

# **The Role of Syrian Kurds in Confronting International Terrorism (ISIS)**

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## ABSTRACT

The Syrian uprising in 2011 opened a door and paved the way for Syrian Kurds to reorganize themselves and retake their homeland from the Syrian regime. The Syrian crisis had not been concluded when another problem emerged, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) which was very strong and a risk for the world at large. The international community turned its attention to the decline of, and ending the threat of ISIS to the region. To that end, the U.S has made a coalition to confront the risks of the terror group, but the U.S has not sought to engage in the war directly with its troops. The U.S strategy has been supporting groups by airstrikes, providing weapons and looking for a reliable and powerful group in Syria capable of ending ISIS's threat. After the defense skills displayed by Syrian Kurds (PYD) in Kobane in 2014, the U.S came to understand that the Kurds are the best option for cooperation against the brutal group, ISIS. On the other hand, the Syrian Kurds needed and tried to get support for fighting ISIS because they did not have enough weapons, ammunition and any international support. In addition, the Syrian Kurds have had some enemies in the region making it necessary for the Kurds to align themselves with the U.S in order to protect from other foes and getting help for fighting ISIS and other groups. The United States and PYD established their relations in 2014. The relationship is beneficial for both sides as for the U.S, ending the threats of ISIS was necessary and for PYD ending ISIS, getting support and protection from other groups and states like Turkey, is also necessary. I hypothesize that in this relationship; the PYD could exploit the situation for their goals and realize the advantages.

**Keywords:** U.S, Rojava, Syria, Turkey, International Terrorism (ISIS).

## ÖZ

2011 yılında Suriye’de yaşanan ayaklanma, Suriye Kürtlerinin yeniden organize olarak Suriye rejiminden kendi topraklarını geri almalarına imkân ve olanak sağlamıştır. Suriye krizi, tüm dünyayı tehdit eden ve çok güçlü olan Irak ve Şam İslam Devleti’nin (İŞİD) ortaya çıkışıyla sonuçlanamamıştır. Uluslararası toplum dikkatini İŞİD’in bölgede yarattığı tehdide son vermeye çevirmiştir. Bu maksatla ABD, söz konusu terör örgütünün yarattığı tehditleri bertaraf etmek için bir koalisyon oluşturdu ancak ABD, askeri birlikleriyle doğrudan savaşa girmeyi istememektedir. ABD; hava saldırıları, silah teminatı ile grupları destekleme stratejisi izlemiştir ve Suriye’de İŞİD tehdidine son verebilecek güvenilir ve kuvvetli bir grup aramıştır. 2014 yılında Kobane’de Suriye Kürtlerinin (PYD) gösterdiği başarılı savunma becerilerinden sonra ABD vahşi İŞİD grubuna karşı işbirliği yapabilecekleri en iyi seçeneğin Kürtler olduğunu anlamıştır. Diğer yandan Suriye Kürtlerinin İŞİD ile savaşmaları için desteğe ihtiyaçları vardı çünkü yeterli silahları, mühimmatları yoktu ve uluslararası desteğe sahip değillerdi. Bunlara ek olarak Suriye Kürtleri, kendilerini bölgedeki diğer düşmanlarından korumak ve İŞİD ile diğer gruplarla savaşmak için ABD ile ittifak yapmaya ihtiyaç duymaktaydı.. Bu ilişki her iki taraf için de faydalıdır. ABD için İŞİD tehdidinin ortadan kaldırılması gerekliken PYD’nin hem İŞİD faaliyetlerine son vermek hem de Türkiye gibi diğer bölgesel devlet ve gruplardan korunmak için desteğe ihtiyacı vardı. Bu çalışmadaki hipotezim, PYD bu durumu kendi hedefleri doğrultusunda kullanarak avantajlarından faydalanacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** ABD, Rojava, Suriye, Türkiye, Uluslararası Terör (İŞİD).

# DEDICATION

To My Family

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# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Questions

1. Why have relations between the U.S and Syrian Kurds become closer and why the Kurds Bandwagoned with the U.S?
2. What are the opportunities for the Syrian Kurds Relation to taking advantages of the war against ISIS and the relationship with the U.S in terms of self-interests?

### 1.2 Hypothesis

The Kurds in Syria (PYD) have played a significant role in confronting ISIS in Syria by working with the U.S which is integral to the eventual decline of the threat of ISIS. As such the conflict with ISIS presents an opportunity for greater Kurdish autonomy in Syria and PYD took advantage by fighting terrorists.

### 1.3 Methodology

In this research, I will use and focus on qualitative methodology for clarifying and supporting my hypothesis. I will use primary sources because the case of ISIS and Syria is evaluating. Secondary sources are largely used such as academic journals, articles, newspapers, Websites and books from different scholars.

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

The Syrian crisis, Islamic state and the growing role of PYD are some new events in the region; usually, the new events attract scholars, authors and researcher to write about the new political issues. I would like to be one of the researchers to focus on

the role of Syrian Kurds in the region because something important has happened for example; before 2011 they did not have primary rights the Baath regime stripped citizenships. And they are persecuted for a century in the region by the dictator regimes, but after 2011 Kurds could uprising against Assad, ISIS and sometimes with Turkey. PYD has become one of the reliable partners for the U.S in Syria while they did not have any friends now they have representatives in several countries. They declared federalism in Rojava that they ask federalism for Syria and want administrative control over their region in the North of Syria based on federalism after a century killing, persecution and displacement, now they want to live like other people in the world but Assad and Turkey especially reject the idea of an autonomous role, however they could gain de-factor autonomy with U.S support as they are one of the prominent actors that have played a role against the brutal terrorism. Numerous scholars and leaders have pointed out and believe that the Syrian Kurds are one of the forces as a non-state actor that could defeat ISIS. Even now some states make a problem for the Kurds that they don't differentiate between PYD and PKK. That is unjust because it is clear who counters terrorism in the region. If we talk about Syria and ISIS we must talk about the Kurds because they have been a factor in the region for the eradication terror, and also the US backers have been useful for the Kurds. For the first time the PYD and the Washington have created a relationship that is mutually beneficial.

### **1.5 Theoretical Frameworks**

For this research, I have focused on the concept of “Bandwagoning” which is a concept rooted in realist IR theory. It refers to the alignment a state in a particular situation and period of time, where there is the existence of a threat both sides. Bandwagoning assumes that states join together to defy a threat through an alliance

based on common interests between a powerful state and a weaker actor increasing economic, political and military cooperation, for example, the threat of terror that is a risk for both sides but if there no threat on one side, the side protect the weaker side in return something else. The concept of Bandwagoning is observed in a statement from 1947 "if Greece fell within the Russian orbit, not only Turkey would be affected but also Italy, France, and the whole of Western Europe" (Schweller, 1994). Henry Kissinger said: "the U.S. should form balancing coalitions for containing the Soviet Union; U.S. coalitions were probably to bandwagon". Bandwagoning usually emerges as a response to a threat, defensively and offensively. It is like Balance of power but the balance of power expects between strong sides or weaker sides but Bandwagoning guesses between a strong side and weaker actor. States will bandwagon when there are no partners to create a balance of powers (Walt, 1988). According to Gunasekara (2015, p. 212; 213; 217), Sri Lanka after independence used banwagoning and aligned itself with Great Britain in 1948. The bandwagoning assisted Sri Lanka in gaining a host of advantages and the strategy became helpful for attaining its national interests because Sri Lanka did not have the capacity, and was too weak to, defend its interests and could not engage other, often larger, states. Consequently, Britain protected Sri Lanka in 1948 and through this strategy, Sri Lanka became strong but the bandwagoning was not beneficial only to Sri Lanka but rather was of mutual benefit to Great Britain as well in that Britain established marine and air bases in Sri Lankan territory. That was the mutual military aid situation where the United Kingdom protected Sri Lanka from the threat posed by India in order to protect Sri Lanka's independence. It was also intended to hinder the spread of the communist ideology by the Soviet Union. The author believes that as a result of bandwagoning, both sides will get advantages but it is most likely that the

weak or small sides obtain more advantages. In this vein, I examine how the Syrian Kurds, as the smaller side, have benefited from bandwagoning with the United States. Espindola (1987) pointed out that there are three options that weak states or sides will take: the first, neutrality; second, regional security deals; and finally, bandwagoning. In the case of North Syria, the PYD could not be neutral and had bad relations with regional actors especially the neighboring countries that pose a threat to the Kurds. The best option therefore, was bandwagoning and aligning itself with the U.S which is more benefit to the Kurds than other states, for example, Russia because the U.S has been more effective in the region.

In the case of Syrian Kurds in Rojava, when ISIS attacked Kurdish Cantons in North Syria, they reorganized themselves as they did not have enough weapons to defend themselves. The PYD had poor relation with both Assad and Turkey as such it would not be easy the fight ISIS with inimical relation with their neighbors. They needed a powerful state for protection and weapons to fight ISIS which would not come from Syrian government or Turkey. The best option for their aims was the U.S because the United States as a superpower decided to eradicate ISIS but they have not sent their troops directly to face ISIS on the ground. Also the U.S needed an ally in the region. The U.S was the best option for the Kurds and the Kurds is the best available partner for the Washington. For U.S ending ISIS is important for the Kurds to protect from ISIS, Turkey and strengthen its position in the region is important. The terror threat is a threat for both. As a result of Bandwagoning, the threat of ISIS has reduced. For Rojava this has become many benefits for example, Rojava's tie with U.S and European are stronger and they could protect the Rojava administration and strengthen their position in Syria. They were able to protect and retake their territory from ISIS and defend the region, which there are many oil fields. In addition, Rojava

established their diplomatic relations with many countries. I believe that threat of ISIS created the conditions for bandwagoning between the U.S and PYD in Rojava and Bandwagon become some opportunities for Rojava and has important implications for Kurds security and autonomy as well as regional security.

## **1.6 Conceptualization**

**ISIS:** The Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria a mostly Sunni jihadist people and group, request people in Iraq and the Syria firstly and then all Muslim across the world to follow them with the goal of founding a caliphate which is a single transnational Islamic state focused on Sharia law. And they established its caliphate in 2014 in Mosul; their leader is Abu Bakir Al-Baghdadi. So Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria are the capital of Islamic states in Iraq and Syrian (Laub and Masters, 2014).

**Rojava:** is meaning for West Kurdistan and located north Syria. In November 2013, Syrian Kurds PYD unilaterally declared self-administration an autonomous zone in the northeast Syria. The Rojava contains three cantons or towns which are Jazira, Kobane and Afrin that for all cantons called "Rojava" (Goudsouzian, 2016).

**PYD:** Democratic Union Party it is a Kurdish left party in Syria that established in 2003 which is largest, powerful and the best armed Kurdish opposition group, in addition, it is a branch of PKK (Kurdistan worker party) of Turkey. The party seeks democratic autonomy for Syria. Saleh Muslim and Asya Abdullah are co-chairs (Middle East insights from Carnegie, 2012).

**PKK:** is a Kurdish political party of turkey that founded in 1978, the party has taken arm against Turkey, they live in the Turkish and Iraqi border mountains. Several

countries believe that the party is a terrorist group but the party believes that they attempt to their rights that turkey persecuted them (BBC, 2016).

**YPJ:** YPJ it is a short name for (Yakinakani Parastni Jinan) the Women's Protection Unit that has formed in 2012 it is a military wing of PYD. They are all women and volunteers they shoulder to shoulder men have fought ISIS, Al Qaeda and Assad regime to defend the Kurdish population, ISIS afraid of them because they believe that if they are killed by Women they will not go to Paradise (Griffin, 2014).

**SDF:** “Syrian Democratic Forces,” which integrates Sunnis (Arab and Kurds), Turkmen and Christians without differences between ethnic and religious. Kurdish force (YPD) IS the most powerful actor in the SDF which has founded in 2015 because US help them better in one form (Ignatius, 2016).

**Syrian National Council (SNC):** it is a council in Syria which found in 2011 after Syrian uprising. The council includes the groups against Assad regime in Syria, but PYD has not joined this Council.

**Free Syrian Army (FSA):** after Syrian uprising, the rebel groups organized themselves under name of free Syrian army as an umbrella. It has found in 2011 against Assad of course but PYD has not involved (O’Bagy, 2013).

**HDP:** (People’s Democratic Party) it is a Kurdish opposition party in turkey which found in 2012 and in 2015 election the party could %10 of Turkey’s votes.

**Peshmerga** Are Kurdish Special Forces in north Iraq (Kurdistan Regional Government). That fought against Iraqi regime until the end of Saddam Regime. Now they are one of the effective forces that have been fighting terror. And they have fought ISIS and pushed back them in Kurdistan region and in Iraq as well (BBC, 2014).

