

Kurdish Political Parties in Syria: Past Struggles and Future Expectations

Bekir Halhalli

INTRODUCTION

Kurdish people/Kurdistan have/has been the weakest link in the system established with the Sykes–Picot Agreement¹ signed in 1916 with the colonial states subsequent to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Kurdish People and Kurdistan have suffered most from the nation-state system built on the monist understanding established in place of multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious empire administrations. This Western-centred system based on modern ‘nation-state’ model has deemed the Kurds as a component to be ‘assimiled’ or an easy matter to resolve as being related to ‘minority’ issue and postponed to a later stage instead of including the Kurds in the new system. The high-profile geography, where the Kurdish people were living in, was fairly drawn with a ruler in the light of economy, geographic, interest affairs and discretionary settlement in order to make the region governable; national population facts, tribal ties and historical-cultural links were ignored. Consequently, in each of the four neighbouring countries—Turkey, Iran,

B. Halhalli (✉)

International Relations Department, Sakarya University, Sakarya, Turkey

Iraq and Syria—social, political and military entities emerged. In other words, under military, political and economic authorities, the Kurdish nationalist movement developed in different forms in each country.²

The separation of Syrian Kurdistan from the Ottoman Kurdistan happened with the Ankara Agreement signed in 1921 between Turkey and France after the First World War. Since 1921 up to the 2012 Rojava Revolution (in Kurdish Rojava means ‘West’) in Syria, where wars and military coups prevailed and various administrations with different socio-cultural governed, nearly the only thing remain unchanged is mass murders, denial, assimilation and prohibition policies.³ Up to now, despite the fact that the Kurds in Syria have no demand for being an independent and separate state, it would be untrue to see the matter as just an ethnic issue with regional dimensions. In addition to this, abuse of democratic rights and lack of democratic governance have a significant impact as well. The Kurds in Syria have never been accepted as a minority group in terms of cultural and linguistic rights and have not been freed from violence and war.⁴ The Kurds were forcefully Arabized by the Syrian administrations. The Kurdish people in Syria were exiled and displaced for many years, and deemed as a colony. And they were victim of physical and cultural oppression.

After a brief introduction to the Kurdistan geography and history, this research study aims at first revealing historical developments/conflicts/discussions and by looking into the Kurdish political actors to demonstrate the people’s long-lasting struggle in the Middle East, even partly, with the Kurdish political parties in Syria. As widely known, Kurdish political movement in Syria unlike to the Kurdish political movements in Iraq, Iran and Turkey has been less discussed in the academia, international platforms and the research on diplomatic activities before the Arab Spring spread to Syria in 2011. Therefore, in order to comprehend the Kurdish political actors/parties in Syria, analyses of the situation, quest and the activities of Kurds migrated to Syria because of the Kemalist administration during post-World War I and discussion on Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria (Partiya Demokrat a Kurdistanê li Syria-PDKS) in a historical context would be useful for this study’s purposes as there are no such complicated political party divisions like PDKS in any other part of Kurdistan. In the present day, nearly all the Kurdish political parties which are active in Syria—except for Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat, PYD—have been developed on a separation from the PDKS established in 1957. PDKS and other following political parties have not been recognised by the Syrian administrations, have been prohibited and

not been included in Syrian elections. Moreover, they have been seen as a threat to country integration and to the Arab identity; their rights were limited, and the pressure gradually increased. The Kurdish political opposition has been both sensitive and moderate for emerging of a separate Kurdish state in neighbouring countries and followed a calm, peaceful and democratic struggle in Syria.⁵ The PYD (Democratic Union Party—*Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat* in Kurdish), which is founded by the Syrian Kurds in 2003 on the social and political heritage of the PKK, has neither stood with Syrian regime nor with the opposition based on the justification of the Kurdish people's natural and democratic rights were being ignored. In general, PYD preferred to resolve current issues with a pragmatic approach and in a peaceful way as well as adopting the principle of solving the existing problems through armed struggle, whenever possible.

In the course of preparation of this research on Kurdish parties in Syria, this study benefitted from Harriet Allsopp's book, an expert on the Syrian Kurds, '*The Kurds of Syria: Political Parties and Identities in the Middle East*' by large. Additionally, '*Syria's Kurds: History, Politics and Society*' authored by Jordi Tejel and Thomas Schimidinger's research '*Krieg and Revolution in Syrisch-Kurdistan: Anaysen und Stimmen aus Rojava*' (War and Revolution in the Syrian Kurdistan: Voices and Analyses from Rojava) provided profound contributions to this study.

In the next chapters of this study, there will be information provided on the Syrian Kurds and there will be discussion on their long-lasting struggle. And, the following chapter will shed light on the Syrian Kurdish parties' situations, organisational structures, their umbrella organisations as well as their relations with regional Kurdish political movement.

SYRIAN KURDISTAN: THE LONG-LASTING STRUGGLE

The population of the Syrian Kurds is estimated to be nearly between 2 and 2.5 million (1.9 million citizens, 350,000 foreigners and 250,000 unregistered-without ID) which equals to 11–12% of the 22-million Syrian population in total.⁶ These numbers demonstrate that the Kurds are the biggest non-Arab minority in Syria, and as a high number of Kurds are deprived of basic rights and of the Syrian citizenship, it is more difficult to estimate the actual number. Nearly, all of the Kurdish people who are speaking Kurmanci dialect of Kurdish are Sunni, whereas very

few are the Yazidi. Although the Kurds are a major minority in Syria, they have been less successful to organise and less developed in terms of politics, military, culture and economy when compared with the Kurds in other neighbouring countries.

The Kurds are densely populated in the northern parts of Syria in parallel to borderline which is Turkey's longest land border and are primarily based in the city of Al-Qamishli (Qamişlo) across Nuseybin, and in the inner parts—the province of Haseki in the south, in Tirbe Spi (these regions are called Cizire as well) across Silopi, in Amude across Mardin, in Dirbesiye across Kiziltepe, in Sere Kaniye (Resul Ayn) across Ceylanpinar, in Girê Spî (Talabyad) across Akcakale, in Kobanê (Ayn el Arab) across Suruc and in more western parts including the Afrin regions Kurd Mountain (in Kurdish Ciyaye Kurdan, in Arabic Cebel-ul Akrad) and in many villages situated in between regions.⁷

The majority is based in the north-east part of the country which is close to Turkish and Iraqi borders (the French people name this region 'le Bec de Canard' meaning duck-bill), and additionally there is a high number of Kurds living in Damascus and Aleppo as well.

