SYRIA

Alawites

Activity: 1946-1954

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- The Alawites demanded self-government in 1917 and, disappointed with the French response, rebelled in 1919. Separatist sentiments, however, appear to have died out following the granting of an autonomous Alawi State in 1920 and the French favouring of the Alawi minority which was also included in the colonial armed forces (Khoury 1981).
- In 1936, the Alawis' autonomy was abolished. A 1936 letter by 80 Alawi leaders to the French Prime Minister had expressed the demand of the Alawi people to remain under French protection. Separatism subsequently re-emerged. Latakia, the Alawite homeland, was declared independent in 1939. The French authorities, ignoring Alawite demands, ceded the territory to Syria in 1942. The Alawites resisted submission to the central government and also continued to do so once Syria had become independent in 1946, but were not able to obtain French support for an independent Alawite state. We code activity in Syria as of 1946, the year Syria became independent, and note prior activity. The exact start date is not fully clear, but 1936 appears to make sense since this is when the Alawites' autonomy was abolished. We found no separatist violence before 1946, and thus indicate prior non-violent activity.
- Unsuccessful revolts flared up in 1946 and in 1952, but it was not until the Alawites became reconciled to Syrian citizenship in 1954 that they gave up their struggle for an independent state (Fildis 2012; Pipes 1989). We thus code an end to the movement in 1954.
- In 1970 the pragmatic military faction of the Ba'ath party, which consisted mainly of Alawites from the region of Latakia and was led by Hafez al-Assad, seized power in a coup. Since then Alawites have controlled the Syrian government.
- There is evidence that separatist sentiment re-emerged in some Alawite corners after the outbreak of the civil war in 2011 as a result of concerns about Alawite security and possible retaliations from other ethnic groups (Jensen 2012; Manfreda 2019; Trivedi 2016). However, we found no evidence for organized separatist claims. [start date: 1936; end date: 1954]

Dominant claim

- According to Minahan (2002) and Pipes (1989), the Alawi rebellions of 1946 and 1952 aimed at the establishment of an independent state. The failure of these efforts led the Alawis "to look into the possibility of attaching Latakia to Lebanon or Transjordan (Pipes 1989: 440). In 1954, which is also coded as movement termination, the Alawites became reconciled to Syrian citizenship and ultimately "gave up the dream of a separate state" (Pipes 1989: 440). Following the first of January rule, the claim is thus coded twofold: independence from 1946 until 1953 and irredentism in 1954. [1946-1953: independence claim; 1954: irredentist claim]

Independence claims

- See above. [start date: 1946; end date: 1953]

Irredentist claims

- See above. [start date: 1953; end date: 1954]

Claimed territory

- The territory claimed by the Alawites consists of the provinces Latakia and Tartus in Syria, with Latakia as the capital (Roth 2015: 218f). A map can be found in Roth (2015: 198). We code this claim using GIS data on administrative units from the Global Administrative Areas Database (2019) for polygon definition.

Sovereignty declarations

NA

Separatist armed conflict

- We found no evidence of separatist violence, hence a NVIOLSD coding. [NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- Alawites first emerge in the 10th century in Iraq, and their name refers to the "veneration of the first Shia imam, Ali", son-in-law and cousin of Prophet Muhammad. The group shares beliefs with the Twelvers although they differ in their interpretations of Ali's divinity. The group is an ethno-religious "offshoot of Shi'a Islam" and traditionally lived in the an-Nusayriyah Mountains. The group's non-standard practice of Islam led to their historic marginalization and ostractization from the rest of the Muslim communities (Hilleary 2012). This has historically led the group to be seen as heretical by other Muslim communities (Wyatt 2016; Trivedi 2016; Baltacioglu-Brammer 2013).
- After World War I and the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire, France was assigned the mandate of Syria and Lebanon in 1922. The French authorities divided the mandated region into six autonomous states, among which the Republic of the Alaouites. In order to gain minority support and to isolate the minorities from the anti-colonial Great Syrian Revolt, the French favored religious minorities, raised Alawite education, health care, and social services and included Alawites in the colonial armed forces (Khoury 1981; Minahan 2002).
- Alawite autonomy was ended in 1937, when the Alawite state was re-incorporated into Syria as a consequence of a Franco-Syrian treaty of 1936 and as a concession of the French to Syrian nationalists (Shambrook 1998). [1936: autonomy restriction]
- The Alawites revolted against growing Sunni dominance on their territory and declared Latakia, the Alawite homeland, independent in 1939. With World War II came an increased British presence which eventually led to re-incorporation of Latakia into Syria in 1942 (Khoury 1987). We do not code a restriction since the re-incorporation reversed a unilateral power grab. Re-incorporation caused renewed rebellion among the Alawites in support of an independent state.

