Moving Beyond the Syrian Identity-Based Conflict

Religion, Politics, Conflict and Peacebuilding

The Changing Alawite Identity from the Ninth Century till 2016

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On the picture of the front page one can see Alawites supporting Bashar al-Assad. Source: Nir Rosen, "Assad's Alawites: An entrenched community," Al Jazeera, October 12, 2011, accessed January 21, 2018, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/10/20111011154631737692.h

Introduction

"The Nusayris are more disbelieving than the Jews and the Christians, as Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said about them. We see them today killing people like mice and cats, by the thousands and tens of thousands. Asad has come to rule by his own authority and with him his Nusayri sect."[1]

On the 31st of May 2013, these words of the most prominent religious authority in Sunni Islam, the Egyptian Hanafi scholar Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, were spoken at Doha, the capital of Qatar. The sermon was delivered in solidarity with the Syrian people. Al-Qaradawi incriminated the Iranian regime and the Shia militia Hezbollah of helping Assad's Alawite regime's war against ordinary Syrians by providing military assistance and sending Shiites from all across the world.[2] By using the fatwa of Ibn Taymiyyah, a fourteenth century Hanbali scholar, al-Qaradawi calls on Muslims to wage jihad to help their fellow Syrian brothers against the disbelieving Shiites and Nusayris.

Until the establishment of the Alawite state in 1920, the Alawis were known as Nusayris named after Abu Shu'ayb Mohammed Ibn Nusayr who is the assumed founder of the sect in the ninth century.[3] Alawites, which means followers of Ali, are often considered as a Twelver branch of Shia Islam and "Nusayris" is an antiquated and derogatory name. Al-Qaradawi's inflammatory rhetoric and remarks "are part of a pattern of escalating Sunni rhetoric -from politicians, clerics, and the media - towards Shi'ite Muslims."[4] The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center argues that this "escalation can be considered part of a broader, region-wide conflict between the Shi'ites and the Sunnis", as the various conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Bahrein, and Yemen exemplify how Shia Iran is vying with Sunni Saudi Arabia for the leadership of Islam and the Middle East.[5]

The Syrian Civil War is an important locus of study as the "Western" approach of conflict transformation to the Syrian Conflict was from the beginning since the 2011 outbreak of the Syrian Revolution "dominated by an overdose of wishful thinking, because precedence

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[1] Aslam Farouk-Alli, "Sectarianism in Alawi Syria: Exploring the Paradoxes of Politics and Religion", in *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 207.

[2] "Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the most prominent religious authority in Sunni Islam, lashed out against Iran and Hezbollah and called on Muslims to support the rebels in Syria.," The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, June 16, 2013, accessed October 19, 2017, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/20527/.

[3] Yaron Friedman, *The Nuṣayrī-'Alawīs: An Introduction to the Religion, History, and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria* (Leiden: Brill. 2010), 5-17.

[4] "Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the most prominent religious authority," The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.

[5] Ibidem.

was given to supposedly democratic and moralistic ideals over *realpolitik*."[6] Initially, many Western politicians thought that the Assad-regime would quickly fall by the summer of 2012 and they became fixated by the idea that the conflict could only be resolved with the removal of Assad.[7] Nikolaos van Dam rightly argues that Western politicians completely underestimated the strength of the regime, "partly out of ignorance and the lack of knowledge of the Syrian regime."[8]

This "ignorance" and this "lack of knowledge" have contributed to the severe Syrian humanitarian crisis: the Syrian Network For Human Rights (SNHR) reports that more than 480,000 deaths were counted for the first half of 2017 and "a total of 5381 civilians have been killed from January 2017 to June 2017."[9] The 2017 Human Rights Reports adds that because of the targeting of civilians and chemical weapons, the ongoing Syrian Civil War is "a dire humanitarian crisis, with 6.1 million internally displaced people and 4.8 million seeking refuge abroad."[10] The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) states about the crisis that "as of August 2017, there are 540,000 civilians living in 11 besieged locations in need of humanitarian assistance" and continues by saying that "frequent denial of entry of humanitarian assistance into these areas and blockage of urgent medical evacuations result in civilian deaths and suffering."[11]

The Syrian conflict and the humanitarian consequences make it clear that a real political solution based on realpolitik is of the utmost importance to get a *negative peace* – the absence of direct violence such as war- before a *positive* peace - the integration of society - can be achieved.[12] Moreover, the Syrian Civil War has been often viewed as "an intensely sectarian conflict" in which "the minority rule of Alawites over a majority Sunni population has created ethnoreligious grievances, adding a lot of fuel to the conflict."[13]

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[6] Nikolaos van Dam, *Destroying a Nation: The Civil War in Syri*a, (London: I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2017), 119.

[7] Van Dam, *Destroying a Nation*, 119

[8] Van Dam, 119.

[9] "Including 1159 children and 742 women and 93 from torture." Total Death Count in Syria: 480,000+ 2017 Death Count: 7, 203," I AM SYRIA, accessed October 19, 2017, http://www.iamsyria.org/death-tolls.html.

[10] "Syria Events of 2016," Human Rights Watch, 2017, accessed October 19, 2017, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/syria.

[11] The indiscriminate attacks, the abuses by Jabhat al-Nusra, ISIS and other non-state armed groups, the torture and deaths in custody, and the the use of incendiary weapons, cluster munitions are also mentioned. About the Crisis," The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), accessed October 19, 2017, http://www.unocha.org/syrian-arab-republic/syria-country-profile/about-crisis.

[12] According to Johan Galtung, the term positive peace means the absence of all forms of violence and the restoration of communal relationships, the creation of viable social systems that provide the needs of every member of society in a constructive manner. Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," in *Journal of Peace Research* Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969), 168.

[13] Lawrence G. Potter, *Sectarian Politics in the Persian Gulf* (London: C. Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2014), 83 and Selma Bardakcı, Ertuğrul Genç, and Dilara C. Hekimci, "Syria Falls from Grace: The Rise of Sectarianism

A conflict analysis to understand the root causes of the Syrian conflict and its psychological dimension is necessary for sustainable peace building.[14] Sandra Marker argues that "one of the primary causes of protracted or intractable conflict is people's unyielding drive to meet their unmet needs on the individual, group, and societal level."[15] Syrian identity issues are therefore driven by "unfulfilled needs and collective fears". This means that the sectarian dimension of the conflict is "based on people's psychology, culture, basic values, shared history, and beliefs", according to Michelle Maiese.[16] She continues by saying that "these issues tend to be more abstract and are connected to people's basic needs for survival."[17]

Leon Goldsmith rightly contends that "the fear and insecurity that has shaped the Alawite identity and political behaviour explains the establishment, consolidation and durability of the Asad regime."[18] Taking this in consideration, these identity effects contribute to the intractability of the Syrian conflict; however, identity issues can be transformed into constructive and peaceful results, as Johan Paul Lederach would say: "the key to transformation is the capacity to envision conflict as having the potential for constructive change."[19] This justifies the question of how a historical analysis of the Alawite identity can contribute to the actual implementation of peacebuilding activities that deal with identity issues.

This study is important for two reasons. First, it aims to contribute to the field of peace and conflict transformation studies. The term "conflict transformation" was introduced in peace and conflict studies by several theorists in the 1990s, such as Edward Shwerin, Dale Spencer and William Spencer, Johan Galtung, John Paul Lederach, Kumar Rupesinghe, and Raimo Väyrynen.[20] Conflict transformation can be described as a process by which conflicts are

and Radicalism," *Democracy and Society* 12, no. 1 (2017): 10-12, accessed October 19, 2017, https://government.georgetown.edu/sites/government/files/GU-D%26S-22.pdf.

[14] Claudia Seymour, "Social Psychological Dimensions of Conflict," Beyond Intractability, September, 2003, accessed October 19, 2017, http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/social_psychological and Marie Doucey, "Understanding the Root Causes of the Conflict: Why it Matters for International Crisis Management," *International Affairs Review* 20, no. 2 (Fall 2011), 1, accessed October 19, 2017, http://iar-gwu.org/sites/default/files/articlepdfs/Understanding%20the%20Root%20Causes%20-%20Doucey.pdf

[15] Sandra Marker, "Unmet Human Needs," Beyond Intractability, August, 2003, accessed October 19, 2017, http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/human-needs.

[16] Heidi Burgess and Guy M. Burgess, "What Are Intractable Conflicts?," Beyond Intractability, November, 2003, accessed October 19, 2017, http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/meaning-intractability.

[17] Burgess and Burgess, "What Are Intractable Conflicts?."

[18] It is important to emphasise that many Alawites do not agree with the Assad regime. Leon Goldsmith, *Cycle of Fear: Syria's Alawites in War and Peace* (London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd, 2015), 203.

[19] Conflict transformation can be described as a process by which conflicts are transformed into constructive and peaceful results. John Paul Lederach, "Conflict Transformation," Beyond Intractability, October, 2003, accessed October 20, 2017, http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/transformation.

[20] Johannes Botes, "Conflict Transformation: A Debate over Semantics or a Crucial Shift in the Theory and Practice of Peace and Conflict Studies?," *International Journal of Peace Studies* 8, no. 2 (Autumn/Winter 2003): 1-27, accessed October 20, 2017, http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/ijps/vol8_2/botes.htm.

transformed into constructive and peaceful results. Within peace and conflict transformation studies, the growing diversification of scholarly attention is exemplified by the abundance of different topics, such as "trauma healing, peace psychology, cultures of violence, restorative justice, nonviolent action, creative arts approaches to social change, decolonizing approaches, faith-based peacebuilding, social justice, ecological peacebuilding, forgiveness, and reconciliation", and identity-based conflicts.[21] This development of different study topics might not be surprising because, according to Heidi Burgess it "combines theoretical concerns with the practical implications of peacebuilding policies" and "is extremely badly needed in the United States right now, as is true in Europe, much of the Middle and Far East, as well as Africa", as conflicts over identity issues seem to be common in the twenty-first century.[22]

Most of the time, scholarly literature on identity-based conflicts such as sectarianism has expanded since the Cold War and has focused on the "conditions under which violence occur, patterns and processes within war, peace agreements" and how case studies of identity-based conflicts can contribute to "transformative policies to de-escalate identity conflicts and to help people develop mutual respect and sources of common ground."[23] This literature tends to focus more on the political dimensions of conflict transformation and particularly on the different number of possible institutional settlements that might "facilitate inclusive governance and minority protections" combined with a problem-solving conflict analysis and practices of dialogue.[24] In this way the character and processes of living together can be defined.[25]

Within the sizeable identity-based conflict studies, most academics tend to focus on one particular conflict. For example *Moving Beyond Sectarianism: Religion, Conflict, and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* is a relevant study that focuses on the role of Christian beliefs and institutions in the sectarian conflict of Northern Ireland. Based on a historical analysis and extensive community relation group work sessions, Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg argue that in order to resolve an identity-based conflict, the solution should be found

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[21] "Peace and Conflict Transformation Studies," Canadian Mennonite University, 2017, accessed October 20, 2017, http://www.cmu.ca/academics.php?s=pacts.

[22] R. Scott Appleby, Atalia Omer, and David Little, *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1-46 and Louis Kriesberg and Heidi Burgess, "Identity Issues," Beyond Intractability, 2003, accessed October 20, 2017, http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/identity-issues.

[23] Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel, *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East*, (London: C. Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2017), 260 see note 13 for an comprehensive overview of the literature and Louis Kriesberg and Heidi Burgess, "Identity Issues," Beyond Intractability, 2003, accessed October 20, 2017, http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/identity-issues.

[24] Timothy D. Sisk, "Conclusion: Peacebuilding in Sectarianized Conflicts: findings and Implications for the Theory and Practice," in *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East*, 259-276, 264

[25] Sisk, "Conclusion: Peacebuilding in Sectarianized Conflicts: findings and Implications for the Theory and Practice," 264.

within the religious traditions of the sectarian communities.[26]

In a comprehensive chapter, the authors discuss what sectarianism is and conceptualise a working definition to substantiate that it is "a system of attitudes, action, and believes, and structures which arises as a distorted expression of positive, human needs especially for belonging, identity, and the free expression of difference."[27] Liechty and Clegg further continue by saying that this "is expressed in destructive patterns of relating" and they conclude that only when people "start taking active responsibility for this, will there be sufficient communal energy generated" to move beyond the sectarian system.[28] In other words, to achieve positive peace, continuous work over generations is required and to move beyond sectarianism requires "strategies of transformation and mitigation", and the most difficult aspect is that this change requires "a willingness and openness" from all the involved sectarian communities.[29] Not only the obvious but also the more subtle and political correct forms of sectarianism should be recognised, because the granted beliefs and attitudes towards other groups strongly ingrain sectarianism in societies.

In contrast to the focus on one conflict, other studies aim attention on a more global approach related to identity-based conflicts. The usefulness of such an approach is reinforced by the comparison and analysis of different identity-based conflicts with the help of various scholars from different academic fields. A noteworthy study of this kind is *Understanding Peace and Conflict Through Social Identity: Contemporary Global Perspectives*. Shelley McKeown, Haji, Reeshma and Neil Ferguson aim to show how social identity and peace psychology are related to both conflict and peace-building. Through several case-studies over the world, such as on South-Africa, Northern Uganda, Rwanda, Northern-Ireland, Cyprus, Kosovo, and the United Arab Emirates, the authors conclude: "what is needed is a greater understanding of the role of identity in the interpretation of threat associated with political conflict and its role in the transformation of conflict."[30] Such understanding is essential "to guide interventions or policy aimed at protecting groups and individuals harmed through conflict or where threatened identities are creating obstacles to conflict transformation."[31] This 2016 study is important and provides relevant knowledge about identity issues; nonetheless,

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[26] Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism: Religion, Conflict, and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2001), 337-346.
[27] Liechty and Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, 102-147
[28] Liechty and Clegg, 147.
[29] Ibidem, 147.
[30] Shelley McKeown, Reeshma Haji and Neil Ferguson, *Understanding Peace and Conflict Through Social Identity: Contemporary Global Perspectives* (New York: Springer, 2016), 368.
[31] McKeown, Haji and Ferguson, *Understanding Peace and Conflict*, 368.

less attention is given to the Middle Eastern region and moreover: the Syrian conflict was not discussed at all.

To fill up this academic lacunae, other studies have focused on the Middle Eastern region such as the important 2017 study, *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East*, by Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel demonstrates. This study aims to challenge "the lazy use of "sectarianism" as a magic-bullet explanation" for the Middle Eastern turmoil in which seemingly "ancient sectarian differences" and "putatively primordial forces" are making conflicts intractable.[32] The authors want to answer the questions why sectarian conflict between Muslims has intensified in recent years, "what explains the upsurge in sectarian conflict at this particular moment in Muslim multiple societies, and "how can we best understand this phenomenon?"[33]

Hashemi and Postel propose the term *sectarianization* which is "a process shaped by political actors operating within specific contexts, pursuing political goals that involve popular mobilization around particular (religious) identity markers."[34] In the book, several scholars from different academic disciplines explore the dynamics of sectarianisation and intend to point out the internal and external factors, such as the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, within Middle Eastern societies to understand why and how this has happened. Case studies of Pakistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Bahrein, Lebanon, Yemen, and Syria make it clear in the concluding chapter that "sectarian identities are created, and evolve over time, as the outcome of mobilization by elites who in turn provide a narrative about the nature and boundaries of the group."[35]

The manipulation by authoritarian political elites has contributed to sectarian violence within Middle Eastern communities according to Timothy D. Six.[36] Peacebuilding efforts in sectarian conflict societies should rely on "process-related options at the regional, national, and local levels" and Six continues by arguing that religious and lay leaders, religious, lay and other civil society groups should actively focus on discussing, reforming and readjusting religious precepts and beliefs to create a more inclusive and tolerant society.[37] This study broadly

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[32] "Sectarianization Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East Edited by Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel," Hurst, accessed October 20, 2017, http://www.hurstpublishers.com/book/sectarianization/.
[33] Hashemi and Postel, *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East*, 4.
[34] Hashemi and Postel, 4.
[35] Ibidem, 259.
[36] Six believes that "a deeper understanding of how sectarian group identity has taken shape in these countries and through-out the region, and how difference along sectarian lines is maintained socially over time, is essential to identifying and understanding the conditions under which measures can be taken to monitor, manage, reduce, and resolve sectarian strife through peacebuilding." Hashemi and Postel, 260.
[37] Ibidem, 265.

sketches out some of the many elements of a conflict analysis which aims to move forward to the de-sectarianisation of Syria, but it does not provide a thorough analysis of how Syrian identity issues, such as the Alawite identity, are constructed and should be dealt with.

Secondly, this study aims to combine the above identity-based conflict theories and studies with the religious and historical scholarship on the Nusayris/Alawites. Scholarly interest in the Alawites was scarce, until in 1971 for the first time in the history of modern Syria, an Alawite by the name of Hafiz al-Assad officially became president of Syria. Because it is assumed that the socioeconomic status of the Alawites changed drastically in the 1970s, Stefan Winter rightly observes that because of current scholarly interest in the Alawis, such studies have generated, or at least contributed to, a distorted narrative in which "the older history of the 'Alawis is often treated in essentialist terms and reduced to a single overarching theme of religious deviance, marginality, and oppression."[38]

Publications in Arabic regarding the Nusayris are not always reliable as such publications often present an apologetic, a negative or a positive propagandistic narrative. Because of this "propaganda", Yaron Friedman thinks that these "studies" can therefore not be considered as entirely objective.[39] Compared with Arabic publications, Max Weiss adds that Western "scholarly discussion of sectarianism in modern Syria may run the risk of reifying sectarian identities, practices and modes of imagination."[40] It is therefore necessary to discuss the history of Western scholarly debate concerning the Nusayri religion, identity and origins to understand Winter's and Weiss' concerns.[41]

Western research on the Nusayri religion and its origins began in the nineteenth century "with French orientalism in the 19th century through the French encounter with their (later) colonial subjects in Lebanon and Syria."[42] This kind of "knowledge-gathering", whether it were British or French, was necessary "to define their subjects and reify their beliefs, and perpetuated 'communalism' to enhance, justify and sustain their political control."[43] Sajjad Rivizi contends

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[38] Stefan Winter, *A History of the 'Alawis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 1.

[39] Friedman, *The Nuṣayrī-'Alawīs*), 68.

[40] Max Weiss, "Community. Sect, Nation: Colonial and Social Scientific Discourses on the Alawis in Syria during the Mandate and early Independence Periods." in Michael Kerr and Craig Larkin, *The Alawis of Syria War, Faith and Politics in the Levant* (London: C. Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2015), 63-75, 64.

[41] Perhaps one of the best detailed overview of the flaws of Western scholarship concerning the Nusayri religion and the flaws of the depictions of Alawites in Medieval hersiographical literature. Ahmad Chehab, "Alawites of Syria: Some Reflections on Theological Takfir," Academia, 2014, accessed November 4, 2017, https://www.academia.edu/7088320/Alawites_of_Syria_Some_Reflections_on_Theological_Takfir.

[42] Sajjad H Rizvi, "Reviewed Work: The Nuṣayrī-'Alawī Religion: An Enquiry into its Theology and Liturgy. (Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture Vol. 1) / دراسة في عقيدة النصيرية وطقوسها الدينية by Meir M. Bar-Asher, مير م. بار أشير, Aryeh Kofsky," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 5, no. 1 (2003): 82-88, 88, accessed October 20, 2017, http://www.jstor.org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/stable/25728095?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

[43] Rizvi, "Reviewed Work: The Nuṣayrī-'Alawī Religion," 88.

that "early French orientalists sought to locate the Alawi community within remains of syncretic and heterodox Syrian Christianity" and that "these studies as well as previous and present interest, cannot be divorced from political interests."[44]

The combination of Western orientalism and political concerns explains why American, German, French and British travellers, Christian missionaries, diplomates, - some of them were members of the French Société Asiatique and of the American Oriental Society - were the pioneers in the Nusayri studies.[45] Generally speaking, one should be very wary of these accounts because it is not only based on their observations but often also on the unreliable speculative obtained knowledge provided by local people, without seriously questioning the content of it. Some of these travellers had not even lived among, or had had any contact with the Nusayris and this all strengthen the possible unreliability of such accounts.

Winter adds to this that even distinguished orientalist scholars have reiterated these egregious assertions "that the 'Alawis are pagans, that they worship the sun, dogs, and female genitalia or partake in night- time sex orgies as part of their cultic practices."[46] Throughout history, such claims have become part of the common sectarian language and narratives that affirm certain identities and emphasises the "otherness" of sectarian groups and their assumed behaviour.

On the other hand there were indeed some Europeans who not only have had contact with Alawites in Syria but also aimed to collect more information and to obtain more reliable knowledge on the origins and religion of the Nusayris. Farhad Daftari thinks that the German traveller Carsten Niebuhr might have been the first European who actually met the Nusayris and "acquire some first-hand accurate information about them."[47] Gisela Prochazka-Eisl and Stephan Procházka strengthen this view by saying that he "was the first Westerner who brought reliable information about the Alawis to Europe."[48]

Another noteworthy development was the use of Nusayri manuscripts, which signals a more scholarly attitude towards the Nusayri studies. One example is René Dussaud who, compared to others, had access to manuscripts of earlier published scholarly works on the Nusaryris as well as to a small European collection of obtained Nusayri manuscripts.[49] The

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[44] Rizvi, 88.

[45] Friedman, 68, Winter, *A History of the 'Alawis*, 3-6, and Farhad Daftary, *a History of Shi'i Islam*, (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2013), 176-179.

[46] Winter, 3.

[47] Daftary, *a History of Shi'i Islam*, 176.

[48] Gisela Prochazka-Eisl and Stephan Procházka, *The Plain of Saints and Prophets: The Nusayri-Alawi Community of Cilicia (Southern Turkey) and Its Sacred Place*s (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 21.

[49] In his work one can find a comprehensive bibliography of twenty Nusayri manuscripts and 95 "Documents Non-Nonsairis, Géographes, Voyageurs et Divers" and René Dussaud substantiates that the Nusayris origins

Kitab al-bakura Sulaymaniyya -The Book of Sulaimân's First Ripe Fruit, Disclosing the Mysteries of the Nusairian Religion- was for him and for later academics an important source.

Another author who based his two influential works on a Nusayri document, the *Mashyakha* (Manual for Sheikhs), was Samuel Lyde.[50] Patrick Seale and Meir M. Bar-Asher both contend that Lyde's *The Asian Mystery Illustrated in the History, Religion and Present State of the Ansaireeh or Nusairis of Syria* is a pioneering work and that this is the first real monograph that focuses on the Nusayri religion.[51] However, as Winter and Weiss already indicated, Lyde's writings reveal a particular negative view of the Alawis by saying that "like most semi-barbarous mountain tribes, they take their revenge by descending and plundering on the plains; and requite the hatred of the Mussulmans by robbing and murdering them without mercy."[52] This revenge was explained by the fact that "the Ansaireeh are oppressed by the government."[53] Such sentences as well as others, such as "the state of (Alawi) society was a perfect hell upon earth", have contributed to the sectarian language on the Alawite identity that circulates even today on the internet.[54]

Early inquiries, most often done by French orientalists such as Barthélemy d'Herbelot, Constantine de Volney, Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy, Ernst Renan, and Henri Lammens sought to ascribe the Nusayri community inside the remnants of syncretic and heterodox elements of Syrian Christianity.[55] A significant change can be found in later scholarship,

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were not Christian.[49] To strengthen this view Dussaud argues that the Nusayri divinity, "Ali est le *Seigneur*, Mohammed le *Voile* et Salman la *Porte*", (…) ne parait pas inspirée de la trinité chrétien", but should be found "dans les ancies cultes syro- phéniciens." René Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairîs*, (Paris: É. Bouillon, 1900), (20) XIII-XXIII and (95) XXIV-XXXV, 64.

[50] Samuel Lyde's *The Anseyreeh and Ismaeleeh: A Visit to the Secret Sects of Northern Syria with a View to the Establishment of Schools* (1853) and secondly, *The Asian Mystery Illustrated in the History, Religion and Present State of the Ansaireeh or Nusairis of Syria* (1860).

[51] Meir Michael Bar-Asher, "The Iranian Component of the Nusayri Religion," *Iran: journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* Vol. 41 (2003): 217-227, 223 and Patrick Seale, *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East* (Berkeley: University California Press, 1989), 10.

[52] Lyde, *The Asian Mystery Illustrated in the History, Religion and Present State of the Ansaireeh or Nusairis of Syria* (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), 219.

[53] Daniel Pipes, *Greater Syria The History of an Ambition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 165 and Lyde, *The Asian Mystery Illustrated in the History*, 219-222.

[54] Pipes, *Greater Syria*, 165 and Lyde, 219-222. For instance a Facebook page, named من هم العلويون والنصيريون العرب في تركيا (Who are the Alawites and the Arab Christians in Turkey?), demonstrates the reification of sectarian identities by using Lyde's sentences on the Nusayris.https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=469020579829466&id=154953607986479

[55]Barthélemy d'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque orientale ou Dictionnaire universel contenant géneralement tout ce qui regarde la connoissance des peuples de l'Orient* (J.E. Dufour & P.H. Roux, Imprimeurs & Libraires, Affociés, 1776); Constantin-François Volney, *Travels Through Syria and Egypt in the Years 1783, 1784, and 1785* (London: Printed for G.G.J. and J. Robinson, Pater-Noster-Row, MDCLLXXXVIII); Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy, *Exposé de la religion des Druzes Tiré des livres religieux de cette secte, et précédé d'une introduction et de la vie du khalife Hakem-biamr-Allah* (Paris: L'Imprimerie Royale, 1838), 565-567; Ernst Renan, (Paris, Imprimerie Impériale, 1864), 114; Henri Lammens, "Les Nosairis furent-ils chretiens? A propos d'un livre recent," *Revue de I'Orient Chretien* 6 (Paris: 1901), 33-50.

particularly the work of Heinz Halm, Louis Massignon, Henry Corbin, and Matti Moosa, by suggesting that the origins of the Nusayri religion, their precepts and their community should be searched in the historical developments of the extremist Shia groups, the so-called *Ghulat* sects.[56]

More recent studies are still evidence of the continuation of scholarly interest in the degree of influence of Christianity and other religions. Two such well-known specialised studies are Meir M. Bar-Asher and Aryeh Kofsky's *The Nusayri-Alawi Religion: An Enquiry into Its Theology and Liturgy* and Friedman's *The Nusayri-Alawis: An Introduction to the Religion, History and Identity of the Leading Minority in Syria*. Although noteworthy and important, even those studies contribute to a somewhat essentialist depiction of the Alawite history by saying that "the Nusayris also known as Alawis have been in power in Syria for the past three decades", as mentioned in the introduction of Bar-Asher and Kofsky.[57] The sentences of the title of Friedman *the Leading Minority in Syria* also obviously illustrate the sectarian narrative of the Alawite minority ruling over the Sunni majority. And despite the richness of their studies by studying Nusayri Arabic sources, Bar-Asher and Kofsky's claim that their textual analysis might by some means give "a normative picture of current Alawi theology and liturgy" is entirely deceptive according to Rizvi, as he continues by saying that "how can a historical text define and contain the beliefs and practices of a contemporary believer? How do the Alawis themselves make sense of the texts that Bar-Asher and Kofsky have studied?"[58]

The above examples show the influence of Western scholarly interest in answering the question how can a "long deprecated as a heterodox mountain "sect" living on the geographic and social margins of the state" became the dominant sect in Syria?[59] This combined with the academic reiteration of the sectarian myth that the ethnic-religious identity has always been essential for the Alawi community, because their assumed inferior religious status often determined their social, economic and political position. This theme of Alawite persecution for their odd and religious beliefs by the Sunni majority throughout history permeates current

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[56] Heinz Halm: '"Das Buch der Schatten". Die Mufaddal-Tradition der Gulat und die Ursprünge des Nusairiertums', Der Islam, 55 (1978): 219-266; Heinz Halm, *Die islamische Gnosis: Die extreme Schia und die ʿAlawiten* (Zurich and Munich: Artemis Verlag,1982), 240-274, 284- 355; Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shiites: The Ghulat Sects* (New York: Syracuse University Press,1987), 255-418; Weiss, "Community. Sect, Nation: Colonial and Social Scientific Discourses on the Alawis in Syria", 71. See note 36 page 289: Louis Massignon, "Les "Noseïris" de Syrie," Revue du monde musulman 38 (1920): 271-280;
The Encyclopædia Iranica (New York: Eisenbrauns, Inc., 2009-2010), s.v. "ḠOLĀT," accessed October 20, 2017, http://www.iranicaonline.org/pages/about.
[57] Meir M. Bar-Asher and Aryeh Kofsky, *The Nusayri-Alawi Religion: An Enquiry into Its Theology and Liturgy* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1.
[58] Rizvi, 87.
[59] Winter, 1.

academic literature[60], as Winter importantly emphasises.[61]

In his conclusion, Winter warns that documents, such as an imperial decree, a travel report, a heresiography, a theological treatise, that name the Nusayris or Alawites "as such directs automatically to their singularity and potential opposition with the rest of society."[62] It is therefore not surprising that, by using such texts, stories of sectarian strife have become normal in journalism on Syria or in the academic world. He continues by saying that "sectarianism has become a self-fulfilling prophecy in the current civil war" and the construction of a historical narrative of persecution and marginalisation is what he believes "in reality a circular argument."[63]

To overcome this sectarian loop, he proposes to include more Alawite prosopographical and day-to-day administration documents to construct a more local history which aim to show more cooperation, accommodation and friendship between Alawites and other communities. Another important thing to do is to historically contextualise the sources that are indeed mentioning clashes with the Alawis or their religion rather than immediately assume a continuous policy of discrimination.[64] Just like the positive attitude that conflicts can be transformed, Winter hints that after some measures of truth and reconciliation after the Syrian conflict has ended, new positive historical narratives can be constructed in Syria.[65]

Although Winter's study and suggestions are important, he does not comment on how such historical knowledge should be used in peacebuilding activities that deals with identity issues. Moreover, even if Western academics have constructed a more realistic historical

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[60] Aslam Farouk-Alli, "Sectarianism in Alawi Syria," 210, Leon Goldsmith, "'God Wanted Diversity': Alawite Pluralist Ideals and their Integration into Syrian Society 1832–1973", in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* Volume 40, Issue 4, 2013, 395; Hanna Batatu, "Some Observations on the Social Roots of Syria's Ruling, Military Group and the Causes for Its Dominance," in *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Summer, 1981), 334; Daniel Pipes, "The Alawi Capture of Power in Syria," in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Oct., 1989), 434-437 and Mahmud A. Faksh, "The Alawi Community of Syria: A New Dominant Political Force," in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Apr., 1984), 133-135. Stefan Winter's meticulously study *A History of the 'Alawis: From Medieval Aleppo to the Turkish Republic* rightly shows that the "Alawites" were much more politically, economically and socially integrated than the literature often assume in Greater Syria from the Medieval period of the Mamelukes till the Ottoman rule over Syria in 1516. Winter uses in his study Ottoman tax documents from the archives in Turkey and an unpublished Alawi biographical dictionary the *Khayr al-Sani'a fi Mukhtasar Tarikh Ghulat al-Shi'a* by Husayn Mayhub Harfush (1959) and archival materials from the French Foreign Ministery. Winter, 2.
[61] "The problem with the notion of "historical persecution" and other such blanket assessments is that they are not borne out by the historical evidence. In basing their perception on fatwas, theological treatises, and narrative chronicles, historians have always tended to concentrate on the 'Alawis' normative separation from the rest of society and on episodic, inherently rare cases of communal conflict." Ibidem, 2.
[62] Ibidem, 269.
[63] Ibidem.
[64] Ibidem, 269-270.
[65] Ibidem, 273.

narrative, to what extent will this be believed or even read among Alawites and other communities? The help of influential Alawite religious or lay persons and Alawite civil society organisations is not enough, because sustainable peacebuilding also involves other communities' effort to overcome identity issues.

