

# Road to Democratic Confederalism – from idea of Socialist Kurdish State to Autonomous Administration

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## **Abstract**

The article analyzes the theory of Democratic Confederalism that had been established in Northern Syria in the beginning of 2014. Three cantons had been declared in Northern Syria, a region also called as Rojava by Kurds and the system for governance of the cantons was Democratic Confederalism. Democratic Confederalism is a governance system which had been theorized by Abdullah Ocalan. Democratic Confederalism is a governance system that rejects the nation-state and its ideology and proposes a new system that does not rely on any kind of state. The article started with the evolvement of A. Ocalan's ideology from socialism, in the early 1970s, to Democratic Confederalism in the beginning of 2000s. The article also explained Democratic Confederalism and introduced the main principles of the system. After explaining the system of Democratic Confederalism, the article focuses on governance of Cantons that had been declared in Northern Syria. The last part of the paper finds out whether Democratic Confederalism is functional or not based on experience in Northern Syria.

## **Introduction**

The Kurdish political movement has followed different paths since its inception (1978) to solve the Kurdish problem in the Middle East. Kurds are divided into four Middle East states which are Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran. The division into the above countries influenced the emergence of several political movements with different characteristics. This article will focus on the Syrian Kurdish political struggle and their new administrative system in Northern Syria. During the Syrian Civil War, Kurds have declared autonomy in North Syria. The administrative system for the region was Democratic Confederalism, a system that has been theorized by Abdullah Ocalan, leader of Kurdistan Workers' Party, (Kurdish. Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK)),

an organization that has been recognized as a terrorist group by European Union, Turkey, United States and many other states. Democratic Confederalism is a governance system that rejects the nation-state and its ideology and proposes a new system that does not rely on any kind of state. The existing literature about Democratic Confederalism have not been quite objective on the theory and praxis in Northern Syria. As Pinar Dinc criticizes, the part of existing literature on cantons Autonomous Administration tends to describe region as a safe haven (Dinc, 2020, p. 48). Although democracy was introduced in Northern Syria under the Charter of the Social Contract, there were violations of human rights in this region. Human Rights Watch claims that the Democratic Union Party (Kurdish. Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (PYD)) committed many human rights violations during its rule. Unsolved killings and disappearances of the PYD's political opponents, suppressing anti-PYD's protestors are some examples of human rights violations and anti-democratic acts (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

This paper defines the main principles of Democratic Confederalism in Northern Syria. The Democratic Union Party (PYD) started to declare the establishment of cantons in Northern Syria in 2014. The administrative system of the cantons was Democratic Confederalism. The article starts with a brief history of the Ocalan's ideology and the path towards Democratic Confederalism. The article's two goals are as follows: First, the article briefly describes how A. Ocalan's Socialist United Kurdish State ideals evolved into Democratic Confederalism and outlines its fundamental tenets. Second, it attempts to address the issue of whether the Autonomous Administration in Northern Syria practices democracy as claimed or not. This paper claims that the Autonomous Administration in Northern Syria is functioning in practice and its practices are suitable with criteria of Democratic Confederalism. The paper has used the Autonomous Administration as a case study to investigate the second objective of the paper and prove its claims. It has focused on three main issues to explain the claims of the article. The political representation of groups like minorities is the first point. The engagement of women in sociopolitical life is the second criteria, and whether the Autonomous Administration can defend the region on its own or not is the final point.

## A. Ocalan's Ideology: from Social to Democratic Confederalism

During the 1970s, revolutionary leftist movements were quite strong and socialist revolution was a possibility among them in Turkey. A. Ocalan and other founding members of PKK, such as Cemil Bayik, Duran Kalkan etc. were also involved in Turkish leftists' movement. However, after the military memorandum of 1971, students started to think about a Kurdish movement. Abdullah A. Ocalan states that from spring 1973, while he was in prison, he thought that a group based on Kurdistan may have played an important role in solving the Kurdish issue (Akkaya, 2013, p. 97). The Kurdish youth who were students in Ankara and Istanbul, believed that a Socialist revolution in Turkey would be the solution to Kurdish issue. However, in the second half of the 70s, Kurdish youth started to consider, a Kurdish leftist organization which just focused on Kurdish issue and would organize in Kurdistan, not in big cities such as Ankara and Istanbul.