Concessions and restrictions

- When the French mandate ended, the urban Sunni elite inherited the government and undertook every effort to integrate Latakia into Syria. With the goal of establishing centralized rule, they abolished Alawi military units and certain jurisdictional rights granted to the Alawites by the French such as courts that applied Alawite laws or the Alawite representation in the parliament (Fildis 2012; Pipes 1989). The exact date of these measures is not specified in our sources, but it is indicated that they were initiated shortly after independence; based on this, we code a restriction in 1946. [1946: autonomy restriction]

Regional autonomy

NA

De facto independence

NA

Major territorial changes

- Syria attained independence in 1946, implying a host change. [1946: host change (new)]

EPR2SDM

Movement	Alawites
Scenario	1:1
EPR group(s)	Alawi
Gwgroupid(s)	65203000

Power access

- We use EPR data. [1946-1948: powerless; 1949-1954: junior partner]

Group size

- We use EPR data. [0.13]

Regional concentration

- The movement ended its activity in 1954. However, since there is no evidence that the Alawites' ethnic geography has changed fundamentally, we rely on the information provided by Minahan (2002: 79). The Alawites are concentrated in Latakia, where they make up 70% of the population (Minahan 2002: 79). This amounts to 1,402,800 Alawites (in 2002), which is more than 50% of the 2.63 million Alawites in the whole of Syria in that same year. EPR also codes regional concentration, and MAR data also suggests a regional concentration code. [regionally concentrated]

Kin

- There are Alawites in Lebanon (approx. 100,000) and Turkey (approx. 500,000) (Joshua Project, also see Minahan 2002: 283 and MAR). [kin in neighboring country]

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Assyrians

Activity: 1968-2020

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- Assyrian claims for an independent state were rejected after World War One. Assyrian nationalism re-emerged in the latter half of the 20th century. By then, many Assyrians had fled the Middle East, and separatist mobilization was concentrated among the Assyrian diaspora; however, while the evidence is limited, we did find indications for local mobilization as well (e.g., Minahan 2016: 37). We peg the movement's start date to 1968, which is when Assyrian nationalists formed the Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA) in France as a global organization to work for an Assyrian homeland with a degree of autonomy (DeKelaita n.d.; Minahan 2002: 209). In 1976, the Bet-Nahrain Democratic Party (BNDP) was formed in the U.S., which sought the creation of an autonomous or even independent Assyrian state in their ancient homeland (Minahan 2002: 209). In 1979, the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM) was formed in Iraq, which among other things demands autonomy for the Assyrians within the context of a federal Iraq (DeKelaita n.d.). ADM has established offices in Syria as well as Iran (DeKelaita n.d.).
- Since most Assyrians live in Iraq and Syria (when excluding the diaspora in the U.S. etc.), the countries that encompass the state of Assyrian, we list the Assyrian self-determination movement under both Iraq and Syria, though it should be noted that Assyrian claims for autonomy seem more prominent in Iraq. [start date: 1968; end date: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- There have been both claims made for an independent Assyrian state and internal autonomy, but overall the latter claim seems dominant (cf. Minahan 2002: 209; Minahan 2016: 37; DeKelaita n.d.). Notably, the organization making claims for independence, the BNDP, is also based outside Syria. [1968-2020: autonomy claim]

Independence claims

- At least one organization – the BNDP – has made claims for outright independence. However, the BNDP seems based mostly or even entirely in the USA (Minahan 2002: 209). Here, we are focused on organizations mobilizing in the country itself. [no independence claims]

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- The exact contours of this territorial claim are unclear and information on the Assyrian homeland more generally is also scarce. We flag this claim as ambiguous and code it based on a map by the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO 2018), which indicates a small area in North-Eastern Syria, bordering Mosul. This also mostly matches the description and map of the

territory in Minahan (2002: 205). We code this claim using the Global Administrative Areas database.