More problematic is the fact that a large degree of Alawites since 2007 actually believe the historical narrative of persecution and are afraid of the Sunni majority.[66] The Alawite fears are not unrealistic as the 2016 Survey Study *Sectarianism in Syria* points out that "the majority of those who said there is one (or more) sect they do not trust (are) named Shiites (69.7%) and Alawites (67%)."[67]Sustainable peacebuilding is only possible when a conflict analysis takes into account the fear of the Alawites which is related to identity issues. To move beyond sectarianism, peacebuilding theorists cannot discard the historical knowledge of the Assad regime, the Alawites and their religion that are all part of the construction of the Alawite identity.

This study not only aims to provide historical, political and religious knowledge and information on events that drives sectarianism in Syria, but also wants to offer a possible peacebuilding trajectory that might move beyond sectarianism by focussing on the Alawite identity. It also aims to answer the following questions: what is the Alawite identity and how has this identity been constructed throughout history? Which primary sources and historical narratives have contributed to the Alawite identity and current Syrian identity issues? Which specific historical narratives related to the Alawis should be more contextualised? Which political and socioeconomic developments inside and outside of Syria have contributed to sectarianism. What are the root causes of the Syrian conflict and which peacebuilding strategies and activities are necessary to overcome an identity-based conflict.

To answer my research questions, this study is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1, explains what an identity-based conflict such as caused by sectarianism is and how this

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[66] Torstein Schiøtz Worren, *Fear and Resistance: The Construction of Alawi Identity in Syria* (Master thesis in human geography, Dept of Sociology and Human Geography University of Oslo, February 2007). 2007**.** By using discourse theory and fieldwork in Alawite areas, Worren's thesis "argues that Alawi identity is constructed in direct opposition to the Sunni majority, where the Sunnis become 'The Other' that restricts 'Us." And According to the abstract: "Their history is connected to the present by the hatred they believe that the Sunnis nurture for them, meaning that the persecution and massacres of the past are still part of the present day. Culturally, they portray themselves as opposites to the Sunnis and see themselves as more similar to the Christians than to other Muslims. And politically, the fact that so many key figures in the regime are Alawis actually makes the Alawis feel even more threatened because it only gives those who hate them yet another reason to do so. Alawi discourses are therefore centred on fear: a fear of the future based on history and history's contemporary reincarnation in the form of Islamic extremism." Joshua Landis, ""Alawi Identity in Syria," M.A. Thesis by Torstein Worren," Syria Comment, June 19, 2007, accessed October 20, 2017, http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/alawi-identity-in-syria-ma-thesis-by-torstein-worren/.

[67] The Day After (TDA), *Sectarianism in Syria: Survey Study* (Beyoğlu-İstanbul: TDA, 2016), 66-67, 92.

theoretical framework can be applied when analysing an identity-based conflict. Several features of social identity theory and collective identity will be examined (Subsection 1.1-1.2). An understanding of these different identities will make it clear how and why groups are formed, created and why they bond with each other (Subsection 1.3).

To understand the Syrian identity-based conflict it is essential to understand how intergroup conflict contribute to identity issues and to the intractability of the Syrian conflict (Subsection 1.4). The last Subsection analyses three different identity theories, primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism, to point out their advantages and shortcomings. These insights make it clear that identities are constructed, can be changed and can be politically used although there are some identity features that are hard to change.

Chapter 2 analyses the construction of the Alawite identity and how it is related to identity issues and conflict. It is essential to understand which religious elements are contributing to identity issues (Subsection 2.1). Subsection 2.2 answers the question how the Alawite identity is constructed and how it is related to the political and socioeconomic status of the community from 1317 till 2016. The fatwas of several religious scholars will be analysed to understand which, how and why some of these Alawite identity components have been used (Subsections 2.2-2.2.3) to expound that the Nusayris/Alawites are apostates and non-Muslims.

Subsection 2.2.4 to 2.2.4.3 analyses the changing Alawite identity from 1920 till 2016. The Alawite religious status has changed from apostates to members of the Muslim community (Subsection 2.2.4.1) in 1936 and the Alawite identity became more associated with Twelver Shiism (Subsection 2.2.4.2). Another essential primary source, *the 2016 Declaration of an Identity Reform*, will be analysed (Subsection 2.2.4.3). The 2016 identity reform is significant because it suggests that the Alawite faith is the third path of Islam.[68]

The last chapter aims to offer peacebuilding strategies and activities to move beyond the Syrian identity-based conflict. Subsection 3.1 analyses the concept of peacebuilding and a good understanding of this concept will make it clear that the identity issues cannot be resolved genuinely if the root causes of the conflict are not addressed and socioeconomic structural conditions are not changed (Subsection 3.2). Subsection 3.3 explains why peacebuilding activities should support democratic transition in post-conflict societies.

The 2012 report of a local Syrian civil society organisation will be analysed to illustrate how the NGO aims to provide key recommendations of transitional processes to achieve socioeconomic and political structural changes (Subsection 3.4). The last Subsection makes it

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[68] See page 1, Appendix I or Identity Reform or "Pdf Declaration of an Identity Reform," Welt, http://www.welt.de/pdf/1085/Declaration.pdf (accessed December 10, 2017).

clear that the conflict cannot really be transformed as long as damaged relationships in Syria have not been repaired and proposes some peacebuilding activities that might help to overcome identity issues such as those related to the Alawite identity.

By analysing primary sources, using secondary literature, websites and reports, this study argues that an analysis of the historical construction of the Alawite identity demonstrates how the Alawite identity is related to the present situation of the Syrian conflict. Current identity issues of the conflict connect the present with the past and a historical analysis provide essential information on how to discern which identity features are related to socioeconomic and political developments and events. An understanding of the overall historical context makes it clear which specific problems need to be resolved first and how destructive relational and socioeconomic patterns could be transformed.

Chapter 1 Theoretical Framework: Social Identity and Conflict

1.1 Social Identity Theory: Self- and Collective Identity

The social identity theory originated from social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner, developed in the 1970s at the Bristol University in England. They aimed to understand and to identify the minimum of psychological conditions that cause members of one group, favouring their in-group, discriminate members of another outgroup.[69] Intergroup behaviour can be explained by the concept of *self-identity* which means that an individual's social identity derives from a perceived membership of any relevant social group in society.[70]

Tafjel would add that an individual's knowledge of his membership comes "together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership."[71] Gazi Islam is right by saying that Tafjel's theory results in "an identification with a collective, depersonalized identity based on group membership and imbued with positive aspects."[72] While Lee Jussim, Richard D. Ashmore, and David Wilder do not necessarily disagree with Tafel, they also contend that his "definition is almost purely individualistic, focusing exclusively on how the individual thinks and feels about group memberships."[73]

Compared with other authors, Thomas Hylland, Eriksen and Herbert C. Kelman nuance this individualistic connotation by arguing that ethic and national identities emerge within particular sociocultural contexts, such as "sociocultural discourses, national myths, and intergroup relations."[74] Because the aforementioned sociocultural elements are essential to the development of any particular national or ethnic identity, they think that "social identity resides

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[69] Kriesberg and Burgess, "Identity Issues"; Gary Taylor and Steve Spencer, *Social Identities: Multidisciplinary Approaches* (New York: Routlegde, 2004), 1-11; Ljubomir Danailov Frckoski, *Negotiation in Identity Conflicts*, 3rd ed. (Skopje: Magor Doo Skopje, 2012), 9-57; Morton Deutsch, Peter T. Coleman, and Eric C. Marcus, *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint, 2006), 1-20; Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets, *Identity Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 18-31; Richard D. Ashmore and Lee Jussim, *Self and Identity: Fundamental Issues (Rutgers Series on Self and Social Identity Volume I)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3-16, 218-229; Lisa Strömbom, *Israeli Identity, Thick Recognition and Conflict Transformation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan in, 2013), 1-66.

[69] Richard D. Ashmore, Lee Jussim, and David Wilder, *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction (Rutgers Series on Self and Social Identity Volume III)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3-36; McKeown, Haji and Ferguson, 3-17; Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004), 1-7.

[70] Mark Tomass, *The Religious Roots of the Syrian Conflict The Remaking of the Fertile Crescent* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1-25.

[71] Henri Tajfel, Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 255.

[72] Gazi Islam, ed., *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 2014), s.v. "Social Identity Theory," 1781-1783, accessed October 22, 2017, https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-1-4614-5583-7_289.

[73] Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder, *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict,* 6.

[74] Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder, 6.

at least partly within one's national or cultural community, rather than exclusively within the individual."[75]

Louis Kriesberg acknowledges different combinations of many identifications which might contribute to one's self-identity, but he continues by saying that "identities are actually much wider than that", because "they are also collective" as those "identities extend to countries and ethnic communities."[76] This means that an individual's self-identity has a connection with, or at least is influenced by, a *collective identity*.

This does not mean that the term "collective identity" has no conceptual problems because "Collective identity has been treated both too broadly and too narrowly", according to Francesca Pollettal and James M. Jasper.[77] By studying the relationship between social movements and collective identity, Pollettal and Jasper argue that "this this definitional catholicity has obscured key questions" such as "Are collective identities imposed on groups or invented by them? Do individuals choose collective identities to maximize their self-interest or do interests flow from identities? How is collective identity different from ideology? From interest? From solidarity?"[78]

To answers these questions, the authors use a comprehensive definition of collective identity and this is an "individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution."[79] A collective identity is also "a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity."[80] Pollettal and Jasper also believe that these identities "are expressed in cultural materials-names, narratives, symbols, verbal styles, rituals, clothing, and so on-but not all cultural materials express collective identities."[81] To end their comprehensive definition, the authors go on to say that a collective identity does not entail "the rational calculus for evaluating choices that

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[75] Ibidem, 6.
[76] Kriesberg and Burgess, "Identity Issues" and see note 84 for more details about nation-states, nations and nationalism. When Anthony Smith has to answer the question what the relationship is between nationalism and ethnicity, he argues that "This is a complex question, and it is extremely difficult to decide the point at which ethnicity or an ethnic community, as I would call it, becomes a nation. But it seems to me that when there is a definite movement- and this is where nationalism comes in -to create a distinct common culture, and laws and customs, and to standardize the cultural heritage and boundaries, then we have the moment of crossing over into nationhood." Alex Stark, "Interview – Anthony D. Smith," E-International Relations (E-IR), September 3, 2013, accessed October 22, 2017, http://www.e-ir.info/2013/09/03/interview-anthony-d-smith/.
[77] Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology,* 27 (2001): 283-305, 283, accessed October 22, 2017, http://faculty.sites.uci.edu/polletta/files/2011/03/2001-Polletta-and-Jasper-Collective-Identity.pdf.
[78] Polletta and Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," 285.
[79] Polletta and Jasper, 285.
[80] Ibidem, 285.
[81] Ibidem.

"interest" does" and in contrast to an ideology, a collective identity brings about positive feelings for other individual group members.[82]

Pollettal and Jasper's conclusion is quite instructive to point out the complex dynamics of collective identity which stands for "imagined as well as concrete communities, involves an act of perception and construction as well as the discovery of pre-existing bonds, interests, and boundaries."[83] A collective identity is not only "fluid and relational", but it also emerges out "of interactions with a number of different audiences" and does not imply a monolithic entity.[84] The identity of a collective "channels words and actions" which enables any "claims and action but delegitimising others."[85] For individuals, a collective identity is important because it provides categories in which they make sense of the world by separating this world into parts.[86]

Kriesberg adds to the above that three important settings shape collective identities. Firstly, "internal factors within each group" which means that certain attributes will affect in-group members' identities and their viewpoints on the outgroup. Secondly, "relations with adversary groups" which explains that in-group and outgroup identities (positive, negative or mixed) are created by intergroup interaction. Certain in-group and outgroup identities may become more persistent when violence and coercion are involved. Consequently, this influences the course of a conflict."[87] Thirdly, "the social context of the groups' interaction" which points out that the social setting affects the identities of the in-group and outgroup when conflicting groups are competing with each other.[88]

All in all, it is still a reasonable claim that there is an individual and collective identity that are characterised by a dialectical relationship. And while identities are individual or collective and related to each other, these identities do not necessarily explain intergroup conflicts. Marilynn B. Brewer argues that "the formation of in-groups and in-group identification arises independently of attitudes toward outgroups."[89] Acknowledging that attachment to in-groups are essential for an individual's "survival and well-being", she rightly contends that such an attachment does not instantly result in "hostility and intergroup

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[82] Ibidem.
[83] Ibidem, 298.
[84] With audiences, the authors are mentioning "bystanders, allies, opponents, news media, and state authorities" Ibidem.
[85] Ibidem.
[86] Ibidem.
[87] Kriesberg and Burgess, "Identity Issues."
[88] Ibidem.
[89] Marilynn B. Brewer, "Ingroup Identification and Intergroup Conflict: When Does Ingroup Love Become Outgroup Hate?", in Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder, , *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction*, 17

conflict."[90] The history of a group's formation might reveal certain actions and behaviour of "individuals within the hierarchy of the group."[91] This means that the identification and formation of groups need to be understood before outgroup hostility can be discussed.

1.2 Bonding: Identity-, Open identity-, and Resource-sharing Groups

Identification with a group is essential for group formation, but also "bonding", an emotional feeling of being close with other group members, establishes close personal relationships with other members. The formation of groups or the bonding of individuals within groups is often based on psychological and material grounds. This creates a feeling of, recognition, security and comfort, but also gives material advantages. Both bonding and identification are part of generating and maintaining certain groups and are also called *identity-sharing groups*.[92] Brewer adds that for the individual this means that the identification with a group "represents the extent to which the in-group has been incorporated into the sense of self, and at the same time, that the self is experienced as an integral part of the in-group."[93]

Within bonding, there are two well-known forms of binding. The first is most common when individuals confirm their heritage of race, ethnic group, sect, family, religion, or religious sect.[94] These primordial features are granted to the individual at birth and as such, these groups are known as *closed identity-sharing*. The second way of bonding is when persons choose to bind with other group members for personal reasons. Such groups are named *open identity-sharing groups* and are most often based on religious, political, or professional identification with other members of a group. This explains that the dynamic processes of identification and bonding can create *new* social identities compared with closed identity-sharing groups.[95]

Closed and open identity sharing groups may transform into *resource-sharing groups* and is based on the advantages of informal relationships with other group members. Closed identity-sharing, open identity-sharing and resource-sharing groups may all provide their members several advantages, such as various forms of security which might be established through marriage, business, physical protection, and solidarity. All possible advantages create the incentive for members to remain loyal to the group.[96] The principle of reciprocity can be found in every group, but identity-based resource sharing groups differ from other groups due

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[90] Brewer, "Ingroup Identification and Intergroup Conflict,"17.
[91] Ibidem, 22.
[92] Ibidem, 23.
[93] Brewer, 21
[94] Tomass, 23.
[95] Ibidem, 23.
[96] Ibidem.

to the implicit focus on the reciprocal tendency of sharing resources.

It is important to emphasise that individuals may bond with a variety of identity sharing groups. This means that not only individuals can have multiple identities, but they can also identify and bond with other identity-sharing groups, and as a result, the prioritisation of one identity over other identities may indicate how individuals prioritize that specific identity.[97] Drawing upon important sources for social values, persons may prioritise ethnic, religious, and sectarian identities instead of other identities, such as local or national identities.[98] While it is often assumed that religious identity may be one of the most important in the Middle East, one should not forget that in a more homogeneous religious region, class, family, tribal, or clan identities are also possible lines of demarcation among people. Bonding is therefore essential for a collective identity and identification with a group and bonding with in-group members might result in a persistent collective identity which may also lead to intergroup conflict.

1.3 Intergroup Conflict: Identity Effects on the Intractability of a Conflict

Competition over scarce economic and social resources might explain a perceived conflict of interests between the in- and outgroup. If the competition for the same resources has become a sincere threat to one group, the link between the survival of the in-group and the destruction of the outgroup is obvious.[99] The question arises if such an intergroup conflict is based on a realistic conflict of interests; nonetheless, even when it is not an objective conflict of interests, such a threat contributes to the importance of an identity which also might affect the intractability of the conflict.[100] The difficulty with intergroup conflicts arises when "conflicts related to highly significant identities have a tendency to persist"[101] Not only economic and social resources, but also other attributes such as "village, region, or country of birth and ancestral attachment" can be a source of threat which contributes to persistent, non-compromising, adversarial, and primary identities.[102]

Bonding to a group, Brewer calls this "the social and psychological functions served by in-group formation and identification", provides in-group attachment and loyalty which are necessary for collective action.[103] Collective action is therefore based on mutual trust and loyalty between members of the in-group and lays the groundwork for intergroup conflict.

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[97] Ibidem, 24.
[98] Ibidem.
[99] Brewer, 28.
[100] Kriesberg and Burgess, "Identity Issues."
[101] Ibidem.
[102] Ibidem.
[103] Brewer, 28.

Obligatory interdependence is a mechanism based on mutual trust and loyalty and ensures long-time survival. In order to survive, people have to rely on others' willingness to share information, to provide aid, and to share resources. This cooperation mechanism for survival is inherent in group formation, identification and bonding which explains in-group behaviour that "reinforces expectations of mutual cooperation and trustworthiness."[104]

Mutual trust, loyalty and cooperation are often implicit extended to any member of the in-group even when one is not personally related to this in-group member. This is called depersonalised trust and only in-group members will benefit from this, which in itself might strengthen individuals to become more attached to or to assure oneself that one is a member of the in-group.[105] Another implicit aspect of depersonalised trust is that in-group members will monitor and evaluate other members according to the assumed in-group's behaviour and conduct. This establishes in-group expectations about "appropriate in-group attitudes and behaviour.[106]

Identification with a group and bonding with other in-group members establish a shared in-group membership which means that theoretically all other members of the in-group will "live by the codes of conduct that bind them as a group."[107] Because in-groups provide the essential "inclusion and differentiation needs at the individual level", those groups specify the fundamental boundaries on shared trust and responsibility which distinguish them from the outgroup. Intergroup comparison based on differences in intergroup behaviour may provide negative stereotypes and distrust. This is especially the case within the social setting of a possible conflict between different social groups, which of course also influences identity issues.[108]

These universal stereotypes characterise in-group-outgroup differences and are often based on the promotion of the outgroup's "particular interpretations of history, economic relations, or for instance God.[109] These stereotypes might become more pronounced when an individual feels unease and discomfort when interacting with members of the outgroup. Such a process of evaluating intergroup differences in a negative way might result in more intergroup anxiety which can ultimately lead to the more destructive intergroup emotions of hatred, fear or aversion.[110]

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[104] Ibidem, 29.
[105] Brewer, 29.
[106] Ibidem, 29.
[107] Ibidem.
[108] Kriesberg and Burgess, "Identity Issues."
[109] Ibidem.
[110] Brewer, 32.

Discrimination in words and actions based on emotions of moral superiority might result in conflict or hostility between groups. This depends on the specific situation; however, two other important threats to the identity of the in-group are firstly, "social changes that give rise to the prospect of close contact, integration, or influence from the outgroup", and secondly, "the threat of loss of distinctiveness, accompanied by feelings of invasion."[111] *Fear* and *anger* are the distinctive emotions generated by the second form of treat and these emotions "propel action against the outgroup rather than mere avoidance."[112] The emotions of *contempt* created by moral superiority combined with *anger*, created by the loss of distinctiveness and fear of invasion, provide the necessary elements that ignite "hatred, expulsion, and even ethnic cleansing."[113]

Moral superiority, lack of faith in outgroups, and social comparison "are all processes that emerge from in-group maintenance and favouritism" and this might result in an intractable conflict.[114] Unrealistic grievances, sense of victimhood, "the absence of realistic conflict over material resources or power" may also contribute to the degree of intractability.

These group processes and the developing of more negative emotions towards the outgroup may exacerbate when groups are *political entities*. Religious leaders, politicians, or other important group leaders may manipulate outgroup and in-group identities, mobilise the in-group, and even justify collective violent actions against the outgroup "to secure or maintain political power."[115] Identities related to social and economic resources may be easily exploited for political purposes. When fear is evoked by a possible control of outsiders or an outgroup threat, realistic or not, and this is perceived as such, group loyalty and cohesion are more strengthened. The psychological state of fear and perceived threat result in an individual's identity based on self-interest being less important in such a situation than the collective identity of the group.

1.4 Identity-based Conflict: Primordialism, Instrumentalism and Constructivism

Another concern when discussing identity issues in intractable conflicts by using the social identity theory is the primary debate between primordialists, constructivists and instrumentalists.[116] Afa'anwi Ma'abo Che argues that *primordialism* explains that "ethnic

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[111] Ibidem, 32-33.
[112] Ibidem, 32-33.
[113] Ibidem, 33.
[114] Ibidem, 34.
[115] Ibidem.
[116] Dodeye Uduak Williams, "How Useful are the Main Existing Theories of Ethnic Conflict?," *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 4, no. 1 (2015): 147-52, accessed October 22, 2017,

identity is assigned at birth, inherent in human nature, and passed on genealogically from generation to generation."[117] This essentialist's viewpoint means that ethnic identity is unchanging and consequently, these ancestral blood ties strengthen cooperation and neighbourliness among members of the ethnic in-group. When there is a conflict with another group, members of the same ethnic group are working together to foment hostility and conflict with the outgroup.[118] Viewing conflicts through a primordial lens, irreconcilable ancient conflicts, such as ethnic conflicts, or more religious framed conflicts, such as the Sunnis versus Shiites and the Alawite minority versus the Sunni majority in Syria, are inevitable because of ethnic or religious differences between groups.

While some of the most violent atrocities and worst genocides might be explained by primordialism, this theory does not explain why in some ethnically heterogeneous countries, such as Botswana, ethnic violence does not occur.[119] Dodeye Uduak Williams agrees with this but still argues that "the primordialist theory is useful in explaining the emotive dimension of ethnic conflicts and offers insight into the passion-driven behaviour of ethnic groups"[120] Al McKay points out three problems concerning this theory. First, "it has a dangerous leaning towards racism" and "it is essentially mono-causal."[121] He continues by arguing that secondly, a sound theory should "appreciate the complexity of internal conflict in relation to the interaction of various socio-economic factors."[122] Thirdly, "the ancient hatreds explanation cannot account for the timing of an outbreak of violence nor can it account for phases of inter-ethnic group co-operation or peace."[123] Thus, primordialism fails to explain the structural, economic and political processes that are part of any given conflict.

By viewing conflicts through an *instrumentalist* lens, ethnic conflicts are not necessarily explained by differences in ethnic identities. This theory contends that ethnic conflicts most

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http://www.mcser.org/journal/index.php/ajis/article/viewFile/5964/5735 and Kriesberg and Burgess, "Identity Issues."

[117] Afa'anwi Ma'abo Che, "Linking Instrumentalist and Primordialist Theories of Ethnic Conflict," E-International Relations (E-IR), June 1, 2016, accessed October 22, 2017, http://www.e-ir.info/2016/06/01/linking-instrumentalist-and-primordialist-theories-of-ethnic-conflict/.

[118]Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press., 1985), 3-55, and especially page 7; Anthony Smith, "Culture, Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism," *International Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1996): 445-58, 445, accessed October 22, 2017, http://homepage.univie.ac.at/herbert.preiss/files/Smith_Culture_community_and_territory.pdf; Ross Hammond and Robert Axelrod, "The Evolution of Ethnocentrism," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 6 (2006): 1-11, accessed October 22, 2017, http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.576.4696&rep=rep1&type=pdf.

[119] Such as the 1971 Bangladesh genocide and the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

[120] Williams, "How Useful are the Main Existing Theories of Ethnic Conflict?," 147.

[121] Al McKay, "The Study of Modern Intrastate War," E-International Relations (E-IR), February 3, 2011, accessed October 22, 2017, http://www.e-ir.info/2011/02/03/the-study-of-modern-intrastate-war/.

[122] McKay, "The Study of Modern Intrastate War."

[123] Ibidem, "The Study of Modern Intrastate War."

likely occur when ethnic identities are politicised or manipulated to engender socio-economic and political advantages by one ethnic group over another ethnic group. "Ethnicity" is therefore used as an instrumental tool and provides strategic ways to form coalitions in order to obtain economic resources or political power. Williams substantiates that this theory "argues that it is rational for parties to organize along ethnic lines depending on the benefit it brings to them."[124] Based on Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffle's 2002 article, he further argues that many conflicts "happen in relation to opportunities for primary commodity predation." [125] Collier and Hoeffle suggest that *greed* is stronger than *grievances* and that hence, greed is one of the main cause for ethnic conflict.[126] Assuming that "ethnic conflict arises among rational agents over scarce resources", Williams continues by contending that an "ethnic conflict is therefore the result of factor's rational activity of widespread interest such as prosperity, power and security."[127]

Instrumentalism might also explain why groups are fighting or cooperating with each other. To decide whether cooperation or conflict is the best choice, a cost-benefit analysis has to be done by the groups. This theory might also be useful to find out why people are involved in ethnic conflicts by following their in-group while as an individual, they are not necessarily convinced. A conflict analysis by using such a theory, such as the ethnic conflict of the Democratic Republic of Congo, often points out that a failing state and its institutions, elite manipulation, and illicit exploitation of mineral sources are some of the main ingredients for ethnic conflict.[128]

Only a few elites who want to gain as much as much political power and economic resources are assumed to be the driving force behind ethnic conflicts.[129] When authors are seeking for conflict transformation, they tend to focus too much on strategies to reconstruct and to build a new state.[130] Although this is important, differences in identities tend to be ignored in such strategies, as Walker Connor warns us that ethnic strife is often implied in the "us-them"

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[124] Williams, 147.
[125] Ibidem, 148.
[126] Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Gree d and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56 (2004): 563-95, accessed October 22, 2017, https://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/workingpapers/pdfs/2002-01text.pdf.
[127] Williams, 148
[128] Séverine Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1-40, 41-84, 83-125.
[129] I agree with Thomas Hylland Eriksen who argues that "Resources" should be interpreted in the widest sense possible, and could in principle be taken to mean economic wealth or political power, recognition, or symbolic power—although what is usually at stake is either economic or political resources." Thomas Hylland Eriksen "Ethnic Identity, National Identity, and Intergroup Conflict: The Significance of Personal Experiences," in Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder, *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction*, 56.
[130] Williams, 148.

syndrome.[131]

Political and economic resources used by political elites to incite an ethnic conflict might be a plausible explanation. If the desire for material gains explains the behaviour of some politicians, this desire should therefore also explicate why in some ethnic conflicts genocide, rape, torture, and severe humiliation occur. While it might be possible to argue that such events are part of a political strategy, it does not explain enough why some groups resort to such horrendous acts. This means that the theory might explain the political elite's behaviour but not all of the actions of the majority of other in-group members. Williams rightly contends that "without the emotive content that primordialism emphasize" it is not possible to understand the complexity of an ethnic conflict.[132] The emotive content, such as feelings of fear, anger, anxiety and mass sentiments, play an important role how the elite use ethnicity effectively. Without these emotions it is most likely difficult for politicians to mobilise mass participation along ethnic lines because politicians "only recognise it and appeal to it."[133]

Thomas Hylland Eriksen adds to this discussion that the Yugoslav conflicts "were never conflicts over the right to assert one's ethnic or cultural identity, but were based on competing claims to rights such as employment, welfare, and political influence."[134] Eriksen is right by saying that a conflict analysis should explain why conflicts over resources are framed in ideological, regional, clan-based or ethnic terms.[135] He thinks that the term "ethnic conflict" is misleading "to classify phenomena or to explain hostilities", because what all the conflicts have in common is that conflicts' "successful appeal to collective identities."[136] These collective identities are perceived "locally as imperative and primordial identities", either based on descent and kinship, religious doctrines and practices, or based on region.[137] Because of a conflict's appeal to collective identities, Eriksen prefers the term "identity politics" as this is a more generic term "for all such political movements."[138]

Ma'abo Che agrees with Williams and Eriksen and further adds that "instrumentalism appears a more nuanced theory as it recognises the relevance of political and socio-economic structural dynamics to account for temporal and geographical variations in the occurrence of

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[131] Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* Princeton (Princeton University, 1994) mentiond in Taras Kuzio and Paul Ánieri, *Dilemmas of State-Led Nation Building in Ukraine* (London: Praeger, 2002), 85.
[132] Williams, 148.
[133] Ibidem.
[134] Eriksen, 49.
[135] Ibidem, 49.
[136] Eriksen, 49.
[137] Ibidem..
[138] Ibdem.

ethnic conflicts."[139] He continues by saying that instrumentalism cannot explain sufficiently "why people easily, cooperatively, and effectively mobilize along ethnic lines", because instrumentalism focusses on the manipulation and politicisation of ethnicity as the primary causes of grievances which ultimately lead to ethnic conflicts.[140] Primordialism might provide the knowledge why people identify with groups and why and how groups' identities bolster a sense of shared treats, shared values, shared interests, shared loyalty, and a shared sense of solidarity.[141] All in all, the combination of destructive emotions shared among an ethnic group and the manipulation or politicisation of ethnicity by elites lay the foundation for collective actions, which might entail genocide, rape and torture.