Five years later, in 1978, under the leadership of A. Ocalan, the PKK had been established. It was a Marxist-Leninist party which aimed to establish a united and independent Kurdish state based on socialist ideas. A. Ocalan claims that PKK was formed during the 70's when the world was divided by two camps – a bipolar system of Cold War – the capitalist and the socialist camps. It was inspired from the rise of decolonization movements which spreaded all around the world (Ocalan, 2011, p. 7). The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) was inspired by the decolonization movement because it views Kurdistan as a land that has been invaded by foreign nations and as a colonized country. In the manifesto of PKK, *The Path of Kurdistan Revolution*, A. Ocalan describes Kurdistan as a colony which is divided into four parts: Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran (Ocalan, 1993, p. 80). The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) had been established in the 70's and was highly affected by contemporary politics of the 70's but it never regarded Kurdish question as a merely ethnicity or nationhood problem. It was a project of liberating society and democratizing it (Ocalan, 2011, p. 7).

However, the collapse of Soviet Union and the end of Cold War had changed A. Ocalan's ideology. It was also clear that none of the sides, neither Turkey nor PKK, can win the armed conflict. The warfare reached a balance point (Ayboğa et al., 2019, p. 49). Hence, A. Ocalan and PKK started to be interested in new methods and policies to solve the Kurdish question. In order to find a democratic solution to Kurdish question, PKK declared ceasefires from 1993 but they did not end with a solution and the war broke out again after all of these ceasefires. In the last years of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Turkey started to oppress Syrian government to stop PKK's existence in the soil of Syria. A. Ocalan left Syria and was captured by Turkish intelligence service in Nairobi, Kenya on February 15, 1999. Since then, he has been imprisoned in Turkey. The capture of A. Ocalan did not result either with dissolution of PKK or termination of the Kurdish question. During his years in prison, A. Ocalan continued his ideological studies in order to end the Kurdish question by democratic means. After his capture, he believed that the period of armed conflict was over and a political solution in the existing borders should be the new aim of Kurdish movement (Gerber, Brincat, 2018, p. 4). He started to reread Marxist theory and praxis in a critical way. He had been influenced by libertarian theorist Murray Bookchin. He had also studied the ideas of Michel Foucault and Immanuel Wallerstein as well as Sumerian mythology, Athenian democracy, religion, philosophy, history, and physics. Benefiting from all of these sources, he developed the idea of Democratic Confederalism and Democratic Autonomy (Ayboğa et al., 2019, p. 49).

## Democratic Confederalism and critique of nation-state

In a letter to Murray Bookchin, A. Ocalan states that he had completely given up the idea of establishing a state. Given up the idea of establishing a Kurdish nation-state leads A. Ocalan to consider different models of governance in order to solve the Kurdish question. He started to theorize the Democratic Confederalism model. The model refers to a non-state democratic organization (Ocalan, 2011, p. 3). He denies nation-states and global capitalism and criticizes both concepts. According to A. Ocalan, the origins of contemporary crises, such as conflicts in the

Middle East or global financial crisis, are nation-state and capitalist system. Democratic Confederalism is not a top-down, democratic system but rather democracy that is based on bottom of the society and is only way to solve modern problems of the world. Democratic Confederalists' program covers the main issues of contemporary world such as women's liberation, direct communal democracy and ecological society (Huff, 2018, p. 2). Contemporary indirect democracy failed to solve issues such as unequal distribution of wealth, participation of women in politics, and, of course, the Kurdish question. Nationalist and state-centric model of administration are the sources of contemporary politics' problems. According to A. Ocalan, the new nationalist wave will not be beneficiary to society, but it will bring loose as it did in the previous century (Ocalan, 2015, p. 3). The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed two great wars: the rise of nationalism and fascism which had resulted with millions of casualties, economic destruction, and Holocaust. To understand Democratic Confederalism there are some concepts that need to be explained, especially the notion of nation-state and the ideology of nation-state.