Sovereignty declarations

NA

Separatist armed conflict

- Assyrians have been involved in the Syrian civil war that broke out in 2011. Zabad (2017), for example, reports that Christian minorities, including Assyrians, have formed Christian militias alongside Kurds to fight against ISIS. However, this violence is focused on self-protection and does not involve separatist goals. Assyrians have also been involved in the Kurds-led Syrian Democratic Forces (Rojava Report 2014; Rashid 2017). While the Syrian Democratic Forces have separatist goals, these are focused on Kurds and not Assyrians and the group is generally dominated by Kurds (UCDP/PRIO). We found no other reports of separatist violence. [NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- The Assyrians claim direct descent from the inhabitants of the ancient Assyrian empire (2500-612 B.C.). Assyrians were among the first converts to Christianity. The Christian population in the Middle East dwindled from the 7th century due to forced conversions to Islam. The Assyrian language, formerly the region's lingua franca, became supplanted by Arabic around 900 (Minahan 2002: 206f).
- In the 19th century, the Assyrian Christians suffered from persecution by the Ottomon authorities in response to European overtures to Christians in the Middle East. In an 1895 massacre, a large number of Assyrians were killed (Minahan 2002: 207f).
- A cultural and national revival began in the mid-19th century, which ultimately supplanted the ancient dialects with a modern literary Assyrian language and united the disparate peoples and sects as one nation (Minahan 2002: 208).
- Assyrians developed a national movement and protested against Turkish rule in the early 20th century. During WWI, Assyrians supported enemies of Turkey and by the end of the war in 1918, many Assyrians perished in Turkish reprisals and massacres, and many also fled the region. Contrary to earlier promises by European powers, the Assyrians were not given an independent state in Versailles. However, Assyrians in the Jhezeira/Jazira District of Syria, controlled by France, were given a measure of autonomy (Minahan 2002: 208).
- The Mosul Commission appointed by the League of Nations recommended in 1924 that Assyrian refugees be resettled in the Mosul district with a large measure of autonomy; however, this was rejected by Turkey and Iraq. Iraq was awarded the Mosul area in 1925, wich led to years of severe repression (Minahan 2002: 209).
- Tensions between Assyrians and the Iraqi government led to a massacra in which ca. 3,000 unarmed Assyrians were killed in 1933. The massacre led to further emigration (Minahan (2002: 209).
- In 1942, the Jazira district became an integral part of Syria, suggesting that Assyrian autonomy became more limited (MRGI). Today Assyrians in Syria continue to live in the Khabur valley (Jazira) in northeast Syria (MRGI).

Concessions and restrictions

- The U.S. Department of State reported that Christians, including Assyrians, were subjected to cultural rights restrictions, violence, and other discrimination "by ISIS, the HTS, the SNA, and

other groups" in the context of the Syrian civil war (U.S. Department of State 2020). We do not code this as the restrictions were imposed by rebel groups and not the Syrian state.

Regional autonomy

- Syrian Kurdistan, also called Rojava, attained de facto autonomy in 2012. One of the regions in Rojava, Jazira, is dominated by Assyrians. However, according to Rojava's 2016 constitution, the canton of Jazira is merely an administrative center with limited competencies (ANHA 2021; EASO 2020; The New Arab 2016). We found no other evidence for regional autonomy. [no autonomy]

De facto independence

NA

Major territorial changes

NA

EPR2SDM

Movement	Assyrians
Scenario	n:1
EPR group(s)	Christians
Gwgroupid(s)	65204000

Power access

- EPR does not code the Assyrians as a separate group but combines them with other Christian groups. There are several Christian communities in Syria, including ethnic Armenians, Maronite Christians, Suryanis, Greek Orthodox, and, of course, the Assyrians (Minority Rights Group International). The EPR coding notes suggest that the Assyrians were not actively discriminated against but without meaningful representation in the natonal executive after Hafez al-Assad rose to power in 1970 and consolidated power under the regime of the Baath party. In 1968-69 EPR codes Christians as a whole as junior partner, but we could not find evidence for Assyrian representation. [1968-2020: powerless]

Group size

- Data on the Assyrian population in Syria is difficult to get by. As Bohac (2009) explains, this is because census data is unreliable and because Assyrian churches tend to exaggerate the number of their members. Minahan (2002: 205) even claims that there are 2.2 million Assyrians in Syria and Iraq (he does not provide separate figures), but this appears way too high. Other sources cite an estimate of 400,000 in recent years (Al-Abed 2014; Isaac 2015). We draw here on Bohac (2009), who suggests that there are ca. 120,000 Assyrians in Syria's al-Jazeera district (as well as ca. 600,000 Assyrians in the north of Iraq as well as Baghdad and Mosul; 50,000 Assyrians in Iran's Urmiya region and in large cities; and 20,000 Assyrians in Turkey). According to the World Bank, Syria's population was approx. 21.2 million in 2009. [0.0057]

- Since the outbreak of the civil war in 2011 ar, many places with Assyrian populations were heavily affected by the war . It is likely that a significant number of Asyrrians has emigrated as a result. UNPO suggests that 35 to 50 thousand Assyrians fled Mosul since June 2014; and another 200 thousand residing in the Nineveh Plain fled under the threat of IS (UNPO 2018). We retain the above estimate because of a lack of better information, but note that it is possible or even likely that the relative group size decreased.

Regional concentration

- Today Assyrians in Syria continue to live in the Khabur valley (Jazira) in northeast Syria (MRGI). A concentration of Assyrians can be found in the Tell Tamer Subdistrict (pop. 50,000); however, overall the Khabur valley is distinctly multi-ethnic, with Kurds and Arabs also significantly represented. Another source suggests that "Assyrians live today as minorities in some Syrian and Iraqi areas" (Enab Baladi 2018). Overall, based on the limited available evidence, it seems unlikely that the criteria for regional concentration are met. [not concentrated]

Kin

- There has been significant Assyrian emigration and there are significantly sized communities in Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and South America (Minahan 2002: 205). Furthermore, several sources suggest numerically significant transborder ethnic kin in Iraq, including Bohac (2009) who estimates that there are ca. 600,000 Assyrians in Iraq. [kin in adjacent state]

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Druze

Activity: 1946-1954

General notes

- The Druze are an Arab group, primarily located in Jabal Druze in south-western Syria bordering Jordan (Minority Rights Group International).