Constructivism is a theory that contends that an ethnic identity is socially constructed, which implies that it is a fluid entity and can be formed and changed throughout history. Daniel N. Posner argues that the constructivist literature points out that ethnic identities are social constructions with "identifiable origins and histories of expansion and contraction, amalgamation and division."[142] Ethnic groups and their identities are the result of political, social and historical processes.[143] James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin add to this debate that an ethic identity refers to a social categorisation and social categories have two distinctive features: first, "rules of membership that decide who is and who is not a member of the category" and second, "content" which is "composed" of cultural attributes, such as religion, language, customs, and shared historical myths."[144] Moreover, depending on the circumstances, situational behaviour is expected from or obligatory for in-group members.[145] Williams sees that such authors "argue that these social categories are not natural, inevitable or unchanging because it is not genes but the internal logic of social discourses that drives identity construction and condition individual's identities with particular groups."[146]

The constructionist theory emphasises the social construction and maintenance of

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[139] Ma'abo Che, "Linking Instrumentalist and Primordialist Theories of Ethnic Conflict."
[140] Ibidem.
[141] Ibidem.
[142] Daniel N. Posner, *The Implications of Constructivism for Studying the Relationship Between Ethnic Diversity and Economic Growth*, (2004): 1-27, 1, accessed October 22, 2017, http://web.mit.edu/posner/www/papers/CAEG_chapter.pdf.
[143] Posner, *The Implications of Constructivism for Studying the Relationship Between Ethnic Diversity and Economic Growth*, 1 and Kanchan Chandra, "Cumulative Findings in the Study of Ethnic Politics" in *APSA-CP*, Volume 12, Issue 1 (Winter 2001): 7-25.
[144] James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity," *International Organization* 54, no. 4 (2003): 845-77, 848, accessed October 22, 2017, https://web.stanford.edu/group/fearon-research/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Violence-and-the-Social-Construction-of-Ethnic-Identity.pdf.
[145] Fearon and Laitin, "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity," 848.
[146] Williams, 149.

persistent and exclusive identities throughout history. Culture, religion, language, symbols, historical myths, and shared homeland or territory are essential features in provoking and maintaining conflicts between ethnic groups.[147] Ethnicity is malleable, fluid and can be transformed with interethnic interaction which aims to "reinforce and perpetuate social differences for specific goals."[148] Stuart J Kaufman rightly contends that the decisive prerequisites for ethnic conflict "are ethnic myths and fears and the opportunity to act on them politically."[149] McKay agrees with Kaufman and further adds that the most dangerous symbols "are myths that justify political domination over particular geopolitical territory, which may have been lost in the past, and myths of past atrocities that can be used to justify fears of future genocide."[150]

Constructivism has in common with primordialism that although ethnic identities are socially constructed, they can be internalised and evoke emotions in such a way that in-group members have a sense of a common identity with primordial traits, such as a shared language, religion, cultural values, and homeland. Compared with primordialism and instrumentalism, constructivism is a theory that might be more nuanced and combines the interaction between the individual's interests, the role of agency and the socioeconomic and political process which might result in ethnic strife. Williams agrees but thinks that three theoretical disadvantages have to be considered: firstly, "constructivism does not explain why societies with similar historical processes and structural features commonly associated with conflict do not produce similar conflict histories."[151] To strengthen his argument, he mentions the example of Botswana.[152] Secondly, the theory does not sufficiently points out the timing of the sudden manifestation of the conflict.[153] Thirdly, constructivism focusses too much on the macro level processes while this theory does not explain "what is happening at the grassroots level."[154] If Williams is correct, peacebuilding activities will focus more on state building strategies and might perhaps ignore essential causes of the underlying animosity.

Finally, primordialism, instrumentalism, and constructivism have their theoretical advantages and disadvantages to analyse an identity-based conflict. Although these theories are

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[147] Anthony D. Smith, 'The Ethnic Sources of Nationalism' in Michael Brown Ed. *Ethnic Conflict and International Security* Princeton (University Press, 1993) 27-39.
[148] Williams, 149.
[149] Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 12.
[150] McKay, "The Study of Modern Intrastate War."
[151] Williams, 149.
[152] Ibidem, 149.
[153] Ibidem.
[154] Ibidem.

most often discussing "ethnic conflicts", the theories' insights and recommendations are valid to understand identity issues that are involved in a conflict. Whilst there are some identity traits that might be difficult to modify, other identity features may be easier to alter by social processes. An identity-based conflict might be analysed with the help of the integration of the three theories, which suggests that the Syrian sectarian conflict mutually reinforces primordialist identities and instrumentalist grievances. Furthermore, the constructionist theory complements the other theories by seeing that identities are social constructions and are not fixed entities and can therefore be changed or adjusted. This justifies how a historical analysis of the construction of the Alawi identity is related to identity issues and conflict.

Chapter 2 Alawite Identity Issues and Conflict

2.1 The "Genesis" and "Religious Precepts" of the Nusayri Community

It is often assumed that the genesis and the religious precepts of the Nusayris originated around the second half of the ninth century when Abu Shu'ayb Mohammed Ibn Nusayr declared in what is now Iraq to be a prophet sent by the Tenth Shia Imam Ali al-Naqi or Ali al-Hadi. Ibn Nusayr also claimed to be the "doorway" of knowledge (*bab*) of the Eleventh Imam Hasan al-'Askari.[155] To strengthen his argument, Ibn Nusayr also alleged to be the representative of the Twelfth Hidden Imam, the Mahdi, the prophesied redeemer of Islam.[156] Because of these three claims based on Shia sources, Ibn Nusayr "was cursed and excommunicated" by the Shia community according to Friedman.[157] Moreover, Ibn Nusayr's doctrines are often associated with antinomianism (no obligation to obey any moral law), transmigration of the soul (metempsychosis) and his self-identification with the divine nature of the Imams.[158]

A group of learned disciples and most likely a larger group of ordinary adherents were following Ibn Nusayr. An important disciple of Ibn Nusayr is as-Sayyid al-Husayn ibn Hamdan al-Khasibi who embarked on a mission to convert people to Nusayrism throughout the Middle Eastern region.[159] The genesis of the Nusayri community in Syria began when one of al-Khasibi adherents, Abu Said al-Maymun at-Tabarani, after he had been imprisoned for following Ibn Nusayr's doctrines, went from Iraq to the coast of Latakia.[160] At-Tabarani preached and eventually converted paganist peasants who lived there.[161] As a consequence, at-Tabarani had also a group of followers and his writings, most likely being influenced by Ibn Nusayr, might have been fundamental for the development of Nuasayri religious precepts. These doctrines of course changed and developed throughout history so it is impossible to determine what constitutes "true" Nusayrism.[162] Besides this, the Nusayri doctrines are often considered as "orthodox" and "heretical" in the Islamic world.

However, Winter importantly contends that such qualifications were only possible after certain "Shia" and "Sunni" movements had become politically and religiously more important

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[155] Friedman, 8.
[156] Ibidem.
[157] Ibidem, 5-17.
[158] Diana Steigerwald, "Ibn Nuṣayr," BrillOnline Reference Works, 2010, accessed January 16, 2017, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/ibn-nusayr-COM_23483?s.num=0&s.q=Ibn+Nu%E1%B9%A3ayr.
[159] Winter argues that al-Khasibi is often considered as the founding father of Nusayrism. Winter, 15.
[160] Ibidem, 15.
[161] Farouk-Alli, 208-210.
[162] Farouk-Alli, 208-210 and Yvette Talhamy, "The Fatwas and the Nusayri/Alawis of Syria, "Middle *Eastern Studies* Volume 46, Issue 2, 2010: 175-194, 176-177.

in certain areas as a result of the political support of certain rulers. Such support is necessary for the survival of religious movement's precepts that define its religious boundaries.[163] Only when some of the Sunni and Shia branches became more dominant, Nusayri precepts were denounced and qualified as heterodox. The reason behind this is that the Nusayri religion was considered a serious religious competitor. Compared with Sunni and Shia Islamic thinking, the assumed antimainstream character of Nusayri thought, such as speculative theology, metempsychosis, and saint worship might be less unusual than one might expect and may have attracted many rural inhabitants who were already familiar with such themes.[164] Nusayri thought should therefore be considered as "an integral part of Islam's vast and multifaceted movement of expansion, conquest, and mission" in the Middle East and North Africa region in the ninth and tenth century.[165] Whoever decides what the "true" religious precepts are or determines what "religion" is, is in fact revealing the dynamics of interreligious power struggles.

But compared to "mainstream Islam", the syncretic elements of different non-Islamic and Islamic precepts and rituals are often taken for granted in the religion of the Nusayris. The defining religious characteristics of Nusayri precepts became more crystallised between the tenth and eleventh century.[166] Firstly, some of these presumed syncretic doctrines were an adaptation of a pagan concept of a divine triad in which God, accompanied by two individuals, is revealing himself through seven cycles of history.[167] Nusayris doctrines assume that when a virtuous Nusayri passed away he will be changed into a star and Nusayris who have sinned will be reborn as a Christian, Muslim or Jew.[168]

Secondly, Nusayri precepts might have adopted certain Shia features, such as the cult of the First Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib and the belief in the successive emanations of Imams.[169] Compared with Shia Islam it is often taken for granted that the Nusayris believe that the First Imam is in fact the reincarnation of God. The pagan concept of a holy trinity is transformed into the belief, firstly, that Imam Ali is the *ma'na* (essence or meaning) and secondly, that Imam Ali has through the eons been accompanied with the Prophet Mohammed, who was made of the light of Imam Ali, and the Prophet Mohammed is the *ism* or *hijab* (name or veil). Thirdly,

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[163] Winter, 41.
[164] Ibidem.
[165] Ibidem.
[166] Friedman, 5-17.
[167] Aslam Farouk-Alli,"The Genesis of Syria's Alawi Community," in *The Alawis of Syria: War, Faith and Politics in the Levant*, ed. Micheal Kerr and Craig Larkin (London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2015), 29.
[168] Farouk-Alli,"The Genesis of Syria's Alawi Community," 29.
[169] Farouk-Alli, 29.

the Persian Salman al-Farsi, one of the companions of the Prophet, represents the third element of the triad.[170] Imam Ali is the central figure in Nusayrism and as such, the supposed Nusayri "*Shahada*", Islamic creed, is: "there is no deity but Ali, no veil but Muhammad, and no *bab* but Salman."[171] The "heretical" nature of the Nusayri "creed" is obvious when it is compared with the common Islamic Shahada "There is no god but God. Muhammad is the messenger of God."[172]

Lastly, it is also presumed that the Nusayris have in common with Shia Ismaili or Seveners, Druzes or other *Ghulat* Muslim groups the idea that esoteric religious knowledge is hidden from the masses and that only the "initiated" can uncover and have knowledge of religious precepts and secrets.[173] Another assumed distinctive feature of the Nusayri doctrines is the adoption of some Christian rituals and Saints, as the references of John the Baptist and Mary Magdalene show, and the use of ceremonial wine.[174]

Influenced most likely by Zoroastrian features, Neoplatonic philosophy and Eastern Christian Gnosticism, the Nusayri religion has become known in the literature as overtly "syncretistic" which is highly debatable, because it is reasonable to state that all religions are "historical amalgams of various older belief systems and influences."[175]

Something else to bring to mind is that in Western Syria many religious movements were all competing with each other in their mission (*da'wah*) to convert the masses.[176] These missions suggest that there were some areas not "Islamised" yet before the tenth and eleven century.[177] This might indicate that there were perhaps more Nusayri communities but that in the end they lost touch with Nusayrism "or were absorbed into the larger Shia tendencies."[178] If this is correct then Nusayri communities might have lived in other areas and this nuances or even disavows the current pervasive academic narrative that the Nusayris were only living near the Syrian coast and isolated in the difficult accessible mountainous area of Latakia.[179] Some

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[170] Winter, 13; A. Faksh, "The Alawi Community of Syria: A New Dominant Political Force," in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Apr., 1984), 135; Heinz Halm, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), s.v. "Nuṣayriyya," accessed December 7, 2017, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy-ub.rug.nl/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/nusayriyya-COM_0876?s.num=3&s.q=nusayris; Friedman, 73-81.
[171] Pipes, "The Alawi Capture of Power in Syria," 431 and Moosa, 402.
[172] Farouk-Alli, 29 and Malise Ruthven, *Historical Atlas of Islam* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2004), 14.
[173] Ibidem, 29.
[174] Ibidem.
[175] Winter, 14.
[176] Such as Fatimid Ismailism, an offshoot of Ismailism, the Druzes, the Ishaqis, the Hululis or Thamina, the Quarmatians, the Nusayris and others.
[177] Ibidem, 18-19.
[178] Ibidem, 25.
[179] Farouk-Alli, 210; Goldsmith, "God Wanted Diversity," 395; Hanna Batatu, "Some Observations on the Social Roots of Syria's Ruling, Military Group and the Causes for Its Dominance," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Summer, 1981): 334; Pipes 434-437 and Faksh, 133-135.

academics have characterised the Nusayris as "compact minority" because of the concentration of them in this area.[180]

Compared with the Nusayri *da'wah* "from Bagdad to Aleppo and other urban centres", it is more difficult to ascertain the influence and dissemination of Nusayrism in the Syrian highlands.[181] This obscurity can be explained by the fact that Nusayri or other well-known primary sources do not provide reliable insight into the extent to which predominantly illiterate rural people might have assimilated, or adapted the often complex religious precepts that most likely varied over a longer period of time in which more local variations might have existed.[182]

The crusaders, Ismaili Nizaris, Ayyubids, and Mamluks fought each other, have conquered and settled in some areas of *Bilad al-Sham* (Greater Syria). Despite the lack of historical sources it is assumed that the Nusayris were tributary to, had cordial relationships with, and fought with these "foreign invaders".[183] To establish a clear picture of what the Nusayri community was, where exactly they lived, and which of the community members actually interacted with these foreigners, is difficult to ascertain. Between the eleventh and twelve century the Nusayris may have become part of the power struggles between the Ismailis, the crusaders, and Ayyubids or at least have had some kind of relationship with them.

Perhaps the most important contributor to the "distinctiveness" of the Nusayri identity and the development of a confessional community is Abu'l-Layth Hasan ibn Yusuf al-Makzun al-Sinjari.[184] Al-Makzun al-Sinjari is remembered as a statesman, religious scholar and mystical poet who had not only written religious treatments, which were extensively commented on in Nusayri sources, but also "led or accompanied a new movement of immigration into the western highlands" that divided the Nusayri society along tribal lines that are characteristic of possible markers of Alawite identity today.[185]

The Alawites are not a monolithic community and they can be roughly divided into four main tribes or tribal confederations.[186] These confederations consist of many smaller clans. The family of Hafez al-Assad belongs to the so-called Numailatiyyah section of the al-Matawiraha tribe and the al-Kalbiyyah consists of at least five branches.[187] Several of the main tribal

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[180] See for example the following pages: Farouk-Alli, 210; Goldsmith, "God Wanted Diversity;" 395; Batatu, 334; Pipes 434-437 and Faksh, 133-135.

[181] Winter, 25.

[182] Ibidem, 25.

[183] Ibidem.

[184] Abu'l-Layth Hasan ibn Yusuf al-Makzun al-Sinjari lived from 1188 or 1193 to 1240.

[185] Ibidem, 38.

[186] The al-Khayyatun, al-Haddadun, al-Matawiraha and al-Kalbiyyah. Ibidem.

[187] The Rashawneh, Junaydi, al-Nawasireh, al-Jurud, and al-QarahilahSee. See note 11 of Hanna Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry, the Descendants of Its Lesser Rural Notables, and Their Politics* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999), 377 and Batatu, "Some Observations on the Social Roots," 331-344, 335-336.

groupings "with which Alawis would later claim affiliation" are generally known as the descendants of al-Mazkun's soldiers and their relatives.[188] His most important innovations in Nusayri religious thought are the rejection of *taqiyya* (dissimulation), emphasising the duty of jihad, and criticising monist Sufism.[189] He is also known to stand up for the Nusayris from the Latakia region who asked him for help when Nusayris were slaughtered at Sahyun castle.[190] Although al-Makzun and his forces were defeated by Ismailis and Kurds, his leadership helped Nusayris in times of crisis to unify and consolidated the Nusayri society "in a way it had never been before."[191]

Winter makes an important statement by saying that "Nusayrism" might have been "a question of subscribing to a particular set of esoteric Shi'i beliefs, either personally or mediated through the poets and village shaykhs of the rural hinterland" before the arrival of al-Makzun.[192] He goes on by arguing that "Nusayrism" has now become more in terms of belonging to a particular clan, following a leader, opposing Frankish and Muslim enemies, "and defending a particular collective."[193] While Nusayrism might at first have been a religious ideal with the openness for any person to convert to this belief, it has, in the beginning of the thirteenth century, become a more self-conscious political community.[194]

Even if the aforementioned Nusayri doctrines were in reality not as "heterodox" or "syncretic" and even quite familiar in some part of the rural hinterlands of Syria, the Nusayri precepts became a contentious topic in fatwas of Sunni religious scholars throughout history.

2.2 The Changing Religious Status and Identity of the Nusayris/Alawites 1317-2016

2.2.1 Nusayris, Fatwas, Ibn Taymiyyah, Enmity and Ongoing Strife

The word Nusayri "has become part of "a long-term sectarian dehumanization strategy" because Sunni jihadis view the Syrian conflict as "an existential religious struggle between Sunnis and Shiites."[195] However, for peacebuilders it is important to understand that the term "Nusayri" in medieval texts was often, perhaps always, used in a discriminatory and essentialist manner to "justify certain communal obligations, state punitive action, or simple, self-serving

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[188] Such as the al-Haddadun, al-Matawiraha, the Banu Ali, the Numaylatiyya and the Muhalaba,Winter, 40.
[189] Ibidem, 38.
[190] Ibidem, 39.
[191] Ibidem, 41 and Friedman, see "Al-Mazkun's Innovations", 53-56.
[192] Ibidem.
[193] Ibidem.
[194] Ibidem.
[195] Zelin and Smyth, "The Vocabulary of Sectarianism."

moral reprobation."[196] It is most likely that the term "Nusayris" was never used by the Alawis themselves. If this is correct then the "Nusayri identity" is constructed by "others": some religious scholars from different Sunni and Shia branches throughout the medieval period.

A brief summary of the historical context, the content of the fatwas, the errors of Ibn Taymiyyah, and information on his relationship with the authorities will be given.[197] Not only is such knowledge necessary to understand how identity issues could be resolved but it also reveals how identities are created and used for political purposes from medieval times till 2016.

In the Islamic world a fatwa is a "legal opinion or religious edict" issued by a mufti (qualified jurist) or other Islamic religious scholars who are trained in and have knowledge of the *sharia* (Islamic law).[198] In short, a fatwa in spite of its importance is in fact only an advisory opinion and non-binding.[199] Moreover, in order for the fatwa to be valid, the question and the religious scholar must have both "certain have certain qualities and conditions or modalities" (*adab al-mufti wal-mustafti*).[200]

The "syncretistic" and "odd" precepts of the Nusayris were seen as *Ghulat* by Shiites and *takfir* (a Muslim's accusation –*kafr*- of apostasy) by Sunnis around the eleventh and twelve century.[201] But the first fatwas in history against the Nusayris were only issued much later around the early fourteenth century by Ibn Taymiyyah.[202] Friedman is right by saying that "we should ask ourselves why such a dramatic step was taken specifically in this period."[203] To answer this question he contends that the Mameluke policy was "extreme" because they had "liquidated" the Nizaris and had dealt with the frequent Mongol invaders, and eventually removed every sign of the crusader presence in Syria by destructing every "Crusader castle, settlement and port in the coastal territories, to prevent their" Reconquista.[204] Because of this psychological state of constant fear of being invaded, the treatment of Nusayris was also

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[196] Winter, 72.

[197] Talhamy, "The Fatwas and the Nusayri/Alawis of Syria, 175-194; Yaron Friedman, "Ibn Taymiyya's Fatāwā against the Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Sect," *Der Islam* 82, no. 2 (2005): 349-63 and Friedman, 299-309.

[198] An Islamic religious scholar must uphold ethical values and he must be righteous, reliable, just, and free of sins. These ethical qualities should be demonstrated in his professional and personal conduct. He must also have legal qualities in which "he must retain the principles of Islamic faith" and must exercise alertness and prudence in the proceeding of *ifta* (act of issuing a fatwa). The religious scholar must be a distinguished Islamic jurist who has the intelligence and competence in *ijtihad* (logical reasoning to make sound interpretations and legal judgments), and must have a thorough understanding of the *hadith* (actions and sayings that are related to the Prophet Muhammed). Corinna Standke, *Sharia - The Islamic Law* (Munich,: GRIN Publishing, 2008), 4-5 and Talhamy 177-179.

[199] Talhamy, 177.

[200] Ibidem.

[201] See Friedman, 187, for the Shia's viewpoints on the Nusayris, 188-190 and for "the Sunni takfīr against the Nussayris", 187-199.

[202] Ibidem and Talhamy, 178.

[203] Ibidem, 62.

[204] Ibidem.

"extreme" as is demonstrated by the way the Mamelukes quelled the resurgence of the Nusayri ibn al-Ḥasan, the proclaimed Mahdi and 20,000 Alawites were killed.[205]

Friedman and others have described the Mameluke period as "extreme" in which continuous rebellions, massacres, and foreign invaders took place and during which period, from 1250 till 1516 when finally the Ottomans conquered Syria, the Nusayris and the Mamelukes were in an ongoing state of war. Such a historical context makes it politically understandable why the fatwas of Ibn Taymiyyah were issued against the adversaries of the Mameluke state.

It is problematic to view the fatwas and other Muslim religious historiographies as normative sources. These documents created a literary trope of Alawite persecution and enmity during the Mameluke period. Within the Ayyubid or Mameluke chronicles from the twelfth to the thirteenth century one can hardly find any references to the Nusayris, in spite of important events such as the conquest of coastal highlands in 1088 by Salah al-Din and the capture of the last crusader fortress in the 1290s by the Mameluke sultan Qualawun.[206] Alawite sources provide a more nuanced picture according to Winter, who states that the "Sunni authorities' attitude toward the community ranged from indifferent to cordial."[207]

Based on the *Khayr al-Sani'a fi Mukhtasar Tarikh Ghulat al-Shi'a* of the Alawite Husayn Mayhub Harfush in 1959, an example of cordial relationship between the Nusayris and Sunni authorities might be demonstrated by the Ayyubid or Mameluke emir known as al-Mawsili.[208] The *Khayr al-Sani'a* also provides examples of possible cordial relationships with Nusayris and, for instance, the Ayyubid rulers of Hama and Tamerlane's vezir Muhammed al-Qurani.[209] There are also not many sources on Nusayri-Ismaili relationships although the few biographical references might suggest "a relationship of sectarian accommodation and even symbiosis" instead of ongoing conflict.[210]

Interesting is Winter's observation that modern Alawite literature, the *Khayr al-Sani* of 1959, mentions prominent Sunnis with pro-Alawite sympathies and has no narratives of persecution or other forms of religious enmity.[211] Whether the historical accounts provided by the Alawite literature are accurate is of no great importance, because the historical accounts

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[205] These farfetched numbers are based on Ibn Battatu's visit to Jabala in 1326 after the Nusayri rebellion in 1318: Friedman, 62; Winter, 67, and Farouk-Alli, 211.
[206] Winter, 52
[207] Ibidem.
[208] See note 14. Winter, 7 and 52-53.
[209] See note 30 for more details the *Khayr al-Sani'a fi Mukhtasar Tarikh Ghulat al-Shi'a* of Husayn Mayhub Harfush, 301-303, 473-475, 500, 711, 904-905. Winter 53.
[210] Ibidem, 54.
[211] Ibidem, 53.

suggest that "the collective memory of constant oppression and sheltering in the mountains" most likely have become more ingrained in Alawi literature after 1959.[212] Also problematic is Friedman's notion of the Mamelukes' extreme policies of "liquidating" the Nizari Ismailis. In short, the Mamelukes in fact tolerated Nizaris, were using even Nizari spies which might indicate that not only the Nizaris but also the Nusayris were much more integrated in the Mameluke state than Friedman suggests.[213]

2.2.2 The Fatwas of Ibn Taymiyyah: the Beginning of the Historical Nusayri/Alawi Persecution

Shaykh al-Islam Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyyah has arguably contributed the most to the pervasive image of Alawi persecution under the guise of Sunni rulers. Known for his contribution to the Hanbali *madhab* (school of law) and his particular interpretations of the Sunnah and the Quran by advocating to return to Islam's most important sources (*salafiyya*), Ibn Taymiyyah's viewpoints are still reverberating through contemporary features of Wahhabism, Salafism and Jihadism.[214] Talhamy rightly argues that "It is fair to say that these fatwas shaped the history of the Nusayris" as the notorious sentences of Ibn Taymiyyah exemplify by stating that the Alawites "are more heretical than the Jews and the Christians and even more than several heterodox groups" exemplify.[215] Ibn Taymiyyah's sentences were used by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood to justify its guerrilla warfare against prominent Alawites in the 1980s.

The first fatwa is most likely issued between 1300-1305 when the Mamelukes held punitive campaigns against the Shiites who were living in the Kisrawan region. The other two fatwas were issued before or after the Mameluke Kisrawn campaigns or at least before the occurrence of a local Nusayri uprising in the Jabala region in 1318.[216] The reason behind this insurgence is the assumed Mameluke's lack of willingness to tolerate religious heterodoxies. Another explanation is the Nusayri's dissatisfaction with the tax policy under Mameluke law.[217] What is known for certain is that the rebellion started after a Mameluke cadastral survey of the province in Tripoli which might have caused fiscal and religious disadvantages for the Nusayris.[218] Although later Muslim historians, such as Ibn Kathir and al-Maqrizi, have argued

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[212] Ibidem.
[213] Ibidem.
[214] Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 194; Gilles Kepel, *Jihad The Trail of Political Islam* (Harvard: Belknap Press, 2003); Quintan Wiktorowicz, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam," *A Genealogy of Radical Islam* 28, no. 2 (2005), 83.
[215] Friedman, 189.
[216] Winter 61-68.
[217] See note 62 or 63. Ibidem, 62.
[218] For more details about the financial implications for the Nusayris. Ibidem, 62.

that this rebellion was part of Sunni state versus a religious heterodox conflict, such a conclusion is only based on a sectarian interpretation of later Sunni *ulama* (religious Islamic scholars) and does not give us much insight into how the wider relationship between the Mameluke state and the Nusayris was.[219]

Ibn Taymiyyah's viewpoints on the Nusayri and Shiites are most likely misrepresenting the general Mameluke policy towards other religious sects. It is also important to mention that his extreme Hanbali's viewpoints caused him to spend six years in prison on several occasions in Damascus and Cairo.[220] Ibn Taymiyyah may have been considered as nuisance to the Mameluke authorities and a polarising figure in Mameluke society. [221] In spite of these important remarks that might be useful for influential Sunni religious scholars to comment on Ibn Taymiyyah's life in post-conflict Syria, his fatwas against the Nusayris and Shiites also show his lack of historical knowledge, as the brief content of his first fatwa illustrates.[222]

For conflict analysists and the actual implementation of peacebuilding activities, it becomes clear that in the question of the fatwa the assumed syncretistic Nusayri religious doctrines are mentioned.[223] The question might also reveal that the Nusayris were much more integrated in society as the question concerns whether a mixed marriage between a Muslim and Nusayri was allowed. The historical knowledge of Ibn Taymiyyah is often inaccurate and for his answer one can read his "false theological and historical accusations against" the Nusayris by saying that firstly, the pilgrims were killed and the Black Stone of al-Ka'ba was stolen by the *Qaramita* and not the Nusayris.[224] Secondly, it were not the Nusayris but the *Ismaili Fatimids* who had

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[219] Ibidem, 63.

[220] Ibidem, 60 and Donald P. Little, "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya", International *Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Jul., 1973), 311-327.

[221] Donald P. Little, "Did Ibn Taymiya Have a Screw Loose?" *Studia Islamica*, No. 41, (1975), 93-111.

[222] Friedman's translation of Ibn Taymiyyah's fatwas is based on M. St. Guyard, "Le fatwa d'Ibn Taymiyya sur les Nossairis, publie pour la premiere fois avec une traduction nouvelle," *Journal asiatique* (6eme serie) 18 (1871), 158-198. Friedman, 188.

[223] Question: "What is the view of the noble scholars, the religious leaders, may God help them to reveal the truth about the Nusayriyya that allow drinking wine, believe in metempsychosis, the antiquity of the world, deny the revival, heaven and hell (…) according to them God who created the world is Ali ibn Abi Talib (…) they have their own initiation ceremony (…) Is mixed marriage between them and the Muslims allowed, is it allowed to eat from their slaughter (…) may they be buried in the Muslim graveyards or not (…) are we allowed to kill them and confiscate their money or not (…) is fighting them considered more important than fighting the Tatar (Mongols)." Talhamy 179. The whole fatwa can be seen in Appendix 8. Friedman, 299-309

[224] Answer: "Praise be to God the Lord of the Worlds, those people called Nusayris, they and the other kinds of the Batiniyya, Qaramita, are more heretical than the Jews and the Christians and even more heretical than many of the polytheists and their harm to Muhammad's community is greater than the harm of the infidel fighters such as the Mongols, the Crusaders, and others. They pretend to be Shia and support ahl al-Bayt (family of the Prophet) while in truth they do not believe in God, or in his messenger (i.e. Muhammad) or in his book (i.e. Quran) (…) there are many famous incidents that show their enmity towards Islam and the Muslims (…) **they killed the pilgrims and threw them in the well of Zamzam**, and they once took the **Black Stone** (…) **they conquered the land of Egypt and ruled it for two hundred years** (…) The religious leaders have agreed that

conquered and ruled over Egypt.[225]

It seems that Ibn Taymiyyah might have obfuscate the Nusayris with branches of the Ismailis who had a similar theology and the Nizari Ismailis had captured some fortresses in the area that is known as the *Jabal an Nusayriyah* (Nusayri mountains). His confusion might be explained by the fact that the Nusayris and Nizaris had already shared the same geographical area for two centuries before the time of Ibn Taymiyyah. Another important observation is that the "Nusayris" are only mentioned once in the entire fatwa as is cited in the question above. Ibn Taymiyyah is listing various names of sects under discussion, but the Nusayris are not mentioned.[226] Ibn Taymiyyah might be directing his theological accusations only against "Ismaili doctrines" although it must be admitted that some of the assumed syncretic religious doctrines of the Nusayris can be seen in the question of the fatwa.[227]

From an Islamic legalistic point of *ifta*[228], Ibn Taymiyyah might lack the requirements of *ijtihad*[229], because he is not allowed to "proceed with any case on the basis of his own knowledge, and on the basis of false theological and historical accusations."[230] His *jawab*[231] on the *istifta* or *su'al*[232] is therefore not legal by declaring that Muslims should not eat Nusayri meat, should not marry Nusayris, and should not be buried in Nusayri graveyards. Because of this, Ibn Taymiyyah also lacks legality to say that it is allowed for Muslims to kill Nusayris and to confisquate their money.[233]

In the second short fatwa Ibn Taymiyyah's judgement is asked concerning the Druses and Nusayris. Despite the unknown date, the possibility that this fatwa might be "a later addition of Ibn Taymiyyah's disciple Badr al-Din al-Ba'li"[234], and perhaps the rather vague question

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intermarriage with them is forbidden and their slaughter is not allowed (…) it is forbidden to bury them in the Muslim graveyards." Friedman, 62-64, Talhamy 180, and Winter 57-58.
[225] Ibidem.
[226] Such as the "Mulāḥida, Ismāʿīliyya, Qarāmiṭa, Bāṭiniyya, Khurramiyya and Muḥammara." Friedman, 189.
[227] See Subsection 2.1.1.
[228] *Ifta* is the act of issuing a fatwa. Ifta," The Oxford Dictionary of Islam, 2017, accessed December 8, 2017, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e978.
[229] Logical reasoning to make sound interpretations and legal judgments.
[230] Talhamy, 180.
[231] Answer or opinion.
[232] *Istifta* or *su'al* means inquiry or question.
[233] The religious scholar must also have knowledge of the 500 Quranic verses that are related to legal ruling, must have knowledge of the Arabic language, "have an understanding of the theories of abrogation", and "must know which cases have already been subject to" *ijma al-ummah* (consensus based on community) or *ijma al-aimmah* (consensus based by religious authorities). When issuing a fatwa, the *jawab* (answer or opinion) of the Islamic religious scholar on the *istifta* or *su'al* (inquiry or question) should not be formulated on only "the teachings of other jurists" and "on the basis of his own 'knowledge about the real situation", but he is also expected to formulate his own *jawab*. Corinna Standke, *Sharia - The Islamic Law* (Munich,: GRIN Publishing, 2008), 4-5 and Talhamy 177-179.
[234] Friedman, 193.

without specifying what to judge on, except that it should concern "Druses" and "Nusayris".[235] The second fatwa assumes that Druses and Nusayris have common religious features and practices that place them both outside the Islamic faith, because "they" are refusing to pay *jizya* and do not accept four of the Five Pillars of Islam, such as *salat* (prayer), *sawm* (fasting), *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) the *shahada* (Islamic creed) as most of the bold sentences above indicate. Ibn Taymiyyah displays some "knowledge" in his answer by saying that the "founding father" of Nusayrism is Ibn Nusayr, the assumed Nusayri belief that Ali is God, and the content of the Nusayri "*shahada*".