**Federalism:** “Federalism refers to the advocacy of multi-tiered government combining elements of shared-rule and regional self-rule. Within the genus of federal political systems, federations represent a particular species in which neither the federal nor the constituent units of government are constitutionally subordinate to the other, i.e. each has sovereign powers derived from the constitution rather than another level government, each is empowered to deal directly with its citizens in the exercise of its legislative, executive and taxing powers and each is directly elected by its citizens” (Watts 1996, pp. 6, 7). Federalism is a kind of regime that the authority between national government and other units of government is divided. It is opposite of unitary administration (Soifer, Hoffman and Voss, 2011).

## **1.7 Thesis Outline**

The thesis includes five chapters. The first one is an introduction that will clarify the research aim, hypothesis and research questions. Chapter two is a literature review about the role of Kurds in Syria against Islamic state that induces grows relationship between Rojava and the United States that both the U.S and the Kurds have benefited from. Also I will detail the global terrorism in general and the dangers of the Islamic state in particular as a global threat which many scholars and writers have argued as well. Chapter three focuses on the difficult times of Syrian Kurds. It will first provide an overview of Kurdish question in Syria, the struggle with the regime of Assad, the

fight against ISIS and the hostile relations with Turkey. In chapter four I will focus on the opportunities for the Syrian Kurds following the acquisition of U.S support. I have divided this chapter into five parts: First, the rise of U.S. Kurdish relations. Second part, the declaration of a federal district in Rojava. Third, controlling areas and growing the economy in Rojava. Forth: advancing Rojava's relations at the level of diplomacy. Lastly, the future of the Syrian Kurds. The last chapter includes a conclusion, recommendations and references.



## **Chapter 2**

### **LITRATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I will clarify the role of Syrian Kurds in confronting ISIS and how they could take advantages of the conflict by becoming a U.S ally in the region. I will focus firstly on the Kurds in confronting ISIS. Secondly, I will mention the relationships between the Kurds and the United States then I will explain that the Kurds benefited from relations with the U.S. I will focus on the declaration of a federation in Rojava. Then I will turn attention to economic issues related to the protection and retaking of the rich oil lands from Assad and Islamic State. Finally, I will examine the diplomatic relations of Rojava with regional and international actors. This is a crucial point because the Kurds started relations with Europe and other countries after ensuring setbacks for ISIS in Syria.

In another section I will focus on the general concept of global terrorism. What are the types and causes of terrorism in general? I will turn attention to dangers of Islamic state in Iraq and Syria. I will also answer the question of how ISIS became a Threat not only regionally but generally. I will focus on some scholars that have pointed out about the risk of ISIS as a global terrorist threat.

## **2.2 Roles of the Syrian Kurds in Fighting ISIS; Potential Advantages for Kurdish Autonomy**

According to Wilgenburg (2016), the Kurds in Syria are a reliable force and they are one of the most prominent and trusted allies of the U.S against terrorism. As he mentioned they have been played a role in confronting Islamic state. The Kurds are very successful which they could retake many Kurdish areas from ISIS, even Arab people in some areas like Hasakah wanted and welcomed the Kurds forces to save them from the terrorist and Callimachi (2015) believes that only the Kurdish in Syria can fight ISIS. He believes that Kurds have regularly and effectively combated Islamic state and pushed it back in many territories in North Syria. According to the editorial board of the New York Times Journal (2016), Kurdish are very strong and they could benefit politically following their role in challenging ISIS. The editor believes that one of the results of Kurdish fighting against ISIS in Syria is autonomy in Northern Syria at the political level. As well as Dalay (2016), has mentioned that after ISIS attacked Syria particularly Kurdish areas like the siege of Kobane for about four months in 2015, but the Kurdish political party PYD defended and did not allow the Islamic state enter the city. After this success, Kobane has become a symbolic city for the Kurds in Syria that showed the world that they fight ISIS on behalf of the world. According to Pasch & Gunter (2016), only Kurdish force, for the time being, fighting against ISIS very successfully, especially YPG/YPJ in Rojava that Kurds fought against the regime of Assad on one side and Islamic state another side. They believe that Kurds could successfully defend their land. Also they mentioned that Turkey is worried about the victory of Kurds in Syria because Turkey believes that there is no difference between PYD and PKK, but the authors believe that they are not same because YPG/YPJ is not on any lists of terrorist groups. As

well as many times the United States mentioned that YPG and PKK are not the same and the U.S has worked with PYD in Syria as a reliable partner. Turbeville (2016), mentioned that as a result of the victories of the Kurds in Northern Syria against the Assad regime and ISIS after 2014, Rojava declared some cantons by Kurds but after defeated ISIS, Kurdish Party PYG with other different national and ethnic groups and parties like: Turkmen, Assyrian, Armenian, Arabs, Syriacs, Chechen and Circassians that participated at a conference to decide on a political project that was federalism for Kurdish areas in Northern Syria. Before 2012 Rojava was not federalized or autonomous rather Kurdish territories were divided and invaded by other ethnic and religious groups, for example, Arabs and Turkmen. However, after autonomy was declared in the Kurdish areas created an interim constitution which in the charter mentions that we will live together peacefully without any differences between ethnic and religious groups.

In regards to PYD the U.S relations, Gunter (2015, 104-105) argues that the U.S wanted to defeat ISIS but did not want send troops and the U.S had to work with some groups and states in the region. The U.S worked with PYD then supported, sent weapons and sent trainers in 2015 to save Kobane. Additionally, Wilgenburg (2016) and Sary (2016, pp. 11), believe that after the resistance densely by PYD in Kobane, the United States soon knew which YPG in Syria is the most successful groups fighting Islamic State and it gave the Kurds a good chance to be a Washington ally to counter terrorism. Sary, pointed out that several United States officials went to Rojava, Joseph Votel and Brett McGurk, for example desired to build a coalition because the U.S did not want to deploy its forces to face ISIS on the ground the U.S needed the Kurds but also, Kurds wanted U.S support as well, to protect themselves from ISIS and Turkey. According to Steele (2015), after Arab spring in Syria, the

Kurds could reorganize themselves against the Assad regime that they retook Kurdish areas from Syrian regime furthermore declared the cantons by PYD. The U.S looks at the Kurds as the most important group fighting ISIS in Syria, that the U.S has helped them by airpower and military advisors. In 2015 the Kurds could drive out the ISIS from the city of Tal-Abyad by the help of air power of the U.S. Furthermore, Barfi, (2016, pp. 2, 3, 6, 9) argues that in the beginning of Arab spring and retook some places by Kurdish party PYD, the USA worried about the party but this image has changed since the emergence of the Islamic state or Daesh because PYD could protect Syrian land and stopped offensives of ISIS. On October 19, 2015, the U.S helped Syrian Kurdish by airpower, ammunition, medical and weapons for Kobane. Brett H. McGurk said the Kurds are one of the effective players in confronting terrorism who visited Kobane in February 2015. Many scholars agree that ISIS's threat have created a relationship between the U.S and the Kurds in Syria (PYD). And both benefited from each other especially PYD because they have different enemies in the region and they want to establish their own autonomy. As well as the U.S wanted end ISIS in Iraq and Syria but the U.S did not want to involve directly into the war that is why they needed a reliable and powerful forces for example Desai (2014, pp. 4), mentioned that the Syrian Kurds are the most powerful force on the ground against ISIS in Syria because ISIS attacked Kurdish areas with advanced weapons and many armor tanks but the Kurds in Syria could defeat ISIS, as well as the Peshmerga force of Kurdistan Regional Government-Iraq that president Masu'd Barzani sent for helping the Kurds in Syria which had an effective role in helping YPG force and together defeated ISIS in Syria particularly in Kobane. The city has liberated from Assad regime in 2012 by Syrian Kurdish as the first city and Kurds declared a Canton in the city of Kobane. According to Desai, Syrian

Kurdish in resistance of Kurdish areas showed and proved themselves as a group and nation of anti-terrorist. The relationships between the Kurds and the U.S has grown as Zaman (2016), argues that according to Turkey, Syrian Kurdish (YPG) and PKK are terrorist and Turkey has tried to accept the U.S that believes so but, as Zaman believes that the U.S says YPG is not just terrorist rather they are a good ally of Washington in Syria which the USA has helped them by air base and some U.S soldiers shoulder to shoulder of YPG fought against ISIS and retake Raqqa which is the capital of ISIS in Syria like Mosul in Iraq. The Syrian Kurdish not just advanced in terror war rather they have advanced in the diplomatic way, for example, Russia wanted Kurdish participation in Geneva to talk about Syria and its future. Washington wanted Kurdish representative in the Geneva as well. Zaman argues that the Kurds carefully and rationally has dealt with both Washington and Moscow. The author believes that reconciliation between Syrian Kurdish and Turkey would be more effective for the fight against ISIS. The U.S and PYD relations have become some advantages for the Kurds for example declaration of federation in Rojava as Sherko (2016), pointed out that the fighting terror could become advantages for Syrian Kurds but not only conflict and fight, that Kurds defeated ISIS, one of the opportunity was the federal system in Rojava other opportunities The federal system can present a better vision and position for policies strategic, developing and getting aims by the Kurds also it can be a better point to deal with the neighbor and international countries. The declaration of federalism provides a better understanding the developing future for Rojava especially geographically because the federalism is for “Northern Syria” that seeks to contain the cities which located North Syria. In addition Galbraith (2016) believes the model of Rojava claims decentralization in

Syria and the best solution for the Syrian crisis. Also, he believes that the model of Rojava is a positive step for creating a free of Syria.

The U.S and PYD's relations become profit for the Kurds at the level of economy as Hamed (2016), has stated that the groups like ISIS, Al Nusra and others tried to control the rich areas that have natural resources like oil, some of the underground resources located Rojava (North Syria) that Kurds have controlled them since Syrian uprising in 2011 for example Rmeilan and Cizire that are two main rich cities with oil. For a while ISIS took Rmeilan and attempted to control all the rich Kurdish areas but the Kurds defended and deterred saved their lands and oil fields intact, also retook again Rmeila by the U.S help because the oil well of Rmeila is one of the important for production oil, when it was under direction of Assad regime it produced one-third of national production of Syria. Now the city and others that rich as much as Rmeila are under control of the Kurds in Rojava, of course, they will have an impact on development economy of Rojava and it becomes insisting them on self-ruling as the federation system because they will have a vital economy that the Kurds could defense by the U.S weapons and ammunition. In this perspective, if you have a financial source, you will be an effective actor. In addition Kajjo (2016), has pointed out that the United States backed the Kurds to shelter and defense their lands and the United States supported them to retake their oil-rich lands that were a chance for the Kurds to manage the oil fields for example Shaddadi is another rich oil field that located Rojava which has abundant natural gas and oil; these natural resources help the Syrian Kurds in confronting ISIS, to build their future and help the Kurds to be a more effective actor at the level of political. The income yearly of Rojava is \$288 million that comes from the production of oil, but they cannot export the oil to other countries because there is still instability and the federalism has not recognized.

Furthermore, the report of (Kurdistan National Congress, 2014), has reported about agriculture in Syria that many available areas for agriculture have been located Rojava with much water for crop growing.

In addition, according to many authors' views, the relationship between the Rojava and many countries in the world, especially with Europe, has advanced. For example, the Rojava's offices have opened in some states as Oliphant (2016), pointed out that the opening Rojava's representative in Moscow was a historic day for the Kurds because they can represent political and diplomatic interests in abroad that they attempt to get international support for the new Rojava system. In addition Taştekin (2016), has said the Rojava continue to expand their ties with the international community for instance Asya the co-chair of PYD had a meeting with Francois Hollande who praised the Kurd's effort in confronting ISIS, and after the Rojava's foreign affairs has opened in Paris. Furthermore Medin (2016), believes that the Kurds could benefit from the war against ISIS and relations with the United States because many countries opened the door for the PYD leaders to meet and discuss the Kurdish question in the region, for example, the leader of Woman's protection units (YPJ) Nesrin Abdullah visited across Europe, Czech Republic, France, Italy and other European states they appreciated and praised the Kurds effort against terror. And Rojava's representative's office opened in Stockholm Sweden. Nesrin Abdullah in Sweden asked for humanitarian and military support. It was a very important for Rojava that with diplomatic delegation a military commander visited Sweden then Prague in Europe. The Rojava's representatives have opened in many places like Iraq, German, Prague, Oslo, France and Netherlands the representative in these states try to get international support for their autonomy.