The end of 30 Years of War and the Peace of Westphalia are the beginning of nation-states era in Europe. Establishment of nation-state closed the Age of Empires and started a new era. Unlike the empires, in nation states, people should share a common history, common language and common values. National education, standing armies, and territorial integrity are some of the main features of the nation-state. Establishment of nation-state had resulted with minorities within nation-states such as Kurds and dividing nations with artificial borders. Minorities generally had witnessed oppression, and assimilation. Nation-states brought external problems as well as internal problems such as wars between nation-states and independence war against nation-states. Kurdistan is one of the examples that witnessed creation of the artificial border which divided Kurds into four different states: Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey. The concept of Kurdistan does not refer to a country or political concept but rather to a geographical concept. Kurds, in all mentioned countries, had witnessed oppression as well as assimilation. Due to nationalist policies of Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey, Kurds had suffered for decades. Kurdish language has been banned in public places as well as in social life. In Syria, Kurds had been stripped away from their citizenship and many other rights. In Iraq, Halabja Massacre happened, where chemical weapon had been used against Kurds in 1986. In Turkey, revolts against government had been harshly suppressed. For instance, during the Dersim rebellion, thousands of Kurds had been killed.

According to A. Ocalan, the problems of Kurds and other nations such as Palestinians, Armenians, Arabs are rooted in the emergence of nations-states. He claims that territorial borders remained flexible and multi-ethnic empires rose with consistently changing borders. Great Empires such as Roman, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian or British Empires had ported many different ethnicities, languages, and religions (Ocalan, 2011, p. 9). For instance, Kurds during the Ottoman Period were not divided into four countries. Kurds in Syria, Iraq and Turkey had free movement of people and goods without any restrictions. Many Kurdish tribes had members in the two countries. Even though the empires had borders, these borders did not have great impact on the social life of ordinary people. However, the nation-states eliminated (or tried to eliminate)

diversity of societies and states. A state with a single official language, one nation and oneness of all symbols such as flags or legendary heroes resulted in discrimination of minority groups.

In the nation-states, the power is concentrated on a specific center. However, in empires the power was distributed over a wide range of secondary small powers. This was one of the reasons that empires survived long periods of time and many challenges (Ocalan, 2011, p. 9). The nation-state has power over all kinds of political activities in determined territory. Decisions that are being taken by a center are applicable to all parts of state but in empires decentralization was an important element. In the nation-states power is highly concentrated in a specific center. State has monopoly on using power. A. Ocalan claims that the nation-state itself is the most developed complete monopoly (Ocalan, 2011, p. 9). Another problem of nation-states which A. Ocalan focuses on is their homogeneity. Nation-state eliminates the plurality of the societies. Creation of one official language, a flag, a nation, and a religious community is the aim of nation-state (Ocalan, 2011, p. 9). This policy resulted in the annihilation of minorities and their culture and language. Kurds in newly established nation-states, such as Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran, had suffered due to the process of creation of nation-states. Problems regarding cultural, historical, and social issues have not been solved yet. In 2011, at the beginning of Syrian Civil War, the Syrian government still refused to give citizenship to all Kurds that live in Syria. Centrality and oneness of nation-state had led to problems among and within societies. A. Ocalan claims that the problems of contemporary politics can be solved through Democratic Confederalism. According to A. Ocalan, nationalism, positivist science, sexism and religiousness are the ideological foundations of nation-state (Ocalan, 2011, p. 15–18). In A. Ocalan's works nationalism is being viewed as quasi-religious justification and its mission is to serve nation-state. If the nation-state is a living God, the nationalism would be its religion (Ocalan, 2011, p. 15). Another ideological foundation is religiousness. Religion still plays an important role in contemporary politics, especially after the 70s, with Iran's Islamic Revolution. For instance, in Turkey the government has been using religious rhetoric and considers themselves as a conservative party. It is very common for government members to show up in religious places and being recorded while they are praying. A. Ocalan claims that even though a nation-state acts like a secular state, it does use *mélange* of nationalism and religion for its purpose (Ocalan, 2011, p. 17).