Movement start and end dates

- Jabal al-Druze had an autonomous status under the French Mandate of Syria from 1922 until 1936 (1942 according to Minahan 2002: 547), when the territory – against Druze petitions insisting on remaining separate from Syria (see e.g. Firro 1997: 92-93) – was incorporated into Syria. Jabal al-Druze retained a special status. In 1944 the Syrian government dismantled much of Jabal al-Druze's autonomy, though guaranteeing the Druze cultural and religious rights (Minahan 2002: 547).
- A number of Syrianists have concluded that the Druze leadership at that point in time had committed to relinquishing autonomy and to full incorporation into the Syrian state. Landis (1998: 370) disagrees, arguing that "[o]n the contrary, the incorporation of the Jabal Druze into the Syrian state was not carried out smoothly. The Atrash family and other leading tribes of the Jabal resisted the Syrian government's attempts to dismantle the administrative autonomy of the Jabal Druze at every step. They fought government attempts to undermine their traditional authority in the Jabal community as best they could. The Atrash leaders used both military [note: Landis appears to refer to the intra-ethnic clashes in 1947-1948 discussed below] and moral force in their attempt to preserve the political independence and economic privileges their community had enjoyed under the French and to resist the encroachment of central authority into Druze politics." Furthermore, "[t]he political leaders of the Druzes were not content to demand only economic benefits from the government in Damascus in exchange for Druze cooperation [economic demands included spending on education and the expansion of the irrigation and water purification systems], they also insisted that the Jabal be permitted most of the political privileges and autonomy it had enjoyed under the French. The Atrashes did not want the government to supplant them or undermine their authority in the name of Arab nationalism, republicanism, or Syrian independence. They had not fought for Syrian independence in order to exchange French meddling in their local affairs for that of the Government in Damascus. The leading families of the Jabal saw themselves as guardians of the Druze way of life and communal traditions which was anchored in the quasi-feudal and tribal institutions, or *mashyakha* system, of the Jabal. To ensure the continuation of Atrash leadership and the *mashyakha* system on which it was founded, Amir Hasan demanded that a separate Druze Ministry of Defense be established with a minister chosen from the Jabal Druze" (Landis 1998: 374).
- In line with Landis, Firro (1997: 91) also suggests that at least some of the Druze leaders had separatist tendencies at the time.
- Based on this, we code a Druze movement from 1946, the year of Syria's independence. The start date is not fully clear, but 1936 appears to make sense based on the above narrative as this was when the Druze's separate status was abolished. We found no separatist violence before 1946, and thus code prior non-violent activity.
- The self-determination movement ended in the early or mid-1950s. Landis (1998: 378, 381) reports that the Druze leadership continued to cling "to their independence, communal privileges, and multiple loyalties" by 1948/1949 and that its leadership continued to have "a desire to maintain the autonomy of the Jabal", suggesting that the movement was ongoing at the time. However, the movement appears to have ended soon thereafter. Landis (1998: 394) notes by 1954, Druze separatism was a "thing of the past". Landis does not give a better indication of when the Druze gave up on their separatist aspirations. Based on this, we code an end to the movement in 1954. This is in line with Minahan's (2002: 547) relatively ambiguous report that

the Druze "were defeated" and "lost all their former autonomous rights" following the 1954 events.

- Minahan (2002: 549) suggests that Druze separatism re-emerged in 1999: "Druze separatism, long suppressed in the heartland in Syria, emerged to some extent with the death of the Syrian dictator Hafiz al-Assad in 1999. His son Bashar, more moderate and less enamored of radical Arab nationalism, has allowed some stirrings of opposition and opinions suppressed for over three decades, although many of the harsh aspects of the dictatorship were reinstated in 2001." However, we found no corroborating evidence; thus we do not code a second phase of activity.
- The Druze were attacked by ISIS on several occasions, most notably in June 2015 (see Barnard 2015) and in July 2018 (see BBC 2018), leading to the deaths of at least 20 and 258 Druze civilians, respectively. According to Barnard (2015) these attacks set off debates among Druze leaders on how best to protect the group's interests – including the prospect of a self-determination movement to "stand alone and defend themselves". However, we could not find evidence for organized separatist claims. Reports suggest that the group is generally supportive of Assad and the Syrian government as it feels primarily threatened by rebels and especially ISIS, and not by government forces (Moftah 2015). [start date: 1936; end date: 1954]

Dominant claim

- According to Landis (1998: 370), the Atrash family and other leading tribes of the Jabal Druze wanted "to preserve the political independence and economic privileges their community had enjoyed under the French and to resist the encroachment of central authority into Druze politics." The demand for a "separate status" - as opposed to incorporation into Syria - is also listed by Minority Rights Group International. Overall, the movement's focus appears to have been on re-gaining the autonomous status the Druze had enjoyed under the French. [1946-1954: autonomy claim]

Independence claims

NA

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- The territory claimed by the Druze consists of the former Jabal al-Druze state in southwestern Syria along the borders to Jordan. We code this claim based on Roth (2015: 198).