### **2.3 Global terrorism and Threat of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria**

Terrorism is a phenomenon that is not quite new. According to Zalman (2016) it includes certain elements including: violence or threat, political aims to alter the situation, attacking civilians indiscriminately and spreading fear through different acts of violence. States, princes, and kings have employed violence against anyone or any group that stood against them. Terrorism exists in different places and has a long history e.g. the French revolution in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Nowadays, it is not only the Middle East that has the problem of terrorism. If we take the case of the 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2001 attacks in the United States where the terrorists attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, we can understand that nowhere is completely secure as terrorists can attack any location. Terrorism has risen unusually fast in the Middle East because the environment helps to grow the terrorist groups and for some other reasons that I will mention later.

According to the defense department of the U.S., terrorism is: “The calculated use of violence or the threat of violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological” (Laquer, 2000, p. 292).

Laqueur (2000, p. 292) defines terrorism as: the criminal use of force to get a political goal while guiltless people are under attack. Resolution 1566 of UN Security Council (2004) similarly states that terrorism is “criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a



government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act". In addition to that, the FBI has defined terrorism in this way: "using violence illegally against people or force a government, civilian and any part thereof, for getting social or political objectives". Furthermore, Richardson (200, pp. 28-30) defines terrorism as targeting civilians, implementing violence in a vicious and planned manner to realize political objectives.

Martin (2014, p. 81) outlined some types of terrorism such as 1- State terrorism. 2- Dissident terrorism. 3- Criminal dissident terrorism. 4- Gender selective terrorism and 5- Religious terrorism. In the same vein Witnie (2003), while explaining the causes of terrorism, cited nationalism and ethnicity, poverty, non-democratic states, dehumanization, disaffected intelligentsia and religion. The rise of terrorism in the Middle East can be attributed to some of the causes Witnie outlined above, as the problems associated with them exist in the region.

Terrorism is dangerous wherever and in whatever way for any human being. The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria is one of the most dangerous threats the entire world has faced thus far in the 21st-century. According to Tucker (2014) and Blumenan (2014), on April 9, 2013, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi declared the DAESH Organization in Iraq and Syria and in June 2014 Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi announced an Islamic Caliphate in Mosul, Iraq and in a short time they gained control of many areas in Iraq and Syria. The emergence of ISIS as a terrorist organization traces back to the invasion of Iraq by the U.S. in 2003. For some years, it was led by Al-Zarqawi who killed U.S and Iraqi soldiers as well as foreign citizens, especially those from western countries. However, the name of the organization at the time was Al-Qaeda in Iraq, not ISIS. Zarqawi was killed by a U.S. airstrike in 2006 and Abu Ayub Masri

became the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and subsequently changed the name to the Islamic State in Iraq. After Masri, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi became the leader of ISI in 2010 and two years later Islamic state emerged in Syria involving itself in Syria's war. In 2013, the name of the Islamic state in Iraq was changed to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) as a result of its extended activities and areas of operation. According to Jeenah (2015, pp. 403-404), the invasion of Iraq by the U.S. in 2003 was one factor that contributed to the emergence of ISIS because many Sunni tribes were against the U.S. and the Shiite-dominated rule in Iraq alienated the Sunni's from authority especially during Nuri Al-Maliki period. Jeenah believes that another reason for ISIS' quick rise is related to the fact that the Iraqi forces do not have legitimacy in areas dominated by Sunnis and that was why ISIS first took Mosul because Sunnis do not trust the Iraqi Shiite leaders and vice versa. As the author argues, corruption was another reason why many people wanted another 'power' as a solution to the bad situation in Iraq and this is why many Sunni people in Iraq now support ISIS. Jeenah says that the Arab uprising in Syria, induced the rise of some Islamist groups like Al Qaeda and al Nusra; the author also mentioned that Saudi Arabia supported groups of extremists that adhered to Wahhabism, which is a source of fundamentalist groups like ISIS.

Tucker (2014), argues that ISIS, in a short time, became a very dangerous terrorist group and he mentions some reasons; for example, the volume of the organization's members including the Baathists in Iraq, Sunni tribes and foreign fighters as many people from across the world came to join ISIS from across the World where Cocco (2015) believes 20,730 foreign fighters have joined ISIS. According to Turker (2014) another reason that ISIS became so strong, he believes, is that ISIS used a social media campaign to scare people and the Iraqi forces. This was done especially

through Twitter where the group posted brutal actions, beheadings and massacres and if they captured any soldier, they would kill him in a brutal way and that is why forces and people fled from the hands of ISIS. The economy of the group and the region is another reason that helped the organization. After it took Mosul, ISIS controlled oil production in the city as Mosul is one of the rich oil cities in Iraq and ISIS took banks and gold in the city valued at an estimated 425 million dollars in addition to the 8 million dollars made from the extraction and trade of oil per month. The last reason that Tucker mentions is that, in taking Mosul, ISIS was able to take many advanced weapons from the Iraqi security forces left for them by the U.S. but in Mosul and other cities, the Iraqi forces left the weapons for ISIS. Consequently, ISIS could become one of the richest, most dangerous and best armed terrorist organizations of the modern era. Additionally, Blumenan (2014) argues that ISIS is not a simple terrorist organization but is rather one of the most dangerous extremist groups in the Middle East and it is a different and unique movement; a terrorist state which has had a strong and negatively influential impact on security and world peace. The terrorists in the organization believe that there is no border between the states and the Islamic Caliphate is for all countries regardless of any existing borders. Blumenan believes that the lack of security in Iraq and Syria was the main reason for the rise of ISIS and the organization's continued existence. If Iraq and Syria did not have security problem and other internal crisis, ISIS would not have become stronger, but now, unfortunately, it is a sturdy and risky threat for entire the world. According to Bucci (2014), ISIS is very dangerous for the world because ISIS has links with other groups that are somewhat controlled by ISIS (like Al-Qaeda in Morocco, Ansar al-Din in Tunisia, Boko Haram in Nigeria) and that make ISIS stronger and more dangerous. ISIS, like a state, has an army, institutions, a judiciary

based on Sharia law and thousands of followers not only comprised of single men but rather families with children. He also mentions that ISIS has a vast number of weapons that constitute one of the largest arms caches held by a terrorist group till date. The leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, as a personality, is an effective leader who could influence young Muslims. The author asserts that ISIS must be stopped because it is more perilous than Al-Qaeda, richer, has control over more areas, more savage and has more followers. That is why ISIS is a state with a full army and economy of its own. Furthermore, Malsin (2016), states that ISIS threatens the world at large as we saw with the Brussels attacks in March 2016 where ISIS claimed the attack was a response to Belgium's involvement in the coalition against ISIS and this was why they attacked an airport and a metro station. This means nowhere is secure and safe; ISIS has shown that it is able to attack anywhere because it has sleeper cells and followers the world over. The author believes that the Islamic State is not a regional threat rather it is an international threat because the terrorists could attack and have bombed some cities in different countries simultaneously like Baghdad in Iraq, Istanbul in Turkey, in Syria Hama, Damascus and Tunisia. Malsin says some ISIS members from Europe joined ISIS then went back to Europe; for them, organizing an attack in Europe is easier because they have knowledge about their cities. Byman (2016) says that Abu Bakr Baghdadi called on Muslim people across the world to join ISIS and travel to Iraq or Syria, and if that is not possible, they can organize activities and attacks in their current places. Byman mentions that ISIS attacked some different countries in 2015 like Yemen, Kuwait, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Libya as well as shot down a Russian plane with 224 passengers and also attacked California, San Bernardino and France such that ISIS has destabilized a number of western cities and all countries are worried about the threat of the brutal

ISIS terrorists. Kumar (2015, pp. 345-353) has pointed out that ISIS, as a Sunni Jihadist Movement, suddenly took Mosul and Tikrit in Iraq and they killed thousands of Shia, Yazidis and Christians. When ISIS took Mosul they captured many kinds of advanced weapons from the Iraqi army such as anti-tanks, anti-aircraft, rockets, machine guns, launchers, lots of ammunition and Toyota cars as well as mustard gas that they used against the Kurds' forces in Iraq and Kobane in Syria also ISIS has experience of attacking, suicides and car bombs. As the author believes, ISIS poses a threat not only to the Middle East countries, but also to the United States and all other modern states, as it is a global Jihadist threat that aims to destroy the modern state system and tries to implement the Sharia law. The U.S. and its coalition must have a comprehensive plan to defeat ISIS. The United States soon understood that the threat of ISIS necessitated cooperation with the Kurds in the region so as to end the terrorists. Lodge (2016) says that when ISIS attacked Sinjar town near Duhok in Iraq, it held about 3,000 Yazidis hostage, most of which were women. ISIS abused, raped and sold them among their soldiers sometimes trading the Yazidi women for a pack of cigarettes. As the author pointed out, ISIS killed many Yazidi men but they kidnapped the women while others fled to the mountains with Shiite and Christian people because ISIS is the enemy of humanity as a whole, especially non-Muslim minorities. Yazidi is an independent religious group that is non-Muslim and non-Christian but rather worships the devil. Thereby the ISIS is a very dangerous extremist group that have had difficult struggle with the people in the region and the world.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on two sections: the first one explained the Syrian Kurds' role in the fight against ISIS and its advantages. Due to the fight against ISIS, the Kurds have become the U.S partner in the region and that has led to some benefits for the Kurds as well. For example, as was argued: after the U.S.' and Kurds relations the Kurds declared the Rojava system and they have demanded a federation for Syria; with the U.S, they could protect and retake the wealthy lands from ISIS that will be very beneficial for Rojava's economy and as such, they now depend on internal production. In the end of the first section, it was also noted that another advantage is growing diplomatic relations with international community. In the second section, the focus was on some definitions obtained from different sources on the types and causes of terrorism, as well as directing attention to the Islamic states in Iraq and Syria as an international threat. Many scholars agreed that ISIS is very dangerous for world as a whole and this chapter pointed out some reasons for the rise of ISIS and some causes that made ISIS stronger.

## **Chapter 3**

### **THE DIFFICULT TIMES FOR THE SYRIAN KURDS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Looking back at the history of the Syrian Kurds, we understand that all the Syrian regimes that have come successively tried to eradicate the Kurds and prohibited all Kurd's activities in Syria. They couldn't even have ceremonies and listen to Kurdish songs as the Syrian regime, especially the Baath party, disallowed even cultural activities. The Baath party did not allow the Kurds to establish a party, the regime oversaw the Kurds but the Kurds continued to attain their objectives and organized their activities secretly but the regime arrested many Kurdish politicians and activists, furthermore many Kurds have been killed by the Baath party in Syria and the regimes persecuted the Kurds until 2011. The Arab spring in Syria opened a door for the Kurds to reorder themselves and stand against the Baath's regime that persecuted the Kurds. During the Arab uprising, the Kurdish political party, PYD, that was founded in 2003 has become a prominent party in Syria and fought against the Assad regime during the time that Assad was under pressure. The Kurds retook the Kurdish lands from Assad and declared the system of cantons in Syria for Kurdish territories. The uprising in Syria had not yet finished when the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria attacked the Kurds in the North of Syria, but the Kurds under the leadership of the PYD successfully fought the terrorists in the region after a hard and long war. Fighting ISIS was difficult for the Syrian Kurds because of insufficient ammunition, but the war also benefited the Kurds that in ways that will be examined

in chapter four, however, one the benefits for the Kurds is linking the cantons under a federal system in Rojava. When the Kurds expanded in Syria, Turkey had been worried about the Kurds and has created many problems for the Kurds and even somehow attacked Rojava's cities when targeting the PYD. In this chapter, an overview of the Kurds' problems and the difficulties faced by the Kurds in Syria is presented.

### **3.2 An overview of Kurdish Question in Syria**

After the end of World War I, and the collapse the Ottoman Empire, the victorious powers divided the region's borders including the Kurdish nation where about 30 million people had lived together in one area. They asked for self-administration and a state, but France and Britain with the acceptance of the Soviet Union and Turkey divided the area and relegated the Kurdish nation from the majority to a minority in four states: Iran, Turkey, Iraq and Syria (Pizzi, 2016). The Kurds have suffered under these four central governments for over one century.

According to the Sykes-Picot agreement, some Kurds were located to Northern Syria (Western Kurdistan), which at that time was under the mandate of France. France wanted to create a silent state. The Kurds, from then on, were persecuted even though they weren't given primary rights (Kurdistan National Congress, 2016). The Kurdish population in Syria is estimated at about 2-2.5 million people and 10-15% of the population (Aloddad, 2013). Syria was also mandated under France after the First World War because of Sykes-Picot. The Sheikh and Aghas of the Kurdish tribes, for example, the family of Badir khan who had a prominent role in Syria, led the Kurdish movement and demands. They established Khoybun (be oneself), an organization which supported the Ararat uprising in 1927 against the Turkish state.