One of the ways to comprehend the situation in the Western Kurdistan and to develop historical understanding is to look at the affairs in the post-Ottoman era and the activities of the ones who migrated from the pressure in Turkey to Syria following to rebellion. During the French Mandate Administration of 1920–1946, after the Kurds' autonomy demand⁸ was declined, the Kurds accepted (were forced to accept) the Syrian citizenship and remained to live quietly without facing high-level pressure. Nevertheless, while the borders were being drawn as *serxet* (the border is divided with railway: above the border is Turkey) and *binxet* (below the border is Syria)—after the Kurdish rebellions in Turkey (Sason, Seyh Said, Kocgiri, Dersim and Agri, etc.),—the tribe leaders, intellectual leaders and Kurdish intellectuals, who struggled against the Turkish (Kemalist) regime, took over substitute roles to arouse the movement in Western Kurdistan and give a new impetus. In particular, the main and leading organisation of Kurdish movement in Syria, the Xoybûn (Independence) Organization was established in 1927 in Lebanon and was expanded in Syria (particularly by the Kurdish intellectuals from Turkey who were sent to exile in Damascus). The Xoybûn Organization primarily carried out political and cultural activities and struggle against Turkey.⁹ Yet, in the French Mandate, Kurds established their own local governments, but their political manoeuvre was limited. Xoybûn expressed that the rights

provided under the Mandate in Syria would be sufficient and there would not be any political demand for these rights.¹⁰ With these kinds of expressions, Xoybûn might have aimed to get along with the French and British administrations and to protect and develop their cultural activities (the focus was given to political and diplomatic activities in the scope of cultural demands so that Xoybûn's nationalist discourse was placed in Kurds' memory and consciousness)¹¹ without causing political problems. Because the Kurdish political movement could not bring various political groups together after the disintegration of Xoybûn movement, in the end of 1940s some of prominent Kurdish individuals such as Cegerxwin, Qedri Can, Osman Sabri, Resid Hamoand Muhammed Ali Hoca turned towards the Syrian Communist Party. Thanks to the elections brought by the French, the Kurdish politicians were elected to be Members of Parliament and (Prime) Ministers in 1947, 1949 and 1957 periods.¹² More importantly, General Husni Zaim, who himself was a Kurdish, did a military coup in 1949 to provide security for the regime and then his administration was ended by Edip Sisek—who was also Kurdish—and Zaim was executed. General El Sisek was implementing policies restricting the Kurdish people's and non-muslims' social and political rights, but Sisek was also overthrown by a military coup in 1954.

The Syrian Kurds, who were mostly not dignified, did not establish a Kurdish party that focuses on the Kurdish nationalism or Kurdish movement in Syria until the second half of 1950s, as they were deprived of their social, cultural and political rights. In other words, between 1946 and 1957 the Kurds did not own an organisation that could defend their rights. This case changed after the second half of 1950s. In reaction to the changes in Iraq and rising Arab nationalism, PDKS was established with the support of Mustafa Barzani and then Iraq KDP Politbureau member Celal Talabani. Although it was established under the name of 'Syrian Kurds' Democrat Party', later in 1960 the name changed into 'Kurdistan Democrat Party of Syria'. However, the Party whose secretary was carried out by Osman Sabri and chairmanship by Nureddin Zaza due to the foundation of United Arab Republic with Egypt lost its manoeuvre, and nearly 5000-sympathisers including secretary, president and members of board were on trial on ground of 'separatism', and the party was shut down.¹³

From the mid-1960s onwards, by justifying agriculture reform, the lands of 120,000 Kurdish villagers were expropriated, and at the same time their citizenship rights were taken away.¹⁴ The Arabs were placed in those emptied Kurdish villages, and exclusion of Kurdishness was made

a central component of the Syrian political system and Syrian culture. In this context, the 1962 population consensus and 'Arab Belt'—which was introduced with the Ba'ath regime coming to power in 1963—became a base for various major problems at the regional level.

From the beginning of the Ba'ath regime in 1963—with the introduction of State of Emergency in 1963—'Arab Belt' has been in practice and was concluded in the Assad administration(s). As inferred from the 1973 Constitution, there was no progress in terms of rights of Kurds and of any other minority group. Between 1970 and 1976 with large-scale implementation of 'Arab Belt', 41 sample modern villages were set up around Iraq–Turkey border, and nearly 25,000 Arab families were placed in place of the Kurds.¹⁵ In addition to this, the Syrian Administration with the State of Emergency, which has been in force since 1963, used Arab nationalism as a threat over the Kurdish language and folklore and narrowed the Kurdish identity and resistance manoeuvre with the laws including restrictions.

In addition, these enforcements leaving Kurds in a difficult situation, Hafez Assad, starting from the end of 1970s and up to 1988, supported the PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan–Kurdistan Workers' Party); let their camps in Syria and used this as a trump in the (foreign policy) matters with Turkey. The regional dimension and transnational nature of Kurdish issue has played a significant role in the state-to-state affairs. The lack of any initiative by Kurds in Syria in this period can be explained by the existence of the PKK in Syria. The PKK which had good relations with Syria managed to direct the attention of Syrian Kurds to Turkey and Iraq. Thus, the Syrian administration achieved to polarise the Syrian Kurds as supporters of the Kurdish movements in Iraq or Turkey.¹⁶ With the signing of Adana Protocol in 1998 between Ankara and Damascus, the support to the PKK was ended. At the same time, the oppression on Kurds in terms of leading to the regime was removed. That being said, the PKK was occupied with the conflicts among themselves over political orientation at early times and with loss of their leaders; yet, the PKK members in Syria came together under the name of the PYD (Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat) just in 2003; this party never received support from the regime and even faced more pressures compared with the previous Kurdish parties.¹⁷

In March 2004, in a fight over a football match in the city of Al-Qamishli between Kurdish and Arab supporters, 36 Kurds died, 160 Kurds were injured, and more than 2000 Kurds were tortured in detention.¹⁸ These events started a new era in Kurds' affairs and caused

Kurdish uprising or Kurdish revolts also known as *serbîldan* (Rebellion in Kurdish) against the Syrian Government. Although Bashar Assad declared that the rights of Kurds would be returned, there was not any progress on this. At the same time, the Kurdish politics was affected by not only internal dynamics but also cross-border dynamics. Federal Kurdish State in Iraq kept the activities and hopes of the Syrian Kurds alive.

In the end, the wave of rebellions called the Arab Spring spread to Syria in spring 2011. From this period on, the Kurdish political parties started to mention of/discuss demands for possible federation in the post-regime era. Barzani and the Syrian opposition Kurdish parties which are close to KDP in order to take a common stance and develop a common policy in this period convened under the Masoud Barzani leadership in October of 2012 in the city of Erbil with the agenda of ‘self-determination, a constitution that would secure and protect the Kurds’ demands and democratic Syria’. Nonetheless, the PYD did not attend this meeting. Later, Meclisa Gel (TEV-DEM or People’s Assembly) which is known to have close links with the PKK and Kurdish National Council in Syria (Encumena Nîştîmanî ya Kurdi li Suriyeye-ENKS)—which is a union of Syrian Kurdish parties who take joint actions—attended the meeting in city of Erbil on 9–10 July, 2012. After that, the PYD remained distant to the antiregime activities in the period of conflicts in Syria, and therefore, being strongly criticized. At the same time, the PYD did not take part in Syrian National Council, instead the PYD formed/strengthened its own defence forces. ‘People’s Protection Units’ (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel—YPG) secured a number of Kurdish districts in the Northern Syria (with the regime’s withdrawal) without entering an armed conflict in the height of internal conflicts in July 2012. In November 2013, along with a number of other Kurdish political groups in Syria, PYD controlled a Kurdish semi-autonomous structure consisting of three democratic cantons—Afrîn (Efrîn), Cizîre (Cizîrê) and Kobani (Kobanê)—and established a temporary government in these regions and announced its name as Rojava.

KURDISH POLITICAL PARTIES IN SYRIA

The Kurds in Syria mostly come into the attention of international arena with regard to human rights issues and the research on the Syrian Kurdish Political Parties and Syrian Kurdish Movement remain

underexplored in the literature. However, the Kurdish groups after the outbreak of civil war in 2011 caught the attention worldwide by controlling the biggest gained land against the Syrian regime. Besides this, it found a place in the international media with receiving support from numerous international forces in its fight against DAİŞ (Dewleta Îslamî ya Iraq û Şamê in Kurdish, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria—ISIS in English).

