KUZEY SURİYE'DE 'REKABETÇİ KONTROL' TEORİSİ

ÖZ

Suriye'de devlet zayıflaması, uzun süredir sessiz bir şekilde devam eden mahrumiyetleri gün ışığına çıkartarak rejimin, ülkenin kuzey-doğusunda güç kaybetmesine sebep oldu. Bu devlet zayıflamasından iki ana devlet-dışı aktör ortaya çıktı: PYD ve IŞİD. İki grup da, ortaya çıktıkları bölgelerde merkezi hükümetin kontrol mekanizmalarını devralarak bir nevi devlet-vari bir idari performans sergilemiş ve bölgelerin günlük idaresini ele almıştır. Devlet-dışı aktörlerin belli bölgelerde nasıl devlet faaliyeti yürüttüğü ve yerel halkın desteğini bu idari performans ile kazandığı konusunda en yeni kavramsallaştırmalardan biri David Kilcullen'ın 'rekabetçi kontrol teorisi'dir. Bu teoriye göre devletler zayıfladığında hangi devlet-dışı aktör idari altyapıyı oluşturacak şekilde bölge halkının taleplerini ve ihtiyaçlarını karşılarsa, o bölgenin aidiyeti bir süre sonra bu gruba dönük olacaktır. Bu teori hem PYD/YPG hem de IŞİD gibi grupların neden sadece askeri yöntemlerle yenilemeyeceğini de açıklamaktadır.

نظرية ‏''الرقابة المنافسة‏'' في سوريا الشمالية

ان ضعف الدولة في سوريا اظهر للعيان الحرمان الذي يعاني منه الشعب والذي يستمر بشكل صامت منذ مدة طويلة، وهذا ما ادى الى فقدان النظام لقوته في المناطق الشمالية الشرقية من هذا البلد. وقد نتج عن ضعف الدولة هذا بروز فاعلين اساسيين هنالك وهما: حزب الوحدة الديمقراطية وداعش. وقد تسلّمت كلتا المجموعتين آلية نفوذ الحكومة المركزية في المناطق التي ظهرتا فيها. واظهرت كلتا القوتين، اللتين يمكن ان يطلق عليهما اشباه دولة، قدرة ادارية، واخذتا زمام السلطة الادارية بايديهما. وان خير مثال مندرج كمفهوم متكامل على كيفية تمشية الفاعلين خارج نطاق الدولة فعاليات الدولة نفسها في مناطق معينة، وكسبها رضا السكان المحليين عن طريق هذه الادارة، هو نظرية «الرقابة المنافسة» للكاتب David Kilcullen. ووفقا لهذه النظرية، فانه عندما تضعف الدول، فان اي فاعل خارج نطاق الدولة يستطيع تاسيس البنية التحتية الادارية و تلبية طلبات واحتياجات سكان المنطقة، فان عائدية تلك المنطقة ستعود بعد فترة ما الى تلك المجموعة. ان هذه النظرية تفسّر لنا سبب امكان اندحار بعض المجاميع من امثال حزب الوحدة الديمقراطية والمنظومة المسلّحة التابعة لهذا الحزب وتنظيم الدولة (داعش) بالوسائل العسكرية وحدها.

WEAK STATES, STRONG NON-STATE ACTORS: THEORY OF COMPETITIVE CONTROL IN NORTHERN SYRIA

ABSTRACT

State weakening in Syria unearthed long-dormant processes of disenfranchisement, contributing to the regime's loss of territory in the north-eastern half of the country. Out of this state weakening, two major armed non-state groups emerged: Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Both groups have uprooted the control tools and actors of the central authority, taking on an increasingly state-like dual role of security provision and day-to-day administration. How non-state armed groups emerge in the wake of state weakening is best conceptualized by David Kilcullen, who introduced the concept of 'theory of competitive control' to identify how challengers to state authority need to prove their capacity in administration. Kilcullen further argues that when states fail, whichever non-state actor emerges most capable of providing administration will convert the loyalties of the local population over time. This perspective is important to understand why Rojava and ISIS are long-term phenomena and will be impossible to eliminate through military-only methods.

Keywords: State failure, non-state actors, ISIS, PYD, Syria

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1. Introduction

The emergence of armed non-state groups since the end of the Cold War inherits from the refocus of threat perceptions from systemic to national. Bereft of the imminent nuclear threat, which was a hallmark of the Cold War, states had to deal with increasingly more difficult questions of legitimacy and loyalty within their diverse demography, as well as maintaining a degree of cosmopolitanism and openness to the world economy. States that had administered over a high percentage of disenfranchisement, be it ideological, identity-related or economic, have begun to see increasingly stronger formations of non-state armed groups as a form of state-society power negotiations. Lack or insufficiency of legitimacy, thus, evolved into greater internal security threats after the Cold War and generated a vicious circle of greater repression and counter-violence by non-state armed groups in response. While states could predominantly devise military-only strategies in response to these new challenges, such strategies have paradoxically led to the strengthening and endurance of the very groups that states sought to eliminate, mainly through the transfer of knowledge, tactics and training. As states increasingly apply violent measures against questions of legitimacy, armed non-state groups begin establishing self-defense zones within certain urban areas, initiating *de facto* control zones.