The Kurdish could not successfully perform in the war because of a lack of adequate weapon and forces. Khoybun attempted to focus on the activities of culture, especially by Jaladat and the Badir khan family, which tried to aid the development of Kurdish literature and the Kurdish language as well as French, propped up the Kurdish to publish some newspapers and Kurdish radio in 1941. The support for press, newspaper, TV and radio by colonialism were one of the benefits for the Middle East and was emulated by a number of countries. During the mandate of Syria, the Kurdish movement asked for autonomy in the Jazirah region but France and Turkey did not allow them leading to the rise of Syrian nationalists who demanded independence for Syria. In 1946 France withdrew entirely from Syria, which became independent politically, but no autonomy was given to the Kurds in Syria. In 1924, the communist party of Syria was founded which was led by Kurdish leaders and used the propaganda of Soviet Union to justify its claims for independence (Kurd watch, 2016). In 1957, the Syrian democratic party of Kurdistan was founded with the aims of: promoting the economy, Kurdish rights, and democracy. However, the party was not recognized by the state of Syria. The party held its activities secretly because the Syrian regime arrested many Kurdish leaders, particularly in the 1960s. The regime in 1960s stripped about 120,000 identity Cards from the Kurds and did not return for them. Furthermore, they said pursued Arabism and fought against the threat of Kurds! (Neria, 2012). In addition to the Syrian regime forbidding the Kurds from cultural activities, the Kurds were not allowed to go to hotels, cafés, cinemas, movies, theaters, festivals and the Kurdish language was forbidden as they must speak only in Arabic! After that, the Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria changed its name to the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Syria. But unfortunately, the leaders of the party and 5,000 Kurdish people were arrested and

tortured. The revolt of Mustafa Barzani in Iraq in 1962 gave the Syrian Kurds hope and at the same time, the Syrian regime was scared of the Mustafa Barzani revolt because Jazirah is bordered with Kurdistan regional government of Iraq. During the time of the revolt, the Syrian Regime controlled the border and the Jazirah province (Kurd watch, 2016).

During the time of the United Arab Republic, and after its demise, the Syrian regime had same policy towards Kurds, persecution. Also, after the Baath party came to power in 1963 through force. The Baath party banned other political parties, especially the conservative party because they used religion. Muhammad Talab Hilal, the security chief of the al-Hasaka province made a report about political, social and national scene in Jazirah. He showed the Kurds as mountain people who were violent without regard for their language, history, ethnic identity and civilization. He declared Kurds as their enemies and said the Kurds and Israel were the same as there is no difference between “Judstan and Kurdistan” (Kurd watch, 2016). Muhammad Talab Hilal said that he found a solution for the Kurdish issue to which end he mentioned some points: 1- Kick out the Kurds in Syria. 2- Refuse education for the Kurds. 3- Return some Kurds to Turkey. 4- Forbid employment for the Kurds. 5- Create propaganda against the Kurds. 6- Employ the policy of Arabisation. 7- Ban the Kurdish language. 8- Stripping citizenship from the Kurds (Vanly 1968, pp. 13). Damascus kicked out 140,000 Kurds from Kurdish areas and replaced them with people of Arab decent especially in Hasakah. But if we look at the Kurds in Syria at present, we see that the Kurds have a vital role to play against the international terrorism of ISIS and the Assad regime In 1973, Hafiz al-Assad, an Alawite came to power in Syria. The Alawites are a minority group in Syria and are part of the Shiite branch that has controlled the power in Syria. Hafiz al-Assad fixed

the presidential system in the 1973 constitution and he monopolized power and the military such that all authority in the land was under his control. Hafiz al-Assad was the supreme commander and the executive; furthermore, he controlled the cabinet, ministries, judge, organization and every institution and its activities (Perthes 1995, pp. 170-171). From then, until now, the Alawites have had an influential role in Syria, but after 2011 the Kurds and the Syrian people, especially Sunnis, who are the majority in Syria, could stand up to the Assad family. Hafiz al-Assad employed a dualistic policy towards the Kurdish issue; he supported Kurdish movements in other states for instance Iraq and Turkey. The Syrian regime helped Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) for instance, Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of PKK lived in Syria in 1998. Syria helped the Iraqi Kurds, especially the Kurdistan Patriotic Union that was founded in Syria in 1975. On the other hand, Syria has rejected any support and rights for the Kurds inside Syria. Furthermore, Syria did not allow many things for Syrian Kurds (Kurd Watch 2009, p. 16), for example, in the 1990s, Kurdish names were forbidden for Kurdish areas and children, the regime changed some Kurdish names to Arabic in villages of Afrin and Hasakah and in addition to that, did not allow Kurdish names for workplaces, songs in wedding and parties, in business, video, CD and cassettes (Montgomery 2005, pp. 131-132).

In 2000, Bashar al-Assad, Hafiz al Assad's son, who had studied in the United Kingdom, came to power. The Union Party of Kurdistan was also established in 2000. One of the big events following the rise of Bashar al-Assad to power was the event of Qamishli in 2004 which started with a football match between two local teams: Dayr az-zawr and Qamishli. Followers of the teams fought, which one side was Kurdish and the other was Arab. The riot was related to nationalism and the political tensions between the Kurds and regime in Syria. The security of the stadium

was unable to control the situation and indirectly helped the Arabs to kill the Kurds, which became a big problem between the Kurds and regime. More than 30 people were killed on the day of the match, 2,000 people were arrested and hundreds were injured (Kurd Watch, 2016). The Qamishli riots continued until 2005 because the Kurdish people and political parties, especially the Kurdistan Union Party gathered thousands of people to protest the massacre in Qamishli but the regime's forces supported the tribes attacking Kurds in the Kurdish cities like Raqqa, Aleppo, Hamuda, Damascus and Derk where Kurds protesters destroyed Hafiz al-Assad statues and some regime structure like Baath buildings but the regime stood against the Kurdish protesters such that they killed more than 100 people, including 7 Arabs, and arrested about 2,500 people. The riot was directly related to the Kurdish issue in Syria (Tejel 2009, pp. 122-123). The Kurdish people in Syria were persecuted until the 2011 Arab uprising, so-called (Arab spring) where the Kurdish question changed to another form because Kurds could now play an influential role in the Arab spring, retake some Kurdish territories which were under the control of Assad and establish the Rojhava autonomous region afterwards declaring a federation like the Kurdistan region in Iraq.

### **3.3 The Kurds and Arab Spring**

The Arab Spring was a revolutionary wave that swept the predominantly Arab countries beginning in late 2010. The protests and uprisings were in response to the social and political ills of Arab society such as authoritarianism, unemployment, poverty, etc. While protests died down in most of the affected countries in 2012, the conflicts escalated in others, such as Syria. The ongoing Syrian civil war grew out of protests in Syria during the Arab spring calling for the removal of President al-Assad from power. As with the rest of the Arab countries affected by the Arab Spring, Syria

was thrown into a state of convulsion with the militarization of opposition groups who subsequently began to seize territory from government control. In the periods of great changes in the Middle East (such as the Iran-Iraq war and more recently the Arab Spring), the non-Arab minorities tend to suffer the most and the Kurds in Syria would play “a major role” in the country’s uprising (Dugulin, R. 2011). A prediction which has indeed come true as the Kurds in Syria have been an active part of the uprising against the al-Assad regime although they remained relatively silent during the earlier days of the protests when they first began (Ulutas 2011, p. 97) in March of 2011. The Kurds’ revolt against the government was the result of the economic, social, and ethnic repression they endured under the regime and as a result, a number of Kurdish factions joined members of the Syrian National Council (SNC), an organization established in late 2011 with the aim to oust the regime (Sahiran 2012, p. 72).

The Kurdish National Council itself, as well as the majority of other Kurdish political organizations, have declined membership of the SNC, for example, the PYD for at least three reasons: the first is due to the domination of the SNC by members of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood whom the secular Kurds are opposed to, the second is that the SNC is based in Turkey which has been a “long-time opponent of Kurdish rights” (Phillips 2012, p. 40), and finally, the SNC’s lack of an explicit policy regarding the status of the Kurds in post-Assad Syria (Noi 2012, p. 24). Also, while the majority of the Kurdish political elite have taken an active anti-Assad stance, a significant portion of the Kurdish population at large has “not found the external opposition’s commitment to a civil, inclusive democracy sufficiently credible to persuade them to abandon the Assad regime and join the uprising” (Heydemann 2013, pp. 69). While the PYD as a population remains rather active within the

context of the uprising in both the political and military wings of the opposition movement, the leadership has often made the claim that it is widely underrepresented within the Syrian Coalition and even uses this as a justification for its continued independence from the coalition. Arab opposition members, on the other hand, have accused the Kurdish leadership of cooperating with the Assad regime (ibid, pp. 69-70) which has had the effect of weakening the opposition itself as a whole and also reducing the likelihood of a concerted victory against the regime. Simplistically, the nature of relations between the Kurds and Arabs are largely the result of the Kurds' political formations being, from the beginning, against Arab nationalism (Sinclair & Kajjo 2011).

The divisions between the opposition at large are also somewhat mirrored with the Kurds themselves as internal divisions do in fact exist between various Kurdish groups. Although the Kurdish parties all more or less follow the same program and somewhat share their suspicion of the Arabs, they are divided on the basis of ideology as well all allegiances to external leaderships (Ulutas 2011, p. 97). This point is best illustrated by looking at the role of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Syria. The party operates in Syria that Turkey believes the party is linked with PKK in Turkey. After declined the Assad's power in Syria There is somewhat agreement between Assad and PYD that Syrian regime left may Kurdish areas for PYD without fight but after a prominent successful of PYD in some cities because Assad understood that He could not fight the Kurds also both Assad and the PYD have had the same enemy that was Turkey (Noi 2012, p. 24). And also it was Assad's strategy which also includes takes advantage of the strained relations between the Kurds and the Arabs to divide the opposition. In conclusion, although many Kurdish political parties believe that the Arab opposition does not see the Kurds as being a

major player in the Syrian political scene, they have however put issues such as the ‘Arabness’ of Syria, Kurdish cultural rights, and possible autonomy on hold for the time being as they try to cooperate to achieve their shared goal of the Syrian crisis (Sinclair & Kajjo 2011, Para). And PYD as the most effective party in Syria could win in the Syrian situation in Arab spring that organized themselves as well as get an autonomous in North of Syria

### **3.4 Fighting Against ISIS**

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is a Salafi jihadist organization in control of significant territory in Iraq and Syria where it enforces a strict interpretation of Islamic Sharia law (Bunzel, 2015, pp. 7). ISIS is Designated a terrorist organization by the United Nations which believe that ISIS is one of the most dangerous threats for worldwide (the Security Council, 2015). And a host of individual countries, the group in 2014 proclaimed itself a caliphate claiming authority over Muslims worldwide. A declaration that has been denounced by the majority of the world’s Muslims and their organizations as has the organization itself. Although the global offensive launched against ISIS has recaptured pockets of territory from ISIS control leaving it with less than it had at its peak in 2015, as with the Kurds themselves, ISIS still controls some territory in Syria. While the Syrian government is currently engaging ISIS under the auspices of a coalition which also includes Russia, Iran, and Iraq, there also exists a US-led coalition also engaging ISIS with airstrikes.

Kurdish forces have been a big part of the fight against ISIS on the ground in both Iraqi and Syrian Kurdistan. Although not initially concerned taking an offensive position with regards to ISIS or even the belligerents in the civil war, the YPG’s position with regard to the Islamist organizations in Syria changed when the

Islamists began capturing Kurdish-majority areas. The YPG went from being concerned primarily with the defense of the Kurdish-majority areas (Bizar, 2012).

As a group directly threatened by ISIS advances, “the initial ISIS onslaught against the Kurds ushered in “Kurdo-pessimism”. This pessimism, however, was transformed into euphoria in the wider Kurdish society following victories by the YPG against ISIS in addition to the fact that ISIS (as with the other Islamist groups in Syria e.g. al-Qaeda affiliate al-Nusra) follow the path of radical Islam, has forced the Kurds to emphasize their own political secularity. As a result, the Kurdish military forces have been able to attract women as well as people of different or no religion(s) to its ranks (Dalay 2016, pp. 4).