Sovereignty declarations

NA

Separatist armed conflict

- The Druze were involved in violence in 1946-1954, but not violence of the separatist sort.
    - The newly independent Syrian government pursued pan-Arabist goals and attempted to centralize power and assert control over the provinces. This led to an armed conflict between unionist and separatist Druze factions in 1947-1948 (Landis 1998: 376-378;

Firro 1997: 97). We do not code separatist violence as this appears to have been primarily an intra-ethnic conflict. It has to be noted though that this coding decision is not unambiguous as the unionist faction was supported by the Syrian central government.
    - Minahan (2002: 547) reports a Druze revolt in 1949; he likely refers to coup d'états in March and August 1949 that were supported by Druzes and a further coup plot after the December 1949 coup that had brought Adib Shishakli to power (Landis 1998: 380-381). We do not code separatist violence.
    - Minahan (2002: 547) reports another Druze revolt in 1954. In line with Minahan, Landis (1998: 389) reports that protests broke out in Jabal al-Druze in early 1954 "which quickly out of control when the Syrian army tried to put them down. When a small column of gendarmes was cut down outside of Qraya, the home of Sultan Pasha, where they had been sent to arrest the Druze leader, Shishakli dispatched 10,000 regular troops to occupy the Jabal. Several towns were bombarded with heavy weapons, killing scores of civilians and destroying many houses. According to Druze accounts, Shishakli encouraged neighboring Bedouin tribes to plunder the defenseless population and allowed his own troops to run amok." We found no casualty estimates for the 1954 events, but the total toll likely exceeds 25. Also consider this quote from Lund (2013): "sent the army to occupy the Arab Mountain, massacring scores of villagers in arbitrary artillery barrages." Most of the violence appears one-sided, but more importantly, this was not separatist violence. Landis (1998: 393) clearly states that these were "anti-government" protests and that the Druzes' main aim at the time was to bring down the Shishakli regime. Thus, we do not code separatist violence in 1954.
- Note that Druze army officers participated in a successful February 1954 coup against Shishakli after the violent repression of Druze protests that brought Syria's traditional rulers back to power. In 1964 a Druze murdered Shishakli in revenge for the 1954 bombardment.
- 1946-1954 are coded as NVIOLSD based on the above arguments. [NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- Druze settlers arrived in the Jabal Druze region at the end of the seventeenth century. Following the 1860 Mount Lebanon civil war, large numbers of Druze migrants from Lebanon moved into the area (Minority Rights Group International). After World War I and the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire, France was assigned the mandate of Syria and Lebanon. The French authorities divided the mandated region into six autonomous states, among which Jabal al-Druze/State of Souaida (Khoury 1987). The Druze territory had an autonomous status from 1922 until 1936, when the territory – against Druze petitions insisting on remaining separate from Syria (see e.g. Firro 1997: 92-93) – ceased to exist as an autonomous entity and was incorporated into Syria. [1936: autonomy restriction]

Concessions and restrictions

- The Druze, who played a heroic role in the struggle against colonialism, continued to enjoy "certain autonomy" (Westheimer and Sedan 2007: 4) and an "autonomous administration" (Landis 1998: 371). Unlike the Alawis and the Kurds, the Druze at first managed to resist centralization efforts of the Sunni-dominated government of independent Syria. It is not entirely clear, when their autonomous status actually ended. According to Minahan (2002: 547), the Druze "lost all their former autonomous rights" after defeat in 1954. However, this process was initiated earlier. Starting in 1949, "the process of national integration was carried out by force" (Landis 1998: 370). The central government began to dismantle the autonomous legal, economic, and administrative institutions of the Druze and limited Druze representation in the regional as well as the national government. Adib Shishakli, military strongman from 1949 onwards and president from 1953 until 1954, engaged in a "relentless campaign to integrate the Druze community into Syria and to destroy the independent power of its Druze chieftains" (Landis 1998: 370). Since there is no evidence of official legislation that reduced autonomy, we code the

measures taken by Adib Shishakli as the start of effective restrictive action. [1949: autonomy restriction]

Regional autonomy

- According to Landis (1998: 370), the Druze had an "autonomous administration" and "political independence" in the first few years of Syrian independence. [1946-1949: regional autonomy]

De facto independence

NA

Major territorial changes

- Syria attained independence in 1946, implying a host change. [1946: host change (new)]
- Autonomy was abolished in 1949. [1949: autonomy revocation]

EPR2SDM

Movement	Druze
Scenario	1:1
EPR group(s)	Druze
Gwgroupid(s)	65201000

Power access

- We use EPR data. [1946-1948: powerless; 1949-1954: junior partner]

Group size

- We use EPR data. [0.03]