The Kurds in the Syrian Arab Republic have vast heritage in cultural activities, but they have been less successful to be organised, and they are less developed in the areas of politics, military and economy compared with the Kurds in other neighbouring countries. The drawn borders in the Middle East after the First World War caused division among the Kurds in the region; fewer Kurds remained within the Syrian borders under the French mandate than in Iraq, Iran and Turkey. Between 1920 and 1946 in the period of French Mandate, the Kurds, under the leadership of Xoybûn movement/organisation, brought a new breath for cultural, political and military struggle in Syria. As said earlier, in 1920s and 1930s after the Kurdish rebellions in Turkey (Sason, Seyh Said, Kocgiri, Dersim, and Agri etc.), the tribe leaders, intellectual leaders and Kurdish intellectuals—who struggled against the Turkish (Kemalist) regime—took over substitute roles to arouse the movement in Western Kurdistan and to give a new impetus.

After the foundation the Syrian Arab Republic, because of the state's policy to hinder/deny the strengthening of sub-identities, the Kurds in Syria did not gain strength in the political arena. Between 1946 and 1957, with the undesired developments in the other parts of Middle East, the Kurds did not own any organisation defending the Kurds' rights in Syria as well. Therefore, the Syrian government integrated Kurdish regions, who are distinctive group in terms of ethnicity and language, in addition to regions on the borders with Turkey and Iraq, into several cities in the other parts of country particularly significant places such as Damascus and Aleppo—in terms of economy, culture and politics.

Yet, a number of politicians and bureaucrats with Kurdish origins undertook roles in state institutions at the foundation stage of the Syrian government and after that. Husnu El-Zaim—the first person led the military coup in Syria—became president in 1949 and had Kurdish roots. Also, Halid Bekdas who was elected for the Syrian Parliament in 1954—which makes him the first communist Member of Parliament in Syria—and at the same time the chair of the Syria Communist Party as well

as a number of prominent religious leaders such as former State Mufti Ahmed Kiftarro, had Kurdish roots.

Although it is not recognised officially by the Syrian government, the 'Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria', which was established in 1957 and later in the early 1960s became the 'Kurdistan Democrat Party of Syria (Kurdish: Partîya Demokrata Kurdistan a-Sûriye-PDKS)', is the source of nearly all political parties excluding a few. In the midst of 1960s, the Kurdish parties focused on the issues like whether to work for Kurdish autonomy or not and whether to work with Communist Party or not and divided into numerous different organisations in the end.

The reasons for different separations/fractions will be elaborated in the next chapter; in brief, there are external factors (dominant powers in the region, the close stance/dependency of Kurdish parties in Syria to the Kurdish parties in Iraq and Turkey, prohibitions/laws by the Syrian regime and cooperations) and internal factors (social, ideational and personal interests). On grounds of being illegal, almost all parties remained as weak structures and were organised as secret cells.¹⁹ Most of the parties did not go beyond being just 'sign party' without public support/popular support and are the organisations established by some relatives and friends.²⁰ The Kurdish parties which are operational in Syria mostly choose Cezire region, particularly the city of Al-Qamishli as central; the PYD, in addition to Cezire region, is situated in regions like Kobanê, Afrin, Girê Spî and thus is able to control nearly all northern Syria. The Party activities at the same time are being conveyed to Europe (to diaspora) and with the support of Kurds living there, thus demonstrating that European States are not oblivious to Syria's Kurdish Policy.

Most of the effective Kurdish opposition parties originating from the same source (PDKS) in the Syrian Arab Republic have been able to continue their activities until today, although most of them have suffered instability and internal leadership conflicts. The brief information about the parties will be provided in the following sections.

THE OUTLOOK OF THE KURDISH POLITICAL PARTIES IN SYRIA

PDKS (Syria Kurdistan Democrat Party) was established in June of 1957. The party programme targeted the recognition of Kurds as an ethnic group and democratic administration as a basis. The leaders of PDKS, which was established in reaction to the Arab nationalism, were arrested in 1960; the party chair was asked to leave Syria. PDKS was

divided into branches in 1965—one was under the leadership of Zaza and focusing on cultural and social rights and the other one wanted to focus on political struggle under the leadership Osman Sabri.²¹ As the PDKS was facing divisions internally in the 1960s, Molla Mustafa Barzani—who was leading the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in Iraq that had close links with PDKS—invited all fractions to Iraqi Kurdistan to reunite. However, his efforts did not result in a reunification. After a series of meetings, Deham Miro was elected for the post of party chair and then was reelected for the PDKS chair in 1972.

As a result of the fractions that started in 1965, the party lost its power and effectiveness; yet, fractions like *çep* (left) and *rast* (right) merged and the party went through various changes. In 1965, both the parties came out of PDKS: PDKS (left wing) under the leadership of Osman Sabri (1969–2003 Salih Bedrettin and 2003–2005 Mustafa Cuma leadership) and PDKS (right wing) under the leadership of Abdulhamid Hajji Darwish.²² It is also necessary to state that the party came forward with formal changes and leaders rather than ideologic differences. For instance, Abdulhamid Hajji Darwish²³ (he was chieftain of the tribe), who left PDKS and established (Partiya Demokrata Pêşverû li Suri) Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria—Progressive Front, positioned himself in the right wing, although he received support from Iraq Kurdistan Autonomous Region, particularly from the party of Celal Talabani's (Yekîtiya Nîştîmanîya Kurdistan) Kurdistan Patriotic Union.²⁴ Darwish—who is an experienced politician—carries out Secretary General position since 1965; thus, the party has continuous leadership among the Syrian Kurds and particularly has support from Celal Talabani's party Kurdistan Patriotic Union.²⁵

One of the four parties, which are still operational with similar names and constitute the main axis of PDKS since the 1965 dissolution, is the party with its changed name in 1981 and which is known by the public today is Al Partî.²⁶ The party was led by, respectively, Deham Mîro (1970–1973), Hemîd Sîno (1973–1976), Mustafa Ibrahim (1976–1977), Ilyas Ramazan (1977–1978), Kemal Ahmed (1978–1996), Nasreddîn İbrahim (1996–1998) and Muhammed Nezîr (1998–2007). Since 2007, Abulhakim Bessar has chaired the PDKS. The Party which separated from Al Partî (PDKS) in 1975 and moved on with the same name was led by Sêyh Muhammed Bakî between 1975 and 1997. The chair has been Cemal Sêyh Bakî who is still chair of the Party. Also, Nasreddîn İbrahim was party chair between 1996 and 1998 before he left

Al Parti. The coming of Muhammed Nazir Mustafa's to party chair position in 1998 influenced Nasreddin Ibrahim's decision to leave the party. The last group with the same name is PDKS Al Party which has been chaired by Abdurrahman Aluci since 2014. After Aluci died, the party was led by Lazgin Mahmud Fahri. After he left from PDKS, in order to distinguish himself from the other party, he started to use this name.