Syrian Civil War brought back the debate on failed or weak states and how such weakening or failure impact non-state actors. The ripple effect of state weakness has been diagnosed by Robert I. Rothberg, who argued that a state's gradual demise leads to weakening in neighboring states as well.[1] This, according to Rothberg, happens because of how state weakening unearths identity-based discontent within a territorial entity and how that discontent affects people of the same or similar identity or ideology in the wider geopolitical space. In that, state weakening is a discontent exporting event, which activates identity-based disenfranchisements in its surrounding environment, leading to the emergence of transnational, identity-based conflicts. These challenges can be conceptualized as vertical (within a territorial entity) and horizontal (between adjacent territorial entities) security dilemmas, as identified by Anthony Vinci, who further discussed how state weakening in one territory leads to the emergence of armed groups that export such weakening to adjacent territories.[2] From the point of Vinci, lack of legitimacy in one state automatically translates into a security problem for adjacent states over the long-term. This has indeed been the case with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS or Daesh) and Democratic Union Party (PYD -Partiya Yekîtiya

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1 Robert Rothberg, "The Failure and Collapse of Nation-States" in Robert Rothberg (ed.) When States Fail: Causes and Consequences, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003)

2 Antonio Vinci (2008) "Anarchy, Failed States, and Armed Groups: Reconsidering Conventional Analysis", International Studies Quarterly, Volume 52, Issue 2, pp. 295–314

Demokrat), along with its military wing YPG (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel, or People's Protection Units) which emerged from the dual state weakening in Syria and Iraq. It also gives us a good idea on why they compete horizontally (with other non-state armed groups) and vertically (with the standing armies of states they inhabit) not only through armed confrontation, but also practices or administration, taxation and territorial control.

2. Theoretical Framework

Most non-state actors like ISIS and PYD-YPG inherit the capabilities of the state they inhabit. Such inheritance can both be in the form of the know-how of violence (recruitment, training, and deployment of armed units) and also of administration (taxation, services provision, law and order). Klaus Schlichte drew a blueprint of how non-state armed groups model the states they emerge within and how within state institutions that the core skills needed for armed rebellion are transmitted.[3] A state possessing well-functioning military, institutional and knowledge capacity is not, by itself, a limiting factor to the emergence of armed groups, if that capacity is tasked with dealing with a question of legitimacy. Schlichte claims that states that lack democracy, always face the challenge of facing their own capacity for violence in the form of internal armed groups.[4] The very military/security measures states take to subdue such groups, without making progress in political representation, also paradoxically strengthen them, as new military knowledge, equipment and training types travel well within a single border, in addition to such equipment being lost or stolen in conflict. However, over time, non-state armed groups also start to mimic the states they are fighting with, along with their ceremonial, symbolic and mobilization procedures. This is why many armed non-state groups use symbols associated with the states they are fighting against: flags, anthems and, in some cases, their own currency, to foster group cohesion and acceptance. The methodical use of these symbols become more commonplace, as armed groups begin administering territory and population, thus becoming the main security providers of that area.[5] In turn, such non-state groups become proto-statelets and engage in a horizontal competition of territorial control with states.

Security provision and territorial control are interlinked, and this is perhaps the most fundamental linkage in administrative competition. Robert Bunker emphasized that the dual failure in Iraq and Syria has brought about a three-tier process whereby, one, there is a consistent decline in the supply of state protection, two, consistent increase in the demand for protection and,

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3 Klaus Schlichte, In the Shadow of Violence: The Politics of Armed Groups, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009)

4 Ibid. p. 146-154

5 Sukanya Podder (2013). "Non-State Armed Groups and Stability: Reconsidering Legitimacy and Inclusion". Contemporary Security Policy, Vol. 34, Issue 1, (2007) 16-39

three, sporadic increase in non-state actors' supply of protection.[6] The combination of these factors increasingly leads to the rise in demand for local armed groups that behave like states by dislodging both the armed and non-armed functions of the central authority. This brings two additional questions: one, in terms of the Weberian notion on the monopoly of the use of force as a basic form of legitimacy of a state and two, in terms of the Westphalian notion of sovereignty, structured upon the presumed social contract (state's main duty is to protect citizens' well-being and security) between those who govern and those that are governed. In Weberian terms, the monopoly on the use of force existed even in feudalism, where organized use of violence has been permitted through a loose set of unwritten laws.[7]

Weber conceded that in modern state system, states are not the only sources of violence, but they are the only *legitimate* source of violence – an observation, which builds on Hobbesian and Machiavellian understandings of statehood. While this view explains the relationship between states and their legitimate use of violence for the most part of the 20th century, recurring problems of legitimacy in the Middle East, which culminated with the Iraq War in 2003 and the Syrian Civil War of 2011, have obscured such Weberian interpretations. The Westphalian debate, on the other hand, where non-intervention is the main structural norm of international relations, becomes further complicated.[8]

If we are to see central authorities as the only sources of legitimacy in international relations, if they are the only sources of legitimate violence and if this legitimacy acts as the foundation of our respect for non-intervention principle, what happens when these central authorities grow unable to respond to the challenges of non-state actors and fail in establishing security in parts of their legitimate territory? While this reasoning acts as the foundational logic of the responsibility-to-protect (R2P) literature,[9] that literature in turn, fails to address a more local and existential problem of territorial control and administration.