Regional concentration

- According to Minahan (2002: 544), the Druze are concentrated in the Jabal al-Druze region, where they make up 87% of the population. EPR also codes regional concentration, and MAR data also suggests a regional concentration code. [regionally concentrated]

Kin

- EPR codes the Druze in neighboring Lebanon and the Israeli Arabs in Israel as kin groups. According to Minahan (2002: 544), there are approximately 400,000 Druze in Lebanon and almost 100,000 in Israel as of 2002. However, neither of the two groups seem large enough to be coded here during Druze separatist activity (1946-1954). According to the U.S. Department of State (2008), the Druze make up 5% of the Lebanese population. Minority Rights Group International mentions an even smaller number (3%). However, even if the high estimate of 5%

amounts to less than the required 100,000 people given Lebanon's population in the aforementioned period. [no kin]

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Kurds

Activity: 1957-2020

General notes

- The Kurdish population in Syria is significantly less than the Kurdish population in Iraq and Turkey, and thus historically the group has received less attention than their counterparts. Minority Rights Group International estimates around 2.5 million Kurds in Syria, half of whom live in the Taurus Mountains and the other half along the Turkish border. Smaller populations of Kurds live in jarabulus and Hayy al-Akrad. The Kurds are Sunni Muslims who speak Kurdish, but most Kurds in Syria also speak Arabic due to assimilation into Syrian society (Minority Rights Group International). Kurds in Syria have faced harsh repression. Subsequent coups led by Kurds resulted in the purging of Kurdish soldiers from the army as well as increased repression in society (Minority Rights Group International). One key grievance is the Arabization of Syrian society, which has prevented the Kurds from using their own language and living according to their own cultural lifestyles (Minorities at Risk Project).

Movement start and end dates

- There is an active and ongoing Kurdish self-determination movement in Syria: a minority of the Kurds in Syria has followed the footsteps of Kurds in Iraq and Turkey by demanding the creation of an autonomous Kurdish region, or separate Kurdish state (Minorities at Risk Project).
- Kurdish nationalism in Syria has its roots in colonialism, as France encouraged minority separatism as a colonizing tactic. In 1927, a pan-Kurdish league was created in Lebanon and attracted Syrian Kurdish nationalists (Sinclair & Kajjo 2011). The League, called the Xoybun (Independence), eventually waned and when Syria gained its independence in 1946, Xoybun had dissolved. In the 1940s and 1950s, the Kurds mostly participated in politics by supporting the communist party.
- In 1957, ex-Xoybun members created the Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria (KDPS) as a "'left-wing and nationalist' alternative to the Communists, who were led by a Kurd, but did not promote Kurdish rights" (Sinclair & Kajjo 2011). "The KDPS was, many observers say, just a continuation of Xoybun as most of its founders and leaders had been prominent members of that defunct pan-Kurdish group." (Sinclair & Kajjo 2011). Since KDPS promoted an independent Kurdistan, 1957 is coded as the start date.
- In 1960, the KDPS renamed itself the Democratic Party of Kurdistan in Syria. By 1965, the Kurdish communist party "had fragmented into numerous organizations divided over issues such as whether to work for Kurdish autonomy or work within the Communist Party…" (Ziadeh 2009: 5). Though increasingly factionalized and repressed, the movement appears to have continued, as evidenced e.g. by MAR which codes an active separatist movement in the 1980s/1990s/2000s (SEPX=3).
- McDowall notes that while "the possibility of Kurdish irredentism within Syria was a real worry roughly between the years 1920 and 1970 the threat of secessionist warfare had been greatly reduced until the the early 2000s (McDowall 2004: 480).
- In 2003, the Democratic Union Party (PYD) was founded as a Kurdish party affiliated with the PKK. After the early 2000s, protests within the Kurdish regions of Syria increased, resulting in government militarization within those borders in anticipation of security concerns. "Large-scale political clashes were not infrequent…Such violent events affecting the Kurdish community, once relatively rare, have become more commonplace, raising the possibility of a further escalation of violent resistance from Syria's Kurds" (Ziadeh 2009: 6).
- In 2011, 12 Kurdish parties came together to create the National Movement, meant to "streamline the Kurd's message in the face of Arab opposition." However, it should be noted that the National Movement did not declare aims regarding self-determination, but instead called for "an