It is also necessary to mention that, with the initiative by Masoud Barzani, the leader of Kurdistan Regional Government, the four political parties in Syria—The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (Al-Partî) led by Abdulhakim Bessar, Azadi Party led by Mustafa Cuma, Azadi Party led by Mustafa Oso and Kurdistan Union Party led by Abdulhamit Hemo—merged into 'Kurdistan Democrat Party in Syria (PDKS)' on 7 April 2014, and Suud Mele was elected for the chair position.²⁷ The journalist-author Faik Bulut explains the necessity of this unification as a precaution and, if necessary, as an alternative power to PYD that became a dominant power in the Syrian Kurdistan.²⁸ Nawaf Rashid, the representative of the party in Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), who spoke to the Anadolu Agency, said that 10,000 *Peshmerge* (military force of the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan) were trained in the KRG to be sent to North Syria with the protection of the US-led international coalition.²⁹

The Syria Kurdish Democratic Patriotic Party (Partiya Welatparêz a Demokrat a Kurdî li Sûriyê)—that separated from the PDKS's right wing on ground of leadership struggles in 1998—is led by Tahir Sifuk.

Another right wing party that separated from PDKS in 1992 is the Kurdish Democratic Equality Party (Partiya Wekhevî ya Demokrat a Kurdî li Sûriyê), which is led by a former senior leader Aziz Davud in PKDS. There is no significant ideologic and organisational difference between this and the other parties.³⁰

After Osman Sabri, the fractions of the left wing of PDKS Syria Kurdish Democratic Left Party (Partiya Çepa Demokrata Kurdî li Sûriyê) were led in 1975–1991 by Ismet Sayda (later in 1991–1993 by Yusuf Dibo and in 1994–2005 by Hayreddin Murad). In 1980, the name of the party was changed to Syria Kurdish People's Union Party (Partiya Hevgirtina Gelê Kurd li Sûriyê). Later, the PDKS left wing was led by Salih Bedreddin between 1970 and 2003 and by Mustafa Cuma between 2003 and 2005. In 2005, with a decision made, as a consecutive to this party, Syria Kurdish Freedom Party (Partiya Azadî ya Kurdî li Sûriyê) was established which is also known as Azadi in the political arena and its secretary is being carried out by Hayreddin Murad. At the end of

October 2011, Azadî was divided into two. Since then, one of the two parties having the same name is led by Hayreddin Murad (and later Mustafa Hidir Oso) and the other by Mustafa Cuma.³¹

Between 1990 and 1993, the Syrian Kurdish Labour Party (Partiya Zehmetkeşanên Kurd li Suriyê) under the leadership of Sabhatullah Seyda; the Syrian Kurdish Workers' Party (Partiya Kar a Demokrat a Kurdî li Suriye) under the leadership of Muhiddin Seyh Ali and the Syrian Kurdish Democrat Party (Partiya Demokrata Kurdî li Suriye) under leadership of Ismail Ammo leagued together under the Syrian United Kurdish Democratic Party led by Ismail Ammo.³²

After the division within PKDS, one of the parties that originated from the left wing—the Kurdish Democrat Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrata Kurdî li Suriyê) known as *Yekîti*—was established in 1993 under the leadership of Ismail Ammo. The party was chaired by Ismail Ammo between 1993 and 2001, and since 2001 it has been chaired by Muhiddin Sheikh Ali. Due to disagreements within the party, there were separations from the party and in 1998 under the leadership of Muhammed Musa Left Party of Syrian Kurds (Partiya Çepa Kurdî li Suriyê) and in 1999 Kurdish Union Party in Syria (Partiya Yekîtiya Kurdî li Suriyê), known as *Yekîti* was established.³³ Kurdish Union Party in Syria has been led by, respectively, Abdulkali Yusuf (2000–2003), Hasan Salih (2003–2007), Fuad Aliko (2007–2010), İsmail Hami (2010–2013) and İsmail Biro (2013–ongoing).³⁴

Again, originated from the left wing, the Kurdish Socialist Party of Syria (Partiya Sosyalist a Kurdî li Suriye) was established by Muhammed Salih Gedo in 1977 and conducted its political activities until 2002. Salih Gedo—who was the deputy chair of Muhammed Musa's party in 2004—and a number of politbureau members left the party on grounds of internal disagreements in 2012 and established the party with a similar name—Kurdish Left Democrat Party of Syria (Partiya Çepa Demokrat a Kurdî li Suriyê) and its secretary still being conducted by Gedo even today.

Apart from the fractions from the PDKS, the independent political parties arose as well: the Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat), the Syria Kurdish Democratic Reconciliation Party (Rekeftina Demokrat a Kurdî li Suri) and the Syria Kurdish Future Movement (Şepela Pesroje ya Kurdî li Suriye). The party chaired by Fuad Omer (by Salih Muslim after 2010 and co-chaired with Asya Abdullah after 2012)³⁵ in 2003 has a more effective and enlarged base than other

Kurdish parties, thanks to its military branch—the People’s Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel—YPG) by large.³⁶ In its inauguration year, a certain group of members under the leadership of Kemal Sahin separated from the Party based on internal disagreement and established Syria Kurdish Democratic Reconciliation Party (Rekeftina Demokrat a Kurdi li Suri). However, after Kemal Sahin was killed in February 2005 in Iraqi Kurdistan, the Party was chaired by numerous leaders and yet, it did not last as an effective movement. Although the Syria Kurdish Future Movement (Şepela Pesroje ya Kurdi li Suriye) seems to be out of PDKS-originated party tradition, it was established by Misel Temo, who served in Salih Bedreddin’s party and left in 1999 and then established Syria Kurdish Future Movement in 2005. After the assassination of Temo on 7 October 2011, the Party divided into two with the same remaining name—one led by Rezan Bahri Seyhmus and the other one by Cemal Molla Mahmud.

The Umbrella Organisations of the Syrian Kurdish Political Parties

The Kurdish Political Parties—that dissolved/disintegrated because of political weariness, personal interests and long-lasting meaningless ideologic differences—tried to unite their political and diplomatic movements under umbrella organisations; however, this was not enough. The Kurdish Democratic Alliance in Syria (Hevbendi ya Demokrat a Kurdi li Suriye), that established in 1992, signed the Damascus Declaration in 2005 with Syria Kurdish Democratic Patriotics Front (Eniya Niştimanî ya Demokrat a Kurdi li Sûriyê) that was established in 1996.³⁷ The non-signatory parties to the Damascus Declaration united under the Kurdish Coordination Committee (Komita Tensiqe ya Kurdi) in 2006. Again, on 30 December 2009, the Syria Kurdish Political Council (Encumena Siyasi ya Kurdi li Suriyeye) was formed.³⁸ Schmidinger explains the foundation of these alliances and disintegration with external factors: the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party under the leadership of Abdulhamid Haci Dervish acts dependent on the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan in Iraq (Yekîtiya Niştimanîya Kurdistan or Yetikîya Niştimanperwerê Kurdistan/ PUK) and on the other hand, Abdulhakim Bessar who leads the Syria Kurdish Democratic Patriotics Front in Syria remained in cooperation with Iraq Kurdistan Democratic Party (Partîya Demokrata Kurdistan a Irak/KDP).³⁹ As for PYD, it preferred to be out of these alliances until the rebellions called ‘Arab Spring’ that spread to

Syria. Consequently, political hostilities and leadership disputes paved the way for more fractions.