The events that unfolded in Iraq and Syria in the last half decade demonstrated that central governments are not necessarily the main source of stability in world politics. Depending on regime type and depth of representation, certain governments can indeed export instability into its wider system through exacerbating existing divisions. Once a disenfranchising central government

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6 Robert Mandel, Global Security Upheaval: Armed Nonstate Groups Usurping State Stability Functions, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013)

7 Max Weber, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft, (1921) p. 29

8 Andreas Osiander (2001). "Sovereignty, international relations, and the Westphalian myth". International organization, Vol. 55, Issue 2, (2001) pp. 251-287.

9 See for example; Gareth Evans and Mohamed Sahnoun, "The responsibility to protect", Foreign Affairs, Volume 81, Issue 6 (2002) pp. 1-8.

uses indiscriminate force on an essentially demographic problem, it paradoxically loses control over the territory and is forced to exert increasing strength with increasingly low returns – a policy, which eventually departs from purely rationalistic explanations of conflict. In this context, the dislodged state authority gives way to a different form of legitimacy; that of armed non-state actors providing both security and basic services to a limited population. This creates a new form of relationship between local population that used to obey the previous form of legitimacy (state-centric) and the newly emerging armed non-state actors that come with their own symbols, ideology and objectives. This transition between state and non-state types of legitimacy is particularly difficult to situate in international law, which has traditionally been state-centric just like Weberian and Westphalian notions of sovereignty.

One of the theoretical approaches that aim to resolve this deadlock is David Kilcullen's 'theory of competitive control', which outlines how non-state armed groups interact with the populations, which they control.[10] In a nutshell, the theory predicts that in irregular conflicts the local armed actor that a given population perceives as best able to establish a predictable, consistent, wide-spectrum normative system, namely a "set of behavioral rules correlated with a set of predictable consequences" of control, is most likely to dominate that population in its residential area and develop legitimacy.[11]

Kilcullen's theory posits that in the absence of a central authority, armed groups that best simulate state functions such as security, taxation, services provision in a consistent and predictable fashion will, over time, successfully steer that population's loyalties. Kilcullen's definition of an armed non-state actor is "any group that includes armed individuals who apply violence but who aren't members of the regular forces of a nation-state,"[12] which expands as far as to street gangs, militias, insurgents and even pirates, rendering such specific definitions irrelevant due to these groups' performance of essentially the same function.

While Kilcullen believes that armed non-state groups corrupt the social fabric of the society by undermining the authority and legitimacy of a central administration, and by creating a new social class which he terms as 'conflict entrepreneurs,'[13] he somehow contradicts himself by admitting that the very emergence of such groups result from state weakening and malfunction to begin with. In that, Kilcullen yields that such 'conflict entrepreneurs' feed on the most disenfranchised segments of a population – those who have lost all

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10 David Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) pp. 116-169

11 Ibid. p. 132

12 Ibid. p. 126

13 Ibid. p. 66

hope for the future and see war as the only way to achieve upward mobility and in most cases, mere survival.

Kilcullen's theory brings a new perspective into the study of statist theories by arguing that the collapse of central state authority doesn't necessarily lead to *homo homini lupus* in Hobbesian sense, nor will it shatter the very foundations of a society in Machiavellian view, but may in certain circumstances, lead to the emergence of local buffer institutions (such as non-state armed actors) that fill-in to provide security and services.

Kilcullen also localizes its analysis of conflict entrepreneurs. In his view, just as city-states in history have developed a largely autonomous profile, becoming centers of arts, culture and science of their time, the rise of non-state armed groups have created militancy city-states that have grown into 'urban no-go areas.' Able to defend entire districts and, in some cases the entire city, from organized state military and police forces, these urban no-go areas become "safe havens for criminal networks or non-state armed groups, creating a vacuum that is filled by local youth who have no shortage of grievances, whether arising from their new urban circumstances or imported from their home villages."[14]

The theory of competitive control thus conceptualizes the emerging security question posed by ungoverned spaces, both for their respective central governments and for the regional security of their strategic habitus. Regardless of whether they are supportive of, or against, Western military intervention, all non-state armed groups have demonstrated similar patterns of behavior with regard to establishing alternative regimes and localized control zones. RAND defines 'ungoverned spaces' as: "… failed or failing states, poorly controlled land or maritime borders, or areas within otherwise viable states where the central government's authority does not extend."[15] US Department of Defense on the other hand offer this definition:

> A place where the state or the central government is unable or unwilling to extend control, effectively govern, or influence the local population, and where a provincial, local, tribal, or autonomous government does not fully or effectively govern, due to inadequate governance capacity, insufficient political will, gaps in legitimacy, the presence of conflict, or restrictive norms of behavior… the term 'ungoverned areas' encompasses under-governed, misgoverned, contested, and exploitable areas as well as ungoverned areas.[16]