The third short fatwa is issued when an assumed Nusayri man proclaimed to be the Mahdi and led the uprising in Jabala[236] as the content of the fatwa's question suggests.[237]The content makes clear that the question concerns what to do with the leader who is not only pretending that he is God or the Mahdi, but also with his followers who displayed assumed Nusayri believes by cursing the Prophet Muhammad's Companions. Compared with the other two fatwas, the third fatwa shows similarities in the question by asking if it is a religious duty for Muslims to fight these "Nusayris" and whether it is permissible to hold them as captives, slaves, and even to seize their possessions. If Ibn Taymiyyah had categorised the Nusayris as, for instance, *Ahl al-Kitab* (People of the Book) or as a legitimate branch of Islam then theoretically it would have been much more difficult for Muslims to hold the Nusayris as captives or to confiscate their property.

As in line with the other two fatwas, Ibn Taymiyyah's answers to the question by assuming that the Nusayri are rejecting the Five Pillars of Islam and the fact that they were allowed to drink wine are reasons enough to categorise them as apostates and to act against

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[235] "These Durziyya and Nuṣayriyya are heretics according to (the judgment of) all Muslims; their (methods of) slaughter is not permitted for eating nor (can a Muslim) marry their women. **They refuse to pay the** *jizya* (poll tax) and are considered *murtaddūn* (apostates). They are neither Muslims, nor Jews, nor Christians. **They do not accept the obligations of the five prayers, the fast of Ramaḍān or the pilgrimage.** They do not forbid what Allāh has forbidden (such) **as (eating) carrion and (drinking) wine.** Even if they apparently declare their belief (in Islam) and accept its doctrines, they should still be considered heretics by all Muslims. Regarding the Nuṣayriyya, they are a sect of **Abū Shuʿayb Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr**, who was one of the extremist Shīʿīs who believed that **Alī is God**. They (the Nusayris) recite the (confessional) phrases: **I testify that there is no other God but Ḥaydara (lion, one of ʿAli's nicknames) the transcendent the esoteric/ and that there is no Veil but Muḥammad the righteous the faithful / and that there is no path to him but Salmān the powerful**." Friedman, 192-193

[236] Talhamy, 180, Friedman, 193 and Winter 61-68.

[237] Question: "about a group of herdsmen who believed in the Nuṣayrī doctrine; all believed in a man about whom they had variety of opinions. Some claimed he was God, some said he was a prophet sent (by God), others said he was **Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan**, meaning the *mahdī*. They ordered that anyone who should meet him (the *mahdī*) should prostrate themselves before him. In doing so they revealed their heresy (as they did in) **cursing the Prophet Muḥammad's Companions**. They revealed their refusal to obey and their determination to fight. **Are we obliged to fight them and kill their warriors? Are we permitted (to hold as captives) their children and (to confiscate) their property?**" Friedman 193.

them.[238] This fatwa was most likely issued before or around 1318 and this "event is covered in a vast panoply of sources."[239] It is plausible that this is the exact date of the fatwa, because in the description of the uprising a man appears who calls himself the Mahdi. But it is also possible that this fatwa, as well as the others, were issued on a later date by Ibn Taymiyyah or even by his disciple Badr al-Din al-Ba'li. It is also not clear whether the Mameluke authorities have asked for Ibn Taymiyyah's religious opinions or that Ibn Taymiyyah had issued his fatwas privately to justify the punitive campaigns of the Mamelukes by condemning different "Shia branches" such as the Ismailis, Druses and Nusayris.

The emphasis of later Muslim "historians" on the religious doctrinal aspect of the 1318 uprising has created the impression of a polemical expose of Mameluke policies towards presumed Nusayri doctrines and rituals. Winter is right by using Donald Little remarks that "many of the authors relating current affairs in Syria were of course religious scholars, "whose professional interest emerged in their writings.""[240] Compared with older polemical writings of Islamic religious scholars and historians, there are more nuanced accounts of the Nusayri community under Mameluke rule, such as the work *Subh al-A'sha fi Sina'at al-Insha'* by the chief chancery secretary of the Mamelukes Shihab al-Din Ahmad al-Qualqashandi (1448).[241]

Much more work has to be done to find more primary sources to nuance the ongoing "Nusayri persecution by Sunnis syndrome" and to move beyond the sectarian "Nusayris are heretical narrative". Such historical accounts might provide essential knowledge to historically contextualise the fatwas and to portray a more realistic picture of Nusayri relationships with other sects and the Mameluke government. For post-conflict Syria, local peacebuilding activities should include influential religious scholars, historians, and peacebuilders from Alawi and Sunni communities to discuss and to adjust the pervasive essentialist historical narratives that contribute to identity issues that influence the intractability of the conflict.

Another aspect that might be important for the role of religion in conflict analysis is, as

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[238] "Praise be to God. These (Nuṣayrīs) should be fought as long as they resist, until they accept the law of Islam. The Nusạyriyya (springs) from the worst heretical people guided by the devil, they are from the worst *murtaddūn* (apostates); their fighters should be killed and their property should be confiscated. (…)
The Nusạyriyya do not conceal their matter (their religion); moreover, all Muslims know them well. **They do not pray the five prayers, they do not fast during Ramaḍān, nor do they carry out the pilgrimage. They do not pay *zakāt* (alms), and they do not admit that it (paying *zakat*) is an obligation**. They permit (drinking) wine and other prohibited things. They believe that ʿAlī is God; they recite: **"I testify that there is no other God but Ḥaydara the transcendent the esoteric/ and that there is no veil but Muḥammad the righteous the faithful/ and that there is no path to him but Salmān the powerful."** Even if they do not reveal their extremism, and do not declare that this liar is the expected *mahdī*, they should be fought. Friedman, 194.
[239] See note 62. Winter, 62.
[240] See note 77. David Little, *An Introduction to Mamluk Historiography* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1970), 46, 95 cited in Winter, 68.
[241] Winter 68 and 282

Friedman points out "the question as to whether his *fatwā* applies to only the members of the Ḥanbalī school of law or to all Muslims."[242] Such a remark seems plausible because of the limited influence of Hanbalism in Syria compared with the dominant *madhab* of Hanafism in Syria.[243] Ibn Taymiyyah is viewed as Shaykh al-Islam by many adherents from all the madhabs of Sunni Islam and Ibn Taymiyyah might himself tried to present his viewpoints as being of the Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki and Hanbali Sunni schools of jurisprudence.[244] His views are without a doubt adopted, accepted and adjusted by some Sunni religious scholars of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence; however, if Friedman is correct by saying "that no other *fatwa* against the Nusạyrīs can be found in any Muslim source" during the Mameluke period then his observation may indicate that Ibn Taymiyyah is the only acclaimed religious scholar to have clearly asserted the heresy of the Nusayris.[245] This means that if he was indeed the only eminent scholar at that time, this also indicates that his viewpoints might be viewed as *extreme* among other religious scholars.

All in all, it is therefore most likely that the assumed religious precepts of the Nusayris were not that important for Sunni authorities as long as the Nusayris paid their taxes and did not rebel. The Nusayris consisted of various communities along different areas and while some of them had a conflict with the Mameluke state or other religious sects, another districts they cooperated. In contrast, the media, politicians and academics are often cherry-picking historical violent events based on fatwas in which they construct the "Sunni-Shia" or "Sunni-Alawite" divide. "This means that the "Sunni community had always hated the Alawis " started when the Prophet Muhammad died in 632 and this enmity continued throughout the Medieval and the Ottoman period right up to the outbreak of the Syrian Civil war in 2011.

2.2.3 The Nusayri Persecution Syndrome: the Fatwas of Shaykh Nuh al-Hanafi al-Dimashqi and Shaykh Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Mugrabi

Compared with the Mamelukes, the Ottomans are even more notorious for their alleged policies of persecuting minorities and embracing "Sunni Islamic radicalism". In 1511, an extensive pro-Safavid and pro-Shia insurrection occurred in Anatolia, the so-called the *Sahkulu* rebellion. A variety of Turcoman tribes, such as the Kizilbas who were adherents of heterodox Shia precepts, participated in this uprising. Because of this pro-Safavid and pro-Shia uprising, the Ottoman

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[242] Friedman, 197.
[243] Ibidem.
[244] Ibidem.
[245] Ibidem.

Sultan Selim I decided to stop the expansion of Shia Islam to Ottoman areas of rule. In 1514, the Ottoman state defeated the Safavid state in a decisive victory in the battle of Chaldiran. Selim's conquest of the Mameluke Empire from 1516 till 1517, which included Syria and Egypt, established the prestige of the Ottoman sultanate in the Islamic world as evidenced by its new role as guardian of Medina and Mecca.[246]

It is often believed that the Nusayris were targeted during Ottoman campaigns when Selim I wanted to conquer the Mameluke Sultanate. In his *Tarikh al-'Alawiyyin* (History of the Alawites) the Alawi historian Muhammad Amin Galib al-Tawil contends that Selim I had massacred a "millions of Shiites" throughout Anatolia, Syria and Egypt.[247] The Ottoman Sultan launched a campaign against the Nusayris in the area surrounding Aleppo and as a consequence, 40,000 Nusayris and 9,400 Nusayri Shayks were killed according to al-Tawil.[248]

After Sultan Selim I had acquired the 1516 fatwa from the local and not well-known Shaykh Nuh al-Hanafi al-Dimashqi, the Ottomans started their campaign against the Nusayris. The fatwa was primarily issued against the *Rawafid*, *Rafida* or *Rafidah* (those who reject), but Alawi historians, such al-Tawil, think that his fatwa is targeted against the Nusayris and see this as an important occurrence in the history of Nusayri persecution by Sunnis.[249] This means that "the Aleppo massacre" has had become a key episode in the sectarian identity and collective memory of the Alawites. This persecution syndrome has been passed down from generation to generation and is still well-known among the Alawi communities in Syria and Turkey.[250] Because of the Aleppo massacre, many Nusayris fled to the Hatay region in nowadays Turkey or to the Nusayri Mountains in north-western Syria. Since the sixteenth century, the Nusayris not only feared the Ottomans, but also preferred to live in the mountains to avoid Ottoman authorities and the Sunni community in the cities, because many local Sunnis had accepted "the strictures of those fatwas", as the one of 1516 fatwa demonstrates.[251]

The question reveals that the Nusayris are not mentioned at all, which is already an essential observation that might be significant for dealing with identity issues.[252] The singular Arabic word *Rafida* (رافضة) is derived from the Arabic consonantal root ر ف ض which as a noun

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[246] Winter, 75.
[247] Winter 76, Talhamy 181, Muhammad Amin Galib al-Tawil, *Tarikh al-'Alawiyyin*, 445-446 note 3.
[248] Talhamy 181 based on Ta'rikh al-'alawiyin (Beirut: Dar al-Andalus, 1979), 395.
[249] Talhamy, 181 and Winter, 76-77.
[250] Winter, 76.
[251] The translation of Talhamy is based on the abridged version Ibn Abdin's *al-'Uqud al-durriya fi tanqih al-fatawa al-Hamidiyya* (1883), which includes the fatwa of Shaykh Nuh al-Hanafi. Talhamy, 182-183.
[252] Question: **What is your judgment regarding the obligation to fight the Rawafid and the permission to kill them.** Is it for their evil intentions towards the Sultan or their heresy? If you say the second (heresy), why are they considered heretics (…) **can we enslave their women and children**? Can you please tell us your judgment? Talhamy 182-183.

means renegade, defector or deserter and as a verb to reject.[253] The word is often used contemporarily in a demeaning manner by Sunnis, particularly Sunni extremists, jihadis, Wahhabis and Salafists, because Shiites do not consider the first three caliphs, Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman, as the legitimate successors of the Prophet Muhammed.[254]

This fatwa might be used or referred to by Sunni extremists in the Syrian conflict as the answer illustrates that the *Rawafids* are not only *rejecting* Abu Bakr and Umar, but are also *cursing* the wife of the Prophet Muhammed.[255] It is therefore an obligation for (Sunni) Muslims to fight and to kill them and to enslave their women and children.

What specific know-how do conflict analysts and peacebuilders need in order to be able to qualify this short fatwa and to use that knowledge for their peace building activities? If there are Sunnis who are thinking that the Alawis are *Rafida* then this would mean that the Alawites are at least considered as Shia Muslims. Peacebuilders might use this angle to emphasise a common "identity" because Sunni and Shia Muslims are all part of the *al-Ummah al-Islamiyah* (Muslim world or Muslim nation). On the other hand, if there are some Sunni Muslims who actual think that Alawis are non-Muslims then they could theoretically never use the fatwa of Shaykh Nuh al-Hanafi, because *Rafidah* stands for Shiites.

Shaykh Nuh al-Hanafi al-Dimashqi is also not a well-known religious scholar. The question arises why the Ottoman Sultan had not asked a prominent mufti to issue a fatwa for the Ottoman campaign. A possible explanation is that in the beginning of the Ottoman Empire the muftis were independent and acted privately. This may indicate that the religious outlook of the Ottoman state was not yet of great importance, because when the Ottoman Empire expanded, the Ottomans finally adopted the Hanafi madhab and more religious scholars "were gradually incorporated into an increasingly centralized judicial administration."[256]

However, Talhamy suggests that the Shaykh al-Islam, during the reign of Selim I, was the highest religious seat in the Ottoman state and not only exercised "a considerable moral influence in the capital", but was also in charge of appointing religious scholars in the provinces

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[253] Arabic Morphological Analyzer برنامج تحليل صرفي للكلمات العربية, http://lexanalysis.com/araflex/araflex.html (accessed December 8, 2017).

[254] Shiite extremist groups are calling the Sunnis Nasabi, Takfiri, Ummayad, and Wahhabi while Sunni groups are calling the Shiites Nusayri, rafidha, majus, Safawi, Hizb al-Lat, and Hizb al-Shaytan. Zelin and Smyth, "The Vocabulary of Sectarianism."

[255] Answer: (…) The reason for the obligation to fight them and kill them is both **their atheism and evil** (…) **They refuse to accept the khilafa of the two shaykhs (Abu Bakir and Umar) they curse Aisha (Prophet Muhammad's wife) and say bad things about her** (…) All these bad characteristics are found in those people who have gone astray. Whoever has one of these qualities is an atheist who should be killed whether they repent or not (…) their women and children may be enslaved. Talhamy 182-183.

[256] Talhamy, 181.

of the empire.[257] If Talhamy is right, two questions remain unanswered: why did the Shaykh al-Islam not issue his religious opinions and to what extent was the fatwa important or obligatory to the Sunni community? The latter question is reasonable since the fatwas was issued by a, compared with the eminent Shaykh al-Islam, less important and lesser-known religious scholar.

The name Nuh *al-Hanafi* al-Dimashqi suggests that the Shayk was a Hanafi scholar and the title *al-Dimashqi* indicates that he was born or had religious jurisdiction around or in Damascus. While Ibn Taymiyyah was a Hanbali scholar, Nuh al-Hanafi al-Dimashqi might have been a Hanafi scholar and again it is the question whether this religious decree applies to all Sunni Muslims or only the adherents of the Hanafi school of law.

To move beyond the essentialist Nusayri identity and the collective memory of ongoing historical persecution by Sunnis, a new historical perspective based on, for instance, Ottoman tax documents might construct a whole different and more nuanced narrative of the relationships between Alawites and the Ottoman state. The account of the Nusayri massacre of Aleppo might be unfounded because after the defeat of the Mamelukes at the battle of Marj Dabiq, the Ottomans could seize the city without any fight. It is also questionable how many Shiites were living in Aleppo at that time, given that many of them were already converted to Sunni Islam after the conquest of the Zangids in the twelfth century.[258] But there were indeed some Ismaili villages in the countryside.[259]

Another important remark is that neither the Ottoman nor the Arabic chronicles provide any evidence of sectarian violence during the Ottoman conquest. The Ottoman chronicles do suggest a high number of deaths of the Kilzibas in other military expeditions of Selim I.[260] The seemingly farfetched numbers of 40,000 Nusayris casualties are most likely a literary trope that is often repeated in academic literature but also has come part of the collective memory and identity of the Alawis.[261]

Ottoman provincial law codes (*kanun-name*), tax censuses (*tahrir*), executive orders (*mühimme*), and other Ottoman tax surveys might also shed a different light in the relationship between the Nusayris and the Ottoman state. Based on these documents, the reality was much more complicated and these tax documents suggest that most of the time Nusayri villages and towns were much more integrated in the Ottoman state evidenced by the fact that they payed

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[257] Ibidem.
[258] "Zangid," Oxford Reference, 2017, http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803133353138 (accessed December 8, 2017).
[259] Winter, 78.
[260] Ibidem.
[261] See note 9. Ibidem.

certain taxes on a village-by-village basis.[262] This insight contrasts with the Nusayri experience of the assumed Ottoman policies of discrimination, persecution and injustice because of their religious identity. [263]

There were of course some Nusayri rebellions against the Ottoman state in some areas, but at the same time in other areas there were Nusayris cooperating with the authorities. Moreover, the tax surveys indicate that large amount of Nusayris participated in the coastal rural economy which disavows or at least nuances the story that many Nusayris had fled into the mountains.[264] As long as religious communities payed their taxes and did not rebel, the Ottoman state had generally speaking no problems with confessional communities. However, in the nineteenth century the Ottoman state began to conceive the Nusayri identity more as a "religious problem".[265] This concern might be explained because they intended the Nusayris and other sectarian minorities to become law-abiding citizens of the state by implementing social disciplining measures, such as education and military conscription. The various attempts to modernise the Ottoman Empire were not only necessary to secure its dominions against external powers, such as Russia and France, but also to curb the development of internal nationalist movements.[266]

A possible indication that the Nusayri identity and their leadership were perceived as a sectarian actors might have started when the French vice-consul stated that a "Grand Cheikh" of the Nusayris had the authority over the *muqaddams* (leaders) of the Kelbiye and Muhalaba geographical areas.[267] This Shaykh had the power to decide to continue or to stop the hostilities against the Ottoman state in 1811.[268] Interesting is the fact that the notion of Nusayri "Grand Cheikh" does not seem to occur in the Ottoman and Nusayri sources, which might indicate an orientalist, particular European, reading of political events at that time in the region. Dividing the indigenous people into religious tribes and nations had become significant in the competition between Europeans and Ottomans in their discourses of "backwardness, progress, and political reform in the region."[269]

Compared to Ottoman sources, Western sources describe the Nusayri society as an essential division of tribes and sects. Medieval sources are not mentioning any form of Nusayri

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[262] Ibidem, 116-118.
[263] Ibidem.
[264] Ibidem, 95.
[265] Ibidem, 168-178.
[266] Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 762.
[267] Winter, 170.
[268] Ibidem.
[269] Ibidem.

tribalism and it seems that the first time Ottomans mentioned the Nusayri Kelbi tribe was in the mid-sixteenth century.[270] Such concern with the Kelbi tribe is most likely "a conscious privileging of tribes as the primary unit of social organisation in the area."[271] Anthropologists have substantiated that "tribes" are only formed in contact with "a state" through rebellion against a colonial power, deportations, resettlements, and the assignment of certain privileged individuals to assert control over taxes and indigenous people.[272] This might suggest that "tribes" are most likely part of administrative actions of a state that needs to categorise and stratify rural societies, and that the formation of tribes is not the result of some indigenous kinship structure.[273]

Religious communities living in the Syrian coastal areas had a long history of coexistence and in severe times of crisis religious identity might be a key factor in mobilising people but this "did not determine the basic social and political order."[274] The development of sectarian discrimination and visible sectarian events of strife in the second half of the nineteenth century did neither originate in Istanbul nor was it a purely local affair, but was the product of the decline in military prospects in the Ottoman empire, the European and American interests in its economic and cultural affairs, and the Ottoman attempts to modernise the empire by implementing new administrative and fiscal acts.[275] This all precipitated nativist and more religious fundamentalist's reactions in the Syrian region against the "newly" constructed sectarian groups such as the Nusayris.[276] An Islamic reform movement with the name of Wahhabism, inspired by Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Ibn Taymiyyah already gained influence in the end of the eighteenth century in the Hejaz, and influenced even more the Arabic tribal people who immigrated to central and southern Syria at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

It seems that a religious preacher from Tunisia by the name of Muhammed Nasir al-Maghribi, Al-Moghrabi or al-Mugrabi seemed to have settled, preached and gave teachings in Latakia around 1820. Known for his conservative teachings, al-Mugrabi might have issued a fatwa against the Nusayris although there are not many reliable sources to validate such claim. Samuel Lyde who lived in the 1850s among the Nusayris stated that "A certain vile and ignorant fanatic called Sheikh Ibrahim il Mograbee, who died about 1827, gave a fetwa for which his memory is accursed among the Ansaireeh (Nusayris) **that the lives and property of the**

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[270] Ibidem, 122.
[271] Ibidem.
[272] See note 6 for literature about this topic. Ibidem.
[273] Ibidem, 122-123.
[274] Ibidem, 179.
[275] Ibidem.
[276] Ibidem.

Ansaireeh were at the free disposal of the Musulmans."[277]

At first glance this fatwa might not be significant at all, but after close examination the bold words could indicate a clear resemblance to the content of the earlier discussed fatwas. What is even more significant is "that the precise terms of Ibn Taymiyyah's fatwas" all of a sudden appear in administrative documents of the 1820s, according to Winter.[278] This means that the recall of Ibn Taymiyyah's fatwas might have been the work of the scholarly teachings and influence of al-Mugrabi in Latakia.

Al-Mugrabi was also mentioned by a local French vice-consul who, in his account of a perceived Nusayri revolt, stated that the local people of Latakia "are fanaticized by a Maghribi Shaykh who is telling them every day that it is a meritorious act before God to drench their hands in the blood of a Christian or an Anssarie (Nusayri)."[279] A Nusayri prayer in which certain names and the Sunni madhabs are called to curse, a "Shaykh Muhammed al-Maghrabi" is indeed mentioned in the 1862 book of the ex-Nusayri Sulayman al-Adhani. It is not entirely certain if this was the al-Mugrabi who issued the fatwa.[280] Also the fact that only Lyde has mentioned the fatwa might suggest that it is doubtable whether this religious decree had been issued at all.

The perceived "sectarian strife", in many cases local tax revolts in Nusayri areas from 1806 till 1858 seems to be more mentioned in Ottoman documents and Western sources.[281] Local rivalries throughout the eighteenth and more in the beginning of the nineteenth century, in which some individual Nusayris were competing with regional Ottoman governors, have contributed to the establishment of preceding sectarian animosities which was perceived as part of general Ottoman policies in the region.[282]

The Ottoman state was indeed concerned because foreign countries, such as Russia, France, and other European countries, and American missionaries had an interest in protecting and converting specific religious minorities. Because of this, the Nusayris had become an important sectarian actor in the eyes of the Ottomans and Westerners. The Ottoman aimed to counter the "Protestant crusade to educate (and proselytise)" the Nusayris by making an effort

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[277] Ibidem, 180; Lyde 196 and Talhamy, 183.
[278] Ibidem.
[279] See note 71. Ibidem.
[280] Edward E. Salisbury, "Notice of كتاب الباكورة السليمانية فى كشف اسرار الديانة النصيرية تأليف سليمان افندى الاذنن The Book of Sulaimân's First Ripe Fruit", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 8 (1866): 227-308, 273
[281] Batatu mentions that there were Nusyari tax revolts in 1806, 1811, 1815, 1834, 1844, 1852, 1855 and 1858. Batatu, 337.
[282] Winter, 80-181.

to proselytise them to Sunni Islam.[283] The American missionaries' and Ottoman conversion enterprise generally speaking failed, but there were some Nusayris who may actually have been converted.[284] More important is that in this period the "religious identity" became part of geopolitics as the British and French were lamenting over the Nusayri precarious situation under Ottoman rule.[285]

The Nusayris were also subjected to more frequently attacks by agents of Islamic revivalism, such as al-Mugrabi. The international context of anti-imperialism explains the development of Islamic revivalism in this period and this also contributed to a more pronounced sectarian identity of the Nusayris.

This more political integration and cooperation of the Nusayri community with Istanbul can be seen during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. During the eighteenth century, the Ottomans designated a number of eminent Nusayri individuals as tax collectors of the so-called *iltizam* system, a form of Ottoman tax farm.[286] There were also Nusayris who had made careers as governors in the Ottoman state or in the army and there were also some Nusayris who supported Istanbul and were involved in the Ottoman's fight against the Egyptians between 1831 and 1841.[287] These are just a few of the many examples that repudiate the Nusayri persecution by the Sunni Ottoman state syndrome.

2.2.4 A Critical Historical Juncture: from Nusayris to Alawites from Apostates to Shiites 1920-1973

2.2.4.1 The 1936 Fatwa of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Amin al-Husseini

The short occupation of Syria by Egypt from 1831 till 1841 is evidence of the declining power of Istanbul. After the Egyptians left, north-western Syria became more instable and an area of conflict in which local feudal factions and the Ottomans aimed to regain their former power. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Ottomans were even more afraid of infringement by European powers. Such an example of European infringement was the French invasion in Lebanon in which the French argued that this was justified because the Catholic Maronites, a

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[283] Winter 205; Talhamy, "American Protestant Missionary Activity among the Nusayris, 232; Farouk-Alli, "Sectarianism in Alawi Syria," 213.

[284] Talhamy, 232.

[285] Winter, 198-199.

[286] Surayia N. Farooqhi, *The Cambridge History of Turkey Volume III The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2008), 75-76, 120-121; Winter, 119-156; Stefan Winter, "La revolte Alaouite de 1834 contre L'occupation Égyptienne: perceptions Alaouites et lecture Ottomane," *Oriente Moderno* 79, no. 3 (1999): 61–71; Stefan Winter, "The Nusayris before the Tanzimat in the Eyes of Ottoman Provincial Administrators, 1804–1834," in Philipp, Thomas; Schumann, Christoph. *From the Syrian Land to the States of Syria and Lebanon* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2004), 97–112.

[287] Ibidem.

minority group, should be protected.[288]

The end of World War I de facto meant the defeat and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. In 1916, the secret Sykes–Picot Agreement between Great Britain and France became historically significant for the future of religious communities such as the Nusayris. In this agreement the former Ottoman dominions were already divided between the two European countries. The Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon was officially given to France in 1923 by the League of Nations while in the 1920s, the French already controlled Lebanon, Alexandretta and other areas of south-eastern Anatolia.[289] Theoretically, the mandate system should enable indigenous people to create an independent state and to stand on their own, with the help of a supervising and governing country. The mandate would only officially be terminated, as is described in Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nation.[290]

The Nusayri identity was throughout history most often subject to designation and redefining by others, and in 1929, France officially began to delineate the Nusayris as *Alawis*. This new political identity by changing names is related to the French political strategy of divide et impera as they subdivided the mandate region into six states by separating religious minorities: the State of Aleppo, of Damascus, of Greater Lebanon in 1920 and the State of Jabal Druze and Sanjak of Alexandretta in 1921.[291] Along the Syrian coast and mountains, France also created in 1920 the "Territory of the Alawites" and two years later in 1922 the district name was changed into "the State of the 'Alawites", also known as the *l'État des Alaouites*.[292] The semi-autonomous State of the Alawites was governed by a Representative Council and a French governor and in 1930, when they decided to take full control of its administration, the French changed its name into the *Government of Latakia*. The 1930 less provocative change of name was a concession by France to Arab nationalists.

France's preferential treatment of religious minority groups and the creation of

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[288] Thomas Collelo, *Syria: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1987), n.p., accessed December 8, 2017. http://countrystudies.us/syria/.

[289] The scope of my master thesis does not allow me to analyse in much detail the French Mandate period and the French policies which have contributed to the political and sectarian identity of the Alawites. One of the best book that deals with Syria, Arab Nationalism and the policies of France is Philip Shukry Khoury*, Syria and the French Mandate The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

[290] "Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognised subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory." Michael Provence, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 69.

[291] Avedis K. Sanjian, "The Sanjak of Alexandretta (Hatay): Its Impact on Turkish-Syrian Relations (1939-1956)," *Middle East Journal* Vol. 10, No. 4 (Autumn, 1956), 379-394.

[292] Eyal Zisser, ""The 'Alawis, Lords of Syria: From Ethnic Minority to Ruling Sect," in Ofra Bengio and Gabriel Ben-Dor, *Minorities and the State in the Arab World* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Pubishers, 1998), 130.

"administratively isolated minority enclaves" were necessary to counter the Pan-Arabic idea of a Greater Syria, Syrian unity and possible independence.[293] The Sunni Muslim majority felt the threat of the French taking control "of their institutions and debasing the symbols of their culture."[294]

Promises of a possible future independent state were also made to the Alawites. Young rural Alawis were attracted by the French from poor areas to join the Syrian legion, which was later renamed in *Les Troupes Speciales du Levant* and in 1925 already twenty percent of this army unit consisted of Alawis.[295] Compared with the Sunni youth in urban centres, for many young Alawis the army was attractive because it was seen as a way of social advancement.[296] These specific French policies of the creation of regional forms of government and policies of highlighting religious differences might have inflamed the more visible sectarian tensions which were pointed out in the end of Subsection 2.2.3.

The French were also reluctant to create sustainable financial and economic infrastructures which might have benefit the inhabitants of the French Mandate, especially because of the devastating effects of World War I and the dominance of the European economy spreading over the Levant. Unfortunately, the French were only promoting their own interests or those of the religious minority groups in spite of the ongoing deterioration of Syrian industries.[297] This contributed to a situation of high unemployment and inflation which also created even more political instability during the French Mandate.