The diplomacy of unification/reconciliation of the Kurdish parties in the Syrian crisis can be framed under two umbrella organisations: the Kurdish National Council of Syria (ENKS) and the Democratic Society Movement in Western Kurdistan (TEV-DEM or Meclisa Gel ya Rojavayê). The parties under the ENKS have been controlled by Masoud Barzani, and on the other hand, the parties under TEV-DEM carried out their political activities under the control of PYD. The table lists the member parties of the ENKS (Table 2.1).⁴⁰

ENKS—the most comprehensive/inclusive umbrella organisation of the Syrian Kurds—was supported in Erbil through Masoud Barzani on 26 October 2011. In general, the Council consisting of Kurdish parties against the regime receives support from Barzani, and in order to protect the Kurdish rights, the Council situates itself as a part of the Syrian revolution. ENKS, seeing itself as a part of the Syrian opposition, refuses to be in a dialogue with the regime and has been in struggle against PYD. And, ENKS condemns PYD with being in cooperation with the regime and making secret deals. In return for this, PYD accuses Turkey of exerting too much influence on the Syrian National Council and refuses the classical models, i.e. federalism and having self-government and demands for ‘democratic autonomy’ and recognition of Kurdish rights within a constitutional framework.

TEV-DEM, which is known to be close to the PKK, attended a convention in Erbil on 11 June 2012 with the ENKS—an alliance of the Syrian Kurdish parties. With the Erbil Cooperation Agreement,⁴¹ the Kurdish Parties were brought together under the Kurdish Higher Council (Desteya Bilind a Kurd). Yet, PYD were neither part of the Syrian National Coalition against the regime nor the Syrian Opposition and Revolutionary Forces National Coalition.⁴²

Because of this, during the conflicts in Syria, PYD remained distant to anti-regime activities and was criticised strongly about this stance. In the meantime, a number of political parties separated from the ENKS membership and/or just their names remained on the list symbolically. Another agreement that was signed between the two umbrella organisations in Duhok on 22 October 2014 was not enforced. The ENKS was invited (within the opposition group) to Syria Meetings in Geneva/Switzerland and Astana/Kazakhstan held by the UN to end the war in Syria; however, as the PYD was not invited, the decisions of these

Table 2.1 The political parties within the ENKS⁵⁸

<i>Party (Kurdish)</i>	<i>Party (English)</i>	<i>Chair</i>	<i>Relation</i>
Partiya Demokrat a Kurdistan-Sûriyê	Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria	Suud Mele	Barzani (KDP) and Syria National Council
Partiya Demokrat a Kurdî li Sûriyê (el-Partî)	Kurdish Democratic Party (al-partî) in Syria	Nasreddin Îbrahim	Barzani (KDP)
Partiya Welatparêz a Demokrat a Kurdî li Sûriyê	Kurdish Democratic Patriotic Party in Syria	Tahir Sifuk	The separation from the PDKS in 1998
Partiya Demokrat a Pêşverû ya Kurdî li Sûriyê	Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party of Syria	Abdulhamid Hajji Darwish	Talabani (PUK)
Partiya Demokrat a Kurdî Sûrî	Kurdish Democrat Party of Syria	Abdurrahman Aluci-Lazgin Mahmud Fahri	The Separation from el-parti in 2013
Partiya Wekhevî ya Demokrat a Kurdî li Sûriyê	Kurdish Democratic Equality Party	Aziz Davud	The Separation from the PDKS in 1992
Partiya Azadî ya Kurdî li Sûriyê	Kurdish Freedom Party in Syria-Azadi	Mustafa Hîdır Oso	The Separation from Azadi in 2011
Partiya Çep a Kurdî li Sûriyê	Kurdish Left Party of Syria	Muhammed Musa Muhammed	PYD
Partiya Çepa Demokrat a Kurdî li Sûriyê	Kurdish Left Democrat Party of Syria	Muhammed Salih Gedo	The separation from Syria Kurd Left Party in 2012
Partiya Yekîti ya Demokrat a Kurdî li Sûriyê	Kurdish Democrat Union Party in Syria	Muhiddin Sheikh Ali	Talabani (PUK) & PYD
Partiya Yekîti ya Kurdî li Sûriyê	Kurdish Union Party in Syria	Ibrahim Biro	Barzani (KDP)
Partiya Demokrat a Kurdî ya Suri	Syrian Kurdish Democratic Party	Cemal Sheikh Bakî	PYD/Syria Regime
Tevgera Reforma	Kurdish Reform Movement	Faysal Yusuf	
Şepela Pesroje ya Kurdî li Suriye	Syria Kurdish Future Movement	Cemal Molla Mahmud	The Separation from Syria Kurdish Future Movement in 2011
Şepela Pesroje ya Kurdî li Suriye	Syria Kurdish Future Movement	Rezan Bahri Sheikhmus	The Separation from Syria Kurdish Future Movement in 2011

meetings were not recognised. Along with a series of opposition and political Kurdish groups in Syria, PYD—through social contract method under the name of democratic autonomy—tries to justify itself and to make itself accepted with a geography covering the most of Kurdish regions.

Consequently, the parties operate under the two umbrella organisations (the parties employed Abdullah Ocalan's ideology and the parties stand close to Masoud Barzani) and constantly tend to blame each other and strongly criticise voided the cooperation agreement/efforts.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS AND RELATIONS

The relations and interactions of the Kurdish movements in Syria are beyond of this chapter's scope. Yet, the Kurdish movement in Syria in the course of long-lasting struggles has been affected by its internal dynamics and other Kurdish movements as well as regional dynamics.⁴³ In addition to this, the Syrian Kurdish movement until the Arab rebellions has been affected by the regional Kurdish dynamics and became affecting come after this date.⁴⁴

Three political movements in the Middle East dominate the Kurdish political arena: the Kurdistan Workers' Party in Turkey (PKK), the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Iraq (KDP) and the Patriotics Union of Kurdistan (PUK). All these three parties have 'brother/sister parties' in Syria. As elaborated in previous sections, the fractions of the Kurdish movement can be explained with tension and power struggle among Abdullah Ocalan's party PKK, the parties accepting its ideology and the parties are part of Masoud Barzani's KDP and the parties on the same stance with Celal Talabani's PUK. According to Jordi Tejel, the Kurdish Parties merged after the PDKS, have generally organised around a central personality and has been affiliated with the Kurdish organisations in Iraq or Turkey.⁴⁵ This is one of the reasons why the Syrian Kurdish parties disintegrated.

As there is no law on political parties in force, the Syrian administration followed remittent policy trend towards the Kurdish parties; generally speaking, the organisation of Kurdish people joining the elections and political parties were banned. The activities apart from setting up a party office and hanging a party sign were banned for the Kurdish parties.⁴⁶ The disintegration of the Syrian Kurdish parties served for the Syrian regime, periodically; the Syrian secret service *mukhabarat* or

intelligence remained always over the Kurdish parties just as the the *Sword of Damocles* and hindered organisation and mobilisation and kept them in control. Yet, before the rebellions, the parties taking into account of 'red lines' of the regime accepted the view of there is Kurds in Syria, but not Kurdistan.⁴⁷ The cooperation with the regime played a role in the disintegration of the parties. Harriet Allsopp categorised the Kurdish parties in the context of cooperation with regime into three in a broad sense: Right (e.g., the Progressive Party remained unofficial, sustained good relations with the regime and did not take a part in the protests against the regime in the events of Al-Qamishli), Central (for instance, the Democratic Union Party—*Yekiti* sustained good and bad dialogues with the regime on a case basis and became careful about red lines) and Left (for instance, the Union Party—*Yekiti* and the Future Movement were monitored by the regime and their activities were not allowed).⁴⁸ In the Al-Qamishli events of March 2004, the regime showed how it tries to maintain order in the streets and squares with the help of the Kurdish parties.