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14 Ibid. p. 40

15 Rand Corporation, "Ungoverned Territories: Unique Front in the War on Terrorism". RAND Project Air Force Reseach Brief #233, (2007)

[http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB233/index1.html] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

16 Robert D. Lamb, "Ungoverned Areas and Threats from Safe Havens – Final Report of the Ungoverned Areas Project." Prepared for the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy by the Office of

Competitive control for the administration of ungoverned spaces can be especially useful in explaining how issue and policy compartmentalizations occur. For example, a non-state group can provide local security, food and garbage disposal, whereas a state can still be providing electricity, water and banking services. This equilibrium between state and non-state administration can range from ghetto-ization, where non-state groups maintain security in small districts and streets, to full state collapse, where non-state actors provide all components of administration, including infrastructure, municipality and financial services. One of the best examples to this was the case of Mosul, where civil servants continued to receive salaries from Baghdad, long after the capture of the city by ISIS.[17] In other words, the extent to which non-state actors assume state-like roles depends entirely on the relative balance of power between those actors and standing armies of states.

With the onset of the Syrian Civil War, local and external pressures have led to a weakening of state authority in Syria. Following the emergence of numerous armed groups, the Islamic State proclaimed itself a caliphate in June 2014, rapidly expanding in territorial control and number of people it brought under control in Syria and Iraq. Likewise, in 2014, Syrian Kurdish groups under the control of PYD have expanded along the Turkish border and consolidated a formidable amount of territory there. Both ISIS and PYD thus merit deeper research into how they manage and oversee their territorial gains, how they consolidate populations and how they administer them.

3. *Dawa* and *Hisba*: How ISIS Controls and Administers

The most comprehensive study on the territorial methodology of ISIS was conducted by Aaron Zelin.[18] Zelin divides his study into pre- and post-territorial control methodologies, explaining how and where ISIS decides to expand, and how the territory it has expanded determines its administrative style. Within pre- and post-territorial control types, there are five different approaches: 'intelligence, military, *dawa* (missionary activities), *hisba* (moral policing and consumer protection), and governance.'[19]

In Zelin's account, the first phase includes sleeper cell implantation and infiltrating other armed groups, as well as 'buying' local clans and smaller

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the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy Planning, as quoted in: David Fisher and Cristina Mercado, "Competitive Control: How to Evaluate the Threats Posed by Ungoverned Spaces", Small Wars Journal. (2007)

17 Isabel Coles, "Despair, hardship as Iraq cuts off wages in Islamic State cities". Reuters, (2 October 2015) [http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-salaries-idUSKCN0RW0V620151002] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

18 Aaron Zelin, "The Islamic State's Territorial Methodology". Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Research Note No. 29 (January 2016) [http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote29-Zelin.pdf] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

19 Ibid. pp. 1-3

insurgents. This takes place through the pledging of allegiance (*baya*) to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, after which training camps begin to form, which is the final step of the first phase. In the second phase, which the group defines as '*dawa* program', IS commences outreach to establish communications with the local populace – from 'softer' methods such as games and competitions to more direct methods as literature and pamphlet distribution as a way of conducting initial propaganda and image building.

A dedicated PR office, which organizes meals and gatherings with powerful tribes and notables is also part of this process. In the third phase, the organization begins taxing the population and enforces law through dedicated legal outlets, with specific attention to resolving long-standing disputes as a way of demonstrating administrative capacity. In post-territorial control, i.e., after ISIS establishes initial control of a recently expanded territory, it begins to rule the area as a state-like entity, extracting resources (manpower, capital and supplies) while exercising a more direct application of its ideology, in terms of cultural codes and production maximization.

Zelin posits that once ISIS establishes stronger control over a territory, it starts to fight with heavier weapons and equipment from there, assuming an open warfare posture. While the softer, initial contact method of *dawa* enables ISIS to control the territory, the next *hisba* phase introduces penalties, punishments and stricter interpretation and enforcement of cultural norms. Final forms of control include raising ISIS black flag in the city, in important buildings, lamp posts and key public areas and manufacturing custom road signs as a form of municipality work and demonstrating bid for statehood. In more extreme cases, ISIS also changes the name of the town it successfully employed all components of administration.

In demonstrating its competence as a source of administration, ISIS engages in substantial municipality work; from paving the roads to fixing electric and phone lines, to garbage collection and 'beautification' projects, including new mosque, market and shop constructions. As a form of communicating to the local populace that ISIS' arrival effectively ends the conflict and provides safety (one of the most welcome changes to a population under prolonged duress), the group also restarts industries (quarries, poultry farms, glass, brick and wood workshops) that halted due to conflict. Mass-production of food – especially bread, rice and potato – is also one of the final phases of ISIS administrative methodology.

4. Social Economy and Cooperatives: How PYD Administers

Syrian Civil War has allowed the Kurds to benefit from the disappearance of borders. PYD and YPG, with differing levels of connections to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), have already redrawn the map of northern Syria, establishing a *de facto* control zone – Rojava. Assisted by US air strikes,

PYD has managed to push back the Islamic State and acquire a territorial form, albeit at a high human cost. Nonetheless, the goal of establishing an autonomous, self-administered territory has so far enabled PYD to mobilize some segment of the Syrian Kurds to keep fighting and take territory from both ISIS and the Assad regime.