The states are the main and powerful actors of international politics. The United Nations (UN) consists of only nation-states. The existence of the UN had been able to prevent a world scale war but not regional and internal armed conflicts. The Gulf War (1990–1991), civil wars after collapse of Yugoslavia, war in Iraq (2003) are some examples of the conflicts. According to A. Ocalan, the UN system has failed. The Problem of Iraq had proved this bankruptcy (Ocalan, 2011, p. 4). The problems regarding the existence of nation-state can be solved through the Democratic Condefederalist system. Democratic Confederalism develops an alternative which is open to different political formation, multiculturalist, ecologic and feminist, and does not allow monopoly (Ocalan, 2011, p. 4).

The right of self-determination of people is an international right that has been granted to all nations. One of the purposes of the UN is to develop friendly relations among nations based

on equal rights and the right of self-determination of people (the UN Charter Article 1). There are different approaches to the concept of the right of self-determination of people, such as the liberal approach and Marxist approach, which A. Ocalan and PKK was once inspired by. Due to its historical context, the right of self-determination of people is not a proletarian socialist concept. It emerged after the French revolution which stated of democratic principles and equality of all nations (Tatar, Toprak, 2015, p. 61). In Marxist literature Vladimir Lenin explains the right of self-determination. V. Lenin claims that the tendency of every national movement is towards the formation of a national state. And the national state is a typical and normal state of the capitalist period (Lenin, 2004, p. 47). Based on the economic era and history of national movements, he gave a definition of the right of self-determination of people. "It means the political separation of these nations from alien national bodies and the formation of an independent national state" (Lenin, 2004, p. 47). A. Ocalan disagrees and criticizes the definition that was made by V. Lenin. He states the right of self-determination does not only mean to establish a state. According to him, this right means to establish their own democracy and non-state way of ruling themselves. It is the right to form a model that non-state communities can discuss and decide about their problems in villages, in neighborhoods and in periphery of cities (Ocalan, year, p. 5). A. Ocalan himself is an anti-nation-statist politician and leader. He criticizes the nation-states for bringing nothing but problems for the people. Therefore, formation of a Kurdish state in the Middle East will not solve the problems of Kurds, because A. Ocalan believes that a nation-state in the Middle East will eventually have a despotic characteristic (Ocalan, year, p. 5). Some Middle Eastern countries are examples to the A. Ocalan's statement. For instance, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Libya, and Saudi Arabi are countries that can be considered as non-democratic, authoritarian, and dictatorial governments. Even Turkey cannot be defined as a liberal democratic state. According to Visual Capitalist, there are no countries falling under the category of full democracy in this region. Only Israel and Cyprus are considered flawed democracies (Amaros, 2022). To conclude, Kurdish nation-state may have the same democratic problems as other countries in the Middle East do and will not contribute to a democratic society for Kurds.

## Principles of Democratic Confederalism

In 2005, PKK declared that their party views nation-state as a barrier to freedoms and stated that it is not aiming to establish a nation-state anymore (Jongerden, 2015, p. 1). On March 20, 2005, in a letter to PKK, A. Ocalan defines the main principles of Democratic Confederalism and he declares the inception of process of building the system in Kurdistan. It is a rule or administration without a state (Ocalan, 2011, p. 21). In Democratic Confederalism, society will organize itself from scratch. Decisions regarding the local problems will be taken by people with manners of direct democracy. All institutions do organize and rule themselves. It will not aim to change the existing state border through force. Self-ruling organizations and societies do not fight (physically) against nation-states but focus on democratizing society, the region and the world. As A. Ocalan states that Democratic Confederalism is not at war with any nation-state but it will not stand idly

by assimilation efforts (Ocalan, 2011, p. 32). Societies will be in a position of self-defense against nation-states.