French Mandate policies should be viewed as oppressive and colonial acts because political engagement was suppressed, civil rights denied, and any change of a future independent Syrian state was held down, which caused much resentment in Syria. Because of the miscalculated polices of the French, a huge revolt lasted from 1925 till 1927 throughout Syria and was initiated by the Druses.[298] After the revolt was quelled with much difficulty, the French could not deny the national tendencies in Syria and had to compromise politically with several nationalist movements such as the National Bloc. The latter nationalist movement became officially involved in reaching a future independent Syrian state. At the same time the

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[293] Khoury, *Syria and the French*, 5.
[294] Khoury, 5.
[295] Goldsmith, 400.
[296] Edmund Burke III, "A Comparative View of French Native Policy in Morocco and Syria, 1912-1925," *Middle Eastern Studies,* 9, no. 2 (May, 1973): 175-86, accessed December 16, 2017, http://www.jstor.org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/stable/pdf/4282469.pdf.
[297] Khoury, 5.
[298] Khoury would substantiate that the participants of the Great Revolt "were drawn from nearly all walks of life in Syria—urban and rural, Muslim and Christian, rich and poor." Khoury, 167, 151-218.

results of the French policies had not gone unnoticed by the League of Nations as the 1926 statement demonstrates.[299]

For a long time the Alawite identity had been constructed on the basis of other than Alawite sources, whether those were Ottoman archives, French documents, disparaging chronicles of urban elites, or foreign orientalist minded reports.[300] The appearance of more literature on Alawites by Alawites themselves, such as the secular intellectuals Husayn Mayhub Harfush and Muhammad Amin Ghalib al-Tawil, "served to define and delineate the community's identity as never before."[301] Despite of its imperfections, the 1924 published *Tarikh al-'Alawiyyin* of al-Tawil was a pioneering work to construct an Alawite identity by narrating an Alawite history "to reach out to and to educate the 'Alawi hinterland population."[302] Winter thinks that a new Alawi history was necessary "to lay the groundwork for the formulation of properly political claim" as a "new" Post-Ottoman sectarian community.[303]

Alawi religious scholars became more aware of the urgent need to reinvigorate Alawite beliefs and to reassert their important function as religious leaders, spiritual guides, and authorities of their own community.[304] In their quest to modernise and to reform the Alawite community, Alawi *ulama* turned their attention to Twelver Shiism because of its extensive network of contacts with prominent Shia families, established jurisprudential practices, financial resources, institutional foundation in Shia cities of Iraq, and support of publishing modern journals.[305]

The most learned and accomplished religious Alawi scholar Salayman al-Ahmad was most likely the key figure who worked toward an Alawite-Shia rapprochement by traveling through the highlands to meet, to discuss with and to mobilise other religious Alawite scholars to the cause of "rejuvenation".[306] Al-Ahmad aimed to reduce the influence of pervasive magical habits and popular beliefs in signs of things to come, to campaign for girls' education within Alawite society, and to help to introduce Jaʿfari jurisprudence (this Shia madhab is followed by

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[299] "The Commission thinks it beyond doubt that these oscillations in matters so calculated to encourage the controversies inspired by the rivalries of races, clans and religions, which are so keen in this country, to arouse all kinds of ambitions and to jeopardize serious moral and material interests, have maintained a condition of instability and unrest in the mandated territory." Collelo, *Syria: A Country Study*.
[300] Winter, 238-244
[301] Ibidem.
[302] Ibidem.
[303] Ibidem, 238.
[304] Ibidem, 239.
[305] Ibidem, 241-242.
[306] Al-Ahmad "was the spiritual leader of the majority Qamari section of Alawis and bore the formal title of "servitor of the Prophet's household" (*khadim ahl al-bayt*)"
http://martinkramer.org/sandbox/reader/archives/syria-alawis-and-shiism/

most Shiites) to the Alawi community.[307] He also tried by emphasising close Islamic fraternal ties to settle the problems between Kurdish, Turkmen and Alawite communities who clashed with each other in the Latakia highlands after World War I.[308]

It is true that there were other Alawi religious shaykhs who tended to be more traditional or followed a less political trajectory of Alawite asceticism and mysticism, but at the same time, many reformist minded Alawi religious scholars were frequently traveling to Iraq and Lebanon to discuss theological issues and doctrinal divergences with Shia scholars.[309]

The idea of Alawi "reformism" throws a different light on the often assumed sudden Alawite *Gestalt-switch* to Shia Islam, because Western observers instantaneously interpreted Alawi rapprochement to Shiism as an act of *taqiyya* (a precautionary dissimulation) or perceived it as purely tactical move. This charge of precautionary dissimulation or tactical act is ubiquitous in polemical and academic literature, as the British Islam expert Malise Ruthven demonstrates by saying that "Taqiyya makes a perfect qualification for membership in the *mukhabarat*, the ubiquitous intelligence/security apparatus that has dominated Syria's government for more than four decades."[310] The effort of Alawi literature to express Alawite claims has consistently aimed to substantiate that whatever theological differences existed, they only concerned minor aspects of *ta'wil* (the allegorical interpretation of the Quran) or were the result of centuries of neglect and isolation.[311] To overcome this Alawite identity issue, Alawi writers have proposed that better integration into the Muslim community and better access to education are both necessary and without a doubt, still of great importance to overcome the sectarian identity issues in post-conflict Syria.[312]

Political and socioeconomic developments, religious reformism, and Ottoman, Egyptian, and French visions of "modernity" on local communities may all have contributed to the 1920s Shia Islam was becoming more part of the Alawite identity. In 1926, a company of religious Alawite scholars announced that Alawites are Shia Muslims because Alawis are adherents of Imam Ali.[313] Again in 1933 after a meeting, a group of Alawi ulama issued a declaration stating that the Alawis have inseparable links with Islam and asked the French for

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[307] Winter, 242.
[308] Ibidem, 243.
[309] Martin Kramer, "Syria's Alawis and Shi'ism," Martin Kramer on the Middle East, 1987, http://www.martinkramer.org/ (accessed December 8, 2017).
[310] Malise Ruthven, *Encounters with Islam: On Religion, Politics and Modernity* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2012), 115.
[311] Winter, 244.
[312] Ibidem, 244 and Goldsmith, 392.
[313] Talhamy, "American Protestant Missionary Activity," 232.

official recognition of Alawites as Muslims.[314] Three years later in 1936, the most prominent and leading Alawi religious scholars issued another declaration unequivocally stating that "true Alawism subscribes to all the precepts of Islam and that 'Alawis have always been loyal defenders of the Muslim community; in a spirit of pan-Islamic and anticolonial solidarity."[315] The declaration was also significant because it asserted that any Alawite who denied that he was a Muslim was in fact not a true Alawi.[316]

Added to this declaration, after an Alawite meeting held at Jabla and Quardaha a petition was submitted to the French foreign ministry emphasising that "just as the Catholic, the Orthodox, and the Protestant are yet Christians, so the Alawi and Sunni are nevertheless Muslims," according to Martin Kramer.[317] In the same year, 1936, the Sunni Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Muhammad Amin al-Husseini, who was a staunch supporter of the idea of *Bilad al-Sham* (Greater Syria) and a key Muslim leader during the British Mandate, issued a fatwa.[318]

Compared with the other fatwas, the religious learned interpretation is significant and can be considered a critical juncture in the history of the Alawis as they are *Muslims* and are part of the *Umma* (the whole community of Muslims). The fatwa is also meaningful because of its explicit emphasis on the implicit ecumenical message that Muslims are part of the *Umma* in spite of the divergences in Islam.[319] Emphasising and constructing a common identity might overcome pervasive "Sunni-Shia" identities.

Although it is true that al-Husseini does not explicitly denounce the fatwas of Ibn Taymiyyah, he does refute the content of Ibn Taymiyyah's fatwas by contending that the Alawis are reciting the Muslim Shahada, performing the Five Pillars of Islam, and publicly declaring that they are Muslims. Lastly, the fact that a prominent Sunni scholar had issued this religious learned interpretation is also noteworthy though it is difficult to ascertain to what extent this

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[314] Talhamy, "The Fatwas and the Nusayri/Alawis of Syria," 185.
[315] Winter, 242.
[316] Kramer, "Syria's Alawis and Shi'ism."
[317] Ibidem.
[318] Question: "To the honourable Mufti of Jerusalem and the head of the Supreme Muslim Council: What do you say about people who declare themselves as Muslims and live with them peacefully, say the *Shahada*, study the Quran and recite from it, have mosques in their townships that are no different from those of the rest of the Muslims, where they pray on time facing the *qibla* in congregation and call for prayer, they do not show aggression against the Muslims, and because they attribute a high position to the Prince of the believers (Ali) they call themselves 'Alawi Muslims'? Are they Muslims and considered as part of the Muslim community or not? Please give us a legal answer (*aftuna*). Talhamy, "The Fatwas and the Nusayri/Alawis of Syria," 185-186.
[319] Answer: Yes, according to those descriptions **they are Muslims and part of the Muslim community**, **have the same obligations and rights** (then he recites some Quranic verses and *Hadiths* to support his answer), and according to this we know that the Alawis are Muslims and **the whole Muslim community should cooperate with them for good deeds and move away from the bad deeds** (…) **they are brothers in faith**." Talhamy, "The Fatwas and the Nusayri/Alawis of Syria," 185-186.

fatwa was endorsed by the Sunni community in Syria or elsewhere.

The question still remains unanswered why al-Husseini had issued a fatwa in 1936. The most obvious explanation is that Syria in 1936 approached political independence, because the French acquiesced to acknowledge a possible unification of the semiautonomous region of Latakia with a Syrian state. During the mandate period, the French already aimed to manipulate and to exploit the existing divisions among Alawites in which frequent power shifts could be seen within the Alawite "changing coalitions and shaky alliances."[320] An example of changing coalitions is that the leader of the Khayyatin tribal confederation Jaber al-Abbas, after he had been abandoned by the French, supported the nationalists. In contrast with al-Abbas, the poet Muhammad Suleiman al-Ahmed, who was a devoted adherent of the nationalists before the French mandate, became a fervent separatist.[321]

The fact that there were Alawite separatists, unionists and even Alawis who were willing to fight "for their autonomy with or without French assistance", should not come as a surprise as neither the Alawi nor any other religious community would have endorsed one single opinion on independence and French rule.[322] Throughout the mandate period, influential Alawite individuals often adjusted their political stance if this would benefit their personal and political situation.[323] It is therefore difficult to point out whether these Alawi figures were indeed sincere "nationalists" or "separatists".

What is known, however, is that pro-French sentiment was enticed by Alawi politicians by playing the ""Alawite persecution by Sunnis based on their religious identity" card. The fear of being persecuted narrative is evoked by a 1936 petition stating that a future union would result in "Sunni slavery".[324] Another Alawi notable wrote to the French Prime Minister Léon Blum that a union with the Sunnis would result in a "catastrophe".[325] In a memorandum dated June 8, 1936 was said that because the Alawis had lived isolated into the mountains for centuries "they had developed a natural instinct for independence."[326] On July 3 1936, in another Alawi memorandum was said that the French should remember the historical ties between them, and the French were aware "that the crusades would have succeeded if their fortresses had been in

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[320] Gitta Yaffe-Schatzmann, "Alawi Separatists and Unionists: The Events of 25 February 1936," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Jan., 1995), 28-38, 29.

[321] Yaffe-Schatzmann, "Alawi Separatists and Unionists," 29.

[322] Ibidem, 29 and Stefan Winter, "The Asad Petition of 1936: Bashar's Grandfather Was Pro-Unionist," Syria Comment, June 14, 2016, http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/asad-petition-1936-bashars-grandfather-pro-unionist-stefan-winter/ (accessed December 8, 2017).

[323] Winter, "The Asad Petition of 1936: Bashar's Grandfather Was Pro-Unionist" and Seale, 18-23.

[324] Pipes, 439.

[325] Ibidem.

[326] Moosa, 286.

northeast Syria, in the Land of the Nusayris?"[327]

The most famous and much disputed one, is the "Assad" petition of 1936. On 15 June 1936, six Alawite notables, one of them is the assumedly grandfather of Hafez al-Assad Sulayman al-Asad and Sulayman al-Murshid the founder of the al-Murshid sect, wrote a petition, again, to the French prime minister Léon Blum:[328] A unification with a Syrian state is dangerous for the Alawites because of the by Sunni Muslims perceived "precarious" Alawite identity, as the following sentences in the petition highlight.[329]

Whether the Alawite notables or their adherents really believed that the Alawis would be enslaved or murdered because of the intolerance of a Sunni majority towards non-Muslims is difficult to ascertain. Nonetheless, the religious Alawite identity is being politically used to support the separatist claim of an independent Alawi state. The 1936 fatwa of al-Husseini might have been issued to reassure the notions of Sunni intolerance by contending that Alawis are Muslims and are part of the whole Muslim community. The fatwa demonstrates that identities are not fixed and can be adjust to create a new identity that might contribute to more social integration or acceptance within post-conflict Syrian society.

It is true that al-Husseini was a fervent support of unification and that he had close ties with the leadership of the pan-Arabic National Bloc. The ecumenical reconciliation message of "Islamic brotherhood" might have been politically motivated to reconcile assumed "religious differences" in order to incorporate the Alawi state into a new Syrian state. This "new" Syrian state was theoretically effectuated when on September 9, the 1936 Franco-Syrian Treaty was signed by the Syrian nationalist politician Hashim al-Atassi and Blum.[330] However, this treaty of "friendship and alliance" was never officially ratified by the French parliament and Syria obtained full independence in 1946 when the French evacuated their last armed forces.

Much academic emphasis has been put on the petitions of Alawi prominent figures who

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[327] Moosa 286 and Pipes, 439.

[328] Winter, "The Asad Petition of 1936: Bashar's Grandfather Was Pro-Unionist" and Moosa, 288-289.

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1. "The Alawite people, who have preserved their independence year after year with great zeal and sacrifices, **are different from the Sunni Muslims**;"
2. "The Alawites refuse to be annexed to Muslim Syria because, in Syria, the official religion of the state is Islam, and **according to Islam, the Alawites are considered infidels**;"
3. "**The spirit of hatred and intolerance** plants its roots in the heart of Muslim Arabs toward everything that is **non-Muslim**, and is forever fuelled by **the spirit of the Islamic religion** (…);"
4. "(…) whose application (of an independence) will only mean the enslavement of the Alawi people and the exposure of the minorities to the dangers of death and annihilation."

Winter, "The Asad Petition of 1936: Bashar's Grandfather Was Pro-Unionist" and Moosa, 288-289.

[330] David Commins and David W. Lesch, *Historical Dictionary of Syria*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2014), 36; Khoury, 464, 469.Jean-Pierre Filiu, "The Missed Opportunity of the 1936 Franco-Syrian Treaty," De Bibliothèque nationale de France, http://heritage.bnf.fr/bibliothequesorient/en/franco-syrian-treaty-art (accessed December 8, 2017).

supported an Alawi independent state and French protection. Highlighting these memorandums, petitions or other documents affirm the sectarian Alawite identity based on fear and persecution. These pro-sentiment documents should be weighed against the same considerable amount of Alawi unionist claims that can be found in the French archives.[331] One example is the petition also written in 1936 signed by the father of Hafez al-Assad Ali Sulayman al-Assad and eighty-six other prominent figures from leading families, such as the al-Khayyir, 'Abbas, Hawwash, and Raslan.[332] The content of the petition opposes the separatists' narratives of crusaders, Alawite persecution by Sunnis and the "otherness" of Alawis compared with Muslims, as the authors argue that if such stories were true "then how does one explain the presence among us advocates of Syrian unity and independence-of all the leading Alawite notables, both religious and civil, who famously represent the overwhelming majority of their coreligionists in the Government of Latakia region"?[333]

These documents are evidence of a divided Alawite society of unionists and separatists concerning Syrian independence and French rule in which a religious identity was used for political purposes. All in all, not only the French in 1920, but also the 1936 fatwa and some Alawite religious scholars have *changed* the "Alawi religious identity" into a more "political identity". The Alawi community began to understand their new political legal status which enabled them to demand the construction of more schools, a more proportional share of government jobs, formal recognition of Alawi common law with Alawite tribunals and judges, and other Alawi institutions in the name of "their confessional identity".[334]

Some Alawi religious scholars were already seeking an "Alawite-Shia rapprochement", but the Shia component of the Alawite identity became more entangled and visible when in 1951 the Alawite religious leadership embraced the Ja'fari school of thought by establishing the Ja'fari Islamic Aid Society. The following year the Mufti of the Syrian Republic officially recognised the Alawis as Shia Muslims by identifying the madhab as one of the constituents of Syria.[335] Another historical juncture of Islamic ecumenism was Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut's fatwa of 1959 in which the Ja'fari school of thought[336] "is religiously correct to follow in

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[331] Winter, "The Asad Petition of 1936: Bashar's Grandfather Was Pro-Unionist."
[332] Winter, 260.
[333] Ibidem, 260-261.
[334] Ibidem, 258.
[335] Ibidem, 244 and Talhamy, 187.
[336] According to Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut: "The Ja'fari school of thought, which is also known as "al-Shi'a al-Imamiyyah al-Ithna Ashariyyah"(i.e., The Twelver Imami Shi'ites) is a school of thought that is religiously correct to follow in worship as are other Sunni schools of thought." Shaikh Mahmoud Shaltoot, "Al-Azhar Verdict on the Shi'a بِسْمِ اللّٰـهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ," Al-Islam.org, https://www.al-islam.org/shiite-encyclopedia-ahlul-bayt-dilp-team/al-azhar-verdict-on-shia (accessed December 8, 2017).

worship as are other Sunni schools of thought."[337] Before Shaltut there was no prominent Sunni religious scholar who had recognised Shia Islam as completely equal to Sunni Islam.[338] Some authors think that this fatwa was "initiated by Gamal Abdel Nasser's guidance" and if this is true then the fatwa was issued for political reasons to emphasise or to construct a common Muslim identity.[339]

The 1936 and the 1959 fatwa of Sunni religious scholars made it possible that the Alawites could be considered as Muslims, but from a Shia religious perspective they only became "officially" part of the Shiite Muslim community when in 1972 Ayatollah Hasan Mahdi al-Shirazi and the prominent Lebanese religious scholar Musa al-Sadr in 1973 declared that the Alawites are part of the Shiite branch of Islam.

2.2.4.2 From Muslims to Twelver Shiism

After Syria obtained independence, the post-independence period was politically unstable and tumultuous in which an extensive number of coups d'état and coup attempts deeply upset the Syrian country from 1949 till 1971. Although not always intended it was possible to direct and to stimulate popular discontent of socioeconomic tensions through sectarian channels.[340] The use of sectarianism, regionalism, and tribalism from 1963 till 1970 should be viewed as means of pure power politics and tactics to seize or to maintain power.[341] From 1963 till 1970 the coups d'état were intra-Baath regional and consisted of sectarian rivalries in which the last coup was an Alawite rivalry between Salah Jadid and Hafez al-Assad.[342]

The socio-political reality was that since the post-independence period it was impossible to monopolise power without relying on primordial ties. In spite of several attempts by some ideological Baathist leaders to reduce sectarianism, it was also impossible for them after the 8 March 1963 Baathist coup to survive so long without "their well-organised sectarian, regional and tribally-based networks within the Syrian armed forces, the security forces and other power institutions."[343]

While many of Assad's blood relations, such as the Makhlouf family, are tribe affiliated

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[337] Mahmoud Shaltoot, "Al-Azhar Verdict on the Shi'a بِسْمِ اللَّـهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ,"and Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: The Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and Restraint* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 289-290.
[338] Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century*, 290.
[339] Said Aburish, *Nasser the Last Arab* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2005), 200-201.
[340] This means that the overlap of sectarianism, regionalism, and tribalism with socioeconomic and ideological factors could have strengthened the construction of a persistent, primary and an adversarial Alawite identity.
[341] Read Subsection "Anti-Alawi sectarian propaganda." Van Dam, 56-59 and 89-104, 136-144.
[342] Since 1963, prominent Sunni officers were purged and in 1966 the Druses were purged. In 1968, the factions of Ismailis were removed and this resulted in the supremacy of some Alawite factions. Van Dam, 79.
[343] Van Dam, 137.

and many of them have therefore key positions in the power institutions of Syria, the Prime Minister of Syria Abdul Rahman Khleifawi and the Minister of Defence Mustafa Tlass were Sunnis.[344] It seems plausible that the occupation of these conspicuous regime posts by Sunnis were necessary to reassure the Sunni majority or to give the regime a slightly less "Alawite outlook", but sincere loyalty and intimate friendship may also have played an important role.[345] After Assad's ascendance in 1970, the inner circle of Assad does not consist of Alawites in general but rather of his own close relatives, and people from his tribe and native village.

Traditional primordial loyalties often coincides with poor-rich and rural-urban contrasts during the generally speaking rural-minoritarian Baath regime. The Alawite elite had obtained many privileges and enriched themselves by entering into alliances with wealthy Christian and Sunni urban families. These alliances illustrate the formation of open identity-sharing groups in which the rich urban bourgeoisie, with a Sunni or Christian primordial identity, had a direct interest in allowing to maintain the regime as long as their businesses carried on to be prosperous.

Corruption of Alawite elites and discontent with president Assad's economic policies and the absence of real political Sunni representatives have contributed to Syria's socio-sectarian grievances. Consequently, these socioeconomic grievances combined with a repressive regime might be more important as a root cause of the Syrian conflict than the assumed religious features of the Alawite identity. Despite the fact that visible sectarian favouritism and support in the Baath Party were "social-communal and politically motivated", a large part of the Sunni majority, however, may have viewed the Alawite-dominated Baathist regime as a semi-religious dictatorship.[346] Another point of resentment was that by some Sunnis the secularist ideology of the Baath Party was viewed as antireligious.

Already after the Baath Party seized power in 1963, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and the Baath Party clashed with each other. The Muslim Brotherhood was strongly opposed against the newly installed government and the prohibition of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1964 resulted in demonstrations and strikes in 1964 and 1965.[347] The 1964 Hama Riot was led by Shaykh Mahmud al-Habib who used the Sultan Mosque as headquarters and to store weapons, but in

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[344] Shmuel Bar, Bashar's Syria:" The Regime and its Strategic Worldview," *Journal Comparative Strategy*, Volume 25, Issue 5 (2006): 353-445; Batatu, 331-333; Ivan Briscoe, Floor Janssen and Rosan Smits, *Stability and economic recovery after Assad: key steps for Syria's post-conflict transition*, (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' Conflict Research Unit, 2012), 1-59.
[345] Richard T. Antoun, "Introduction Ethnicity, Clientship, and Class: Their Changing Meaning," in Syria: Society, Culture, and Polity (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 1-12, 8.
[346] Van Dam, 142.
[347] Read the Hama Riots of 1964. Seale, 92-94.

the end the mosque was attacked and the riot quelled by the government.[348] Two years later in 1967 there were again riots in Syria but the armed forces kept down the opposition forcibly.[349] It is difficult to ascertain if and to what extent the riots were actually supported by Syrians from every religious denomination; nonetheless, the use of sheer force by the Baath government and the perceived rural-minoritarian Baath Party have contributed to dormant sectarian resentment.

Under these circumstances, Hafiz al-Assad in 1971 declared himself president of Syria, an office that according to the Syrian constitution was reserved for Sunni Muslims only. Expelled from Iraq in 1970, Ayatollah Hasan Mahdi al-Shirazi had close relationships with Assad and discussed often with Alawite Shaykhs and visited Alawi communities in Syria and Lebanon in 1972.

According to Talhamy, three months after his visit al-Shirazi's ecumenical message was to consider the Alawites as Shiites, but to what extent this declaration was purely religiously motivated is obscure; it most likely also served political interests.[350] The above sentences were used at a conference of the "Ja'fari Beneficiary Association of Latakia" and held by prominent Lebanese and Syrian Alawite religious scholars.[351] These Lebanese and Syrian religious scholars, supported by earlier declarations, declared that they were part of the Shiite community and this new declaration was signed by eighty prominent Alawi Shaykhs and religious scholars.[352] Talhamy considers al-Shirzazi's 1972 declaration as a fatwa because of its highly religious status and whether this is correct or not, more important is that for the first time in history a high-ranked Shiite religious scholar asserted that the Alawites are Shia Muslims.[353]

The fact that the declaration of a group of eminent religious scholars from both Syria and Lebanon endorsed al-Shirzazi's statement, gives the impression that the political Alawi identity became more religiously entwined with Twelver Shiism. Because Assad was the first Alawite president of Syria in 1971, both declarations were politically needed to counter possible

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[348] Ibidem, 93.

[349] Liad Porat, "The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and the Asad Regime," *Middle East Brief Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University* no. 47 (December 2010), 3.

[350] "First – **the Alawis are Shia adherents of the prince of the believers Ali bin Abi Talib** (…). Second – the Alawis and the Shia are two synonymous words just like *Imamiyya* and *Ja'fariyya*, and every Shiite is an Alawi in his belief ('Aqida) and every Alawi is a Shiite in the school of thought (…) would like here – like any Muslim – to refer the attention of those that neglect the words of God: 'and say not to anyone who offers you a salutation thou art not a believer, and one who covets the perishable goods of this life'. I draw their attention to the fact that **the era of disagreement that enabled mutual accusations is over, and the era of communication has come** (…) **We ask God to unite the Muslims for what is good for them**." Talhamy, 188.

[351] Ibidem.

[352] Ibidem.

[353] Read Subsection "Muftis, Fatwas, and Islamic Legal Interpretation" (3-33) and Ifta' and Ijtihad in Suni Legal Theory: A Developmental Account (33-45) in Muhammad Khalid Masud, Brinkley Messick, David Powers, *Islamic Legal Interpretation: Muftis and Their Fatwas* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1996), 1-45.

Sunni resentment in order to justify Assad's regime. Although the exiled al-Shirazi needed a powerful patron like Assad, it is difficult to ascertain to what extent the Alawi Shaykhs' "religious" declarations were the result of Assad's pressure.[354] But it is reasonable to think that most of the prominent Alawite religious scholars would not oppose the new powerful president of Syria.

On 31 January 1973, Assad aimed to adopt the first Arab constitution based on socialist and nationalist principles in which the clause "Islam is the religion of the state" was omitted. Moreover, and not only because the exclusion of this particular sentence, the constitution was generally viewed by and large as a product by an Alawite minority who dominated the secular Baathist ruling power elite.[355] Such a view might be justified considering that a national crises arose when in the cities of Aleppo, Homs and Hama a series of riots broke out, instigated by radical elements within the Muslim Brotherhood.[356] Assad tried to resolve the situation by adding to the 1973 constitution Article 3: firstly, "The religion of the President of the Republic has to be Islam" and secondly "Islamic jurisprudence is a main source of legislation."[357] In spite of Assad's adjustments, the situation deteriorated and the violent protests only ended when armed forces entered the cities.

The Muslim Brotherhood openly declared that Assad is a non-Muslim and it was not a coincidence that in 1973 the influential Lebanese political and religious leader al-Sadr held a speech.[358] Talhamy, again, views al-Sadr's speech as a fatwa because he is a prominent Lebanese religious scholar with the title of Imam.[359] Al-Sadr mentions the name "Matawila" which means "to be loyal to Ali" and is a designation for a broader Shia religious identity.[360]

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[354] Kramer, "Syria's Alawis and Shi'ism."

[355] Talhamy, 189.

[356] Raphaël Lefèvre, "The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's Alawi Conundrum," in Kerr and Larkin, The *Alawis of Syria: War, Faith and Politics in the Levant*, 125-141.

[357] Admin, "Constitution of Syria (1973)," Corpus of Laws, October 26, 2013, http://corpus.learningpartnership.org/constitution-of-syria-1973-1-basic-principles (accessed December 8, 2017) and Line Khatib, *Islamic Revivalism in Syria: The Rise and Fall of Ba'thist Secularism*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 71.

[358] "**The Alawis and the Shia are partners in distress, since they were persecuted like the Shia**. We hope that we have overcome this partnership of **distress and persecution** since we live freely in a democratic Lebanon, where we can rebuff every charge and say whatever we want, and not complain of **persecution**. On the contrary, we blame ourselves if we did not acquire our rights, preserve our dignity and clarify our essential reality. **Today those Muslims called Alawis are the brothers of the Shia; or ''Matawila' as they are called by their opponents,** and we will not allow anyone to condemn this generous creed. I will soon quit my position as Imam of my creed so that my opponents can be sure that I am not thinking about posts, but rather how to fulfil my Islamic, human and cultural duty in Lebanon, Syria and Turkey." Talhamy, 190.

[359] Ibidem.

[360] Anne Sofie Roald and Anh Nga Longva, *Religious Minorities in the Middle East Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 247 and "Meeting the Métoualis, Representing Jabal 'Amil," in Max Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi`ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon* (Harvard: Harvard University Press), 4-54.

Arab nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century incentivised Shia, Druse and Alawite intellectuals and religious scholars to think about how to adapt their communities to these new nationalist ideas. These attempts to create a new collective identity is nothing special for religious minority groups as they aim to find their place in society. The construction of a collective identity through fatwas or declarations of religious scholars reveals the attempt of a community's identity accommodation to the political, cultural, social, ideological, and religious frameworks.[361]

Born in Qom in Iran, Al-Sadr is an important figure because he gave the Shiites in Lebanon a "collective identity." He is known as the prominent defender of the Lebanese Shia population because this community assumedly was both politically and economically underprivileged.[362] Al-Sadr combined social activism with a new Shia identity in order to give this community a distinct political Shia voice in Lebanon's political discussions.[363] He created a new political Shia identity as in 1969 he was the chairman of the Supreme Islamic Shia Council (SISC) and in 1974 established the *Harakat al-Mahrumin* (the Movement of the Dispossessed) also known as the Amal militia. In spite of his efforts to counter Sunni-led Arabism, al-Sadr emphasised the need for Muslim unity with his ecumenical messages.

The perceived "Sunni" riots of 1973 and the "Sunni" allegation that Alawites were not Muslims might have resulted in Assad's putting pressure on the Alawite Shaykhs to seek formal religious legitimacy from al-Sadr.[364] The 1973 formal inclusion of Alawites into the Twelver Shia community was secured in a covenant and Alawite religious Shaykhs witnessed the event. On this occasion, a Lebanese Alawite was assigned by al-Sadr as a Twelver mufti of North Lebanon and Tripoli.[365] But some Lebanese Alawis, especially a group known as the Alawi Youth Movement, were against this covenant arguing that the Lebanese Alawites were a distinct community different than the Twelver Shia community. They also claimed that the Alawites deserved a separate judicial status because other religious communities were also officially designated in the Lebanese constitution.

The Mufti's appointment caused great tension in Alawi neighbourhoods in Tripoli and adherents and opponents of the new mufti clashed and even got into firefights.[366] This means that the new constructed Alawite identity with the identification of Twelver Shiism was by and

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[361] Roald and Longva, *Religious Minorities in the Middle East Domination*, 248.
[362] Kramer, "Syria's Alawis and Shi'ism."
[363] Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 112.
[364] Kramer, "Syria's Alawis and Shi'ism."
[365] Ibidem.
[366] Ibidem.

large "accepted" in Syria but less accepted in Lebanon. Because of given nature of Assad's regime in Syria it seems unlikely that a large number of Syrian Alawis would oppose this declaration.

Because of the obvious political usefulness of al-Sadr's declaration and al-Shirzazi's statement, both religious degrees were viewed as doubtful. Compared with earlier Twelver religious scholars' visits to Syrian Alawis, al-Sadr only acted on behalf of his official religious function in Lebanon, and in the Shia cities of Qom or Najaf he was not a representative of "leading Twelver divine".[367] Another important observation is that al-Sadr and Assad had frequent meetings with each other and after al-Sadr's declaration, the political alliance continued during the Lebanese Civil War when Amal was supported by the Syrian army.