end to one-party rule, a modern, civil state that ensures the rule of law, and true equality for all citizens…" (Sinclair & Kajjo 2011).
- In the context of the Syrian civil war, in 2011, the YPG ('Kurdish People's Protection Units') was established as the military wing of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) (EUAA n.d.). Syrian Kurdistan, also called Rojava, attained de facto autonomy in 2012 (UCDP/PRIO).
- In 2015, the YPG, along with other groups, established the SDF ('Syrian Democratic Forces'). The SDF are a multi-ethnic rebel group. Initially dominated almost entirely by Kurds, the group increasingly also included Arabs and several smaller minorities (e.g. Assyrians). The SDF's primary focus was the fight against ISIS, the defense of Rojava, and the establishment of a democratic and federal Syria (UCDP/PRIO). [start date: 1957; end date: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- There is only very limited evidence regarding the early period of separatist activity. This could be due to the large degree of fragmentation that started in the 1960s or the repressive measures under the Baathist regime. According to Minorities at Risk, however, demands mostly evolved around cultural and linguistic rights and included "some support for an autonomous region". This demand seems to have continued. The Democratic Union Party (PYD), the Syrian affiliate of the PKK, was founded in 2003. The Kurdistan National Council (KNC), a union of sixteen Syrian Kurdish political factions that are not aligned with the PYD, was founded in 2011. According to the International Crisis Group (2013: 27), the PYD has called "democratic autonomy" or "democratic self-administration" of Kurdish areas in Syria. Autonomy within Syria is also the goal of the KNC (International Crisis Group 2013: 18). The absence of secessionist claims is confirmed by other sources, such as the New York Times (2012) or Sinclair and Kajjo (2011), who state that "no party seeks full independence from Syria". Autonomy seems to have remained the dominant claim during the Syrian civil war. In 2016, the Kurds reiterated their demand for a federal system and a self-run entity within Syria similar to the one established in 2003 in neighboring Iraq (Reuters 2016). Furthermore, the Syrian Democratic Forces, which were formed in 2015 and of which the Kurds make up around 40%, also fight for a secular, democratic and federal Syria. [1957-2020: autonomy claim]

Independence claims

NA

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- The territory claimed by the Kurds is the Kurdish populated area in northeastern Syria along the Turkish border and in the Taurus Mountains. We code the territory based on Roth (2015: 198).

Sovereignty declarations

- According to UCDP/PRIO: "PYD officially announced its regional autonomy on 9 January 2014". [2014: autonomy declaration]

Separatist armed conflict

- The Kurds have been involved in the Kurdish civil war, but much of the violence is not separatist (e.g., concerns the conflict with ISIS). Despite the high destructiveness of the Syrian civil war, we do not code HVIOLSD in any year, therefore.
- UCDP/PRIO reports between 46 and 84 annual deaths in a territorial armed conflict between PYD (i.e., its armed wing, the YPG) and the Syrian government over Rojava in 2012-2015. UCDP/PRIO furthermore codes a minor war over Rojava involving the Syrian government and SDF in 2016 and 2018.
- In August 2016, Turkey started intervening in the Syrian civil war, primarily targeting SDF and PKK locations. This led to a de-escalation of violence between Kurds/the SDF and the Syrian government (International Crisis Group n.d.). Still, UCDP/PRIO records 7 battle-related deaths in 2017. Given sustained fighting, we code a single period of LVIOLSD, 2012-2018.
- SDF continued to be involved in violence after 2018, but most of this involved the conflicts with ISIS and Turkey (EASO 2020a, 2020b). [1957-2011: NVIOLSD; 2012-2018: LVIOLSD; 2019-2020: NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- Kurdish territory was split between the Safavid and Ottoman empires after the Persian defeat in the battle of Chaldiran in 1514. In the Ottoman Empire, the Kurdish territory was ruled as a separate principality with considerable autonomy. This autonomy was ended in the 19th century, when the decaying empire centralized its administration and abolished minority self-rule. The end of autonomy sparked several Kurdish revolts against the Ottoman Empire (Minahan 2002: 1058).
- After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War, the Kurdish were promised independence in the Treaty of Sèvres that partitioned the Ottoman Empire. However, the treaty was abandoned after the Kemalist victory in the Turkish War of Independence and the formation of a modern Turkish state. The treaty of Lausanne signed by Turkey and the allies in 1923 partitioned Kurdistan between Turkey, Iran, and the British and French administrations of Iraq and Syria (Minahan 2002: 1058).
- In his attempt to create a homogeneous nation, Atatürk pursued an extensive policy of Turkification. In 1924, the use of the Kurdish language was prohibited. As a result of further repression, many Kurds fled to Syria in the 1920s.
- In 1920, the Allied Supreme Council decided to grant France the Syrian Mandate. The Kurds occupied three narrow zones along the Turkish border: the Upper Jazira, Jarablus, and Kurd Dagh. During the French mandate period in Syria, the Kurds enjoyed considerable rights and were recruited disproportionately into the police and military. However, most of the Kurdish demands for more self-determination were rejected by the French (Minority Rights Group International, Gambill 2004). According to Gorgas (2014: 847), the 'Terrier Plan', which was partially implemented, included the nomination of Kurdish functionaries in Jazira, the opening of a Kurdish language course at the Arab college for higher education in Damascus, and the publication of the Kurdish journal Hawar.
- The Franco-Syrian treaty, which foreshadowed the independence of Syria, was signed in 1936. The treaty did not include provision for Kurdish autonomy. There is no explicit evidence of restrictive legislation that reduced the Kurdish self-determination in the last years of the mandate or the early years of independence. However, with the withdrawal of French troops and the independence of Syria in 1946, Arab nationalism increased and minorities were pressured to assimilate (Gorgas 2014; McQuade and Al-Tikriti 2015).