In contrast to nation-states, Democratic Confederalism does not aim to create a monistic society. It is open to all cultures, languages, religions, and political groups and is a multi-culturalist society. Feminism and ecology are central elements of Democratic Confederalism (Ocalan, 2011, p. 21). Environmental and gender problems are popular issues of contemporary politics. Women are not being represented in global politics as well as men. Environmental problems such as climate change are threatening the environment as well as human life. Democratic Confederalism aims to equal representation of women and men. It also aims to end production based on profit, which causes environmental problems. The main principles of the system are as follow (Ocalan, 2011, p. 33–34):

1. The right of self-determination of the people includes the right to a state of their own. However, the foundation of a state does not increase the freedom of people. The system of the United Nations that is based on nation-states has remained inefficient. Meanwhile, nation-states have become serious obstacles for any social development. Democratic Confederalism is the contrasting paradigm of oppressed people.
2. Democratic Confederalism is a non-state paradigm. It is not controlled by a state. At the same time, it is the cultural organizational blueprint of a democratic nation.
3. It is based on grass-roots participation. Its decision-making processes lie with the communities. Higher levels only serve the coordination and implementation of the will of the communities that send their delegates to the general assemblies. For limited period space of time, they are both mouthpiece and executive institutions. However, the basic power of decisions rests with the local grass-roots institutions.
4. In the Middle East, democracy cannot be implemented by the capitalist system and its imperial powers which only damage democracy. The propagation of grass-roots democracy is elementary. It is the only approach that can cope with diverse ethnical groups, religions, and class differences. It also goes together well with the traditional confederate structure of the society.
5. Democratic Confederalism in Kurdistan is an anti-nationalist movement as well. It aims at realizing the right of self-defense of the peoples by the advancement of democracy in all parts of Kurdistan without questioning the existing political borders. Its goal is to establish federal structures in Iran, Turkey, Iraq, and Syria that are open for all Kurds and at the same time form an umbrella confederation for all four parts of Kurdistan.

The idea of Democratic Confederalism would remain as a theory until the establishment of the Autonomous Administration during the course of Syrian Civil War. The Democratic Union Party (PYD), which considers A. Ocalan as an ideological leader, will try to implement the idea of Democratic Confederalism in Northern Syria. The Civil War has resulted an administrative gap which will be fulfilled by the PYD and Democratic Confederalism was declared in Northern Syria.



## Declaration of Autonomous Administration in Northern Syria

The inception of creation of autonomous regions can be dated back to 2011. In 2011, PYD created the Peoples Council of Western Kurdistan (PCWK) which has 320 elected members with legislative and executive branches. The aim of PCWK was to provide social services and decrease the level of anarchy under the situation of civil war (Gunter, 2014, p. 111) and to further develop people's councils, commissions, and coordinating bodies. The Peoples Council of Western Kurdistan (PCWK) has members in every Kurdish region, and they act as mayors and tried to rule society instead of Syrian government. It can be interpreted that PYD started the project of autonomous Kurdish region from the very beginning of the civil war.

After the withdrawal of Syrian government from Northern Syria where majority of population is Kurdish, the Movement for a Democratic Society (TEV-DEM) which is a coordinating body that has been elected by the PCWK, alongside with PYD, declared the Charter of Social Contract in January 2014, which can be considered as constitution of Autonomous Administration and created Autonomous Regions, the self-administrative units. Democratic Autonomy had also been declared alongside with the Charter of Social Contract and Northern Syria had been divided into three cantons: Canton of Jazira declared on January 19, 2014, Canton of Kobane on January 27, 2014, and Canton of Afrin on January 29, 2014. Declaration of Cantons laid a ground for the implementation of Democratic Confederalism in Northern Syria.