The Kurdish forces have defended and pushed back ISIS in Syria's Kobane it was a very hard fight for PYD and a bad situation for all people in Kobane and the areas around the city because more than 300 people were killed by Islamic state group that many children and women bodies were on the street and many people fled others were fought with little food and ammunition but the Kurds with good moral never disappointed and they still resisted the people and lands (Al Rifai, 2015). Until the YPG has received support from the U.S, in the form of material, training, and air support, which has allowed it to reclaim ISIS controlled border areas which have had the effect of putting pressure on the group's supply lines (Itani, 2016) which are extremely critical to its survival as well as governance of its two-state wide territorial conquests.



### **3.5 Hostility Relation with Turkey**

The relationship between Turkey and the Syrian Kurds (PYD) is one of belligerence because Turkey does not see any difference between the PYD and PKK and believes both are terrorist groups. Even though the PYD is not in Turkey, and it is related to Syria. Turkey has intervened in Syria regardless of its sovereignty and attacked Kurdish strongholds while meeting with the PKK as part of a peace process even though it has also branded the PKK as a terrorist organization. After the declaration of Federation of Rojava, Turkey totally rejected PYD's project for Syria and has even attacked the PYD inside Syria and has threatened Rojava many times but because the U.S has supported PYD, Turkey cannot do whatever wants against PYD in Syria.

From the start of the ISIS war in Syria and the attacks against the Kurds carried out by ISIS, some countries believed that Turkey helped ISIS attack the PYD, and during siege of Kobane, the PYD needed support from the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq who decided to help them but there was only one way to help Kobane, through Turkey. After a long discussion, Turkey allowed the Peshmerga forces and ammunition go to Kobane to help the PYD. Turkey has rejected the view that it has helped ISIS and sent a message to the international community that it is fighting ISIS and claims it has been helpful to the Syrian Kurds (al-Bayaa, 2014). But this 'help' soon has changed to an inimical relationship between the PYD and Turkey when ISIS attacked North Syrian cities like Aleppo and Kobane leading many refugees, that were mostly Kurds, to flee to the Turkish border but Turkey did not open the border for the refugees leaving many with no food and water in the cold winter weather. In addition, Turkey deployed forces to hinder the refugees' entrance

(Pfeffer, 2016). Turkey tabled a proposal to solve the problem of the refugees of Syria and claimed that a no-fly zone is necessary and asked to deploy a buffer zone for Northern Syria, in fact, Turkey had aims specifically targeted against the Kurds and asked that Russian and Syrian air strikes not fly over the Kurdish areas. Turkey's aims were to limit intervention by its forces, but after allowing UN forces, but the UN as well as the U.S. rejected Turkey's proposal for a buffer zone. According to Turkey, the flow of refugees to the EU would reduce as a result of a no-fly zone but in actuality, Turkey wanted to deploy a buffer zone to reduce the Kurds' expansion in Syria because at the time, the PYD received help from the U.S and Russian jets but if the no-fly zone was effected in Syria, no jets could attack thereby necessitating ground forces to defeat ISIS and Turkey wanted to intervene in Syria and occupy the cities in Rojava. Furthermore, a no-fly zone would protect the anti-Assad groups that were closer to Turkey (Dapkus 2015, pp. 52) but Barack Obama rejected the proposal for a no-fly zone in Syria. As he said at a Group 20 summit in Turkey, "A true safe zone needs us to set up ground operation" (Wintour, 2016) even though the Obama administration did not want to involve U.S ground forces in Syria.

When the Syrian uprising began, Turkey supported the Assad opposition and wanted to overthrow Syrian regime because Syria has been governed by the Assad family, who are Shia Alawi, a minority group in Syria but has somehow maintained control over the country. The Assad family has a close relationship with Iran and within the context of the Middle East sectarian conflict between Iran (Shia) and Saudi Arabia and Turkey (Sunni), they are pitted against one another. As such, Turkey has sought to change the Syrian regime to a Sunni authority. When Turkey could not employ no-fly zone in Syria, it created another policy towards Syria, the policy entailed political and military support for Syrian opposition groups and for this policy Turkey has had

two goals: first, go against and overthrow the Syrian regime, and second, hinder the Kurds' objectives of establishing an independent opposition faction in Syria and diminishing the PYD's role in the Syrian situation (Dali, 2015). Turkey has helped the Syrian National Council and Free Syrian Army, which mostly consists of Sunni groups and is related to the Muslim Brotherhood, against Assad and the PYD in Northern Syria. The PYD has not joined the Syrian National Council (SNC) because the council was established in Turkey, which also supports it, and its aims are too far off from the PYD's goals (Balci, 2012, pp. 2, 3). Turkey has been concerned about the Kurdish question in Turkey and in Syria as well, the Kurds position has grown as a non-state actor that is why Turkey has changed its policy towards the Kurds in Syria, attack and intervention. There are three reasons why Turkey intervened Syria and changed its policy towards the Kurds: Firstly, the success of the Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) in the 2015 Turkish election that Turkey perceived as a success for the PKK; Secondly, the growing impact of the Syrian Kurdish PYD which Turkey regards as a partner of the PKK, and Turkey wanted to ensure that the Rojava cities do not link with each other and seemed to separate Kobane and Afrin from Qamishli specifically; and thirdly, following the Suruç bomb attacks in Turkey carried out by ISIS, the military wanted to intervene in Syria and help the opposition groups by giving them weapons, logistical support, and bullets (Dapkus, 2015, pp. 52). The main factor leading Turkey to intervene Syria, however is related to the PYD's position and the Rojava system because Turkey on several occasions has rejected the founding of any Kurdish autonomous entity in North Syria (Jan Nasro, 2015). Turkey perceives both the PYD and ISIS as threats to its security and takes action against them. The victories of Rojava could consolidate Kurdish autonomy in Syria that is unacceptable to Turkey because it might make it easy for Turkey's

Kurds' desire for independence and that is why Turkey takes action against ISIS and the Syrian Kurds because it is worried about the former ISIS-controlled areas that were transferred to Rojava but the U.S did not allow Turkey to deploy a buffer zone and Turkey also does not want to go face-to-face with the PYD but creates problems for Rojava (Dapkus, 2015). Turkey believes that the Syrian Kurds have mostly benefitted from the crisis in Syria so far. For the first time in history, the Kurds have been successful in Syria and gained control over a large area, distanced themselves from the opposition and the regime, as well as developed themselves as a political entity. All of these factors have created concern for Turkey, as the Kurds could get more powerful and develop links with other cities in the North and the West of Syria and eventually make a move towards the Mediterranean Sea as well as control and change the direction of an oil pipeline in Syria. Turkey sent a message to the Kurds that it would not agree to the founding of any Kurdish entity and tries to block the Kurdish project because Turkey does not want to be neighbored by a Kurdish entity and believes that the Kurds will create problems for Turkey with the PKK, which share a border and are in contact with the Syrian Kurds. In addition, Turkey worries about the alliance of the U.S and the PYD that is getting stronger as the war against terror in the region drags on (Dali, 2015). Therefore, in August 2016, Turkey entered North Syria through East Afrin as a result of the Syrian Kurds connecting the cantons of Hasakah and Kobane with the West of Afrin. Turkey was involved in trying to separate the cantons under Rojava and create opportunities for the Syrian opposition groups (Ekurd Daily, 2016). In addition, Turkey, with the Free Syrian Army, regained control of Jarablus from ISIS. The U.S tried to tow the line between its ally, the PYD, and its relations with Turkey and consequently, Washington has limited Turkey's operations and does not allow Turkey take action or clash directly with the

PYD. In addition, the U.S expresses its displeasure about Turkey's attacks against the PYD (Daly, 2016). For that reason, the U.S warned that fighting between the PYD and Turkey was unacceptable and following the arrival of Turkish forces to Syria, Ash Carter, the U.S secretary of defense said: "We have called upon Turkey to stay focused on the fight against ISIL and not to engage Syrian Defense Forces (SDF), and we have had a number of contacts over the last several days," (Aljazeera, 2016). The PYD itself does not desire to engage Turkey for two reasons: First, the U.S has supported the PYD but if PYD faces off against Turkey, the U.S supports will stop. Secondly, the PYD does not have an internal ally or support in Syria as the situation in Syria is a war of all against all. For example the PYD itself is already fighting ISIS, the Syrian regime and does not have good relations with anti Assad groups and that is why the PYD does not seek to open another front with Turkey (Coşkun, 2016).

As has been mentioned above, the relationship between Rojava and Turkey has been inimical; Turkey sometimes attacked the PYD but because the PYD is a partner of the U.S, the PYD has aligned itself with Washington and the resultant 'bandwagoning' has brought many benefits for Rojava as the U.S has protected the PYD from attacks and direct clashes with Turkey because the PYD cannot fight ISIS, Turkey, opposition groups and Assad regime, all at the same time. Of course, if the United States did not work with the PYD, Turkey would attack the Kurds and destroy their cantons and Rojava system of self-administration.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter presented an overview of the Kurds in Syria, who have been persecuted for a long time; they were not allowed to organize political parties and activities. The Syrian regimes have killed and arrested politicians, replaced the Kurds and Baath party stripped the Kurds of their citizenship. During the Arab spring in 2011, the Kurds engaged Assad in an effort to get the Kurds rights in the region. Also, the fight against ISIS has created many issues for the Kurds who have had their cities attacked, particularly Kobane, but they defended it well although the city has been destroyed and many people have fled. On the other hand, Turkey is worried about the expansion of the Kurds in Rojava, claims the PYD is a terrorist party like the PKK, and has tried to hinder the Kurds' advance in the region, creating even more problems. Turkey even went as far as attacking the PYD and helping the opposition groups in Syria against the Kurds and Assad. Conclusively, the Kurds have had many problems in Syria but they could overcome these problems and become a prominent actor in the region.

## Chapter 4

### THE VICTORIES OF THE SYRIAN KURDS AND THEIR OPPORTUNITES

#### 4.1 Introduction

The Syrian crisis and the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria have changed borders in the region. During the course of this conflict, states like the US, Russia, Iran and Turkey have intervened the region at various points, all in a bid to safe guard their personal interests. Syrian Kurds on their part have also taken advantage of this crisis to gain some territory. The PYD for example, has shown itself as an effective actor against Assad in 2011, and also against ISIS in 2014. Syrian Kurds have been engaged in the fight against ISIS for a while now. However, there has been an imbalance and/or inequality in power between ISIS and the Kurds. One reason for this is the fact that ISIS was able to get its hands on weapons and ammunitions from Mosul which the US had left when evacuating Iraq, the dynamics on the ground in the fight against ISIS was such that on the one hand, the Kurds needed support, and on the other hand, the US needed an effective forces on the ground in the fight against ISIS. As a result, the Kurds aligned (Bandwagoning) themselves with the US in order to get support from the US in the fight against ISIS. This Bandwagoning has been advantageous and provided opportunities for Rojava. For example, the relationship between Rojava and the U.S has significantly improved and advanced. Even though Rojava is not a state per se, both parties have worked together. Additionally, the U.S has had dealings with Rojava separately from the Syrian regime, and this has strengthened the position of the Kurds in the region.

Moreover, cities recaptured by Rojava were to remain in its possession. Furthermore, Rojava's relations with the international community have increased to the extent that they do have representatives in other countries. In this chapter, the researcher will examine and shed light on the advantages and opportunities which a continuous collaboration with the United States will have for Rojava.

## **4.2 Rising US and Kurdish Relations**

This section will attempt to answer the aforementioned research questions; why and how has a relationship emerged between the US and the PYD? As well as the benefits which will ensue from such a working relationship with the US, as is stated in my hypothesis.

The Syrian war has degenerated so much so that it is a proxy war for international and regional states. For instance, we have the U.S, Gulf countries, Turkey and Saudi Arabia who are on an axis, and demand that Assad be removed from power. They also provide backing to anti-Assad groups. On the other side, there are some countries that have actively maintained and support Bashar al-Assad to remain in power like China, Iran and Russia (Bajalan, 2016). This conflict is referred to as a proxy one because elements from both sides have not involved themselves directly in the conflict, but mostly indirectly.

The Islamic State laid siege to some Kurdish areas albeit unsuccessfully. In some areas like Kobane, the siege lasted for about 4 months, but the Kurds successfully prevented ISIS from entering the city. The U.S and Syrian Kurds have had the same goals; push back and eradicate ISIS. The US has not been willing to commit its ground troops in the region, and has therefore worked closely with the Kurds who are



on the ground in the fight against terrorism. The U.S has therefore helped the Syrian Kurds to push ISIS out of the city of Kobane as well as assisted the Kurds in retaking the city of Tal Abyad which was important for ISIS, especially as it served as a pathway for delivery of weapons, finance and foreign volunteers for ISIS.