The relations with the Arab opposition always remained limited. The Democratic Union Party, the Patriotic Party, the Democratic Equality Party, the Left Party, the PKDS (al-parti) and the Reconciliation Party supported the Damascus Declaration and got represented, but the Union Party (Yekiti), the Freedom Party (Azadi) and the PYD stayed distant to this formation on grounds of lacking ground for the Kurds and their rights. On the other hand, in the agenda of the Syrian Arab Opposition, there was a nationalist discourse taking place and in the agenda of Kurdish opposition, there was more emphasis on identity, language and cultural demands. The Arab opponents ignored the situation of Kurds in the context of language, history and culture and preferred concealing it. Therefore, the Kurdish Parties' being vocal about 'Arabization' policy and discourse has been seen as a threat by the Arab opposition mostly. This case is deemed to be akin to Israel's Palestine policy.⁴⁹

According to experienced journalist–writer, Fehim Taştekin, the opposition parties were afraid of the reaction of the (Ba'ath) regime.⁵⁰ Because the Kurdish question was the most fundamental contradiction of the Arab opposition; the Arab elites were far from clarifying the position on the existence and rights of the Syrian Kurds. The Kurds supporting the Damascus Declaration supported the foundations of the organisations

demanding democratic reforms in Syria, but Kurd–Arab dialogue remained limited due to its being seen as a long-term project.⁵¹ Since the start of rebellions, the cooperation (generally with the initiative of Barzani) between the Arab nationalist, (moderate) Islamic parts and Kurdish parties did not become fruitful and the Kurdish society was not represented in national–international platforms.⁵² The approach of the Muslim Brotherhood to the Kurdish parties has not gone beyond the slogan of ‘Islam or umma fraternity’.

President Hafez Assad granted relatively the freedom to operate for the Kurdish parties coming from neighbours, Iraq and Turkey. In other words, with this policy, the Syrian regime targets to realise their own regional aspirations and to keep the Kurdish threat away from the capital as well as to transfer its Kurdish problem to Iraq and Turkey between 1970 and 1990.⁵³ Before Ocalan was arrested in 1988, the PKK organised training camps for the guerilla units in Lebanon under the Syrian control.

The PKK-Syria regime relations date back to 1980s. The views of Abdullah Ocalan, the prominent leader for the Kurdish Politics in Syria, were later developed by the PYD circles. In the 1980s, when the relations with the regime were relatively good and 1990s, PKK directed the struggle and the attention of Kurdish movement in Syria to Turkey. Consequently, the Syrian–Kurdish parties did not compete with the PKK in terms of political activities, even more stayed in its shadows. Until the uprisings in Syria, KDP and PUK had party offices in both Damascus and Al-Qamishli. The main objective of Hafiz al-Assad’s policy with the Iraqi Kurds has been to undermine the strength of the rival Ba’ath party and to direct the interest of his Kurds out of the country. Therefore, Assad provided himself with a tool to use/pressure in negotiations with the neighbour countries. He ensured that the Syrian Kurds join the struggle in Iraq and Turkey, but achieved to hold them distant from the Syrian–Kurdish problem.

In Syrian–Turkish relations, although the parameters of PKK, Water, Hatay and Israel issues changed periodically, the post-Arab Uprisings era has become the most controversial area of Turkish Foreign Policy. In the course of Syrian uprisings and later, AKP (Justice and Development Party) could not make an agreement directly with the PYD, and instead tried to put the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) leader Masoud Barzani in place. Barzani tried to bring all the Kurdish parties under the same umbrella organisation in 2012 in Erbil, but have not been successful.⁵⁴ Later in the face of ISIS attacks on Kobanê, Ankara once again,

instead of taking a stance with the Syrian Kurds, chose Barzani and in the time of Kobanê resistance gave a greenlight to peshmerges for passing through Turkey to Syria to fight against ISIS. This case can be described as the most comprehensive and strategic action since the 2004 Al-Qamishli events.

At the same time, this development in the Kurdish history played a role in making imprisoned Kurdish nationalism within the borders more regional. The AKP government's view of PYD and PKK as being same played a significant role in the Turk-Kurd polarisation.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Ankara's view of Kurdish organisation in North Syria as a threat to Turkey's security and ignoring non-state actors, Kurds being active in high-profile politics in the south side of the border and silence in ISIS's Kobanê siege had a significant role in Turk-Kurd polarisation today as well.⁵⁶ Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the training of thousands of Peshmergen in the KRG to be sent to North Syria with the protection of the international coalition under US leadership will further increase the competition between the Kurdish parties close to KDP and the Kurdish parties close to the PKK in Syria. The main purpose here is to turn the monopoly of PYD and its military arm YPG into its own favour.

Cantonal Kurdish region resisting against a strong organisation like ISIS (troublemaker in the region)—Kurds followed the third way independent from Assad Regime and Free Syria Army (FSA) under the leadership of PYD—has been a threat to the Turkish government.⁵⁷

On the other hand, the Syrian-Kurdish movement changed its relations particularly with the USA and the European States in the Kobanê war and later for the struggle against radical Islamist organisations and proved that could be a beneficial alliance. In particular, the USA, in the context of coalition forces against ISIS and El Nusra in the 2014 Kobanê siege, supported PYD politically and YPG in military dimension and started to help. During the bombardment of the ISIS sites, the USA moved in coordination with YPG—the military side of the PYD. PYD, along with YPG, has been conducting a two-way strategy towards both the USA and Russia. PYD/YPG, which fought together with the USA against the ISIS in the north of the country, also received support from Russia against the same rival in the south.

Besides, the Kurdish movement in Syria has closely followed the Kurdistan state-building in Iraq since the 1990s and gained experience. After the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, although the Iraq Kurdish Nationalist Movement has been followed by the Syrian Kurdish

movement after the Syrian crisis, Iraqi KDP entered into a struggle for power over the Syrian Kurds with the PKK-PYD. As for Turkey, PKK is the main enemy, but KDP (Barzani) is the best alliance. AKP deliberately has been supporting Kurdistan parties aligned with KDP as a tool to take away the demands of both PYD and PKK at international platforms.

CONCLUSION: DEMANDS AND EXPECTATIONS

The Kurdish Movement with its own internal and external dynamics has been affected by regional developments and has focused on areas like cultural, national and struggle for human rights and political pressure. At the same time, the Kurdish Movement tries to change the regime's policy towards Kurds and establish a legal base for identity and cultural activities and practices. In other words, they demand reverse of the Arabisation policies, democratisation of the Syrian political system, respect for human rights and development of Kurd-Arab affairs. Until today, the Kurdish political parties have not been legalised, and their activities were banned, and they did not demand for an independent Kurdish state/Kurdistan; rather, they demand for a democratic autonomy in Rojava called (Western) Kurdistan and/or federalism. The quest for a peaceful solution, secular construction and constitutional protection, removal of discriminative, racist and chauvinist practices are some of the demands. Also, giving back citizenship rights to the ones who were removed from the citizenry in 1962 and returning Arabised (Arab Belt) Kurdish regions in the Ba'ath regime are part of the demands as well.

Since 1957, PDKS has been through numerous separations. These separations can be explained with more formal reasons, personal interests as well as internal and external factors, instead of ideologic (rightest-leftist), forming new and compelling elements. No Kurdish Party—the Kurdish Movement in Syria different from that in Iraq and Turkey—did not demand for armed conflict and not spread it in the Kurdish-dominated regions. Almost all of the Kurdish parties in Syria are implementing a strategy aimed at separating themselves from the radical religious elements of the regional sovereign actors (especially Syrian Islamist dissidents, Iraq, Iran and Turkey). Kurdish parties believe that this distinction will earn international legitimacy and support for the Kurds.