After the declaration of autonomy, each canton formed a democratic-autonomous administration which was transitional administration, and each administration has a legislative council which can be identified as a local parliament. Members of the Legislative Council are elected for a four-year term. The Legislative Council elects an Executive Council which has two co-chairs: one male and one female. All three cantons adopt Democratic Confederalism and its means of governance. The sole source of authority resides within people of regions. All cantons have the right to freely elect their representatives and representative bodies. This right is assured via the Charter in article 8. Each body of Autonomous Regions has different responsibilities and different duties to implement principles of self-administration in the region. The Legislative Assembly is elected by the people by secret ballot and for duration of four years (The Charter of Social Contract, Article 45). The Legislative Assembly is the main organizational and legal body of The Autonomous Regions. As mentioned in the Charter, in the section of the functions of the Legislative Assembly, it has right and power to establish rules, signing international treaties and agreements, declare war and peace etc. The other body of governance in the Autonomous Regions is the Executive Council. The Executive Council is the highest executive and administrative body in the Autonomous Regions. It is responsible for the implementation of laws, resolutions and decrees as issued by the Legislative Assembly and judicial institutions (The Charter of Social Contract, Article 54). Northern Syria does not only consist of Kurds. It ports different ethnicities and religions such as Muslims, Christians, and Yazidis. Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Armenians, Turkmens, Chechens and Circassians are the ethnicities that live in Northern Syria (Ayboğa et al., 2019, p. 33–41). The first sentence of the Charter of Social Contract emphasizes this diversity and states that the Charter has been declared by all these ethnic and religious



groups. Article 6 of the Charter focuses on the equality of all individuals and communities in the eyes of the laws. The Cantons are founded based on the principle of self-government and each of the cantons is free to choose its representatives and representative bodies. Cantons are also free to choose their own flags, emblems, and anthems (The Charter of Social Contract, Article 6, 8, 11). The cantons are still part of Syria rather than a separatist movement. Article 12 of the Charter of the Social Contract states that the cantons are integral part of Syria. In March 2016, Federal System of Rojava/ Northern Syria had been established. It brought three cantons together as well as newly liberated areas. In November 2016, the name of the federation has been changed to Democratic Federation of Northern Syria. The name of the federation has been changed and the concept of Rojava has been removed. Because as Democratic Federation of Northern Syria is not only consisting of Kurds but also different other nations and minorities such as Arabs, and Assyrians (Ayboğa et al., 2019, p. 120). Therefore, using the term Rojava, a Kurdish term, would mean that Autonomous Administration is a Kurdish federation and would not be suitable with Democratic Confederalism. A member of Northern Syria Federal System Organizing Council said that one reason for removing the word Rojava is region's plan to join the mainly Arab provinces of Raqqa and Deir ez-Zur in Northern Syria (Arafat, 2016). Due to territorial expansion, the name of Autonomous Administration has been changed once again to its final version in 2018, which is the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), to include new regions such as Raqqah, Manbij, and Deir al-Zour (Van Wilgenburg, 2020). It can be concluded that the changing of names was a result of geographical expansion and a need for political administration.

## Conclusion

The Democratic Union Party (PYD) had aimed to build a different system of governance that would create a democratic society and a democratic governance. The system of Democratic Confederalism has been applied in Northern Syria by PYD. It was developed by A. Ocalan, an imprisoned leader of PKK. PYD considers A. Ocalan as an inspiration. Therefore, the ideology of PYD is based on the ideology of A. Ocalan. His ideas have evolved through the years. In 1978 (the year that PKK was formed), the main ideology of PKK and of A. Ocalan was to establish a united and socialist Kurdistan which will include Kurds in all part of Middle East which is: Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran. The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) had been formed during the Cold War period and it was affected by the bipolar world system and independence wars of colonies. It has started to wage a guerilla war against Turkey in 1984. However, during the 1990s, warfare reached a balance point. It was clear that neither PKK nor Turkey can win the war. With the collapse of the socialist bloc and dissolution of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), PKK witnessed the collapse of real socialism. Hence, the ideology of PKK and A. Ocalan had shifted from socialism to Democratic Confederalism.

Democratic Confederalism proposes a democratic society that does not rely on the existence of nation-state. During the Syrian Civil War, a power gap emerged in Northern Syria when the

Syrian government withdrew from the region. PYD took control of Northern Syria and declared the establishment of canton administration in three regions of Northern Syria. Democratic Confederalism aims at creating a democratic society and an administration.