PYD doesn't have the kind of maximalist expansion aims like ISIS. Rather, PYD has so far acted in more minimalist terms, aiming to capitalize on an ethno-nationalist territorialization, where Kurdish demography renders PYD presence conducive. In that, PYD doesn't enjoy a large territory like ISIS, but benefits from greater consolidation and support, owing to ethno-nationalist and ideological cohesion. This in turn means that PYD has less incentive to focus on pre-territorial control methods like intelligence gathering and propaganda, and more on administration and consolidation. Indeed, as PYD expands into territories with a larger majority of Kurdish population, there is faster and easier consolidation of administration, whereas as it expands into more ethnically mixed areas, it is forced to fine tune and improvise its approach. Following its territorial gains after its capture of Tal Abyad from ISIS in the summer 2015, it has rapidly expanded territory in ethnically mixed areas, which posed a challenge to its initial model.

First types of administrative action PYD takes is to establish a framework for municipality and infrastructure projects. Akram Hasso, PYD's self-declared Prime Minister, has defined these project types as "health, sewerage, medical, agricultural projects, and local municipality services [such as asphalt road connections]."[20] Rojava Kurds believe that their region was left backward deliberately by the Assad regime for decades, which led to the region's development of a kind of colonial relationship to Damascus by supplying wheat, cotton and oil.[21] In return, however, there are few factories, infrastructure or workshops built by the regime, as the Damascus has attempted to deny further development in bid to restrict the Kurds' ability to generate extra resources that may be used in rebellion against the state. This one-sided arrangement, according to the discourse of Rojava, had led to the emergence of private fiefdoms, controlled by pro-government officials, all of which fled after the onset of the civil war, leaving a backward and mal-administered territory behind.[22]

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20 Tom Perry, "Syrian Kurds' spending plans reflect rising ambition". Reuters. (28 July 2015) [http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-kurds-idUSKCN0Q21BK20150728] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

21 Carne Ross, "The Kurds' Democratic Experiment". New York Times. (30 September 2015) [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/30/opinion/the-kurds-democratic-experiment.html] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

22 Erika Solomon "Amid Syria's violence, Kurds carve out autonomy". Reuters. (22 January 2014) [http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-kurdistan-specialreport-idUSBREA0L17320140122] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

In order to re-create administration in a region that had poor connection to the nation's capital, PYD emphasizes 'social economy' – a combination of cooperatives across economic sectors in order to meet basic supplies of food and fuel.[23] The idea of a cooperative, as well as 'social economy,' import a lot from the Soviet concept of *kolkhoz*[24] as well as its Israeli counterpart, *kibbutz*,[25] both of which have been integral components of early state- and community-building in both countries. The idea of self-governing farming collectives has thus been central to Rojava's political economy and act as a pivot towards possible statehood.[26]

If statehood is not achieved, then, collectives are still integral to Rojava, as they will be the basis of economic independence from any central administration. Rations of food, produced by these collectives have both been used to supply adjacent collectives, and also wider towns and villages as well, rendering these collectives integral to food security for a larger area. In that, Rojava revolution has also been – among other things – a land re-appropriation project from former government-controlled fiefdoms into self-governing farming collectives that feed their immediate neighborhoods.[27]

This is indeed a socialist experiment, as one of the stated aims of the revolution has been the eventual connection of cooperatives into a larger network economy, within which money is either minimized or eliminated altogether.[28] In the town of Derik (within Jazira canton), for example, as of September 2014, municipality payment for the employees were made based on need (number of dependents), rather than merit, and establishment of food aid networks across communes and municipality workers were also conducted in a similar fashion.[29]

At the time of writing this article, Syrian currency was still used in PYD-administered areas and loans were made – albeit, without interest.[30] While the

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23 Ahmed Yousef, "The Social Economy in Rojava". FairCoop, (11 October 2016) [https://fair.coop/the-social-economy-in-rojava/] (Accessed: 26 October 2016)

24 Tomasso Trevisani, "After the Kolkhoz: rural elites in competition". Central Asian Survey, Volume 26, Issue 1, (2007) pp. 85-104.

25 Yonina Talmon, Family and Community in the Kibbutz. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972)

26 On Rojava's economy, one of the best accounts is ANF's interview with Ahmet Yusuf, who was made President of the Committee On Economy and Trade of the Afrin Autonomous Canton. See: Seyit Evran, "Dr. Yusuf: Rojava's Economic Model is a Communal Model". Fırat News Agency (ANF), (14 September 2014). Available at: [https://rojavareport.wordpress.com/2014/04/14/dr-yusuf-rojavas-economic-model-is-a-communal-model/] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

27 Ibid.

28 Joseph Kay, "Rojava Economy and Class Structure". LibCom.Org, (17 October 2014) [http://kurdishquestion.com/oldsite/index.php/kurdistan/west-kurdistan/rojava-s-threefold-economy.html] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

29 Ibid.

30 Evran, 2014

model seems to be working for now and in smaller administrative areas, it poses questions over the future of banking and finance – two essential economic questions if the PYD project pushed to administer over a larger population and territory, which seeks sustainability.