In October of 2015, the U.S provided the Kurds with weapons and ammunitions. Added to that, the Obama administration sent fifty US army officers to help train Kurdish forces. This assistance has been vital for the Kurds especially as they are faced with different enemies on the ground ranging from ISIS, the Assad regime, and Turkey (Gunter, 2015). Turkish authorities believe that there is no difference between the PKK and Syrian Kurds (PYD), even though the U.S has continuously made it clear to Turkish authorities that the PKK and PYD are different, and have different objectives. While the PKK is considered a terrorist organization, the PYD is not a terrorist group and is closely cooperating with the US in the fighting ISIS in Syria. The U.S State department spokesman, Mark Toner is quoted as having said:

*“We have talked on many occasions about Turkey’s real concerns about Kurdish forces operating in northern Syria and, frankly, our support for those Kurdish forces who are frankly very capable forces fighting to remove Daesh from its foothold in northern Syria”*(Wilgenburg, 2016).

(Wilgenburg, 2016) posits that the Kurdish brave resistance against ISIS is one of the reasons why the US decided to work with this group. The financial and military support received from the US made the Kurds less reliant on the Syrian regime in the fight against ISIS. It has been argued that Damascus would provide support to the Kurds in the fight against ISIS, but that this support would have to be attached to

conditions; one of which might be asking the Kurds not to declare any autonomous state of their own. Washington officials like (Brett McGurk and Joseph Votel) have made numerous visits to North Syria in an effort to build a coalition with the Kurds. It is clear that they need the Kurds and also that the Kurds need their backup, particularly to protect the Kurds from Islamic State on the one side, and protect them from Turkey as well (Sary, 2016).

The PYD is part of the Washington strategy but not just fighting Islamic State, but also against other terrorist groups like the Jaish al-Islam and front of Al Nusra that are closely related to Al-Qaeda. The Kurds are seen by Washington as a secular group which can be used to fight against extremist groups in the region. Washington has also encouraged the Kurds to form a united coalition with other Arab groups in order to create one force which will be more effective in the fight against terror than the Joint Syrian Democratic Force (SDF). One of the positive points for PYD, is that they are perceived by the U.S as a group which fights terrorism, and not as terrorists as they are viewed by the Turkish government (Wladimir van Walsenburg, 2016). The rise of Daesh in Syria and Iraq, and the U.S coalition to fight against this group has had a significant impact on military cooperation between the U.S and Rojava. The beginning of this coalition is associated with the Obama administration's realization that the eradication of ISIS could be successful only if support was gotten from locals in the region. As a result, the Kurds were seen as a viable U.S ally. One reason for this was that the US had previously had a successful coalition with Peshmaga forces. The other was that the Kurds were already having some successes in their campaigns in Syria against these terrorist groups. The relationship between Syrian Kurds and the United States has started in 2014 when ISIS attacked Kobane, Manbij and Gre Spi. The United States knows which is a big problem in the Middle

East is sectarian conflict. The current crisis in the region has since a de facto division of Iraq and Syria based on ethnic groups and sects. But Rojava system does not care about the differences between sects and ethnic groups, this is why the United States helps Rojava to establish as an autonomous group which it can utilize to bring about political and security stability in the region. The relationship between the Kurds is two ways. If the Kurds continuously remain a reliable force on the ground, then the U.S will back their support for federalism. (Hituty, 2016) asserts that this is the reason why Syrian Kurds prefer to work with Washington rather than with Moscow. On the other hand, without the PYD as an ally, the U.S would not have achieved the grounds it has today in the fight against ISIS in the region (Coşkun, 2016).

This however does not mean that Kurds seek to statehood at this moment, especially considering the fact that they do not have any international backers. Even the U.S at this point in time is not in favor of a Kurdish state. As Alan Semo, the representative of PYD in the UK said *"insisted their aim was not to declare full independence but to be part of future democratic federal Syria"* (Goudsouzian, 2016). The Kurd's demand for a federal state in Syria is an easier demand to appease than that of separate statehood; they seek for federalism, as Federalism in Iraq. Although the Assad regime rejects federalism for Syria, in practical terms, Syria has lost sovereignty and legitimacy. In fact, the resolution of the Syrian crisis is in the hands of the international community; Russia, the United States, Turkey and Iran (Stephens & Stein, 2015). Although Washington has not yet acknowledged its support for a federal system in Syria, it has not rejected this altogether. Perhaps the fact that United States representatives met the PYD leaders in Rojava that could be interpreted as recognition de facto. Washington can no longer disregard the Syrian Kurds because if they isolate the Kurds, the Kurds may turn to Russia. On the other

hand, the Kurds could strike a balance in their relations with the U.S and Russia (Stein, 2016). However, this would be difficult considering that these two former cold war rivals have different objectives in the Middle East. The U.S has since declared that if it fails to remove Assad from power, then it will institute a plan B. This plan B focuses on the partition of Syria. John Kerry, US secretary of state has said *“Partition might be plan B for Syria”*. The crisis of Syria has taken on an international dimension; Washington insisted which Assad should step down, while on the other side Russia has supported Bashar Al Assad. John Kerry has even declared that both parties are locked in negotiations as to how to solve this crisis; *“There is a significant discussion taking place now about a Plan B in the event that we do not succeed at the negotiating table”* (Sputnik international, 2016). In fact, John Kerry announced at a Chicago council on global affairs that: *“any solution for Syria will not be any longer as united”* (Millet Press, 2016). As well as Russia has not rejected this position even the Assad regime is against this Plan B. The Kurds on their part have already declared a federal system.

US support for the Kurds has been very instrumental; they have provided the Kurds with weapons, information, trained Kurdish fighters as well as protected the Kurds from the Turkey’s inimical actions, to a great extend. When the Syrian Kurds are attacked by Turkey, US senator, John McCain rebuked the actions and stated:

*“The United States has a longstanding relationship with Turkey, but a series of recent events have raised concerns about the fundamentals of our relations. I have long argued that the Obama administration's feckless approach to Syria has contributed to a strategic disaster on Turkey's doorstep. At the same time, the Turkish government's continued attacks on Syrian Kurds are destabilizing and*

*troubling. These Kurdish fighters have shown themselves to be willing and capable partners in the fight against the Islamic State in Syria, and our continued cooperation serves the national security interests of both the United States and countries in the region, including Turkey. I urge the Turkish government to refrain from further attacks against Kurdish groups in Syria.*”(John McCain, U.S senator-Arizona, 2016).

During the recapture of Raqqa from ISIS, Turkey insisted that they did not want the Kurds to be part of the operation, however, Washington refused this demand, and the Kurds played an important role in the recapturing of this city from ISIS. The U.S affirmed which its work and assist will continue for the PYD as an offshoot of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), in a bid to provide arms, ammunition, and in the training of YPG force (Schmitt, 2016). The U.S gave has even provided them in some instances with advanced weapons from two U.S air bases in Kobane and in Rmeilan (sharpres, 2016). In all, Washington and the SDF have been cooperating together, and retook Raqqa which was the capital of the Islamic state in Syria and a very strategic place, as well as the recapturing of Manbij for this particular mission, it has been reported that US soldiers wore PYD uniforms (Ustun, 2016).

The cooperation between the Kurds and the U.S has seen both parties benefit. Washington has benefitted in its fight against ISIS in the region. The Kurds on their part have also benefitted in that they have been able to send across a message to the world through the defeat of ISIS that they are a force to reckon with. This might pave the way for a Kurdish position in post-ISIS, considering their monumental role in the defeat of this terrorist group.

### **4.3 The Emergence of Rojava and Declaration of Federalism**

During the course of the war in Syria, the PYD fought against the Syrian regime as well as ISIS and succeeded in seizing Kurdish territories like Afrin, Jazira and Kobane which had been under Syrian control. From then on, the PYD has administered these territories and have since declared them cantons. In 2014, these cantons were placed under the control of Rojava which was in charge of managing Western Kurdistan until a time when elections could be held for these cantons. The point here is that the Rojava system came after the success of the Kurds in the fight against the Assad regime, and ISIS. This struggle between the Kurds and the Assad regime on the one hand and on the other against ISIS, coupled with US support for the Kurds in the long run could become beneficial for the Kurds with regards to the question of federalism. The Kurds have even already declared a federal system in the North of Syria, after uniting a number of political parties; the Democratic Union party, the Syrian union party, the Syrian Kurds democratic peace party, the Kurdistan liberal union party, the liberation communist party of Kurdistan and the Kombuna Nishtimania Kurdi. These parties have united under the banner of the Movement for a democratic society (TEV-DEM) (Gunes & Lowe, 2015, pp. 4-5). The federal system of Rojava is not meant for the Kurdish region only, instead, all other religious and ethnic groups are also included. The rise of ISIS in Syria has facilitated the development of the PYD politically and militarily. The defeat of ISIS, a renowned terrorist group by the PYD has consolidated the position of the Kurds and has facilitated their demand for a federal system in the North of Syria. This defeat has practically led to a de facto Kurdish controlled region in the North of Syria, Kobane. Many authors see this as one of the solutions which can be used to contain the growth of the Islamic State. This de facto autonomy has always been a dream for

Syrian Kurds, and they have strived many years to get it, similar to that of South Kurdistan which had achieved theirs in 1992, although they were officially recognized as an autonomous region by Iraq in 2005 after the defeat of Saddam Hussein (Ihssan, 2007, pp. 13).

There are some positives for a local Rojava administration ranging from the benefits of decentralization in a conflict ridden zone like Syria, to the personal benefits of inhabitants, reducing the pain and sufferings of those struck by war, etc. decentralization appears to be the best solution for Syria at the moment. Given the precarious situation in which the country finds itself after a long period of rule by the Alawi ethnic group of Assad, there is a need to redistribute power for the betterment of the other ethnic groups. On another note, most of the cities lost to ISIS have been recaptured by the Kurds, therefore it is only fitting that they get to exercise control over this recaptured cities. Allowing powerful groups like the Kurds control these reconquered cities is also positive because it helps to reduce the spread and influence of the Islamic State. From this angle, federalism with a Rojava administration is beneficial for all. The structures of the administration model also contain components of secular, essential demands of Western societies. Articles 8 to 53 of the constitution of Rojava are on the principles of human rights, freedom and representation. Also, Rojava's constitution contains some other principles that are pro-Western such as the illegalizing of the death penalty and preventing civilians from being prosecuted in army courts. Also, women and men are given equal rights and opportunities in all spheres of administration. It even goes as far as establishing a 'women's liberation force' which has also taken part in the fight against ISIS and other terrorist groups (Sary, 2016, pp. 11).

The PYD chose the city of Qamishli as the capital of Rojava because the city represents different groups and nations such as the Kurds, Arabs and Christian (Wilgeburg, 2016). The Rojava constitution also provides for elections of members into the executive, legislative, and judiciary (Sary, 2016).

This federal system can present a better vision for strategic development policies as well as putting the Kurds in a position to enter into deals with other neighboring countries and international countries. This will also put Rojava in a better position to understand what the future holds for it geographically especially in relation to cities like Jarablus and Raqqa which are still under the control of ISIS. The Rojava model also proposes that the period of the nation state is over (Sherko, 2016). The introduction to the charter of the Rojava constitution states that: Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Armenians and Assyrians will live together equally and freely without any differences between nations and religions. (See: Charter of the social contract in Rojava, 2016). In addition, the model claims decentralization in Syria is the best solution for the Syrian crisis. The nation state cannot be the lasting solution; rather a democratic and federal state can best solve the problems facing Syria today. An example is the case of Rojava where the constitution provides for a democratic society which provides for essential rights and assures the independence of all groups and peoples. It is not clear when the war in Syria will end, and people must not wait till the end of the war before deciding the future of Syria. Hence, areas which have been liberated by the SDF must be allowed to build a social system, organize themselves and create an administrative system based on self determination principles in order to foster their wellbeing. This Rojava model is one of such steps which could lead to the liberation of Syria (Peter Galbraith, 2016).



In the end, the federal system has emerged as a consequence of political, geographic and military successes by the PYD, backed by the United States over ISIS and other terrorist groups. The federal system could help Kurds to become organized and have institutions which will help its people have better lives based on rules and institutions. It could also help Kurds become an important actor at the international level, and help create conditions which would allow the Kurds to enter into dealings with other neighboring countries as has been the case with Southern Kurdistan in Iraq.