On the other hand, internal organisational structures of the Syrian Kurdish parties are conflicting with their commitment to democracy, clearly. Because of numerous separations, Syrian Kurdish problem and

transnational nature, it turned into KDP-PKK intra-blocs struggle for power, and therefore their structures were weak(en)ed. A long-term success for the Kurdish people as a force in regional politics will be dependent on their ability to start cooperative relations among various Kurdish political movements (umbrella organisations). The Kurdish politics in Syria is shaped by deep rifts and competition between the PYD and ENKS; the need to cooperate will fulfil these expectations even partly. Moreover, mainly the USA, Turkey and KRG as well as Russia will play a significant role in the future of Kurdish movements in Syria. KRG will be cautious to protect its affairs with Turkey, but is affected by developments in the Kurdish regions of Syria and therefore, KRG–Turkey relations will bring significant restrictions on KRG’s capacity to cooperate with PYD.

NOTES

1. Kurdistan geography, which used to be within borders of two countries: Iran and Ottoman State prior to the First World War, was left for France (Syrian Kurdistan) with the Ankara Treaty (1921), and the province of Mosul (Iraqi Kurdistan) was left for British Iraq Mandatory with Ankara Treaty (1926).
2. Tejel, J. (2009) *Syria’s Kurds: History, Politics and Society*, Routledge: New York (Tejel 2009).
3. Arslan, S. (2016) “Rojava Kronoloji I”, *Toplum ve Kuram*, Sayı: 11, Bahar 2016, p. 122 (Arslan 2016).
4. Halhalli, B. (2015) “Turkish Policy towards the Kurds in Syria”, *Conflicts, Context & Realities in the Middle East-IDEAZ Journal*, No: 13, p. 41 (Halhalli 2015).
5. While making political preferences, armed struggle is most preferred political movement in Kurdish geography outside of Syria, whereas Syrian Kurdish parties never carried out an armed struggle except for the short-lived and failed Kurdistan Freedom Movement (Tevgera Azadiya Kurdistan). For further information, Schmidinger, T. (2015) *Suriye Kürdistanı’nda Savaş ve Devrim: Rojavadan Sesler*, Analizler, Yordam Kitap: İstanbul; Tejel, J. (2009) *Syria’s Kurds: History, Politics and Society*, Routledge: New York (Schmidinger 2015; Tejel 2009).
6. The official certain numbers and statistics are not available because of the Syrian Constitution’s reference to the citizens in Syrian Arab Republic as Arab, and no valid population census is conducted as well as denial policies of Kurdish presence and identity. For further information, please see: Bengio, O. (2014) *Kurdish Awakening: Nation Building in*

- a Fragmented Homeland*, University of Texas Press: Austin; Gunter, M. (2011), *The Kurds Ascending: The Evolving Solution to the Problem in Turkey and Iraq*, Palgrave Macmillan: New York (Bengio 2014; Gunter 2011).
7. Bingöl, N. (2013) *Suriye'nin Kimliksizleri Kürtler*, Do yayınları: İstanbul, p. 50 (Bingöl 2013).
 8. Although at the beginning of 1920s, Bozan and Muhammed Sahin—members of the Berazi Tribe living in the region of Kobane—and those living around the Kurd Mountain and the then Kurdish Member of Parliament Nuri Kandy demanded administrative autonomy for all regions where the majority of population was Kurdish people, the French Mandate Administration divided the country by giving autonomy or granting special regime status, respectively, into the Lebanon (Christian) State, Alevi State, Cebel-i Durzi State, Aleppo State and later Iskenderun County within Aleppo State.
 9. The families of Cemilpasazade and Bedirxaniler, Ihsan Nuri Pasa, Haco Aga, Cegerxwin, Nureddin Zaza, Ferzende, Memduh Selim, Seyh Ali Rıza, Osman Sabri, Mehmet Sukru Sekban played a significant role in establishing and carrying out activities of Xoybûn Organization. Further information on this can be found at following sources: Tejel, J. (2009) *Syria's Kurds: History, Politics and Society*, Routledge: New York; Schmidinger, T. (2015) *Suriye Kürdistanı'nda Savaş ve Devrim: Rojava'dan Sesler*, Analizler, Yordam Kitap: İstanbul; Bolme, S. M. (2015), "Hoybun Örgütü: Kürt Milliyetçiliğinde Yeni bir Evre [Hoybun Organization: A new era in Kurdish Nationalism]", *International Journal of Kurdish Studies*, 1 (2), S. 22–42 (Bolme 2015).
 10. Kutschera, C. (2013) Kürt Ulusal Hareketi, Avesta Kitap: İstanbul, p. 114 (Kutschera 2013).
 11. Although in the period of occupation there was no significant gainings, with many ways and approaches it brought a fresh impetus to the Kurdish movement and left significant gainings for the following organizations. For example, the established various Kurdish associations, medress-ehs, Hawat and Roja Nu journals expressing the Kurdish belonging, feeling and Kurdish ideas took the Kurds a new phase. Bolme, S. M. (2015), "Hoybun Örgütü: Kürt Milliyetçiliğinde Yeni bir Evre [Hoybun Organization: A new era in Kurdish Nationalism]", *International Journal of Kurdish Studies*, 1 (2), S. 22–42.
 12. Bulut, F. (2015) *Tarih Boyunca Kürtlerde Diplomasi 1. Cilt*, Evrensel Basım Yayın: İstanbul, p. 284 (Bulut 2015).
 13. Allsopp, H. (2015) *The Kurds of Syria: Political Parties and Identities in the Middle East*, IB Tauris: London-New York (Allsopp 2015).

14. Minorsyk, V. & Bois, T. (2008) *Kürt Milliyetçiliği*, Örgün Yayınevi: İstanbul, p. 138 (Minorsyk 2008).
15. Schmidinger, T. (2015) *Suriye Kürdistanı'nda Savaş ve Devrim: Rojavadan Sesler*, Analizler, Yordam Kitap: İstanbul, p. 82.
16. Tejel, J. (2015) *Suriye Kürtleri: Tarih, Siyaset ve Toplum*, İntifada Yayınları: İstanbul, p. 153 (Tejel 2015).
17. Schmidinger, T. (2015) *Suriye Kürdistanı'nda Savaş ve Devrim: Rojavadan Sesler*, Analizler, Yordam Kitap: İstanbul, p. 92.
18. Human Rights Watch (2009), *Group denial: Repression of Kurdish political and cultural rights in Syria*. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch (Human Rights Watch 2009).
19. Schmidinger, T. (2015) *Suriye Kürdistanı'nda Savaş ve Devrim: Rojavadan Sesler*, Analizler, Yordam Kitap: İstanbul, p. 102.
20. Bingöl, N. (2013) *Suriye'nin Kimliksizleri Kürtler*, Do yayınları: İstanbul, p. 52.
21. Both Dr. Nureddin Zaza and Osman Sabri went to Syria after the failure of Seyh Said rebellion. There, they took prominent roles in first establishing Xoybûn and then PDKS.
22. Kurdswatch (2011), *Who is the Syrian-Kurdish Opposition? The Development of Kurdish Parties, 1956–2011*, Report 8, http://kurdwatch.org/pdf/kurdwatch_parteien_en.pdf (Kurdswatch 2011).
23. Abdulhamit Heci Derviş, although he was not leftist, joined his student fellow Celal Talabani's Marxist camp in 1965. For further information, see: Tejel, J. (2015) *Suriye Kürtleri: Tarih, Siyaset ve Toplum*, İntifada Yayınları: İstanbul.
24. PDPKS which originated from PDKS's right wing continued to exist under the name of PDKS between 1970 and 1983 and with a decision made in 1983 the party name was changed as Partiya Demokrata Pêşverû ya Kurd li Sûriyê.
25. ORSAM (2012) “*Suriye'deki Kürt Hareketleri (Kurdish Movements in Syria)*”, Report No: 127, p. 18. http://www.orsam.org.tr/eski/tr/trUploads/Yazilar/Dosyalar/201286_127%20yeniraporson.pdf (ORSAM 2012).
26. Partiya Demokrata Kurd li Sûriyê- The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria.
27. “Suriye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi Başkanını Seçti”, *Anadolu Ajansı*, 09.04.2014. <http://aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/suriye-kurdistan-demokrat-partisi-baskanini-secti/168560> (Suriye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi Başkanını Seçti 2014).
28. Bulut, F. (2015) *Tarih Boyunca Kürtlerde Diplomasi 2. Cilt*, Evrensel Basım Yayın: İstanbul, p. 100 (Bulut 2015).