5. Comparing and Contrasting ISIS and PYD's Competitive Control

Theory of competitive control helps us understand why ISIS and PYD are both long-term and local phenomena. As the level of analysis problem in modern conflicts are reduced to the size of cities and even districts, understanding competition for territorial control through administrative practice is key. In that, a military-only thinking of both organizations prevents a proper contextualization of why they have sustained popular support and social base. Both groups construct authority based on coercive, persuasive and administrative approaches in which intertwined and dynamic processes of conflicts co-exist. In comparing and contrasting both groups' territorial methods, two layers of analysis are required: population-economy (resources) and centralization-autonomy (type of rule).

In terms of resources, ISIS controls both a larger territory and population, as well as a more expansive economy. In February 2015, Daveed Gartenstein-Ross estimated that ISIS rules over a population of around 6,750,000; 2,247,000 of which is in Syria and 3,900,000 - 4,600,000 living in Iraq.[31] In Syria, the most concentrated ISIS population centers are Raqqa (around 1 million) and Dair az-Zor Province (also around 1 million) in Syria, whereas in Iraq these are Ninawa Province (1,480,000) and parts of Kirkuk, including al-Dibs, Daquq and Hawija (525,000).[32] For PYD-controlled areas, on the other hand, one of the earliest measurements of population was 4,6 million as of late 2014, based on New World Academy report,[33] although a more recent census has been unforthcoming. Even with the 2014 figure, an important majority of those are thought of as internally displaced people. In Rojava, the most populated cantons are Jazira (1.5 million), Kobani (1 million) and Afrin (1.3 million) as of May 2014.[34] Both groups control similar sizes of population and, in that regard, identifying a clear long-term demographic winner is difficult at this point. At a time when a proper census is unforthcoming, a

31 David Gartenstein-Ross, "How many fighters does the Islamic State really have?". War on the Rocks. (9 February 2015) [http://warontherocks.com/2015/02/how-many-fighters-does-the-islamic-state-really-have/] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

32 Ibid.

33 Reneé in der Maur and Jonas Staal (eds.) Stateless Democracy, (Utrecht: New World Academy, 2015) [http://newworldsummit.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/NWA5-Stateless-Democracy.pdf] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

34 "Canton Based Democratic Autonomy of Rojava". Kurdistan National Congress (KNK). (May 2014) [https://peaceinkurdistancampaign.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/rojava-info-may-2014.pdf] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

statistical survey on the birthrates – a reliable measurement of long-term de-mography – is also hard to conduct. Therefore, based on available data, ISIS and Rojava seem to be tied down in a draw over competition for demographic superiority. Nonetheless, the territorial gains of PYD at the expense of ISIS in Syria and the rollback of ISIS in Iraq is likely to change this picture.

In terms of financial resources, there is a more complicated picture. In December 2015, *Financial Times* ran one of the most detailed accounts of ISIS finances, including provincial microeconomic policy.[35] There are two types of economy in ISIS run parts of Iraq and Syria – for ISIS members and outsiders. According to FT account, prices for commodity goods and services for ISIS members are about half of outsider prices. Rather than maintaining and improving existing economy in administered territories, ISIS has so far relied more on conquest economy, where confiscation and re-appropriation of newly acquired resources have generated more revenue than the sale of oil or taxation.[36] ISIS employs a governor (or *wali*), who coordinates the local *Zakat* Council, which in turn collects tax, depending on the territory's income and level of loyalty. Taxation includes cash, as well as grain and cotton. Zakat is taken at a 2.5% rate from all businesses regardless of size – regular grain is taxed 5% and rain-fed corps is taxed 10%.[37] In generating a sanction-proof economy, ISIS has structured its financial system in a way that sanctions hurt the population more than ISIS leadership or militant network – this is also part of ISIS military strategy, whereby it has successfully embedded its command rooms inside dense civilian areas, rendering it costly to hit through aerial bombing.[38] This dual military-financial embedding into civilian areas ensure public support (or at least loyalty) to the organization, while preventing break-aways or external pressures to destabilize the group's control.[39]

As far as economy in PYD-controlled areas is concerned, there are multiple insider accounts from different cantons. As solidarity economy and cooperatives are based on the idea of political autonomy and de-centralization, a fixed

35 Sam Jones and Erika Solomon, "ISIS Inc: Jihadis fund war machine but squeeze citizens". Financial Times. (15 December 2015) [http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/2ef519a6-a23d-11e5-bc70-7ff6d4fd203a.html#axzz4C2haXZPo] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

36 Erika Solomon and Sam Jones, "ISIS Inc: Loot and taxes keep jihadi economy churning". Financial Times (14 December 2016) [http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/aee89a00-9ff1-11e5-beba-5e33e2b79e46.html#axzz4C2haXZPo] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

37 Jose Pagliery, "Inside the $2 billion ISIS war machine". CNN Money. (11 December 2015) [http://money.cnn.com/2015/12/06/news/isis-funding/index.html?category=home-international] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