The episode of the Shiite declarations illustrates the different opinions of Syrian and Lebanese Alawis in spite of their close ties because of their tribe affiliations. The newly installed regime of Assad caused more sectarian tensions in Syrian society than ever before and the religious identity of the Alawites was used politically by the regime or opponents such as the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. After the 1976 Syrian invasion in Lebanon, a series of political assassinations and attacks on Baathist political leaders took place.[368] Although the Syrian government initially did not know who was responsible for these actions, the regime realised in 1978 that Sunni extremists must have been responsible, because most of the victims were part of the Alawite community.[369]

Despite the various factions and tensions within the Muslim Brotherhood, sectarian rhetoric was frequently used to portray the Assad regime as an enemy of Allah or justified a jihad against this "Nusayri enemy".[370] Sectarian rhetoric and the murdering of Alawites were intended to polarise the Syrian society along sectarian lines. During the 1979 Aleppo massacre thirty two Alawi cadets were murdered and fifty four were wounded by the *At Tali'a al Muqatila* (The Fighting Vanguard), an offshoot group of the Muslim Brotherhood. This event marked the beginning of the Islamist uprising in Syria until its climax with the 1982 Hama Massacre.[371]

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[367] Kramer, "Syria's Alawis and Shi'ism."
[368] Van Dam, 89.
[369] Seale, 316-317.
[370] For more detailed information about the differences among the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood see Lefèvre, 125-14 and Sonia Alianak, *Middle Eastern Leaders and Islam: A Precarious Equilibrium* (Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2007), 55.
[371] Dara Conduit, "The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and the Spectacle of Hama", *Middle East journal*, vol. 70, no. 2, (Spring 2016), 211-226; Joshua Teitelbaum, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, 1945-1958: Founding, Social Origins, Ideology," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 65, No. 2, (Spring 2011): 213-223; R.G. Rabil, "The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood", in Rubin B., *The Muslim Brotherhood. The Middle East in Focus* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 73-8 and Raphaël Lefèvre, Ashes of Hama: The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

The sectarian provocation by Sunni Muslim extremists to ignite a sectarian civil war failed because in the end they had not enough support among the Syrian population.[372]

However, since the 1980s more Sunni religious propaganda and polemical writings against the Alawites appeared focusing more on purely religious presentations of support, encouraging to consider the "Nusayris" as non-Muslims.[373] Generally speaking the Assad regime ignored the religious accusations of Sunnis and refused to enter into a religious debate, because it would most likely contribute to the confirmation of these allegations.[374] The declarations of prominent Shia scholars during the 1970s could not prevent the Islamist uprising from 1976 till 1982 and the sectarian rhetoric used by Sunni opponents of the regime only stimulated the fears and communal solidarity of the Alawites. Assad aimed to construct a more religious outlook for his secular Baath regime by publicly carrying out prayers in Sunni mosques, building mosques even in his hometown Quardaha, appearing with high Sunni officials, and quoting from the Quran in public speeches.[375]

Whether Assad's attempts would have convinced the Sunni majority remains questionable and really changing the strong Alawite character of the regime would seriously weaken his powerbase which still applies to Bashar al-Assad. The legacy of the Islamist uprising for the Alawi community is the construction of a political Alawite identity intrinsically tied with the Assad regime and religious features of Twelver Shiism. The created and perceived sectarian tensions were a recipe for possible future resentment and renewed conflict in which persistent, primary and non-composing identities would play a major role as the ongoing Syrian Civil War since 2011 demonstrates.

2.2.4.3 The 2016 Alawite Declaration: a New Identity?

Because the Syrian security forces used overzealous repression, the peaceful demonstrations of 2011 resulted in a national uprising. In this uprising, protesters of various religious denominations, such as Christians, Druses, Ismailis, Sunnis and Alawis were using religious symbols, vocabulary, and spaces in order to demand more freedom and political change of the Assad regime. On the other hand the Syrian regime from the outset aimed to frame the protesters as violent "Islamic extremists" and to justify its military actions through the international narrative of the "War on Terror". Assad's discourse narrates a clear zero-sum game since the regime would not make any political concessions to these "terrorists". The government's

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[372] Ibidem.
[373] Van Dam, 108-111.
[374] Ibidem, 109.
[375] Ibidem, 142.

accusation of Sunni sectarianism and radicalism in spite of the protesters' aim to promote an inclusive Syrian identity, seemed to be successful to some extent in deepening religious cleavages in society around 2012.[376] The injection of a sectarian dimension to the uprising might give Assad the support of religious minorities.

The gradual development of a more Sunni character of the uprising had alienated non-Sunni protesters as they became more uncomfortable with the religious verbal expressions which they perceived as Sunni sectarianism.[377] Rumour, misinformation and deliberate effort of the Assad regime to depict the conflict as a sectarian one, have contributed to the creation of sectarian boundaries and collective mobilisation in an atmosphere of insecurity, fear and concern that the Syrian regime might fall. The visible mobilisation of Sunni organisations and religious authorities through political and religious positions in and outside of Syria have led to more fear of religious minorities. This perceived "Sunni-assertiveness" might have convinced many Christians, Druses, Ismailis and Alawis to view the Assad regime as important for their survival.

Fear, resentment and suspicion were even more created by sectarian violence such as the 2012 Hula massacre, in which children and women were most likely slaughtered by pro-Assad *Shabiha* (meaning shadows or ghosts) militias.[378] The Syrian government claimed that al-Qaeda was responsible for the massacre while several opposition groups, human rights organisations, such as the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, and the Local Coordination Committees, and the U.N. Human Rights Council condemned the Assad regime.[379]

The massacre was a key event in the creation of a trend that spread throughout Syria in which local and religious identities became more geographically entwined with towns and villages. As a consequence, the defence of the villages' and towns' militias were organised

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[376] Hashemi and Postel,128-129

[377] Ibidem, 132.

[378] "Syria crisis: Most Houla victims 'were executed'," BBC News, May 29, 2012, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-18249413 (accessed December 9, 2017).

[379] DayPress. "Syria: Armed Terrorist Groups committed Taldao, al-Shoumarieh Massacres." May 29, 2012. http://www.dp-news.com/en/detail.aspx?articleid=121906 (accessed December 9, 2017); "Syrian activists condemn Houla 'massacre'," Al Jazeera, May 26, 2012, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/05/20125265258397885.html (accessed December 9, 2017); CNN Wire Staff, "Outrage grows over Syrian massacre," CNN, May 27, 2012, http://edition.cnn.com/2012/05/26/world/meast/syria-unrest/index.html?hpt=hp_t1 (accessed December 9, 2017); "Syria: UN Inquiry Should Investigate Houla Killings," Human Rights Watch, May 27, 2012, https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/05/27/syria-un-inquiry-should-investigate-houla-killings (accessed December 10, 2017); Martin Chulov, "Houla massacre: UN resolution condemns Syria," The Guardian, June 1, 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/01/syria-houla-massacre-un-resolution (accessed December 10, 2017).

along sectarian lines. This explains the observance of more clashes between different armed groups in religiously mixed geographical areas. These groups were constructed in sectarian and political stereotypes such as Alawi-Shia/Christian/Palestinian pro-government and Sunni/anti-Baathist opposition.[380] The aforementioned examples of militarisation and territorialisation resulted in a variety of locally created religious, political and sectarian configurations of identities. This created a self-fulling prophecy of sectarianism and a pattern of diffuse sectarian violence which are characteristic of the Syrian identity-based conflict.[381] Support to Islamic extremist groups from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Gulf states and the involvement of Iran, Hezbollah and other Shia brigades have only aggravated the sectarian dimension of the Syrian conflict.

Under these circumstances, unidentified Alawis issued *the Declaration of an Identity Reform* on April 3, 2016 the BBC and the Telegraph were the first to publish excerpts of this document.[382] It is assumed that Alawite Shaykhs and Alawite notables were responsible for smuggling this declaration out of Syria and handing it over to the BBC and the Telegraph. For fear of their safety, the authors wished to remain anonymous.[383] Michael Kerr argues that "It is very significant that Alawi community leaders have stressed that they are not a branch of Shia Islam but a separate Muslim religious community that is of and within Islam."[384] Another observation that contributes to the significance of this document is that nothing of its content had ever been seen from within the Syrian Alawi community. This is especially the case when this document is compared with the declarations of al-Shirazi and al-Sadr and therefore it will be analysed in some detail.

In the Preamble it becomes clear that the authors contend that the Alawites are part of the Syrian nation and peaceful coexistence between all the different religious communities

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[380] On the website of Syrian expert Joshua Landis one can find in the blogs information about the creation of the many militias along sectarian and political lines. By reading the blog it becomes clear that the creation and dissolvent of the militias are illustrating the complex situation on the ground in the Syrian Civil War. See for instance: Aymenn Al-Tamimi, "Liwa Al-Jabal: A New Loyalist Militia Unity Initiative In Suwayda'," Syria Comment, January 19, 2017, http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/liwa-al-jabal-new-loyalist-militia-unity-initiative-suwayda/ (accessed December 10, 2017) and Hashemi and Postel, 136-137.
[381] Hashemi and Postel, 137.
[382] Caroline Wyatt, "Syrian Alawites distance themselves from Assad," BBC News, April 3, 2016, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35941679 (accessed December 10, 2017); Richard Spencer, "Leaders of Syrian Alawite sect threaten to abandon Bashar al-Assad," The Telegraph, April 3, 2016, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/04/02/leaders-of-syrian-alawite-sect-threaten-to-abandon-bashar-al-ass/ (accessed December 10, 2017) and see Appendix I for the whole English translation and the Arabic version of the Declaration of an Identity Reform or "Pdf Declaration of an Identity Reform," Welt, http://www.welt.de/pdf/1085/Declaration.pdf (accessed December 10, 2017).
[383] Hassan Mneimneh, "The Alawites in Syrian Society: Loud Silence in a Declaration of Identity Reform," The Washington Institute, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/the-alawites-in-syrian-society-loud-silence-in-a-declaration-of-identity-re (accessed December 10, 2017).
[384] Wyatt, "Syrian Alawites distance themselves from Assad."

within Syria is important for the Alawi community.[385] To overcome the communal Alawite identity based on "religious practices and beliefs, most notably our mysticism" defined for centuries by others than themselves, only the creation of an inclusive Syrian national identity might solve this dilemma.[386] The preamble also contends that this declaration is not a religious reform of Alawism or its precepts.[387]

However, the writers do select and emphasise features of Alawism which suggest a legitimate research on the quintessential features of their belief. The attempts of religious re-conceptions based on historical events and figures in this document, suggest that this is a project of religious rectification, and not a mere exhibition on already established religious doctrines.[388]

In Subsection I, "A New Era of the Alawites", the authors substantiate that the Alawis are neither Shiites nor Sunnis but that they "represent a third model *of* and *within* Islam."[389] The writers also decline any issued fatwa or declaration which regards the Alawites as part of Shia Islam or another branch of it. Although their names are not mentioned, the authors are against the declarations of al-Shirazi and al-Sadr. In a new era of post-conflict society they say that the Alawis do not want to be labelled again as a minority group and that they want to combat sectarianism and sectarian strife.

Subsection II, "The Recognition of a Past Time", disproves that Alawites are "Nusayris" and that Ibn-Nusayr is the founding father as it is often assumed.[390] The terms "Nusayri" and "Alawis" are defined by others when they created these identities although according to the authors, the latter is the creation of more recent times. They see that in the history of the Alawis "al-Hussein bin Hamdan al-Khassabi" and "Saif al-Dawla al-Hamdani" are the most important figures when distinguishing an identifiable Alawi community in the tenth century.

In Subsection III, "Preservation", the authors argue that the Alawite community has its own human understanding of Islam "as its base of common law."[391] Because Islam in the seventh century was built by religious doctrines and the state, the appearance of a new Muslim community could only be viewed as something against the "established" authorities. As such, persecution and intolerance might be expectable consequences and the result was that the Alawis turned in on themselves and "closed themselves."[392] The writers acknowledge that the

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[385] See page 1, Appendix I or Identity Reform or "Pdf Declaration of an Identity Reform," Welt, http://www.welt.de/pdf/1085/Declaration.pdf (accessed December 10, 2017).
[386] Ibidem.
[387] Ibidem.
[388] Mneimneh, "The Alawites in Syrian Society: Loud Silence in a Declaration of Identity Reform."
[389] See page 2 Appendix I or "Pdf Declaration of an Identity Reform,"
[390] Ibidem.
[391] See article 11, page 3. Ibidem.
[392] Ibidem.

Alawites resorted to isolation, overstatement and myths to protect their community, but "in this constitution of a new identity" the narratives of ongoing Alawi discrimination and persecution by Sunnis are a myth.[393]

The communal Alawite identity is constructed by or related to a collective memory of Alawi victimisation from generation to generation. The writers understand that this narrative of Sunni persecution should be deconstructed or adjusted and even when among many Alawites the Ottoman state is perceived as oppressive against religious minorities, Alawites should not forget that the Ottomans had allowed the Alawis "to administrate themselves three times."[394] Although the unknown authors do not propose how to change the Alawi narrative of Sunni persecution, but they say that these narratives of persecution based on myths and half-truths will be overcome.[395]

The authors also reject the fatwas of ibn Taymiyyah and al-Ghazali and know that, by and large with some exceptions, the Sunni majority did not follow or implement this fatwa to execute Alawites.[396] In al-Ghazali's *Fada'ih al-Batiniyya* (Scandals of the Esoterics) the Ismailis are condemned as unbelievers and apostates because he wrongly thinks that the Ismailis teach "the existence of two gods."[397] Although the authors are mentioning al-Ghazali's fatwa, the possibility exists that he was not explicitly dealing with the Alawis because in his *Scandals of the Esoterics* he was dealing with or sects.[398] For the moment, Pipes and Tomass are the only academics that are using al-Ghazali's phrases by saying that he explicitly refers to the "Nusayris".[399] But Tomass is relying on Pipes' quotation and Pipes is also relying on a quotation of secondary literature.[400]

This means that it is possible that al-Ghazali was not mentioning the Nusayris

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[393] See article 12, page 3. Ibidem.
[394] See article 14, page 3. Ibidem.
[395] See article 15, page 3. Ibidem.
[396] See article 16, page 3. Ibidem.
[397] See note 36. Daniel Pipes, *Nothing Abides Perspectives on the Middle East and Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 131 and Frank Griffel, ed., *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter ed. (Stanford: Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016), s.v. "Al-Ghazali," https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/al-ghazali/ (accessed December 10, 2017).
[398] The "Batiniyya, Quaramita, Quaramatiyya. Khurramdiniyya, Ismailiyya, Sabiyya, Babakiyya, Mhummara and Talimiyya." Friedman, 189.
[399] "Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058-1111), the Thomas Aquinas of Islam, wrote that the Alawis 'apostatize in matters of blood, money, marriage, and butchering, so it is a duty to kill them'." Pipes, "The Alawi Capture of Power in Syria," 434.
[400] Although I am not saying that al-Ghazali is not explicitly mentioning the Nusayris in his *Fada'ih al-Batiniyya*; nonetheless, I think we have to be careful to use quotes from secondary literature and this is especially the case when only a few authors are saying that al-Ghazali issued a fatwa against the Nusayris. Neither the excerpts of the *Fada'ih al-Batiniyya* nor any other academics who were arguing that al-Ghazali issued a fatwa against the Nusayris could be found. Tomass, 78 and 240 see Pipes, 434 note 36: Quoted in Izz ad-Din al-Farisi and Ahmad Sadiq, "Ath-Thawra al-Islamiya fi Suriya", Al-Mukhtar al-lslami (Cairo, Oct. 1980), 39.

specifically or that he, just like Ibn Taymiyyah, confuses heterodox religious sects with the Ismailis. Even if this is not the case, his refutation of the Ismailis and *al-Falasifa* (the philosophers) has a clearly political component which alarms al-Ghazali fearing that the adherents of these movements, including individuals with only a perfunctory comprehension of them, might disavow Sharia law.[401] Nonetheless, the writers of the Alawite declaration reform are mentioning al-Ghazali which indicates that his "fatwa" is perceived as part of their past identity, but the myths, persecution and discrimination will not determine their new Alawite identity.[402]

Subsection IV, "The Alawites and Syria", and V, "In Search of a National Integration", the writers contend that the Syrian uprising and the Alawite identity reform are necessary for the construction of a new Syrian identity.[403] The Alawis disavow the Syrian communitarian system with an emphasis on religious confessionalism and demand "a general and formal revision of the history of the Syrian State's creation.[404]

Moreover, the authors think that given of Islam's divergences, Islam should not play an important role in the new Syrian state after the Syrian conflict has ended.[405] Although Islam should be a uniting feature, using Islam in Syrian politics may only divide and obstruct a sincere national integration of all religious communities. "Equality, liberty and citizenship" are the guiding principles to create social cohesion and Syrian unity.[406] "Secularism" is the required state application to ensure full equality between religions and its citizens.[407]

In Subsection VI, "Reason and Truth", the writers reassure the Sunni community stating that the whole Sunni community cannot be held responsible for the sporadic Alawi persecution by Sunni rulers throughout history.[408] The Alawite State during the French Mandate period is an important part of the Alawi history as it provided "aspects of democracy and human rights."[409] The authors continue by saying that the Alawis dismantled their state because Syrian unity was threatened.[410] This is of course highly debatable as we have already seen that the Alawis were generally speaking divided in separatists and unionists.

Reference is made to the Assad regime by saying that neither "the ruling political

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[401] Griffel, ed., *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
[402] See article 17, page 3. Ibidem.
[403] See article 18-19, page 4-5. Ibidem.
[404] See article 20, page 5. Ibidem.
[405] See article 22, page 5. Ibidem.
[406] See article 23, page 5. Ibidem.
[407] Ibidem.
[408] See article 24, page 6. Ibidem.
[409] See article 25, page 6. Ibidem.
[410] Ibidem.

power" does not represent the Alawites, shape their identity, provide their safety or contribute to their reputation. The writers also contend that the Alawis are not giving the regime its power and that the legitimacy of the regime can only be measured "according to the criteria of democracy and fundamental rights."[411] The regime should not resort to violence and oppression and the opposition groups should not take up arms and resort to violence, but they should look for alternative means. These sentences suggest that the writers are criticizing the use of violence of both the Assad regime and the opposition groups in Syria.

In the last Subsection, "God, the Alawites, and Esoterism" the authors emphasise that Alawism is the third path in Islam compared with "Doctrinal Islam, Sunnism or Shia."[412] In Sunni Islam it is God who his behind everything while in Alawism "everything is hidden behind God."[413] It is true that Alawism and Shiism both share some of the formal sources and the use of *ijtihad*[414], this does not mean that Alawism is a Shia branch of Islam.[415] Their *batiniyya* (باطنية or Islamic esoterism)[416] should be vindicated as the Alawis are not following a "secret faith."[417] According to the authors, esoterism is *with* the Alawites and *within* them as they see that every believer has the right to find his own path *in* or *of* Islam, which means that Islam has no fixed path.[418] Alawi esoterism should be considered as a doctrine, a faith and a matter of worship as it arises from a secret and "acquires a secret character itself."[419]

The writers of the Declaration declare that Alawism and not the Alawi community is connected with esotericism and that the community is "neither secret nor mysterious."[420] The Quran is their only holy book and because Alawism is one path towards God it is separated from the political and social life.[421] This means that religion should not participate in the political domain and vice versa, and this separation connotes a form of secularism. In the last

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[411] Ibidem.

[412] See Article 28-29, page 6. Ibidem.

[413] Ibidem.

[414] اجتهاد means "independent reasoning," and it is an Islamic legal term and in the English translation of the Declaration of an Identity Reform one can read "constructive interpretation" article 29, 7. Ibidem and "Ijtihad," Oxford Islamic Studies Online, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e990 (accessed December 10, 2017).

[415] See article 29, page 7. Ibidem.

[416] http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bateniya

[417] See Article 30, page 7. Ibidem. Hassan Mneimneh argues that "The reference to Alawite esoterism as "sirraniyah" is notable in this project" as he thinks that this term, see for instance the Arabic version (سرانية) on page 34 Article, "is a neologism coined by the translators of the Western Orientalizing occultist tradition." A possible explanation is that the authors of the declaration may have attempted to link Alawi esoterism within a broader context as the Druses had done. Mneimneh, "The Alawites in Syrian Society: Loud Silence in a Declaration of Identity Reform."

[418] Ibidem.

[419] See Article 31, page 7-8. Ibidem and Mneimneh, "The Alawites in Syrian Society: Loud Silence in a Declaration of Identity Reform."

[420] See Article 32, page 8. Ibidem.

[421] See Article 34, page 8. Ibidem.

article, the authors concur that Alawism has incorporated "elements of other monotheist religions, most notably Judaism and Christianity."[422] The writers contend that Alawism is not a deviation of Islam and that these elements are evidence of Alawism's "riches and universality."[423]

What to think about this Declaration of Identity Reform? In spite of the anonymity of the authors and the question to what extent they actually represent the Alawite community, the Syrian conflict and the assumption that many Alawites are supporting the regime, are the reasons for issuing this identity reform. The writers ignore the atrocities of the Syrian regime and avoid to address how Assad's used tactics of sectarianism and of fear to fuel the Syrian conflict. This caused many Alawis to support the regime because they fear for their safety might the regime collapse. It is difficult to answer the question who the authors' intended audience is? Does the declaration aim at "all" Syrians, or only at the Sunni majority, or is it "an invitation for discussion within the Alawite community itself", as some authors would argue.[424]

The Declaration of Identity aims to frame the Alawite identity as a purely religious, because it is emphasising to disconnect Alawism from political affairs and aims to defend and to depict it as unbound by scholasticism, gnostic, and esoteric. This "definition" suggests that it opposes Sunnism as this is described as a dogmatic form of scholasticism as is illustrated by Ibn Taymiyyah and al-Ghazali. In contrast, Shiism is depicted more favourably as it is expressed in Arabic as "the manifestation of rational scholasticism."[425]

The authors also suggest that the earlier discussed Alawite-Shia rapprochement was purely political and insincere. Claiming that Alawism is not a Shia branch also suggests that the authors disavow the current political alliance with Teheran. The identity reform might reflect tension and differences within the Alawite community in which one group wants to place Alawism under Shiite guardianship with the obvious religious and political support of Iran. The other Alawi group, as is illustrated by the Lebanese Alawites in 1973, wants to disconnect the Alawis from Shia influences. This Shia connection has contributed to other religious communities' perception viewing the Alawites as Iranian puppets. So to achieve this disconnection, the authors contend that Alawism is equal to Sunnism and Shiism, and prefer to choose secularism as a distinct political feature to remedy the assumed Alawite minority status.

Thus, this declaration might have been issued by influential Alawis and can be

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[422] See Article 35, page 8. Ibidem.
[423] Ibidem.
[424] Mneimneh, "The Alawites in Syrian Society: Loud Silence in a Declaration of Identity Reform."
[425] Ibidem.

considered as a positive step forward to reconciliation and national integration. The document also aims to put forward a new religious Alawite identity without political connections. However, like all the other religious declarations we have discussed, these documents are reductionist in nature because, generally speaking, they do not allow differences or multiple expressions. It is also questionable whether it is at all possible to distinct between religious identity and political identity.

Monolithic characterisations and essentialist features are often used in the construction of identities and these characteristics of identity become more pronounced in extreme situations when people are exposed to gross violence and have feelings of extreme fear and insecurity, as may occur in identity-based conflicts. Analysing documents that are used or issued in an identity-based conflict reveal the socioeconomic situation, the political context and the different actors that are most likely involved.

Chapter 3 Moving Beyond the Syrian Identity-Based Conflict

3.1 The Concept of Peacebuilding

This chapter aims to point out what peacebuilding is and how several peacebuilding activities and strategies can be implemented to move beyond the Syrian identity-based conflict.[426] So how should we understand the term peacebuilding? The term originated in 1975 when Galtung laid the groundwork for peacebuilding in his article "Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding."[427] His observes that "structures must be found that remove causes of wars and offer alternatives to war in situations where wars might occur."[428] Sustainable peace is created through these structures by addressing the root causes of conflict and educing indigenous abilities to reduce conflict, initiate peacebuilding activities and advance sustainable peace.[429] A change from structures that endorses violence and coercion to structures that strengthen a culture of peace is necessary to achieve lasting peace.

While Galtung, Kenneth and Elsie Boulding accentuated a bottom up approach and to deconcentrate economic and social structures, Lederach proposes a more holistic approach in which the whole society and its sectors should be mobilised to foster sustainable peace.[430] To achieve positive peace, this holistic approach of peacebuilding emphasises the need for international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other peacebuilding agents from civil society at the grassroots level.[431] Lederach argues that peacebuilding encompasses "a wide range of activities that both precede and follow formal peace accords. Metaphorically, peace is seen not merely as a stage in time or a condition. It is a dynamic social construct."[432] According to Lederach, essential for peacebuilding activities is the term *conflict transformation* which entails a multi-faceted and holistic approach to foster a culture of peacebuilding and is in an ongoing process orientated "toward the building of relationships that in their totality form

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[426] Michelle Maiese, "Peacebuilding," Beyond Intractability, September, 2003, accessed January 14, 2018, https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/peacebuilding.

[427] Johan Galtung, "Impact of Science on Society", 1/2, PRIO publication, No 25-9, (1976): 282-304.

[428] Galtung, "Impact of Science on Society", 298.

[429] "Peacebuilding Initiative," http://www.peacebuildinginitiative.org/index34ac.html?pageId=1764, April, 2013, The conceptual origins of peacebuilding and Peacebuilding and the United Nations, "Peacebuilding and the United Nations," United Nations Peacebuilding and Support Office, accessed January 14, 2018, https://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pbun.shtml.

[430] Tom Keating and W. Andy Knight, *Building Sustainable Peace*, (Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 2014), XXXIV.

[431] Keating and Andy Knight, *Building Sustainable Peace*, XXXIV and Michelle Maiese, "Levels of Action summarizing John Paul Lederach," Beyond Intractability, July, 2003, accessed January 14, 2018, https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/hierarchical-intervention-levels.

[432] John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 20.

new patterns, processes, and structures."[433]

Since Galtung, Lederach and many other scholars of peacebuilding studies, the definitions and concepts of peacebuilding have been expanded which include many dimensions, such as "the disarming of warring factions to the rebuilding of political, economic, judicial and civil society institutions."[434] To comprehend peacebuilding at the outset, Michelle Maiese suggests that this term can be understood in two distinctive ways.[435] Firstly, according to the 1992 UN document *An Agenda for Peace*, "peacebuilding consists of a wide range of activities associated with capacity building, reconciliation, and societal transformation."[436] From this concept, Maiese thinks that this term entails that peacebuilding comes after "peacekeeping and "peacemaking" and it can be viewed as a long-term process.[437]

Secondly, NGOs and other peacebuilding agents use peacebuilding as an umbrella concept and this means that the term does not only contain long-term transformational processes, but also includes peacekeeping and peacemaking.[438] This concept entails a broader and more inclusive approach of peacebuilding in which military and civilian peacekeeping, efforts to reduce violence, agreements on no-fly zones and ceasefire, and humanitarian aid are just a few of the many examples that are part of this concept.[439]

Sometimes there are also peacebuilding theorists who make a distinction between ""post-conflict peacebuilding" and "long-term peacebuilding."[440] This distinction suggests that a variety of peacebuilding activities are designed according to the specific situation of the conflict. The notion of a short-term, medium-term and long-term of a conflict is important for a conflict analysis and the implementation of peacebuilding activities.

Peacebuilding is to some extent an amorphous concept or a comprehensive umbrella term. Nonetheless, there is an over-all agreement in spite of the various strategies and activities that peacebuilding should improve "human security".[441] Peacebuilding activities should be

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[433] John Paul Lederach, "Conflict Transformation in Protracted Internal Conflicts: The Case for a Comprehensive Framework," in *Conflict Transformation*, ed. Kumar Rupesinghe (New York: St. Martin's Press/ Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995): 201-222.
[434] The United Nations, "Peacebuilding and the United Nations."
[435] Maiese, "Peacebuilding."
[436] Ibidem, "Peacebuilding."
[437] According to Maiese, "Peacemaking is the diplomatic effort to end the violence between the conflicting parties, move them towards nonviolent dialogue, and eventually reach a peace agreement. Peacekeeping, on the other hand, is a third-party intervention (often, but not always done by military forces) to assist parties in transitioning from violent conflict to peace by separating the fighting parties and keeping them apart." Ibidem.
[438] See note 12. Ibidem.
[439] Ibidem.
[440] Maiese, "Peacebuilding."
[441] United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, "Human Security Approach," United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, accessed January 14, 2018, http://www.un.org/humansecurity/human-security-unit/human-security-approach.

designed to stop actual violence, to prevent the recurring of violence, and to create sustainable peace. Peacebuilding should not only address the root causes of the conflict, but should also design strategies to implement activities that aim to resolve societal, political and socioeconomic problems. While identity issues are a root cause of any given conflict, it is important to emphasise that identity issues are not the only cause of the conflict, but it is often intertwined with political and socioeconomic issues that all contribute to the intractability of the conflict.

To overcome identity issues, peacebuilding activities should support civil society and induce to move different identity groups away from violence by emphasising coexistence, recognition, and tolerance. An essential condition for sustainable peace is that one considers "the other" as a human being, which can be achieved through joint workshops and joint projects. This kind of peacebuilding activities enable different identity groups to establish personal relationships, to address their needs and fears, to seek common goals, and to focus on commonalities. Thus, peacebuilding should establish a sustainable environment for long-term peace. To achieve this it is essential to focus on three key dimensions. Firstly, coping with emotional and psychological trauma, secondly, addressing the root sources of the conflict, and thirdly, restoring damaged communal relationships.[442]

However, social harmony, peaceful relationships and the creation of a culture of peace in post-conflict society cannot be achieved when the underlying societal and structural issues are not addressed and resolved. This means that if power sharing, democratic political participation, fair institutions of justice, and sustainable economic development are not been taken care of, it is impossible to foresee a long-term perspective of lasting peace. To move beyond an identity-based conflict, international and local peacebuilding efforts should aim to provide social structural changes.

3.2 Addressing the Root Causes of the Syrian Conflict: Social Structural Change

The Syrian conflict has not ended yet and the immediate peacebuilding activities that are necessary should temporarily stop the incessant violence. Since the 2011 Syrian Revolution, the intra-Syrian talks, trough Geneva 1 and the Geneva Communiqué in 2012, Geneva 2 in 2014, the Riyadh Opposition Conference in 2015, Geneva 3 in 2016, and Russia's proposed Sochi conference in 2018, illustrate the reluctance to negotiate between the Assad-regime and

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[442] Ibidem, "Peacebuilding."

the various opposition groups.[443] A political solution to share power with the main opposition groups is anathema to the Assad-regime. The question remains what the "opposition" is, considering the many armed groups who are often fighting each other. Nonetheless, most of the opposition groups argue that it is unacceptable to share power with the bloodthirsty Syrian regime.

Many of the international community also declared that Bashar al-Assad lost his legitimacy due to the regime's extreme violent actions against its own population. This was justified on moral grounds and this was not realistic if negative peace needs to be achieved. Western powers, especially the US, did not want to talk with the Damascus regime, but also did not want to seriously support the various opposition groups or to use military actions against the regime. Although president Barack Obama warned Assad in 2012 that for the US the use of chemical weapons was a red line that should not be crossed, the Damascus regime most likely fired in 2013 Sarin-laden rockets to bombard the Damascus suburb of Ghouta.[444] Most foreign governments concluded that Assad was behind the chemical attack while Russia and the Syrian government both argued that it was in fact the opposition who had used chemical missiles.[445]

Despite Obama's warning, the US and other Western powers lost most of their credibility since they did not take any military actions against Damascus after the chemical attack. Although an all-out military invasion was not a realistic option, it seemed that the Assad-regime could get away with chemical attacks. This explicitly and implicitly gave Teheran and Moscow the impression that they could interfere more in Syrian affairs. Russian and Iranian military and financial support resulted in Assad being able to "win" the conflict although it is not likely that he will gain all of his former territory.