#### **4.4 Retaking the Rich Region and the Growing Economy of Rojava**

The North of Syria (Rojava) is a very rich region, fertile for agriculture and blessed with natural resources. When the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria attacked the North of Syria where these rich natural resources are mostly located, the Kurds defended well and pushed them back. U.S support was one of the factors which led to the success of the Kurds and the re-capturing of these regions. As earlier mentioned, the North of Syria (Rojava) which is now under the control of the Kurds is a very rich region, and this in the future will lead to the development of the Rojava economy. For the time being, it is true that some cities in Rojava have been destroyed, and the reconstruction of these areas will need a lot of money. However, as stability is restored in this area, the future looks bright considering the rich nature of the area in terms of oil production as well as the agricultural sector. Before the Syria uprising, the Syrian regime exported meat, cotton and grains from this region. Also this region because of the presence of rivers is able to manufacture products such as cement (Strangers in a Tangled Wilderness, 2015). However, the current crisis in this region has hampered the economic advancement of this region. Coupled with this is the fact that Rojava has not yet been recognized internationally, hence, it can concentrate on

the production of only agricultural products for the time being. Nevertheless, agricultural, oil filtering and diesel producing companies have been created in the region by the locals. The Jizre canton one of such oil rich cities has thousands of oil wells, however, only 200 are currently operational because of the war, and also because the locals need income just for their personal survival. (Biehl, 2015) posits that most people in Rojava depend on agriculture for livelihood. Surely, if the region becomes internationally recognized, more of these wells could become functional so as to export to other countries. This will be very helpful to the economy of the Rojava administration.

Currently the companies produce oil just for internal consumption, and the price is determined by Rojava's committee for energy. In 2014, some representatives from Rojava went to Europe to look for trading partners for their oil economy seeing as they had oil to export but no partners. However, the precarious situation of Syria creates uncertainty and as such Rojava is still to receive any positive feedback from European countries (Strangers in a Tangled Wilderness, 2015). As such, there is also heavy reliance on the black market.

Nowadays Rojava is under pressure to fight against ISIS, other terror groups, and at other times, Assad's forces and Turkey, and of course these wars need money. Rojava spends a large proportion of its budget on the military sector. The budget for defense is 70 % of its annual budget. One begins to wonder where this money comes from especially as there are no taxes and/or proof of exportation of oil. In response to this, administrators have argued that they rely on Jizre's rich economy, local sales of oil, border passages and support from the United States. One however wonders if this is sufficient enough to maintain the economy and the costs of war. Rojava has put in

place a plan for an 'open economy'. This 'open economy' will depend on manufactured and agriculture products, and the promotion of foreign investments. However, foreign investment is hampered by Turkey who has closed most of the borders. Nevertheless, the border between Rojava and the Kurdistan regional government in Iraq is open, and as such, they are able to attract some foreign investors and establish trade routes and agreements which have bolstered the Rojava economy (Biehl, 2015). The Syrian crisis has seen several groups such as ISIS, Al-Nusra, etc, search for control of oil rich areas. The Kurds have had control of some of the underground resources located in the North of Syria since the start of the uprisings in 2011, for instance, Rmeilan and Jizire. For a while ISIS took Rmeila and attempted to control all the rich Kurdish areas but the Kurds defended and in some cases retook these lands with the support of the US. Rmeile one of such areas recaptured by the Kurds produced about one-third of the national oil under the Assad regime. This region certainly is of vital importance to the Kurds especially if they succeed in their demands of a federal system. (Hamed, 2016) argues that control of resources will be an important bargaining chip in these negotiations.

The Rmeilan oil field which is located in the Hasakah province has 25 gas wells, and 1,322 oil wells that are managed by the Syrian Kurds. However, after a clash between the Syrian Kurds and the Al Nusra front in 2013, all of these have stopped being operational. Local companies have tried to refine these oil fields, but their equipments are mostly outdated. In fact, equipments have been brought from refineries in Jizire but they are not sufficient and developed enough to raise production levels. These local machineries are able to produce only about 400.000 liters of diesel and 150.000 liters of good benzene per day. As a consequence, the little oil that is extracted and refined is sold to local gas stations at cheap prices. Of

course the availability of modern and sophisticated weapons will drastically improve the numbers, and therefore enhance trade with outside parties (Haj Hamo, 2014).

The United States has helped the Kurds to protect and defend their region, and the U.S still supports them in efforts to recapture oil rich cities. Shaddadi is another rich oil field that is located in the province of Hasakah which has abundant natural gas and oil currently. The annual revenue of Rojava is estimated at \$288 million which comes largely from the production of oil (Kajjo, 2016).

Under the Assad regime, the Jizire region was of vital importance to the economy of Syria. Even at the dawn of the crisis in 2010, it produced about 90.000 barrels of oil per day. In order to gain full access of this city, the Syrian regime engaged in an ‘arabization’ of the region by creating conditions which forced out Kurds while increasing the number of Arabs there. Some of these were by creating very few job opportunities for Kurds there, lack of universities, factories and opportunities. As such, Kurds had to emigrate to find better living conditions elsewhere. The Syrian regime at one point time under the Baath regime cut off the river Euphrates and Tigris from reaching this region, in order to force Kurds out of the region. This region which also relied on cotton production was heavily affected by this, and many Kurds were forced to leave the area. However, control of this region now lies in the hands of the Kurds, as this area was seized from the Syrian regime in 2011. The current system in Rojava provides that: the economy will be based on self-administration, a work and equitable based developmental system, reliance on technology and science, provision of better living standards for all persons, good organization, and non tolerance for monopolies, a focus on social justice, and a right to private ownership, (Kurdistan national congress, 2014, pp. 5).

At a point in time, oil was exported through the Kurdistan regional government from the oil refinery of Rmeilan to the Alyuka refinery in Zumar in Iraqi Kurdistan then to the Ceyhan port in Turkey. This provided about 10% of the revenue of the economy of Rojava. However, Turkey fearing the growth of the Kurds economically and militarily closed these borders (Now Website, 2015).

In some ways, Rojava has similarities with the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government especially after the invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the United States. This led to the Kurds retaking the city of Kirkuk and asking for federalism which was granted. The same thing is happening in Rojava. Also, both Kurdistan parts South Kurdistan and West Kurdistan have abundant oil. In Iraq, the KRG used these resources after 2005 to rebuild their economy. In the case of the PYD, the goals are the same; use these resources to rebuild their economy. At present though, the KRG is being forced by Turkey who is its highest exporter of oil to take drastic regions against Rojava. This is preventing the KRG to fully support and open trade dealings with Rojava. To the Turkey, there is no difference between Rojava and the PKK which is in (Abdulla, 2014).

This section of this paper has demonstrated how the Rojava region is rich in oil as well as agricultural products. The Kurds have been able to seize some territories from the Assad regime with the help of the United States; however, there are still a number of difficulties faced by the Kurds. One of such is difficulties in entering into trade deals with neighbors, and a lack of markets for its oil. At present, oil exportation is very difficult, and till the federal system is accepted by Syria and the international community, it remains to be seen what the future holds.

## **4.5 Advancing Rojava Relations at the Diplomatic Level**

Since declaring a federation after having fought ISIS and the Syrian regime, the Kurds have sought to establish diplomatic relations with neighboring states and other international actors. These relations in my opinion have started from zero because before 2011, they did not have the opportunity to engage in political activities separate from that of the Syrian regime. However, after fighting the Syrian regime with the support of the US and other international backers, they are now in a position to negotiate with foreign countries in order to establish diplomatic relations. They have tried to do so with Russia, Prague, Brussels, Denmark, Iraq, BENELUX, Germany and Sweden.

These are historic times for Rojava both at the political and diplomatic levels. For the first time they are able to represent their interest on the international stage and make their voices heard. Rojava has attempted to build relations with political parties and civil societies the world across in a bid to garner support for its autonomy. The first diplomatic action was the opening of a PYD office in Sulaimani city in Iraqi Kurdistan Region on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2015. Since then, Rojava has tried to establish friendly relations with other countries and the international community. One if such has been by demanding recognition from the international community for its autonomy (Arafat, 2016). On Feb 10, 2016, Rojava opened its representative office in Moscow. However, Russia has not recognized Rojava's office as a diplomatic mission but has allowed it operate as an NGO. But this office benefits Rojava in the long run. It could also serve as an important tool to use to lobby for support and recognition once the war is over. On the bright side, Rojava has cooperated with the U.S. and Russia in the fight against ISIS. Although Russia has

supported Bashar Al-Assad's regime, it has also joined forces with Rojava to fight a common enemy ISIS (Oliphant, 2016). These bilateral relations will help Rojava in future negotiations for a recognized federal system. This kind of international support now for them is very necessary. For instance, both the U.S and Russia did not mind the Kurds participating in Geneva-3, and although Turkey did not agree, both the U.S and Russia agree that without the Kurds the Syrian crisis will be more difficult to solve because the Kurds have been involved significantly in the Syrian crisis, particularly in the fight against terrorist groups in the region. The PYD has had good relation with the U.S and its partners but has also not rejected support from other countries like Russia (RT, 2016). Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov in June 2016 said: *"How is it possible to talk about political reforms in Syria while ignoring the leading Kurdish party—a quite a powerful force that is actively resisting terrorism on the ground?"* (Hodge & Ostroukh, 2016).

Rojava is expanding their relations and legitimacy in Europe and have succeeded in opening some representative offices in different countries, as well being hosted by presidents; for example the PYD co-chair visited Francois Hollande in Paris even as Turkish president, Recep Erdogan has criticized some states for opening their arms to the PYD's representatives. One of the reasons why Erdogan's calls have fallen on deaf ears is because the Kurds have actively fought against ISIS (Taştekin, 2016). Prague has also hosted Rojava's representative office and is even building a friendly relationship. The PYD has used this opportunity to lobby for political support, and humanitarian aid. However, the Czech Republic has not formally acknowledged Syrian Kurdistan as a sovereign state. Rojava on its part has been striving for international support and recognition of its democratic system and a federal autonomous region. They do this under the banner of self determination, claiming

that all they seek is a modern democratic system which is part of their rights (Ekurd daily, 2016).

Commander Nesrin Abdullah, the leader of the Women's Protection Units (YPJ) paid several visits across Europe; the Czech Republic, France, Italy and other European states and her delegation was appreciated and praised for their fight against terrorism. Nesrin Abdullah in Sweden is quoted as saying; "*We want their support either in a political, humanitarian or military form.*" During her stay in Sweden, she met some political parties, was received by the Swedish parliament, and met with the Swedish defense minister. Her delegation asked for medical aid for people and fighters wounded in the battles against terror groups like (ISIS). It is possible that her delegation could receive up to \$8000 in donations from Sweden for the construction of a school in the city of Kobane in the North of Syria. It was a vital step for Rojava that delegation led by a military commander visited Sweden, then Prague and the rest of Europe (Medin, 2016). When the Rojava bureau on April 17, 2016, opened in Stockholm, Sweden, the PYD representatives were greeted by an excited crowd dressed in PYD uniforms.

In May 2016, a diplomatic mission for Rojava was opened in Berlin, the capital of Germany. In the ceremony which had in attendance members from the German parliament, NGOs, and different Kurdish political parties. The representative of Rojava in German asked the German government to support them through the training of fighters, as well as the provision of arms in the fight against terror (Ekurd daily, 2016). When Turkey attacked Rojava's territories by troops and air forces, Dr. Frank Walter Steinmeier warned Turkey and asked that the attacks stop. The German Foreign minister also said: "*we have warned Turkey from threatening the Kurdish*



*issue, and pointed out that Turkey has to join the war against ISIS not to fight Kurds” (Adel, 2016).*

France has been involved in the US-led coalition against ISIS, and has also conducted air attacks in support of the Rojava’s military in the fight against ISIS (France 24, 2016). Also, Francois Hollande on Feb 8, 2015, hosted the PYD co-chair Asya Abdullah, and the Commander of the Women’s Protection Union, Nesrin Abdullah. They asked Francois Hollande for advanced weapons to fight ISIS. The French president confirmed France’s support for the Syrian Kurds (Taştekin, 2015). On May 23, 2016, Rojava opened its diplomatic representative mission in Paris and some French figures participated, like former French foreign minister Bernard Kouchner. The aim of this representative branch is to facilitate and coordinate military cooperation with France, as well as establish political, cultural and economic relations, all in an effort to lobby for support of their demands for (Ekurd daily, 2016).