38 Karoun Demirjian, "Congress wants to strengthen financial sanctions against ISIS". The Washington Post. (24 December 2015) [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2015/12/24/congress-wants-to-strengthen-financial-sanctions-against-isis/] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

39 Jonah Goldberg, "US Mandates ISIS embed deeper into civilian populations". National Review. (24 June 2015) [http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/420230/us-mandates-isis-embed-deeper-civilian-populations-jonah-goldberg] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

policy is difficult to track. Rojava's Constitution[40] specifically states a preference for democratic autonomy over the homogeneity of the nation-state, while equally emphasizing 'not being opposed to the state' and 'not seeking to form a state', meaning its understanding of autonomy is not against territorial integrity of neighboring countries. Contrasting with ISIS's understanding of ownership, PYD governance pursues a pro-private property approach, somewhat contradicting the socialist foundations of its collective communalization system.[41] Rather than taxation or zakat, however, PYD focuses more on collective production – collective consumption and the eventual goal of minimizing the role of currency in economy.[42] Overall, however, given the proximity of the main population centers to conflict and different practices of economic policy in the cantons, a clear-cut, functioning economic policy is difficult to identify there, in contrast to ISIS's economic policy, which is more centrally administered.

As far as population and economy are concerned, it is hard to identify a clear long-term winner between ISIS and PYD. Both groups have only recently emerged from what Kilcullen defines as 'shadow governance'[43] (which exists in parallel to the reach of a central authority) to active governance (where central authority does not exist). While ISIS controls a larger population, its rigid conquest economy creates too many disenfranchisements away from these territories, inevitably leading to economic shrinkage. Indeed, ISIS has already begun banning travels outside its control zones (*Dar al-Harb*) following large numbers of defections of people whose properties were confiscated from cities under its control.[44]

To that extent, ISIS' economic survival depends on constant conquest, for its economic administration and taxation policy not only prevents further development of businesses and workshops into more advanced forms of production, but it also structured the very basis of its economy on the accumulation of outside resources, such as pillaging and extortion. PYD governance, on the other hand, seems to be more understanding of the necessity of attracting capital, rather than overtax or restrict the movement of goods and services. However, its co-op economy may run into bigger problems as territory and

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40 Charter of the Social Contract in Rojava (Syria), available online: [http://www.kurdishinstitute.be/charter-of-the-social-contract/] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

41 C. Massey (2016) "A new co-operative economy: Democratic confederalism in Rojava and Bakur". Institute for Solidarity Economics. (7 June 2016) [http://solidarityeconomics.org/2016/06/07/a-new-co-operative-economy-democratic-confederalism-in-rojava-and-bakur/] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

42 Evran, 2014

43 Kilcullen, 151

44 Lizzie Dearden, "Isis 'bans all Christians from leaving Raqqa' as military operations against group intensify in Syria". The Independent. (31 March 2016) [http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-bans-all-christians-from-leaving-raqqa-as-military-operations-against-group-intensify-in-syria-a6962331.html](Accessed: 19 June 2016)

population expands into a size, which may require more efficient financial planning. In addition, PYD itself is not immune from accusations of extortion and other abuses of power,[45] which may complicate its bid to emerge as a more progressive and accommodating alternative to ISIS. Nonetheless, both ISIS and PYD have effectively filled-in the need for the administration of basic goods and services in a conflict setting, providing security, food and basic activities of livelihood to an otherwise ungoverned territory.

In terms of political administration, ISIS favors direct centralization, whereas PYD is the complete opposite, advocating canton-style autonomy. Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi made a detailed account of the evolution in ISIS' administration, tracking it back to 2006, when the group was a fringe organization in Iraq.[46] ISIS adopts a mixture of technocratic and ideological approach to appointments, where 'important' ministries such as oil and health were headed by engineers and doctors with due specialization. By 2014, ISIS had already developed an administrative model with 14 'ministries,' including education, resources, currency, public relations and agriculture.[47]

Strong cultural adherence is required in the application of such administration, such as a common policy on *Zakat*, or other practices such as the closure of businesses during prayer times. In the application of administration, harsh justice and rigid religious-legal apparatus have helped to bring order in ISIS controlled places that have suffered from extended fighting. ISIS's centralization becomes easier to enforce as warring sides have been fully polarized across clear-cut trenches, unlike the fragmented picture that emerged soon after the Iraq War in 2003. Also, the populace is more war-weary now, compared to 2003 and is more receptive to the idea of harsh justice in exchange for security and basic stability. In that, the structure of ISIS administration has a clear-cut hierarchy, where Caliph is the ultimate source of authority, which rules over a cabinet of advisors. In turn, the Caliph has two deputies, one for Syria and one for Iraq, each of which rule over 12 governors in Syria and 12 in Iraq. A separate *Shura* Council, which administers religious and military affairs counsel both the Caliph and his deputies.[48]

45 "Under Kurdish Rule: Abuses in PYD-run Enclaves of Syria". Human Rights Watch. (19 June 2014). [https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/06/19/under-kurdish-rule/abuses-pyd-run-enclaves-syria] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

