census also resulted in another significant group of stateless Syrian-born Kurds that in Arabic are referred to as *maktoumeen* ("unregistered," or "not appearing in the records"). This group was not even listed in official population registers. In July 1996, Human Rights Watch estimated the number of Syrian-born Kurds holding this category of classification to 75,000 (*Syria. The Silenced Kurds*, 1996). At the same time the state apparatus launched a media campaign against the Kurds with slogans such as "saving Arabism on the Jazeera", which mean NES, and "fighting the Kurdish threat" (Vanly, 1992: 157-158), despite the fact that "the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees the right of every person to a nationality, and provides that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his or her nationality" (*Syria. The Silenced Kurds*, 1996).

Syrian-born Kurds holding 'foreigner' status started to face tremendous difficulties in their everyday lives as they were denied many rights, which other Syrians enjoy. They were not permitted to own land or property, housing or businesses, not to be employed at government agencies and state-owned enterprises, could not practice as doctors or engineers, they were not eligible for food subsidies or admission to public hospitals, did not have the right to vote, no right to have marriages legally recognized. The

status of the stateless Kurds was also inherited by Syrian-born children that made number of stateless Syrian Kurds grow since 1962 to reach more than 517,000 in 2011. Even though the case presented a pursuant state policy discriminatory as matter of international law, the situation of the stateless Kurds did not witness practical changes until the outbreak of Syrian crisis in 2011 (Abbas, 2018).

Historical events and existing documentations show that the census and withdrawal of citizenship from the Kurds in 1962 was just an introduction to a comprehensive plan generated by Al Ba'ath party aimed to erase the national identity of the Kurds and the Kurdish regions by systematic Arabization to change the ethnic structure of NES (*Syria. The Silenced Kurds*, 1996). The next phase of oppression against Kurds started in year after the census when government started confiscation of lands of the Kurdish farmers to build Arab settlements aimed at depriving the Kurdish regions in NES contingency and to change the demographic structure of NES, and to use sophisticate discrimination tools to make the Kurds under constant instability that force them to emigration. This sudden shift to obvious aggression toward the Kurds was based on assumptions adopted by Al Ba'ath considering the Kurds existence a threat to national security (Tejle, 2009: 13).

The existing data proves that the census was a part of a comprehensive plan generated by the Al Ba'ath leadership about how to abolish the Kurdish question in Syria, even before the party sized power. The plan was implemented in each detail under the period of the Second Syrian Republic, starting in 1963 when Al Ba'ath sized power (Vanly, 1992: 159).

Conclusions

A scope of micro- and macro-factors led to empowerment of extreme Arab nationalist trends in Syria that had also infiltrated the army formations. These political currents seized power through subsistent military coups in contemporary Syria, that also determinated the permanent army engagement with the police and transformation of the political system into cruel dictatorship ruled by brutal machine of police state with main goal to secure its own power manipulations, also in the contexts of existing ideological or sectarian conflicts between different political currents. They simultaneously try to push Syria toward one-nation state of pure Arabic identity by adopting severe repressive methods in the narratives of its national fusion projects aimed to erase ethnic identity of Syrian Kurds.

The policies used by state apparatus against the Kurds, in contrary to these goals, created retroactive effects by empowering the Pan-Kurdish nationalism and deepening ethnic fragmentation within Syrian society, which also can be considered as main factor behind the existing indigenous fragmentation aspirations based on ethnical aspects, clearly noticed through features of quasi state demonstrated by AANES. At least in its announced, the federal project and struggle to not be again reabsorbed by the parent

state, Syria, clearly show that the Kurds are not willing to accept same status as the one they were forced to before the start of the Syrian civil war.

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Abstract: The research is presenting backgrounds to the sudden informal secession of the Kurdish regions in Syria from the central government of Damascus in 2012, to successively create a kind of de facto autonomy known as Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES). This research is trying to expose features of a quasi state demonstrated by AANES through analyses of its existence mechanisms and collaborations with the International Coalition in fights against ISIS, and also in the efforts by AANES to obtain international recognition for its autonomous project. Furthermore, to point the relations between indigenous secession attempts presented by AANES and roots of the Kurdish question in Syria, also the inter-engagements with micro- and macro-aspects and fluctuations of political transformation inside Syria and the existing severe ethnic and sectarian fragmentations of Syria's society, considered as the main factors behind Syrian state failure and fragmentation, that also

became very obvious after the outbreak of civil war in 2011, to finally present prognoses about the fate of AANES and Syrian state.

Keywords: Kurdish question in Syria, AANES, Syrian crisis, Syrian civil war, indigenous session attempts, YPG, YPJ, International Coalition against ISIS, Jihadist groups, de facto autonomy in NES, quasi state

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