Rojava day by day is increasingly garnering support and establishing representative offices abroad, for example, on September 8, 2016, the Rojava’s representative office was opened in Hague, in the union of BENELUX for representation in Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg, (Roj, 2016). Furthermore the first temporary embassy of Rojava was opened in a municipality hall in Oslo in Norway, on November 26, 2016. The embassy has brought together diplomats, academics, activists, and artists from Rojava, to talk about the future of the Kurds and Rojava in the region (Ekurd Daily, 2016). This embassy was temporary, yet a positive step for an infant Rojava. Just the fact that they could bring together many politicians, academics and

diplomats to discuss the future of this group is an important step forward and a message to the world that we are ready for autonomy.

#### **4.6 The Future of Rojava**

Predicting what will happen next is very difficult because situations change quickly in the Middle East. In the case of Syria, this is even more complicated by the fact that on one hand, you have the US, on the other, Russia, on another Iran, as well as Turkey on its own side. All of these international actors have their own interests and goals in Syria, so it is difficult to predict what will happen next in Syria. The future of Rojava and whether it gets autonomy is closely tied with the outcome of negotiations in Syria. So far, things are looking good for Rojava especially as both the US and Russia seems not to be opposed to the idea of federalism in Syria. However, there is still a long way to go and things might change. The hope for Rojava is that by the end of the war, they can achieve a federal system. Presently Syria is divided into four; one part is under the control of Assad, the other under Rojava, one under Sunni opposition groups and the final controlled by ISIS and other terrorists groups. By the time these terrorist groups are defeated, three sides will remain and with the way things stand and it will be difficult to go back to a Syria pre-2011, because Rojava has become a de factor autonomous region which has a large territory in the North as well as they are armed and trained by U.S. The initial call by the US that Assad must not be part of a future Syria has failed. US secretary of State, John Kerry, has now declared a plan B that focuses on decentralization in Syria based on a system of federation or confederation involving Rojava, the Sunni opposition groups and Assad (Engdahi, 2016). For Moscow, Assad remaining power is a must, although they have not rejected the Plan B suggested by the US. Slim (2016) argues that Russia will agree with federation if only Syrians have no

objections. In reality though, if Russia and the U.S agree on a federation, Assad will have to accept it (Haidi, 2016).

The PYD has already declared its support for a federal system in all of Syria. If this plan B is implemented in Syria, it will be good for Rojava because the Kurds autonomous region will be recognized just as was the case with the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq. This will open many doors for Rojava and it can then enter into diplomatic dealings and treaties with neighboring countries and other international actors. In addition, the Rojava region will become very rich, because then it would be able to produce and sell oil to neighboring countries, as well as attract foreign investment, and foster growth and stability (Biehl, 2015). The hope is that foreign investments just like the case of the KRG region, will guarantee international support. For instance, when ISIS attacked the KRG, the US immediately intervened in order to protect its companies which were in the region.

Bahram (2016) has said that the other solution might be one which sees Syria remain the same, and this comes after the Assad regime insisted that any negotiations on the future of Syria will be done with Syria and not the PYD. In addition, some international and regional actors such as Turkey and Iran have objected to the division of Syria. This is because both Iran and Turkey fear the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish region in Syria. The Arab League is also against the division of Syria for fear of a strong an autonomous Kurdistan. Demographics also pose a problem because many Kurds live in other areas in Syria, and vice versa. The Kurdish National Council a Kurdish group has even joined the Syrian regime in the fight against the regime. Matters are further complicated in terms of sharing the natural resources available particularly as most of the natural resources, water

sources and farming lands are located in the Rojava region. This poses a problem because it is difficult to see how the Assad regime and other parties will be willing to accept divisions which will see these resources remain in the hands of the Kurds (Haidi, 2016). The Kurds also fear that they maybe betrayed by the US and other allies even as they jointly fought ISIS. As well as the Kurds worry about regional agreement as was the case in 1975 with Kurdish Iraq (In Algeria 1975, the Shah of Iran and Saddam Hussein had signed an agreement rejecting an autonomous Iraq Kurdistan.) (Schorr, 1991). The Kurds in Rojava fear a repeat of history. The fear is that Syria and Turkey might emulate the 1975 Iraq-Iran agreement in Algeria on the issue of the Syrian Kurds. In fact, in 1998 these two parties had signed the Adana agreement in which they argued that the ‘Kurdish issue’ was a security threat for them (Aykan, 1999. pp, 174).

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

The threat posed by ISIS and other terrorist groups have grown such that the US and the Kurds were forced to form an alliance in order to fight and eradicate these groups. As a result of this, the Kurds have ‘bandwaggoned’ on the US. This relationship has been beneficial to both parties particularly the Kurds. While that of the US has been to curb the spread of terrorism, that of the Kurds has been dual; stop the threats posed by terrorism, and establish an autonomous Kurdistan region in the North of Syria. US backing have been vital for the PYD not only in its fight against ISIS, but also against the Assad regime, Turkey and the numerous international embargoes which it has faced from some international states. At present, the future of the rich region of Rojava as has been elaborated upon above is closely tied to the future of negotiations on the Syrian crisis. However, it is my opinion that the best

solution will not be to go back to pre-2011 Syria seeing as the dynamics of the region has changed.

## **Chapter 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

The Syrian Kurds have had many problems in Syria, but after 2011 something happened generally in Syria and particularly for the Kurds. As I mentioned in the overview of the Syrian Kurds, all the Syrian regimes did not allow the Kurds a political or cultural identity and persecuted the Kurds for a long time. In Syria and other places where Kurds live, like Turkey, Iran and Iraq have not let the Kurds any right, the Kurds are suffering more than a century in the Middle East. They have tried to autonomy or independent; Kurdistan-Iraq gained autonomy and in 2005 became a federal region in the Iraqi federal system.

The Syrian Kurds with have had many pressures on them, and before 2011 their activities were limited. They did not see any window to look at the brightness, but the Arab uprising in Syria 2011 gave the Kurds a big chance and paved the way for the Kurds to prove themselves as they fought against the Assad regime to achieve their objectives. They soon could organize themselves and faced Assad after awhile the Kurds retook many cities in North of Syria that were Kurdish cities. PYD became a powerful and an organized party after 2011 they declared a system of cantons for Jazira, Afrin and Kobane. The struggle between Assad and other opposition groups have not finished while another problem emerged in Syria, the Islamic state in Iraq and Syria, the terror state or organization changed the situation and turned the eyes from Assad to ISIS. The ISIS became stronger in Iraq after attacking Mosul then they

attacked Raqqa both have become capital cities of ISIS in Iraq and Syria. ISIS attacked the Kurdish cities in Syria particularly Kobane and they took many villages around Kobane but they could not enter the city of Kobane because PYD defended very well with limited weapons, ammunition and drugs. The U.S has made a coalition against the terrorist group that many countries joined the coalition but no one sought fighting ISIS directly on the ground as the alliance was limited to air strike. The U.S understood that they needed some forces on the ground to defeat ISIS and allied with Peshmerga forces of the Kurdistan region in Iraq. However it was not sufficient because the allies needed some reliable forces in Syria like Peshmerga forces in South Kurdistan. The best option for the U.S in Syria was the Kurds; while Kobane was under siege of ISIS the PYD resisted alone but required the international community to help against terrorism. The U.S helped and has made relations with PYD to defeat ISIS in Syria. Thus both the U.S and PYD needed each other based on common interests they have created the relationships which have been the benefit for both sides. Because the U.S sought to end the terrorist in the region and the Kurds needed the military, economy and political support of the United States in order to the Kurds could exploit the U.S support for empowering their position in Syria and aligned (Bandwagoning) with the U.S because they have had different enemies. Turkey made many problems for PYD but because the U.S and PYD have a kind of alliance, Turkey could not full intervention or invade Rojava. In addition the relationships between the United States and PYD have some other advantages for the Kurds (PYD) in Syria for example, the PYD after making alliance with the U.S and getting its support by the U.S supports they could win in fighting Islamic state and retake the lands of North Syria then the Kurds linked the some of the cantons and all cantons organized under system of Rojava, the system is federalism of Syria and an

autonomous region for the Kurds under Syrian federal. The Kurds could benefit from close relations economically. The U.S provided the Kurds with the necessities for war which reduced economic pressure on the Kurds. Additionally, the Kurds retook some rich cities in the North of Syria that helped the economy of Rojava the cities and many villages taken by ISIS but the Kurds and the U.S retook them which most rich oil lands. Now PYD produce the oil by the internal company and there are many oil fields and the land of North Syria are possible for agriculture because of soil and enough water for farming. Thus the Kurds with the U.S support could protect the natural resources and retook their lands from ISIS. Another advantage for the Kurds is about diplomatic relations after declared cantons and Rojava self-rule the Kurds established diplomatic ties with many countries and opened a door towards international community after visiting some leaders of PYD to Europe and some delegations that received by even president of some countries, for example, Francois Hollande president of France received Asya Abdulla the co-chair of PYD. Furthermore, the PYD opened representatives in different states that will help the Rojava in difference ways to support the new autonomy in Syria. Regarding the future of Rojava I mentioned two assumptions first, divided Syria for some autonomy region based on federalism as the PYD seeks, as John Kerry pointed out as plan B for the Syrian solution. Second, remaining in Syria as Assad envisions. However this is a weak assumption. Furthermore, there is a risk for the Kurds of betrayal, between some countries on the Kurdish issue like Sykes Picot agreement. As well as, they fear a regional agreement especially between Turkey and Assad, as has happened on Iraqi Kurds in 1975 between Saddam Hussein and the Shah of Iran when they signed an agreement to end the Kurdish revolution in the North of Iraq In



addition the Adana agreement between Syria and Turkey in 1998. The Syrian Kurds worry about the same kind of regional agreements.

## **5.1 Recommendations**

As I examined in my research the Kurds could reduce the threat of the Islamic state. In this relation both the Kurds (PYD) and the U.S benefited, particularly the PYD as my hypotheses emphasizes, I mentioned the advantages PYD got from its ties with the U.S in chapter four. In my recommendation section, I am going to recommend some points that PYD and the U.S must have for now and the future.

For Rojava this is necessary to continue its relations with the U.S, because U.S supports will help the infant Rojava entity. Defeating ISIS must be a priority aim for both sides because the terrorist group is a threat to their goals and agendas as well as stability for the region. Bandwagoning is more essential for Rojava in order to Rojava has many problems and enemies additionally working with the Washington becomes return the stability to the region which under the security situation Rojava can get the objectivis especially regarding the economy like production oil, deal with other companies and receive foreigner companies to restructure the destroy cities. In additionally the continuation of the U.S and Kurds relations will limit the Turkey's hostility actions and fighting PYD face to face. Furthermore, Turkey and ISIS are not only Rojava's hostiles rather Assad is and opposition groups as well. Because Assad rejects the partition of Syria and opposition groups mostly are supported by Turkey especially to end the Kurds dream in the North of Syria. For these above reasons, I recommend that Rojava must still have relation with the U.S and align. Of course, continue the relations are not only useful for Rojava rather it will be a benefit for the United States as well. Because the Kurds are only reliable forces for the Washington

in confronting terrorism, today it must end may be tomorrow other terrorist groups emerge and the U.S does not face fighting ISIS by its forces. As well as the Kurds are the modern and secular group they are not extremist and nationalist group, they can work with Arab, Turkmen and different religious groups. Furthermore, if the U.S isolates or ignores the Kurds in Syria they may have relation with Russia or Iran that will not be good news for Washington.

But Rojava must isolate from some points to assure the U.S. the first, PYD must insulate them from PKK in Turkey because Turkey believes and tries to show them as the same terrorist group but for the United States they are different. PYD must not take any action like terrorist do so. Secondly, for Rojava will be good if they do not go face and fight other internal groups and civil war in order to the situations will get worse and Turkey may share and the U.S may not help. Third, Rojava must not directly reaction and fighting the Turkey's inimically action or threat, today is not time to face Turkey in order to the U.S will not support the Kurds, rather the Rojava must turn attention, attractive and require the UN, international community and civil societies then prove for them that we are fighting terrorist, not countries but Turkey has sought to end our right and dream while we are living in Syria, not in Turkey. Finally, for continuation the Rojava and the U.S relations, Rojava should insulate from Russia and Iran's agendas because Assad has a close relation with both Iran and Russia countries, opposition groups have relation with Turkey and Rojava has with the United States that necessary to still have this relation. In addition, Rojava must strengthen their relations with all countries in the world and continue to open the representatives to try to get their support for the infant administration and show them that their region is very rich to export oil. To bring about a solution for Syria, I recommend decentralization as the best method based on federalism, because it will

be difficult to return Syria to the pre-2011 order, particularly as Rojava has enjoyed de factor autonomy since the revolution against Assad began.

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