Concessions and restrictions

- Human Rights Watch (1996) and other sources list a number of restrictive measures that targeted the Kurdish identity, culture, and language in the context of the Arabization campaign. Some of these are not significant enough to be coded here. Others are not related to territorial or cultural

self-determination and are reflected in the discrimination coding under EPR2SDM (including the 1962 census that stripped some 120,000 Kurds from their Syrian citizenship). The following fall in the category of a cultural rights restriction as defined by the codebook:
    - The right to print in Kurdish was taken away in 1958, formally banning all Kurdish-language publications (CNN 2017). [1958: cultural rights restriction]
    - In the 1960s and 1970s, the Syrian government began to replace the names of Kurdish villages and sites in Hasakeh governorate and in Kurd Dagh with Arabic names. The official legislation for this was Directive No. 15801 in 1977 (Ziadeh 2009: 2, Human Rights Watch 1996). [1977: cultural rights restriction]
    - In 1986, Decree No. 1012 by the governor of Hasaka prohibited the use of the Kurdish language in the workplace (Human Rights Watch 1996). [1986: cultural rights restriction]
    - Starting in 1992 (Decree No. 122) authorities refused to register children with Kurdish names (Human Rights Watch 1996). According to Ziadeh (2009: 4), this has resulted in a backlash from the Kurdish community and consequently forced the government to back down on the matter. Hence, no restriction is coded.
- In 2011, in a bid to prevent the escalation of the civil uprising to a full conflict, President Bashar al-Assad granted approximately 220,000 stateless Kurds citizenship through April 2011's Decree No. 49 (see Lister, 2015: 30). This is not coded here, but MRGI reports that the government also allowed Kurds to "set up cultural centres and schools in Kurdish regions" in 2011, which is coded as a cultural rights concession. [2011: cultural rights concession]

Regional autonomy

- Following de facto Independence. [2013-2020: regional autonomy]

De facto independence

- EPR codes the Kurds as self-excluded from 2017 onwards. The evidence we collected suggests an earlier start date as Syrian Kurdistan, also called Rojava, gained de facto autonomy in 2012. Reuters, for example, reports that Kurdish "groups have already carved out self-governing regions since the start of the war" (see Perry 2016). Schmidinger suggests that the withdrawal of Syrian government troops in 2012 is the effective beginning date of the region's de facto independence (Schmidinger 2018). Rojava is dominated by ethnic Kurds, but is multi-ethnic as it also contains sizeable Arab, Assyrian and other minority populations (Schmidinger 2019). Rojava retained its de facto autonomy, though as Schmidinger explains YPG/YPJ (SDF) forces had to retreat from some locations. [2013-2020: de facto independence]

Major territorial changes

- [2012: Establishment of de facto independence]

EPR2SDM

Movement	Kurds
Scenario	1:1
EPR group(s)	Kurds
Gwgroupid(s)	65206000

Power access

- EPR codes the Kurds as included until the beginning of the year of 1957, and as excluded from early 1958 onwards. The EPR coding notes mention waning Kurdish representation from 1954 onwards and that the Kurds became completely sidelined as Syria joined with Egypt in the United Arab Republic in 1958. As Syria became increasingly dominated by Sunni Arabs, the Syrian Kurds founded the Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria (KDPS) in 1957 and began to claim SD. To reflect the case history, we move the 1958 excluded (powerless) code forward to 1957 and otherwise follow EPR. Self-exclusion = powerless. [1957-1960: powerless; 1961-2011: discriminated; 2012-2020: powerless]

Group size

- We use EPR data. [0.08]

Regional concentration

- EPR codes regional concentration, but EPR applies a lower bar. MAR, whose rules for regional concentration are more similar to ours, does not code regional concentration. This matches with other evidence we found. The Kurds in Syria inhabit several non-contiguous regions in the north and the northeast in particular. According to Gambill (2004), approximately 30% of the Kurdish population is settled in the highlands of Kurd Dagh, 10% live in the Ain al-Arab region, and 40% in the northeastern half of the Jazeera governorate. The rest of the Syrian Kurds lives in urban neighborhoods around the country, Damascus in particular. Hence, less than 50% of the population live in a territorially contiguous territory. Furthermore, there were also major population transfers by the government that aimed to settle Arabs all along the Turkish border.
- Schmidinger (2019) suggests that by 2018 "about two hundred to three hundred thousand people expelled from other parts of Syria had been added to the […population of Afrin]" – and states that the population of the urban centre doubled since the start of the civil war (see Schmidinger, 2018). It is possible that the group is more concentrated now, but we could not find any sufficiently detailed breakdowns. [not regionally concentrated]

Kin

- There are numerically significant Kurd communities in numerous other countries, including Armenia, Iraq, Iran, and Turkey (see EPR). [kin in neighboring country]

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