46 Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi (2015) "The Evolution in Islamic State Administration: The Documentary Evidence", Perspective on Terrorism. (5 August 2015) [http://www.meforum.org/5515/isis-administration-evolution] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

47 Ibid.

48 Nick Thompson and Atika Shubert. "The anatomy of ISIS: How the 'Islamic State' is run, from oil to beheadings". CNN International Edition. (14 January 2015). [http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/18/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq-hierarchy/] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

Rojava, on the other hand, has a different structure, which follows an interlinked set up of institutions that address administration at different levels.[49] While different cantons have individual models, the best-defined example is the Jazira administration, where Executive Council acts as a government with 22 ministries, with a Kurdish President and two deputies – one Arab and one Syriac. A Judicial Council oversees legal processes, whereas a Supreme Constitutional Court and High Commission of Election act within a checks and balances system. For the Legislative Council, made up of 101 members, and the Judicial Council, Supreme Constitutional Court and High Commission of Election, there is a gender quota of at least %40 women. In addition, there is also a Local Administration Council, which handles local affairs in 10 cities of the Jazira Canton. Yet, the planned structure is currently lagging behind, due to the persistence of the conflict and the proximity of population centers to active combat. In addition, despite an autonomous and loosely linked decision-making, the 'Rojava project' is still viewed by different groups of Kurds as a 'PYD project,' which prevents further consolidation and unification.[50] Other criticisms exist in terms of Rojava project being 'too ethno-nationalist,' as well as denouncement for being too rigid from its ideological standpoint and its harsh stance against other local Kurdish political parties.[51]

6. Conclusion

This article aimed to outline David Kilcullen's theory of competitive control by focusing on Rojava and ISIS administrative models. Ungoverned spaces are becoming increasingly important in the study of modern conflicts, where non-state armed actors establish no-go zones in parts of urban centers. In Syria case, such no-go zones achieve a larger territorial expression as the weakening of central authorities necessitate the emergence of non-state armed groups that are expected to grow out of their role as mere security providers and take on more elaborate set of administrative duties. In Kilcullen's analysis, 'whichever actor takes on the wider range of capabilities, covering more of the spectrum from persuasion to coercion' will dominate a particular territory, uproot central state authority and redirect the loyalties of the local populace.

Both ISIS and PYD have been developing administrative models for a long period of time, as the methods and tools they use have been honed and tested against multiple scenarios. For ISIS, administrative experimentation go back to the Iraq War in 2003, when the fragmentation of the war brought

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49 Kurdistan National Congress, p. 15

50 "Kurdish National Council in Syria condemns federalism declaration by Kurdish rival" ARA News. (19 March 2016) [http://aranews.net/2016/03/kurdish-national-council-syria-condemns-federalism-declaration-kurdish-rival/] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

51 Wladimir Van Wilgenburg, "This is a new Syria, not a new Kurdistan". Middle East Eye. (17 March 2016) [http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/analysis-kurds-syria-rojava-1925945786] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

the necessity of strengthening the Sunni bid for statehood with a more successful practice of administration. For PYD, on the other hand, the 'Rojava experiment' go as far back as to 1999, when outlawed PKK's leader Abdullah Öcalan had outlined the basic premises of administration and state-building in Kobani.[52]

ISIS has a more expansive, conquest-based approach to administration with clear-cut methodologies on pre- and post-territorial control. With intelligence, network-building, propaganda and municipality approaches, the group follows a direct hierarchy and a well-defined standard operating procedure. PYD project, on the other hand, defines its territorial aims in a more limited fashion, aiming to capitalize on Kurdish-majority territories along the Turkish-Syrian border and connect all three cantons of Rojava into a single territorial expression. It has a more fragmented decision-making system where autonomy, self-rule and gender equality in political participation are prized.

In terms of resources, both ISIS and PYD control comparable portions of population, where ISIS administers over a negative demography (where incentive to flee is greater), whereas PYD rules over static one (where those that flee and join leave the population in equilibrium). In terms of economic resource-generation, ISIS has more resources, but less incentive to cultivate/maximize them, instead of focusing on conquest economy. PYD, on the other hand, focuses more on the cultivation and efficiency of existing resources through the establishment of communes where resources are produced and consumed based on ability and need, respectively. While both groups use currency and lending, PYD seeks to minimize and eliminate currency and monetary interest as a form of resource.

To conclude, theory of competitive control is a crucial approach that explains why both ISIS and PYD will not be eliminated through military means. Both groups have entrenched themselves into their respective populations through the complex use of security, financial and administrative tools. Both groups have successfully challenged weakening state authority in Syria and capitalized on the population's demand for security and stability in order to pursue their political goals. Over time, the debate over PYD and ISIS will shape along the lines, of which ideology and administrative style fits best to the demands of their populations and their geopolitical necessities, as well as which group will leave a lasting legacy in the region – regardless of whether Syria disintegrates, or a new political arrangement is made at the end of the war.

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52 Güney Yıldız, "Kobani, PKK ve barış süreci için neden önemli?". BBC Türkçe. (1 October 2014) [http://www.bbc.com/turkce/ozeldosyalar/2014/10/141001_kobani_baris_surec] (Accessed: 19 June 2016)

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