This section of the article addresses the second objective of the paper. The paper claims that the Autonomous Administration in Northern Syria is functioning in practice and its practices are suitable with criteria of Democratic Confederalism. The paper has used the Autonomous Administration as a case study to investigate the second objective of the paper and prove its claims. It has focused on three main issues to explain the claims of the article. The political representation of groups like minorities is the first point. The engagement of women in sociopolitical life is the second criteria, and whether the Autonomous Administration can defend the region on its own or not is the final point.

Declaration of the Charter of Social Contract (herein after the Charter) was one of the first steps toward a democratic and equal society. The Charter includes all ethnicities and minorities in the region to socio-political life. Kurds, Arabs, Armenians, Arameans, Turkmens, and Chechens were mentioned in the region and all minorities have equal rights. Particularly comparison between Syrian Constitution and the Charter of Social Contract shows that PYD create an administration which is more democratic than Syrian government. Syrian Constitution states on Arab characteristic of Syria. In the preamble of the Syrian Constitution, it states that Syrian Arab Republic is proud of its Arab identity and the constitution considers its people as an integral part of the Arab nation. Article 1<sup>st</sup> of the Constitution also focuses on the same points. It defines Syria as a part of Arab homeland and Syrian people as a part of Arab nation. Only official language of Syria is Arabic (Syrian Arab Republic's Constitution of 2012, Article 4.). In contrast to Syrian Constitution, the Charter focuses on pluralist characteristics of the region. For instance, Article 9<sup>th</sup> of the Charter of Social Contract states that Canton of Jazira has three official languages and all communities are granted to teach and be taught in their native language. Each canton has the right to freely elect their representatives and has the right to have its own flag, emblem and anthem (the Social Charter, Article 8, 11). It can be concluded that PYD had succeeded in creating a pluralist and democratic society based on Democratic Confederalism.

The second point is women's participation to socio-political life. Women are visible in all parts of social and political life of Northern Syria. Every administrative unit should have 40% women quota and should have two co-chairperson, one male and one female. Article 27<sup>th</sup> of the Charter of Social Contract states that women have inviolable rights to participate in political, social, economic, and cultural life. The Charter of Social Contract also mandates all public institutions to work towards elimination of gender discrimination. The Charter of Social Contract states the equality of all genders in front of law. One of the bodies of the Executive Council of Autonomous Regions is Body of Family and Gender Equality (the Social Charter, Article 95). In practice, women in Northern Syria have great contribution to the establishment of a new system both in defending Northern Syria and organizing women in the region. Specially in the war against Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) women had fought alongside with men and played a major role in defeating it.

A. Ocalan states that Democratic Confederalism is not at war with any nation-state but it will not stand idly by assimilation efforts (Ocalan, 2011, p. 32). There are mainly two threats to Autonomous Administration: ISIS and Turkey. ISIS started to launch an offensive towards Northern Syria, Kobane, in September 2014. Military wing of PYD, People's Protection Units Kurdish, Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (YPG) and Women's Protection Units, Kurdish. Yekîneyên Parastina Jin (YPJ) defended the city for almost six months and defeated ISIS. After defending Kobane, YPG and YPJ launched an offensive and liberated Northern Syria. ISIS no longer possesses a threat to the Autonomous Administration. However, Autonomous Administration was not able to defend region against Turkish operations. For instance, in January 2018, Turkey launched an operation against Afrin canton and took control of the city in March. Since then, the city has been under control of Turkish forces and Syrian National Army.

First two points clearly state that Democratic Confederalism has proven itself to be functional in praxis and it created a society based on equalities and liberties in Northern Syria. However, it can also be concluded that Autonomous Administration is not capable of defense of region against nation-state and seems to be fragile. By the time of writing this article, Turkey still has intention to dissolve the Autonomous Administration, and it is still unknown if the Autonomous Administration will be able to defend itself against Turkey.

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