29. "Syrian Peshmerga to Return Home After Training in Iraq", *Anadolu Ajansı (Anadolu Agency)*, 24.01.2017 (Syrian Peshmerga to Return Home After Training in Iraq [2017](#)).
30. Bulut, F. (2015) *Tarih Boyunca Kürtlerde Diplomasi 2. Cilt*, Evrensel Basım Yayın: İstanbul, p. 97.
31. As can be inferred, there are two Azadî parties in Syrian Kurdistan today. Hayrettin Murad lost power a while ago and had to leave his place for Mustafa Hıdır Oso. In brief, today there are two Azadi parties- one is led by Mustafa Cuma and the other one is by Mustafa Hıdır Oso.
32. Schmidinger, T. (2015) *Suriye Kürdistanı'nda Savaş ve Devrim: Rojavadan Sesler*, Analizler, Yordam Kitap: İstanbul, pp. 254–255.
33. For further information, see: Ibid.
34. At the present time, İbrahim Biro is leader of the both KNC and the Kurdish Union (Yekîtî) Party.
35. Co-chairmanship was put into practice with the fifth congress held with the slogans of "Democracy for Syria, autonomy for Western Kurdistan" on 16 June 2012. Salih Muslim and Asya Abdullah were selected to be co-chairs. Although nearly all parties claimed to have women members, except for the PYD among the Syrian-Kurdish parties the politics remained to be dominated/controlled by the men.
36. International Crisis Group (2013) *Syria's Kurds: A Struggle within a Struggle*. Middle East Report no. 136. Brussels: ICG (International Crisis Group [2013](#)).
37. According to the International Crisis Group report, founding year of Kurdish Democratic Union of Syria is 1994 and Kurdish Democratic Patriots Party of Syria is 2000. However, Schmidinger refers to the founding years as 1992 in his book (War and Revolution in Syrian Kurdistan) and Allsopp refers as 1996 in his book (The Kurds of Syria: Political Parties and Identities in the Middle East).
38. Allsopp, H. (2015) *The Kurds of Syria: Political Parties and Identities in the Middle East*, IB Tauris: London-New York, p. 96.
39. ENKS which was founded on 26 October 2011 and after several stages the Party covers only seven parties today and is known to have close relationship with Mesud Barzani- the KDP leader and the leader of the Iraq Kurdistan Regional Government. Schmidinger, T. (2015) *Suriye Kürdistanı'nda Savaş ve Devrim: Rojavadan Sesler*, Analizler, Yordam Kitap: İstanbul, p. 104.
40. Schmidinger, T. (2014) "Syrian-Kurdistan and its Political Actors", *Research Briefing*, (Handout) at the Conference: The Syrian Conflict and the Promotion of Reconciliation and its Implications for International Security (Vienna, February 6–7, 2014) (Schmidinger [2014](#)).

41. For the full text of agreement (English and Arabic), please refer to: http://www.kurdwatch.org/pdf/KurdWatch_D027_en_ar.pdf.
42. The Kurds under the control of PYD, claim that Syrian National Council and Revolutionary Forces Coalition (SMDK) are “still Arab nationalist organizations with the strong tendencies of Arab Islamists” and implies that the country’s ethnic and religious pluralism is insufficient. Moreover, they claim that Council is under influence of Turkish Government and they do not trust.
43. ORSAM (2012) “*Suriye’deki Kürt Hareketleri (Kurdish Movements in Syria)*”, Report No: 127, p. 39.
44. Merkez Strateji Enstitüsü (MSE) “Suriye’deki Kürt Hareketi: Suriye’de PYD/YPG’nin PKK ve Bölgesel Kürt Dinamiği ile İlişkisi ve Türkiye’ye Etkileri”, Report No: 14, p. 13 (Merkez Strateji Enstitüsü 2016).
45. Tejel, J. (2015) *Suriye Kürtleri: Tarih, Siyaset ve Toplum*, İntifada Yayınları: İstanbul, p. 190 (Tejel 2015).
46. Bingöl, N. (2013) *Suriye’nin Kimliksizleri Kürtler*, Do yayınları: İstanbul, p. 60 (Bingöl 2013).
47. Schmidinger, T. (2015) *Suriye Kürdistanı’nda Savaş ve Devrim: Rojavadan Sesler*, Analizler, Yordam Kitap: İstanbul, pp. 88–89 (Schmidinger 2015).
48. Allsopp, H. (2015) *The Kurds of Syria: Political Parties and Identities in the Middle East*, IB Tauris: London-New York, pp. 117–118.
49. Ibid., p. 100.
50. Taştekin, F. (2016) *Rojava Kürtlerin Zamanı*, İletişim Yayınları: İstanbul, p. 115 (Taştekin 2016).
51. Allsopp, H. (2015) *The Kurds of Syria: Political Parties and Identities in the Middle East*, IB Tauris: London-New York, p. 114.
52. Even Kurdish politician, Abdulbasit Seyda, who was brought to the presidency of the Syrian National Council, has not collected the Kurds under the Council roof.
53. Tejel, J. (2015) *Suriye Kürtleri: Tarih, Siyaset ve Toplum*, İntifada Yayınları: İstanbul, p. 152.
54. Halhallı, B. (Mart, 2015), “Türkiye’nin Rojava Çıkmazı”, *Türkiye Politika ve Araştırma Merkezi (Research Turkey)*, Cilt IV, Sayı 3, pp. 93–99, Londra: Research Turkey (Halhallı 2015b).
55. While the EU and the US are considered PKK as terrorist organization, PYD/YPG is not considered as such. The AKP government defines both PKK and PYD as terrorist organizations due to using same organizational structure, strategy, tactic, propaganda means, financial sources and training camps. For further information on this, please refer to the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Turkey: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/pkk.tr.mfa>.

56. Halhallı, B. (Mart, 2015), “Türkiye’nin Rojava Çıkmazı”, *Türkiye Politika ve Araştırma Merkezi (Research Turkey)*, Cilt IV, Sayı 3, S. 93–99, Londra: Research Turkey.
57. Ibid.
58. After several stages, ENKS which currently has only 7 parties in its own influence, is known to be close to Massoud Barzani, leader of the KDP and President of Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government. At the same time, ENKS is represented by Ibrahim Biro, the president of the *Yekiti*.

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