The involvement of Qatar, US, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, France, and Great-Britain in the Syrian conflict has resulted in a destructive proxy war that fuelled the sectarian dimension of the conflict. Many of the Alawites were afraid to be slaughtered by armed Sunni-dominated

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[443] Van Dam, *Destroying a Nation*, 138-167 and Reuters in Amman, "Rebel groups reject talks on Syrian conflict hosted by Russia," The Guardian, December 25, 2017, accessed January 14, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/25/rebel-groups-reject-talks-on-syrian-conflict-hosted-by-russia.
[444] Human Rights Watch, "Attacks on Ghouta: Analysis of Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria," Human Rights Watch, September, 2013, accessed January 14, 2018, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/syria_cw0913_web_1.pdf and Reuters Staff, "REFILE-Chemical weapons used in Syria appear to come from army stockpile -UN," Reuters, March 5, 2014, accessed January 14, 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/syria-crisis-chemical/refile-chemical-weapons-used-in-syria-appear-to-come-from-army-stockpile-un-idUSL6N0M21TT20140305.
[445] United Kingdom, Israel, Turkey, France, Germany, and the United Stated concluded that Assad was behind the chemical attack. Samira Said and Ashley Fantz, "Syrian activists: Videos show chemical weapons used," CNN, August 22, 2013, accessed January 14, 2018, http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/21/world/meast/syria-civil-war/index.html and BBC News, "Syria chemical attack: What we know," BBC News, September 13, 2013, accessed January 14, 2018, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-23927399.

groups and Islamist extremists. Security and fear are the main reasons why a large amount of Alawis felt obliged to support the Assad-regime.[446] Thus, it becomes obvious that first and foremost negotiations should be conducted to achieve a cease-fire. Only when negative peace is realised through negation peace talks and peace agreements, then it might be possible to address the root causes of the conflict and to assess how to achieve social structural change in post-conflict Syria.

Perhaps the most important condition to move beyond Syrian identity issues is social structural change. Peacebuilding strategies and activities should strengthen, support or recreate the political, economic, and social foundations that will serve the needs of the Syrian people. Identity issues are related to established social and political structures because these are essential for the behaviour of groups and individuals. The resources for Syrians to survive are provided by such structures and Syrian people's live and actions are in general formed by these structures.[447] This means that the social and political structures should theoretically safeguard basic human rights and social justice.[448]

However, Syria is an example where it becomes clear that the social institutions are distinguished by unequal means of entry to resources, structural economic social and political imbalances, and severe exploitation.[449] Without taking peacebuilding measures to change the system, it is impossible to deal effectively with inequality and injustice that emanate from the Syrian system. The created political structures in Syria are designed to foster existing institutions.[450] Syrian identity issues cannot be resolved without addressing and implementing social structural changes. Although the root causes of the conflict are complex and closely connected, the nature of the Assad regime, the economic and political injustice throughout the established government institutions, and the disproportional political representation are some of the endogenous root causes of the Syrian conflict.[451]

Typical ways of peacebuilding activities to start social structural change is the promotion of retributive justice, procedural justice and distributive justice to enhance civil

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[446] Van Dam, 176.
[447] Michelle Maiese, "Social Structural Change," Beyond Intractability, July, 2003, accessed January 14, 2018, https://www.beyondintractability.org/ssay/social_structural_changes.
[448] Michelle Maiese, "Types of Justice," Beyond Intractability, July, 2003, accessed January 14, 2018, https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/types-of-justice.
[449] Máire A. Dugan, "Power Inequities," Beyond Intractability, February, 2004, accessed January 14, 2018, https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/power-inequities.
[450] Maiese, "Social Structural Change."
[451] The 2003 invasion of Iraq by the US and the Arab Spring in 2010 are just a few examples of the exogenous rout causes of the Syrian Civil War.

society and build up institutions.[452] The creation of new economic and political institutions might redress some of the economic and political injustice in Syria. A post-war economic policy with reconstruction programs may also resolve a few of the economic and social deficits caused by the damage of the war.[453] Peacebuilding activities should remove the mechanisms that bring about violence, and should promote and create structures that widen public participation and accommodate basic human needs.[454]

The Syrian state needs to foster structural change through the establishment of more fair judicial and legislative institutions in order to provide indispensable services to Syrian civilians.[455] The concept of "democratisation" with essential features of a civil-society and a civic culture is often seen as a key element of post-conflict peacebuilding.[456] In spite of the many meanings or definitions of democratisation, Syrian democratisation processes should at least aim to set up lawful and reliable political institutions that will permit fair electoral competition and extensive attendance of Syrian civilians to discuss policies and to select politicians.[457] Syrians should be part of public processes that allow them to discuss, to oppose or to agree when for instance the government decides to adopt a law. More political participation contributes to that the Syrian people realising that the government is adhering to "democratic" principles of fairness, openness and political representation.

In case of the Assad regime it is obvious that political structural changes are essential to overcome identity issues. Social structural change in Syria is only feasible when nation building and the creation of competent government institutions are part of peacebuilding activities. [458] This means that it is vital for a future of lasting peace in Syria to think of political changes: such as power-sharing procedures, constitutional reforms, judicial reforms, and election reforms.[459] Political structural change also involves the creation of institutions that make it possible to initiate new political parties.[460]

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[452] Michelle Maiese, "Procedural Justice," Beyond Intractability, January, 2004, accessed January 14, 2018, https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/procedural-justice and Maiese, "Types of Justice."

[453] Michelle Maiese, "Reconstruction," Beyond Intractability, November, 2003, accessed January 14, 2018, https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/reconstructive-programs.

[454] Marker, "Unmet Human Needs" and Heidi Burgess and Cate Malek, "Public Participation," Beyond Intractability, September, 2005, accessed January 14, 2018, https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/public-participation.

[455] Ibidem, "Types of Justice."

[456] Ibidem.

[457] Ibidem.

[458] Carolyn Stephenson, "Nation Building," Beyond Intractability, January, 2005, accessed January 14, 2018, https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/nation-building.

[459] Timothy D. Sisk, "Power Sharing," Beyond Intractability, September, 2003, accessed January 14, 2018, https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/power-sharing.

[460] Michelle Maiese, "Human Rights Protection," Beyond Intractability, June, 2004, accessed January 14, 2018, https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/human-rights-protect.

A general way of peacebuilding is to reform the Syrian government through constitutional changes to ensure power sharing and processes of democratisation. Constitutional reform could contribute to a process of national dialogue which set aside different perspectives and demanded rights. National education could also be part of constitutional reform with consideration for unmet needs and concerns of different religious groups, for concepts of socioeconomic institutions and government, for the advancement of Syrian civil society and Syrian citizenship's responsibilities, and for norms to enhance recognition, tolerance and basic human rights.[461] The protection of minority rights, such as the Alawis, could also be part of the new Syrian constitution to reduce the feelings of unsafety, fear and anxiety of the Alawi community. The aforementioned elements are much needed in Syria to address power inequalities and advance political inclusion to move beyond identity issues.

Syria's new institutions should be designed to provide the necessary mechanisms and procedures to resolve conflicts. These institutions should also have mechanisms to oversee and to take care of basic human rights.[462] Syrian identity issues might also be reduced when procedures and rules are implemented to ensure that fair rule of law is firmly rooted and cultivated.[463] Such political measures are needed in the future to held politicians and political organisations accountable for their actions and needed to restrict the power of political actors. This may resolve post-war-grievances, lessen the tension between different identity groups, settle some of the feelings of fear and insecurity, and diminish the probability of the recurrence of violence.[464]

To lessen tensions between the different religious communities in Syria, the armed, security and police forces should be reorganised in such a way that they are free of discrimination and of corruption. This also means that fair procedures and mechanisms must be created to observe the Syrian armed and police forces in order to ensure that they maintain essential basic rights when carrying out their assignments. Just like political actors, the police and security forces also need to be accountable for their actions when they violate laws or basic human rights.[465]

Although structural change is much needed to overcome Syrian identity issues, it is unlikely that these social structural changes will be achieved while Assad is in power. The Assad regime will not allow institutional changes or to share power with other Syrian parties

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[461] Ibidem, "Peacebuilding."
[462] Ibidem, "Human Rights Protection."
[463] Ibidem, "Human Rights Protection."
[464] Ibidem.
[465] Ibidem, "Social Structural Change."

and it seems that the Assad regime will continue until a new conflict arises. Deep-rooted changes are unfortunately not feasible without a regime change. Moreover, to build up the war-torn Syrian socioeconomic and political infrastructures would be a costly enterprise. Humanitarian aid and financial assistance from other countries cannot reconstruct all of the destroyed political and socioeconomic institutions. The Assad-regime and the high costs make it difficult to address the root causes of the conflict and to achieve essential social structural changes after negative peace. These observations are not hopeful for the implementations of actual peacebuilding activities to overcome Syrian identity issues in post-conflict society.

Nonetheless, peacebuilders should not be discouraged but must continue to conceive the Syrian conflict as an event that has the *potential for constructive change*. A transformational approach of peacebuilding should be based on "a *positive orientation* toward conflict" and an *eagerness to envision* peacebuilding strategies and the implementation of peacebuilding activities in order to achieve positive peace.[466] Lederach rightly argues that the key of conflict transformation is to conceive conflict as a potential for constructive change. Therefore we should continue to think about how peacebuilding activities could achieve social structural change and could transform and repair relationships in the Syrian post-conflict society.[467]

3.3 The 2012 TDA Report: how to achieve Sustainable Peace

The 2012 TDA report *The Day After: Supporting a Democratic Transition in Syria* is a comprehensive document that aims to specify a framework of recommendations, objectives and principles to ensure structural changes after negative peace.[468] Supported and facilitated by the USIP and the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), the report is unique because it is a document created by Syrians who represent several political and religious groups from within the opposition. The document addresses six essential fields that need to be changed as is briefly pointed out in Subsection 3.2.[469]

The TDA argues on their website "that by offering recommendations and defining goals,

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[466] Lederach, "Conflict Transformation."
[467] Ibidem.
[468] The Day After Association, "The TDA report."
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1. "The rule of law;"
2. "Transitional justice;"
3. "Security sector reform;"
4. "Electoral reform and forming a constitutional assembly;"
5. "Constitutional design;"
6. "Economic restructuring and social policy."

See the TDA report. Unfortunately, the document cannot be downloaded from the website due to an error: "PDF.js v1.4.20 (build: b15f335) Message: file origin does not match viewer's." The Day After Association, "The TDA report,"

principles, objectives, and strategies, the report will provide a starting point around which debate and discussion can be organized."[470] The Syrian civil society organisation continues by saying that the report neither should be viewed "as a blueprint" nor as a predetermined transition plan to achieve structural change.[471] Therefore, it is not the intention that the content of this report will be imposed on a newly formed Syrian regime. It is the intention of the TDA by making this document to stimulate debate and discussion on how to achieve structural change for Syrians in a more democratic future.

A summary of firstly, the eleven key goals of a transitional process and secondly, the six key chapters that are designed to guide the transitional process will be given that are necessary to achieve negative and positive peace. These key goals and six chapters with recommendations are essential to ensure democratic transitional processes in Syria to overcome identity issues.[472]

Summary of the six key chapters:

Chapter 1) Rule of Law

The TDA sees that during the transition phase it is necessary for Syria to set up "the rule of law" and to direct "justice" that is different from that of the Assad-regime. The rule of law and justice should be governed by features of transparency and accountability. To envision a new relationship of the state with its citizens, to release political prisoners, to discuss the role of opposition groups, to organise public communal meetings, and to establish the mechanisms of oversight are essential issues that need to be addressed.[473] The recommendations of the rule of

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[470] Ibidem, The TDA report."
[471] Ibidem.
[472] TDA's eleven key goals of a transitional process:
1. "Develop, strengthen, and promote a new national identity;"
2. "Foster unity among the many diverse components of Syrian society;"
3. "Build consensus on the core values and fundamental principles of the nation as well as the new framework for governance;"
4. "Establish citizenship and the equality of all citizens as decisive in relations between individuals and the state as opposed to sectarian, ethnic, or gender considerations;"
5. "Establish Syria as a civil state in which the role of the security forces should be to protect the security and human rights of all citizens;"
6. "Affirm that Syria must remain one unified state, with elements of decentralization that will allow for citizens' participation on all levels;"
7. "Provide for economic governance that ensures social justice, human development, sustainable development, and the protection of national resources;"
8. "Dedicate efforts to building trust between communities and groups;"
9. "Break with authoritarian legacies by demonstrating a commitment to democratic principles and processes among political leadership and government;"
10. "Educate and empower citizens on the principles and practice of democracy;"
11. "Increase the potential for a legitimate and effective governance and legal framework that consolidates rule of law in all domains."

Ibidem.
[473] See Chapter 1. The Rule of Law. Ibidem.

law encompasses the needed actions and apparent symbolic directives as they are both desired to establish new relationships between religious communities and a new democratic Syrian government.[474]

Summary of three key recommendations

1) Justice system and laws

   During the transition phase in Syria, the TDA recommends to ensure the administration of justice. It is important to ensure the protection of the Syrian "justice infrastructure and court records."[475] Extraordinary courts are illegal and need to be eradicated. Nullify laws that allow imprisonment and arrest, and confinement capabilities and protection of intelligence services. Laws that disregard basic human rights and independent judicial capabilities should be repealed. Individuals who are accused of war crimes need to be arrested and should be entitled to a fair trial.[476]

2) Trust and legitimacy

   The TDA recommends to cultivate and to advance the rule of law and basic human rights. The new Syrian transitional government should commit themselves to uphold the rule of law. To ensure trust, transparency in communication to the public when new law proposals and initiatives are going to be implemented that are necessary to achieve negative peace is required.[477]

3) Oversight:

   The TDA advises to set up means of oversight and keep an eye on the justice systems and laws to advance a more Syrian democratic state. The development of oversight mechanisms would enable accountability and transparency. Independent oversight mechanisms should be established "at the national, regional and local levels" in which oversight committees and other institutions will monitor the government, prisons, army, and police.[478] Independent committees should discuss, evaluate and address specific problems within the justice systems.[479]

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[474] Ibidem.
[475] Ibidem.
[476] Ibidem.
[477] Ibidem.
[478] Ibidem.
[479] Ibidem.

Chapter 2) Transitional Justice

The Assad regime has ruled with oppression and strife since the outbreak of the revolution in 2011 and many Syrians have been confronted with anxiety and fear. The current regime and its institutions of power need to be reformed because the political, judicial and economic system are broken. The Syrian society is also fragmented and many people are traumatised and have witnessed horrific crimes and lost many relatives. Attention to the personal dimension of the conflict is necessary to overcome feelings of injustice. As such, victims of war crimes need to get the justice they deserve and inside and outside of Syria people need to know the truth about atrocities of the Assad-regime. Transitional justice is essential to reconcile the different religious communities "divided by conflict."[480] The TDA is right to think that without "processes of healing", a successful transition within Syria would be difficult.[481]

Summary of four recommendations

1) The TDA recommends forthwith to set up "a Preparatory Committee on Transitional Justice" to establish and start to devise transitional justice strategies and processes. Actions need to be taken and Syrians need to be informed of the transitional justice processes to prevent actions of revenge. Discussions and evaluation of different transitional justice variations are essential to enhance the attention of transitional justice procedures and the creation of new institutions.[482]

2) The TDA also thinks that "a Commission of Inquiry" should be established to enhance "inclusive and broad processes of truth-seeking."[483] Those processes should make it possible to find "a shared account of recent Syrian history."[484] One sub-commission will be analysing and focussing on the period before the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War. Another sub-commission will deal with the period during the Syrian Revolution.[485]

3) Another recommendation is to think about and to specify various ways of reconciliation which will repair communal relationships. Reparation can be achieved with official

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[480] See Chapter 2. Transitional Justice. Ibidem.
[481] Ibidem.
[482] Ibidem.
[483] Ibidem.
[484] Ibidem.
[485] Ibidem.

offering of remorse, symbolic and material compensation, indemnities, restoration, and assurances of non-recurrence.[486]

4) It is essential to ensure and to think about longstanding national reconciliation through national discussions, psycho-social support, memorialisation, and the creation of new national history education.[487]

Chapter 3) Security Sector Reform

The TDA recommends to reform the security sector for the security of all Syrians. This reform is necessary to ensure Syrian citizens' cultural, political and social opportunities.[488] New answerable, transparent and reformed security organisations should be placed under "civilian control" and should maintain "public order" and "defend Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity."[489]

Summary of recommendations of the four security reform transition phases

1) Prior to the transition:
▪ The various armed opposition groups should be controlled under the new transitional government and those groups should respect basic human rights and civilian leadership.[490]

2) Immediate aftermath and short-term priorities (1 week-14 days):
▪ Non-state armed groups should be dissolved and appointed state-militias should detain, disarm and arrest those who are responsible for committing crimes against Syrian civilians.[491]

3) Medium-term measures (1 ½-2 months):
▪ Arrest and detain key figures and senior officials of the Assad-regime who may be responsible for war crimes and violation of basic human rights.[492]

4) Long-term reforms (12 months-end of transitional period):

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[486] Ibidem.
[487] Ibidem.
[488] See Chapter 3. Security Sector Reform. Ibidem.
[489] Ibidem.
[490] Ibidem.
[491] Ibidem.
[492] Ibidem.

- ▪ Reorganise the security services, police units and armed forces and reform the Syrian armed forces based on democratic criteria.[493]

Figure 1: Security Sector Reform Implementation Timeline.[494]

Chapter 4) Electoral Reform and Forming a Constitutional Assembly

Syria need to reform or to create a democratic functioning constituent assembly of elected representatives to adopt or to draft a new constitution. Because of the nature of the dictatorship of the Assad-family, the constituent assembly should consist of members representing all Syrians. This political body should be designed to ensure "inclusiveness" which is essential for the future of Syria and its inhabitants.[495]

Summary of three recommendations

1. Design a new democratic electoral system that makes it possible select deputies who are representing all the Syrian citizens when a new Syrian constitution is going to be drafted.[496]
2. Start to develop suggestions to establish "a new political party law" that facilitates the registration of new political parties.
3. All of the new Syrian election processes should be monitored by assigned international, national and regional organisations and individuals.[497]
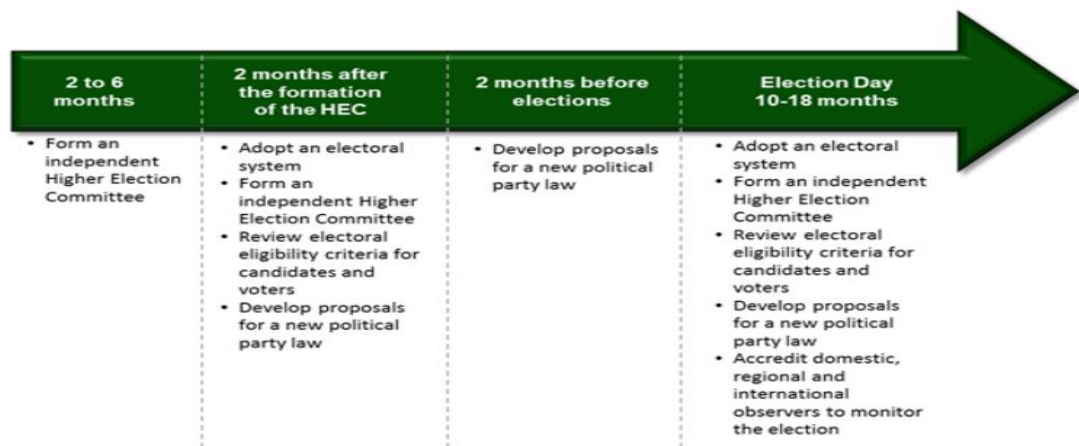
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[493] Ibidem.
[494] Ibidem.
[495] See Chapter 4. Electoral Reform and Forming a Constitutional Assembly. Ibidem.
[496] Ibidem.
[497] Ibidem.

Figure 2: Timeline for Electoral Reform.[498]

2 to 6 months	2 months after the formation of the HEC	2 months before elections	Election Day 10-18 months
• Form an independent Higher Election Committee	• Adopt an electoral system • Form an independent Higher Election Committee • Review electoral eligibility criteria for candidates and voters • Develop proposals for a new political party law	• Develop proposals for a new political party law	• Adopt an electoral system • Form an independent Higher Election Committee • Review electoral eligibility criteria for candidates and voters • Develop proposals for a new political party law • Accredit domestic, regional and international observers to monitor the election

Chapter 5) Constitutional Design

The TDA argues that a new constitutional design is necessary for the people of Syria to guide them into a new period of freedom, peace and democracy.[499] A new constitution may be a symbolic moment to break with the history of the Assad-regime and its crimes against ordinary Syrians. The establishment of a new constitution should ensure democratic processes and adopt principles of trust, transparency, legitimacy, accountability, and of inclusiveness.[500]

Summary of three recommendations

- "Constitution-making processes" should benefit Syrians to encourage, enhance and advance a new national identity and Syrian unity. The construction of a new national identity for all Syrians may help to resolve tensions and increase trust between the different elements of Syrian society. Transitional processes that involve constitution-making may contribute to national reconciliation and establish a more democratic culture in the long run.[501]

- The new formed constituent assembly should discuss and approve the draft for a new constitution. For transparency and inclusiveness, a national referendum may be added to approve or to reject the new constitution before it becomes final.

- Along with the permanent constitution of Syria, civic education and meetings and deliberating with the different communities within the Syrian society are necessary to

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[498] Ibidem.
[499] See Chapter 5. Constitutional Design. Ibidem.
[500] Ibidem.
[501] Ibidem.

give the Syrians the feeling that the drafting of the constitution echoes their rights and desires.[502]

Figure 3: Tasks and Phases of the Roadmap for Constitution-making.[503]

Negotiate and adopt transitional legal framework
Establish commission to begin civic education
Conduct civic education
Elections for Constitutional Assembly (CA)
CA establishes secretariat to help develop budget, procure resources, develop strategic plan, document and facilitate drafting process
CA establishes regional/district offices for CA to assist in civic education and consultations
CA establishes sub-committees to assist in researching and drafting
Conduct more civic education
Conduct public consultations
Analyze public inputs/views
Research, negotiate and agree on first draft of constitution
Allow public to comment on first draft
More negotiation and drafting, as needed
CA adopts constitution
Referendum, if appropriate
Implementation, including additional civic education on the final constitution

Figure 4: Recommended Timeline for Constitution-Making Processes.[504]

Day 1	6 Mos	1 Yr	1.5 Yrs	2 Yrs	2.5 Yrs	3 yrs
Negotiate and adopt TLF						
Public outreach and communication strategy						
Civic education/preparation						
CA Elections						
CA begins work						
Civic education						
Public consultations						
Analyze public inputs						
First draft						
Civic education						
Public consultations						
More negotiation and drafting						
CA adopts constitution						
Civic education for referendum						
Referendum						

Chapter 6) Economic Restructuring and Social Policy

The Syrian conflict has resulted in immediate humanitarian aid for emergency relief and the manifold challenges to reconstruct post-conflict society. The TDA sees that the Syrian economy

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[502] Eric Brahm, "Civic Education," Beyond Intractability, July, 2006, accessed January 14, 2018, https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/civic-education.
[503] See Chapter 5. Constitutional Design. Ibidem.
[504] Ibidem.

is weakened by Assad-regime's severe policies, exploitation, miscalculation of resources, and preferential treatment. The socioeconomic challenges have to be resolved with Syrian human and financial capital and foreign and domestic resources.[505] Local communities should be empowered to make their own choices. The TDA argues that local empowerment "will help prevent aid dependence or distortions", will help both national reconstruction and reconciliation processes, and will contribute to long term essential socioeconomic restructuring processes.[506]

Summary of three key recommendations:

1. Meetings with national and international NGOs and other local Syrian civil society organisations are necessary to draw out and "coordinate donor funds."[507]

2. Provide the required humanitarians aid with the help of emergency relief, such as food, medical treatment and protection, and provide essential basic services, "education, sanitation, and electricity," and start with the resettlement of "internally displaced persons" and Syrian refugees.

3. The new Syrian transitional government should take adequate measures to establish macroeconomic and microeconomic stability and to return financial assets to the new democratic country of Syria.

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[505] See Chapter 6. Economic Restructuring and Social Policy. Ibidem.
[506] Ibidem.
[507] Ibidem.

Figure 5: TDA's Recommendation and Timeline to Implement.[508]

Recommendation	Justification	Timeline to Implement
Drive macroeconomic stability	• Address drivers of inflation • Review currency arrangements • Quantify debt (domestic / external) • Augment technical/management competencies	First 6 months
	• Introduce indirect fiscal deficit financing mechanisms • Rebuild reserves gradually • Initiate customized debt restructuring • Evaluate new currency options	6 months to 2 years
Stimulate Employment	• Focus on reducing unemployment (introduce quick wins) • Quantify and map underemployment • Retain public sector employees and preserve current institutions	First 6 months
	• Transition focus to sustained employment opportunities • Develop strategy to address underemployment (training + placements) • Develop strategy for SMEs and microenterprises • Assess requirements to revive non-oil employment • Introduce reconstruction zones	6 months to 2 years
Real Sector Output	• Improve opportunity and access for all Syrians • Integrate local economy in reconstruction efforts and service provision • Identify barriers to private sector development • Map non-formal sector	First 6 months
	• Provide incentives to SMEs and microenterprises • Restructure public enterprises • Initiate steps to improve competitiveness • Develop strategy to improve market access for producers (domestic, regional and global)	6 months to 2 years

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[508] Ibidem.

Restructure Economic and Financial Institutions	• Ensure functioning payment system in major towns • Strengthen management of public-sector institutions • Enforce accountability • Improve domestic coordination (ministries, banks, treasury) • Establish rules for coordination with external institutions • Improve central bank monitoring and supervision of private institutions	First 6 months
	• Appoint independent oversight and regulatory institutions • Expand functioning payments system • Rationalize financial regulations (e.g., tiered reserve requirements) • Create a regulatory and institutional support framework for non-formal sector	6 months to 2 years
Address immediate social needs and challenges	• Develop community-based and generated approaches to social development • Provide basic human needs: food, medicine, water, shelter • Restore basic services and infrastructure: electricity, schools, hospitals/clinics, transportation, fuel, and social services.	First 6 months
Address societal issues	• Assess sectarian and ethnic divides and develop the framework for national dialogue and healing • Develop a comprehensive reintegration plan (e.g., political detainees, members of the security forces, displaced populations, returning refugees) • Account for the forcibly disappeared	First 6 months
Create sustainable programs	• Deepen and broaden scope of social and economic dialogue • Gradually reduce dependency on humanitarian aid • Develop long-term educational programs	6 months to 2 years

Finally, it has become clear that the goals and objectives, the key principles of "inclusiveness and participation", "transparency and accountability" and "consensus," are designed for social structural, political and economic changes. The summary of the six key areas provide a peacebuilding trajectory to ensure long-lasting peace in Syria. In spite of the many challenges

and difficult circumstances to achieve a more democratic Syrian state and to restructure the socioeconomic systems, the recommendations of the six key areas aim to be clear and follow a straight path to ensure a successful transition after negative peace.

The goals, objectives and strategies of the 2012 report may contribute to the development of the necessary communicative capacities through dialogue. On the national and the local level, dialogue between groups and individuals are essential to repair and transform relationships when peacebuilding activities aim to get involved in transformation processes at the social-structural, intergroup and at the interpersonal levels.[509] Intergroup dialogue or interaction between people from different groups could reduce violence when they share their needs, concerns about safety, common goals, and jointly search for constructive solutions. An understanding of both perspectives between different groups through dialogue may contribute to discern essential features of social structural change. Peacebuilding activities that emphasise to improve, to transform and to repair communal relationships through dialogue are crucial part of social structural change by addressing the root causes of the Syrian conflict. This means that the relational and the social structural dimension of peacebuilding are closely connected and are both indispensable to overcome identity issues.

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[509] Maiese, "Peacebuilding."

Conclusion

In Chapter 1, I contended that the theoretical framework of the social identity theory is still an applicable method to analyse and understand an identity-based conflict. On any occasion when a certain identity becomes visible we should ask ourselves: who is constructing this identity, what are the specific components of this identity, in which historical and socioeconomic context is this identity constructed, and where and against what background is this identity created? This way of analysis justifies the theoretical framework of the social identity theory to analyse identity-based conflicts.

Four essential features of the social identity theory were important for my analysis. First, an individual's identity is based on a social identity. Any identity consists of an enormous variety of identity attributes. Self - and collective identities are related to each other but do not necessarily give a reason for intergroup conflicts (Subsection 1.1). Second, the formation and the creation of groups or the bonding of individuals within groups are time and again based on material and psychological premises. Individuals need to identify and bond with a group before a collective identity comes into existence (Subsection 1.2).

Third, destructive and negative emotions of fear, anger and contempt are the necessary elements of intergroup conflicts that may result in extreme violence. Socioeconomic and political reasons are often used by key religious and political leaders to mobilise the in-group and to justify collective violent actions against the outgroup. Identity issues are created by the views of the other and also determine the intractability of any given conflict (Subsection 1.3).

Fourth, the theoretical insights of primordialism, instrumentalism, and constructivism should be combined to analyse identity-based conflicts. Primordialism and instrumentalism indicate that primordial identities and instrumental grievances are mutually reinforced by the Syrian conflict. The two theories are complemented by the constructionist theory considering that personal and collective identities are not fixed identities, but are constructed and can be adjusted or changed (Subsection 1.4).

In Chapter 2, I argued that Alawite identity is not fixed or monolithic and therefore it consists of a variety of possible identity sources based on class, tribe, sect, clan, and territory. A historical analysis of the Alawi identity reveals which specific identity features become visible at a specific moment in history. The construction of an identity depends on the historical political and socioeconomic circumstances.

The genesis and the development of the religious doctrines of the Nusayri community is often based on assumptions and lack of reliable sources. It is therefore difficult to distinguish

an adequate narrative of the Nusayri community and its religious precepts. In spite of the assumed heterodox precepts, it seems logical to view Nusayrism as a more serious religious competitor than is often assumed. Different religious movements were competing with each other to convert the masses.

Because of political developments in the Syrian hinterland, Nusayrism lost significance and influence compared with other Sunni or Shia branches. Competing religious movements could only survive or become more dominant if they were supported by powerful rulers. An analysis of why certain religious doctrines are considered as heterodox or true reveals the interreligious power struggles: which religious movement has the power to determine the boundaries of a religion and its precepts (Subsection 2.1)?

In Subsection 2.2, I argued that the syncretic elements of the Nusayri religion became a contentious topic in only five or six known fatwas issued by Sunni religious scholars (Subsection 2.2.1-2.2.3). The well-known and often used religious decree in the Syrian conflict nowadays is the fatwa of Ibn Taymiyyah, issued during the Mameluke period. Academics are often narrating that the first fatwa was issued because the Mamelukes were in an ongoing state of war with external and internal enemies. Based on this corollary, scholars thought that because of this political situation the Mamelukes needed religious justification to defeat their adversaries.

Although not intended, academics created a literary trope of Nusayri persecution and massacre by using Muslim religious historiographies as normative primary sources. The reiteration of "historical myths", such as farfetched numbers, questionable historical facts and the ongoing Mameluke state of war, needs to stop. In reality there were most likely more cordial relationships between the different religious communities and with the Mameluke state. Other primary sources or literature could be useful for the construction of a new historical narrative (Subsection 2.2.1).

The fatwa of Subsection 2.2.2 can be considered as the beginning of the historical myth of Nusayri/Alawite persecution. Nonetheless, Ibn Taymiyyah's standpoints on the Nusayri and Shiite branches are based on erroneous knowledge and false accusations. His viewpoints are distorting the general policy of the Mamelukes towards other religious communities. Also the fact that he is the only known Sunni religious scholar viewing the Nusayris as apostates at that time and his imprisonment because of his behaviour and extreme viewpoints are important observations. It is therefore possible that Ibn Taymiyyah's standpoints and behaviour were viewed as "extreme" by the Mameluke state and his fellow religious scholars.

Another important document that has contributed to the sectarian identity and collective

memory of the Alawis is the 1516 fatwa (Subsection 2.2.3). This fatwa was needed for the Ottoman Sultan to quell a Nusayri rebellion. The subsequent actions are known in Alawite history as "the Aleppo massacre". After a historical analysis of the document, there are still three important unanswered questions. Firstly, are the numbers of 49,400 Nusayri deaths during the Aleppo massacre accurate? Secondly, why had the less well-known local Shaykh Nuh al-Hanafi al-Dimashqi issued this fatwa and not the prominent Shaykh al-Islam? Thirdly, did the Aleppo massacre actually happen? Although these questions remain unanswered, it seems to me that the numbers are farfetched and questionable and that it is even doubtful if the massacre of Aleppo really occurred: neither Arabic nor Ottoman documents are supporting any evidence of sectarian killings during the Ottoman campaigns.

In the second part of Subsection 2.2.3, I argued that the religious identity of the Nusayris became even more politically important in the nineteenth century. The political dimension of the Nusayri identity is related to firstly, the decline of the Ottoman Empire and secondly, Western interests in Ottoman territories and its religious communities. The two developments had resulted in the Nusayris becoming an important sectarian actor in the power struggles between the Ottoman state and Western countries. The Ottomans wanted to transform the Nusayris into law-abiding Ottoman citizens while the European super powers wanted to protect religious minority groups because of their unfair treatment by Ottoman rule.

More visible sectarian discrimination and strife was documented in the second half of the nineteenth century. Western interference, the decline of military careers in the Ottoman territories and the failed attempt of the Ottoman state to modernise the empire, all contributed to intergroup tensions and conflict. This socioeconomic and political background explains the more frequent Islamic fundamentalists' reactions in the Syrian region. The fatwa of al-Mugrabi is an example of the rise of Islamic reform movements and thinking.

In spite of the sporadic sectarian tensions and conflict, Ottoman tax documents are evidence that the Nusayri community were much more politically and socioeconomically integrated than previously assumed. As long as the Nusayris did not rebel and paid their taxes, the Ottomans had in fact no problems with any religious community. Moreover, there were Nusayris working for the Ottoman state. These historical remarks are essential to overcome another sectarian myth: the ongoing Nusayri persecution by the Sunni Ottoman state from 1516 till 1922.

From Subsection 2.2.4 to 2.2.4.3, I have analysed the changing religious and political identity and status of the Alawites from 1920 till 2016. The 1929 new created Alawi political identity was part of French Mandate policies to obstruct feelings of pan-Arabism and Syrian

unity. Also part of this strategy was the division of the mandate on religious affiliation, highlighting confessional differences, the recruitment of religious communities for the French army, and the reluctance to establish economic and financial infrastructures, contributed to more intergroup tension and conflict from 1922 till 1946.

During the post-Ottoman period more literature on Alawites by Alawites themselves appeared. Alawite intellectuals and religious scholars were pioneers in delineating and defining a post-Ottoman Alawite identity. Alawi precepts needed to be reformed and contributed to the creation of a new religious identity. Alawi religious leaders aimed to embrace Twelver Shiism to modernise the Alawite faith and community, because their community needed to be more integrated into Muslim society. This might be the reason why the Alawite ulama between 1920 and 1936 often declared that the Alawis were Shia Muslims and explains why Shia Islam had become more part of the Alawi identity.

Concerning possible Syrian independence, the Alawite society was highly divided between unionists and separatists. Separatists were using sectarian rhetoric to justify an independent Alawite state. They argued that the Alawites would be slaughtered because they were considered as non-Muslim by the Sunni majority. A separate Alawi state was politically justified by key Alawite politicians by reiterating the ongoing Alawite persecution by Sunni rulers myth.

It is no coincidence that during Alawite discussions whether or not to support a new Syrian state al-Husseini issued the 1936 fatwa. The fatwa is significant because it was for the first time that Alawites should be considered as Muslims. The religious decree was therefore issued to reassure Alawites who were afraid of Sunni intolerance and to emphasise Syrian unity. Although the fatwa was highly politically motivated, the religious decree aimed to enhance more acceptance and social integration of Alawites in Muslim society. This fatwa is an example of the concept that identities are constructed and not fixed and can be changed to construct a more inclusive identity that is part of large community (Subsection 2.2.4.1).

In Subsection 2.2.4.2, I explained the political context and social circumstances that led to the Alawites being recognised as Twelver Shia through the religious declarations of Al-Shirzazi and al-Sadr. The most unstable post-independence period in Syria lasted from 1949 till 1971. The instrumental use of tribalism, regionalism and sectarianism to take or maintain power could be seen in the frequent coup attempts and coups d'état. Pure power politics within the Baath Party from 1963 till 1970 created the beginning of sincere tensions between the different religious communities in Syrian society.

The beginning of the Assad dictatorship, the absence of sincere political parties with

Sunni representatives, and the bad socioeconomic policies of Assad created even more dormant sectarian grievances and intergroup tensions. The socioeconomic and political developments aggravated many Sunnis. It is therefore obvious that between 1971 and 1973 al-Shirzazi and al-Sadr both issued a declaration to link the Alawites with Twelver Shiism. These two religious declarations were needed to lessen intergroup tensions, to reassure the Sunni majority and to justify the regime of Assad.

However, some Lebanese Alawite groups did not like the newly constructed Alawi identity being connected with Twelver Shiism. The tensions between supporters and opponents of the construction of this new identity demonstrate the Alawite identity issues within their own community, although these issues were more visible in Lebanon than in Syria. The political Alawite identity was religiously constructed and some Alawites were concerned with the problematic question of what the Alawite identity was.

The Muslim Brotherhood murdered Alawis and used sectarian rhetoric to divide the Syrian communities along sectarian lines to ignite a sectarian war in the so-called Islamic uprising from 1976 till 1982. The Muslim Brotherhood's actions strengthen Alawite solidarity and their fear of possible Sunni revenge. The aftermath of the Islamic uprising was that the Alawite identity was inherently tied with Twelver Shiism, the Assad-regime, and laid the foundation for the intergroup conflicts that erupted in 2011.

In Subsection 2.2.4.3, I analysed the content of the 2016 *Declaration of an Identity Reform*. The once promising 2011 Syrian Revolution had become an identity-based conflict due to Assad's regime's sectarian policies of misinformation and actions, and the involvement of proxy militias supported by foreign countries. All this aggravated the already perceived gradual development of a Sunni character of the revolution. Fear, insecurity and extreme sectarian violence resulted in more pervasive sectarian identities and collective mobilisation by political entrepreneurs. Fear of Sunni revenge strengthen the Alawis and other religious minorities to support the regime. It is because of these difficult political and socioeconomic circumstances that unidentified Alawis issued the 2016 *Declaration of an Identity Reform*.

The identity reform contradicts earlier publications and documents from within the Alawi community. The authors argued that the Alawite identity was constructed by the collective memory of Alawi fears and for the obvious political reasons. The document also contends that the historical myths of Sunni persecution need to be adjusted and deconstructed. Without mentioning any detailed solutions, the authors think that the Alawite narratives of Sunni persecution will be overcome by the creation of a new Syrian identity and a new history of the formation of the Syrian state.

The document reveals that Islam should not be involved in future Syrian politics. Without secularism, the authors think that it is not possible for the Syrian state to achieve full equality of religious communities and its members. The reason behind this is that religion obstructs national integration of all confessional communities. Civic principles and Syrian citizenship should enhance intergroup cordial relationships and a sense of Syrian unity.

The authors disavow the content of all the fatwas, reject that Ibn Nusayr is the founding father of the Alawites, and repudiate that Alawites are Twelver Shia. The document argues that the Alawite identity is purely religious and Alawite esotericism is the third path of Islam. Although the authors aim to disconnect the political component of the religious identity, it seems that it is difficult to make a sincere distinction between a religious and a political Alawite identity.

This declaration is still useful for peacebuilders and conflict analysts to encourage them to think about how to transform Alawite identity issues by designing peacebuilding activities that enhance Syrian national integration and reconciliation.

In the last chapter I argued that peacebuilding means designing strategies and implementing activities that should stop actual violence, prevent recurrent violence, and establish long lasting peace. Sustainable peace is only possible when the root causes of the Syrian conflict are addressed and peacebuilding activities to transform the socioeconomic and political structures are implemented. Alawite identity issues are intrinsically related to political and socioeconomic structures. To move beyond the Syrian identity-based conflict all of these problems and challenges need to be resolved (Subsection 3.1-3.2).

Subsection 3.3, I analysed and summarised the six chapters of the 2012 Report of the TDA. This comprehensive report presents key recommendations, goals and fundamentals to transform existing socioeconomic and political structures. The six key fields aims to overcome identity issues.[510]

There are three essential recommendations of the report in which the obtained knowledge of Chapter 2 could be useful for peacebuilding activities. Firstly, new historical education should be established to construct a new history of Syria in which historical events and myths need to be analysed, nuanced, and contextualised. A special commission and its sub-commissions need to construct the history before and after the Syrian revolution of 2011.

Secondly, special commissions should interact with key figures of religious

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[510] The six fields are: the rule of law, transitional justice, security sector reform, electoral reform and forming a constitutional assembly, constitutional design, and economic restructuring and social policy.

communities to identity and to discuss how to foster a new Syrian identity with the help of specific civic norms and values in order to establish a sense of Syrian citizenship. An emphasis on Syrian unity should contribute to look for over-arching values to enhance the creation of a large Syrian community that includes all confessional groups. Although it is difficult, religious or sectarian identities should therefore be subordinated to a new more inclusive Syrian identity that enhances Syrian citizenship and equality of all Syrian individuals.

Thirdly, more future research has to be done to create a more nuanced and realistic historical narrative of Nusayri relationships with the Mameluke and Ottoman government and other sects to deconstruct pervasive sectarian myths and biased primary sources. The ongoing Alawite persecution by Sunnis myth should be debunked and should be discussed within the Alawite community but also with other communities to overcome identity issues. Joint scientific projects with historians and religious scholars may result in new scholarly publications to address historical aberrations and to point out a more nuanced history of cordial relationships and sometimes periods of intergroup strife. This knowledge could be part of or supplement the knowledge of the commission that is responsible for the creation of a new Syrian history and historical education.

Finally, the strength of this study is that it aims to analyse the construction of the Alawite identity from the ninth century till 2016 through primary sources, secondary literature and religious declarations. The construction of the Alawite identity reveals a community aiming to find its place in society and the identity's adaption to the cultural, religious, social, ideological and political frameworks.

This study has shown that a historical analysis is indispensable to understand the current situation in Syria. To move beyond the visible sectarian expression of the Syrian conflict, I focused on the historical and relational patterns combined with the development of political and socioeconomic structures. Only when conflict analysts and peacebuilders are able to identify and understand what has actually occurred can they start thinking about how to create peacebuilding strategies and activities to transform socioeconomic and political structures, and means to enhance sustainable personal relationships and intergroup dialogue.

However, it is impossible to elaborate on all the details of the Alawite community due to the vast timespan of this study. Much more can be elaborated on the political and socioeconomic developments, specific historical events and key figures of the Alawite community during the Ottoman period of the nineteenth century and the French Mandate period. Also more Arabic and French primary sources could be used to give a more detailed

and comprehensive historical analysis of the Alawite identity.

Much more can be discussed on and pointed out in detail about the subtleties of conflict transformation and the involved peacebuilding activities to overcome identity issues. In this study I could elaborate more on the personal, the relational, the structural, and the cultural dimension of the conflict. The discussed notions of concepts, strategies and implementation of peacebuilding may be viewed as too broad or too general. More detailed examples of specific peacebuilding activities, such as workshops, could be provided as well as a summary of which peacebuilding activities to overcome identity issues were successful in other conflicts.

Future research should therefore focus on specific periods how the Alawite identity is constructed and how academics could contribute to deconstruct and stop the literary trope of Alawite persecution by Sunnis. The first step is to discuss and to analyse the different primary sources through joint scholarly effort among academics to seek specific documents in French and Ottoman archives. The second step is new research to focus on microhistory or local history by moving away from the sectarian to the local.

Future research should combine these new historical insights with current conflict transformation studies to design and to think about specific peacebuilding activities to overcome identity issues in Syria. Although it is difficult to envision a more democratic Syria, to establish more intergroup cordial relationships and to achieve sustainable peace, we should still aim to see conflicts as possibilities for constructive changes as Lederach would argue: "Deep conflicts are stressful and painful. At worst, they are violent and destructive. Yet at the same time, they create some of the most intense spiritual encounters we experience. Conflict opens a path, a holy path, toward revelation and reconciliation."[511]

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[511] John Paul Lederach, *Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians* (Harrisonburg: Herald Press, 2014), 14.

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Appendix I: 2016 Declaration of an Identity Reform

The whole document can be found on http://www.welt.de/pdf/1085/Declaration.pdf

Preamble

Whereas we, the Alawites, are an integral part of the people of the Syrian Land, yet distinguished by our own character as a community,

whereas, undeniably, the state of coexistence between the Alawites and other communities had given Syria a particular conformation,

whereas for us, the Alawites, nothing reaches closer to the very core of human existence than the community,

whereas only the Homeland can create an identity that supersedes the need for affiliation to a community identity,

whereas we, the Alawites, remain allegiant to the great notions of peaceful coexistence in society, yet we are seriously concerned to see the values of national integration wither and Syria as one common heart beating in the chests of all Syrians evanescent,

whereas we, the Alawites, are anguished to concede that, for many centuries, our brothers in land have regarded and defined us mainly by religious practices and beliefs, most notably our mysticism,

whereas we, the Alawites, furthermore concede that we have been, for far too long, defined with the words of others rather than our own,

whereas, this declaration was written and agreed upon by our houses, where, over many centuries, the true collective conscience of our community was formed,

whereas this declaration does not constitute, under no circumstances, a religious reform of Alawism or the Alawite belief,

we, the Alawites, by the latent authority of our houses and our community in itself, in the name of our rights and in name of the rights of our brothers of Syrian Land, and in the name of safety and prosperity, and in the name of God, the Merciful and the Compassionate, and in the name of the ultimate Truth, and in the name of Life, hereby adopt this

Declaration of an Identity Reform.

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I. A New Era of the Alawites

1: Alawism, or the Alawite belief, represent a third model *of* and *within* Islam. We, the Alawites, form a separate confession, which is neither textual nor rational as in the models represented by our Sunni or Shiite brothers. The character of Alawism, henceforth, may be qualified as Islam's transcendent (or transcendental) form.

2: Honouring what unites us, but also taking into account the substantial differences between Shiism and Alawism, we hereby decline any fatwa that seeks to appropriate the Alawites and considers Alawism an integral part of Shiism or a branch of the latter.

3: For the sake of peaceful and prosperous coexistence, we want to embrace a New Era of the Alawites. In a religiously diverse society such as Syria our faith shall imbue our daily life with decency and morality. We shall live informed by religious teaching and our understanding of the divine will. However, we shall not use our own beliefs to dictate the way of life of others.

4: In the past, we, the Alawites, abode to a sectarian character with tenacity. This was by no means intrinsic to our religious identity but an exogenous property, partly due to the struggle we endured in order to preserve our evolution. In this new era, we commit ourselves to the fight against sectarian strife and we hereby call for a charter of core principles and conduct against sectarianism.

5: In this new of era of the Alawites, we from now on repudiate to be labelled or defined as a minority in Syria. We divest ourselves from the minority status, with all the hardship but, in equal measure, with all the benefits and privileges that could be associated with this status. Morally, politically and culturally, one shall no longer use the term "minority" to define who the Alawites are and who they are not.

II. The Recognition of a Past Time

6: The notion of Time is an important aspect of Alawite cosmology. Indeed, the community of believers often suggest that our existence is incommensurable in its beginning. Historically, the Alawites have emerged in the 10th century, originating in a part of a Sunni population that later turned to Shiism and, eventually, became what today is known as Alawites.

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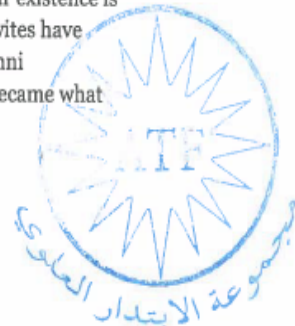
7: It is not in Alawism to place ourselves above others, nor to claim to be a "chosen people".

8: The Alawites are not "Nusairi" or "Nusairiyin" as they are often referred to in a depreciative fashion. We hereby redefine the status of "Muhammad Ibn Nusair", this ancestral figure of ours. But Ibn Nusair stood on the shoulders of even greater and more learned progenitors. Hence, he could not be the founding father of the Alawites.

9: We acknowledge that, moreover, the term "Alawites" was a recent naming used to define our identity by others. We assumed it, though it was not a choice we had made, and this extends to the term "Nusairi", too. "Alawite", however, is an appellation that acquired a customary value.

10: The history of Alawites as an identifiable community is rooted back in the time of Al-Hussein bin Hamdan Al-Khassibi .The first Alawite community, in our view, emerged after Al-Khassibi, a venerable religious scholar, and Saif Al-Dawla Al-Hamdani, the prosperous ruler of Aleppo, made their covenant. We shall therefore revise the respective appellation of our community and may use the glory of the Hamdanid period as a historical point of departure for our revision.

III. Preservation

11: We, the Alawites, have our own understanding of Islam as a base of common law. Since the 7th century, Islamic law was built by religious doctrine and the State. Within this imperial and dogmatic system any irregularity, such as the appearance of a new Muslim community, could only be treated as a twofold revolt against authority. Persecution, or else, intolerance were an expectable result. The case of our emergence, and our exile, is literally inscribed therein.

12: In this constitution of our new identity, we acknowledge that our isolation had become an instrument to self-protection. We turned inwards and enclosed ourselves, resorting to myth and overstatement. The widespread narrative that, over centuries, Alawites were solely persecuted and discriminated against by those around us represents such a myth.

13: This declaration relinquishes the definition of Alawites as a persecuted and oppressed group. Alawites are henceforth defined as a people which had been inspired by their faith and by their community

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to resist a dual religious and political power waged against them during a specific historical period of time.

14: We acknowledge that the collective conscience of Alawites, from generation to generation, became perniciously confused, between the external rejection of their religious identity and the enslavement suffered from feudal masters within their own community. The victimisation of the Alawites originates in a confusion of internal oppression and external discrimination. In the context of reconciliation with our own past, we shall remember that even the Ottoman Empire, regarded by many as an oppressor to minorities, had allowed for the Alawites to administrate themselves three times.

15: The spirit of exaggeration in Alawite narratives about a miserable past shall be overcome, so shall the practice of reverting to half-truths and implicit messages about a group of people united with and around their values and engaged in an existential struggle.

16: We declare, with all the serenity of our collective conscience, that we shall not fear the wrath embodied in the late 13th century fatwa of Ibn Taimiya, based on the Fatwa of Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, against the Alawites. This fatwa is no longer of concern to us and shall not weigh on our shoulders. It has fallen into desuetude. We condemn Ibn Taymiya's fatwa, not in the name of Alawism but in the name of humanity. We know that, with very limited exceptions, the Sunnis of Syria abstained from implementing or becoming executors of this fatwa.
The Alawites no longer consider it. Moreover, they no longer find shelter therein.

17: Hereby we, the Alawites declare that neither the myths nor the jurisprudences of persecution or else discrimination, both internally and externally, shall define our identity. For us, it has rather become an element of our memory that strengthens even more our rejection to any form of oppression.

IV. The Alawites and Syria

18: The constitution of the new Alawite identity marks the convergence of two processes towards a radiant and victorious future. Indeed, we testify that, while many of the Syrian people are driven an uprising, an initiative of noble anger, we, the Alawites, are driven by an identity reform, this initiative of a serene collective conscience.

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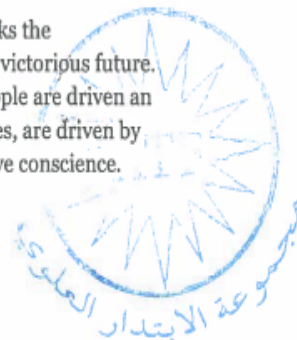
19: We, the Alawites, see that Syrian communitarianism, particularly the religious confessionalism, had for centuries been used as a system of prejudice and attribution. We hereby declare that we renounce this system for good.

20: We demand, by this document, a general and formal revision of the history of the Syrian State's creation.

V. In search of National Integration

21: Through our identity reform, we proceed to refine our notion of the National Integration. It is for us the catalyst for a united, vigorous and diverse Syria. Syria's unity is therefore the political, social and even geographical embodiment of a true national integration. This integration does not only consist of values of solidarity, loyalty and fraternity but it is also a whole system in which the said values can operate in spite of unpredictable conditions.

22: The vicissitudes of the Syrian land tender proof that no true national integration has materialised yet. A national integration was forged before the era of the modern State through the coercion of imperial rule. Later, it became no more than an illusion exhibited by totalitarian regimes.
For centuries, Syrian integration was based alone on a shared heritage with cultural traditions and moral notions as major references. Within this accumulative process, religion, in particular Islam, occupied a pre-eminent role. Islam, mainly textual, had to naturally contribute conceptualising political life and served as a source of organizational principles. This explains in our views that Islam has so far been implicitly the official religion of the State, and it irradiates on the constitutional regimes of Syria since its establishment.

Indeed, this rule is evident in two persistent norms: One is that Islam is the principal source of positive law, and the second, that Islam is required to be the religion of the head of this State, the President. But
Islam, in its intrinsic diversity, cannot be a condition to reunite in name of the State those who in the name of their religion are divided today. Therefore, we demand, in full awareness, the definitive abolition of this rule.

23: We as Alawites adhere to the values of equality, liberty and citizenship. We believe that these are actual principles to organise and

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maintain social unity. Therefore, we call for the application of secularism, since secularism, like democracy, is the adequate mechanism to implement these values. We demand the application of secularism as a functional non-absolute separation between State and religion.

We request a system where religion is a source of cultural and virtuous norms, moreover, a system where Islam, Christianity and other religions are equal.

Any such claim would be void if it did not present a prior conceptualisation of what secularism truly means. For us, this common standard must be readable and perspicuous.

VI. Reason and Truth

24: The Alawites purged their collective memory from real and mythic stories of persecution. We declare that, in the name of truth, Syrian Sunnis shall be acquitted and shall not be held collectively accountable for the acts of discrimination that some of their fellow Sunni believers have committed against Alawites in the past. In our reading of history, most acts of moral or material discrimination against Alawites were committed by powers of the Sunni Muslim denomination who had occupied Syrian land during certain historical periods and did who did not represent the Sunnis of Syria.

25: We have always considered the history of the Alawite State in the coastal region during the times of the French Mandate and as part of Federal Syria between 1920, 1930 and 1936 as an element of our identity. However, we see the glory of that period in the particular experience of a state that had all the aspects of democracy and human rights. Yet, we are proud that we dismantled it once our Syrian patriotic unity was threatened. We dismiss that the patriotic reputation of the Alawites could be challenged or mistrusted on account of this particular historical event.

26: The ruling political power, whoever embodies it, does not represent us nor does it shape our identity or preserves our safety and reputation. Nor do we, the Alawites, substantiate it or generate its power. The legitimacy of a regime can only be considered according to the criteria of democracy and fundamental rights.

Political command shall not, and under no circumstances, exert oppression out of fear of loosing power or legitimacy. As for an opposition, it may resort to means other than arms, violence and repression.

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27: For the sake of Syria, we assure that this Identity Reform Declaration shall provide answers to the many ignored questions of the Alawite conscience. But this declaration shall, in equal measure, answer the questions of other Syrians. These answers may reassure those who aspire to engage in a true national integration. These same answers may also respond to those who strive for separation.

VII. God, the Alawites, and Esoterism

28: We do not speak, in this Declaration, as religious preachers but as people inspired by religious thought. Doctrinal Islam, Sunni or Shia, in our view, originated in a quest to understand God's message, the religious. It focuses on what comes from God. In contrast, Alawism can be regarded as a quest to understand what God truly is. In Doctrinal Islam, God is behind everything. In Alawism, everything is hidden behind God.

Our differentiation of Alawism from Shiism is not a shift from the latter, nor an evolutionary act. It is a reverence to the primary and original truth.

29: The fact that Alawism and Shiism share some formal religious sources does not make Alawism a branch of Shiism. Since Shiism until today allows for the constructive interpretation of religious texts (Al-Ijtihad) it was merely an obligatory passage for all those who wanted to restore or even revolutionise Muslim thought.

30: Our esoterism is not to be defended but to be vindicated: Alawites do not follow a secret faith. It is solely based on the idea of worshipping God. Esoterism is with us and within us.

We believe that God, as an absolute beginning, preceded all his revelations to mankind.

We believe that the believers have to find the right path *of* or *in* Islam, yet, we do not believe that this path is predefined.

We believe that any message addressed to an infinite audience with multiple individual qualities can only be coded. The case of the Holy Scripts is even more evident to us. The Quran, the holy book of Islam, is for us a supreme and coded book and it reflects the incommensurability of God in his message descended upon Man.

31: As such, esoterism is not only a method of worship but also a faith

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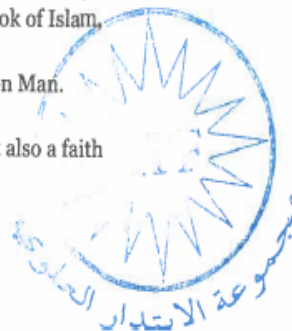
and a doctrine. Arising from a secret, it acquires a secret character itself.

32: Alawism, not the Alawites as a community, shall be associated with esoterism. The aura of mystery surrounding our method of worship is not part of our community life. The community itself is neither secret nor mysterious.

33: The Quran alone is our holy book and a clear reference to our Muslim quality.

34: Alawite mysticism and esoterism have never had and will never have an application outside of the religious sphere. It can neither produce nor spur plans to lead the Alawite community in any area of social or political life. Alawism is not an organisation of believers but one path towards God.

35: Alawism incorporates elements of other monotheist religions, most notably Judaism and Christianity. These elements enrich Alawism and shall not be seen as marks of deviation from Islam but as elements that bear witness to our riches and universality.

Post Scriptum

This Declaration of an Identity Reform is, in short, the work of a commendable force of the collective conscience of our community. The voice of our conscience calls to regenerate the Alawites, for them, for us, to become a catalyst of a new Syria, peaceful and prosper.

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العَلَويُّ في المُجتَمع

إعلان وثيقة إصلاح هوَيَّاتي

مُقدّمة

نحن أهل الأرض السورية في جزئهم "العلويون"، مجموعة من الناس مُدمَجة برابطٍ أوَّليّ ولكنه ـ الدين هنا ـ صميميٌّ يَبلُغُ معه اختلافُها عن نظائرها حدَّ الهوية الذاتية.

العلويون، طائفة بين ثنايات يُعطي تواجُدُها للمجتمع السوري عناصرَه الابتدائية، وللبلاد السورية أعطى تعايُشُها نَمطاً مشغولاً عبر قرون: دياراً للمُنَوَّعةِ وصوفَهم وفق الدين أو القومية أو القبيلة والعشيرة.

نحن العلويون، وعندنا أن الانتماء بالطائفة هو نوعٌ من أقدَارِ الإنسان، مُطلَقٌ ولكنه آيلٌ إلى المجتمع، ذاك الذي يَجعلَه نسبيّ، أما الدولة فهي ما يُحَيِّدُه، ووَحدَه الوطن ما يُلاشيه. كما وعندنا أن الدولة، إذ تضمَنُ للمُتَغايرينَ كوناً مُشترَكاً، آمناً وزاهراً، هيَ في آخر الأمر نظامٌ مُغالَبة الاختلاف في عناصر المجتمع الابتدائية، ونظام التوفيق المُنتصِر، فهو الوطن.

مَزيدون بمفاهيم هكذا جوهرية عمّا هو، بالتجريد، "الكونُ الوادِعُ معاً" وبالتطبيق هو "الاندماج الوطني"، العلويون، وكم يُنقِصُنا أن نَراه اليومَ في سوريا يُكابدُ نجوزَه، وكم يُنقِصُنا أن يَرانا الآخرون دونه، فنحن المُعتَبَرون، ومن جبلٍ إلى جيل، على أساس "السرّانية" المُرتبطة باعتقادنا الديني والمفهومة من بعضٍ منّا و من بعض سوانا، على أنها مُوجِبَة لاتّقاءنا غيرنا ثمَّ لِكَفّه عنّا. كما ونحن المُعَرَّفون، ومن حقبة إلى أخرى، بطريقة "هؤلاء هم" العلويون، وليس بطريقة "هذا نحن".

واليومَ أخيراً، ها نحن، وحباً بالحياة التي يَهمِزُ المجهولُ أصحابَها إذا كان قادماً إليهم، ويُضنيهم، مثلنا، إذا كان سائداً عنهم، وحبّاً بما خَلَق الله من إنسان، يَبقى من غير شَرَاكة الآخَر أقلُّ من نَفسه، نُعلِن ذاتَنا خالصين من التقيّة ومن الخصوصية المُناهزة حدَّ الاحتجاب عن غيرنا، ونقومُ إلى المجتمع الذي، لكونه انتظامُ الحياة في اثنين وأكثر، هو سبب الحق وأساس فكرَته، وأن الإنسان لو يُوجَدُ واحداً على الأرض لما احتاجَهُ أصلاً، فوَحدُها السماءُ ما يَعرف مفهومَ الحق من الوجودِ في واحدٍ صَمَد.

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العَلـويـون، وذات المَعنيّـين بالسـرّانيّـة، يَستنزلون منها في هذا الإعلان قوةً حُدوثٍ جديد.

وذات شهود التقيّة، يصيرون، هنا، كتّاب البُزوغ فيما بعدُ الصميم الأول.

نحن المُفوّضون، في طائفةٍ تلقينيّة وإبنويّة، من ضمائر ناسها، والمُرَخّصون، بحكم أعراف القرون، لتدبير مصيرها حين تصبح المَصائرُ مُعَلّقة بالإجمال على نوع الهويّة الأوليّة، ومعنا نخبةٌ من الوازنين فيها، قد تـأسّسنا في هـيئةٍ آمرةٍ على سبيل "سُلطة الضمير الجماعي" للعلويين.

وإننا باسم حقوقنا المُضارَعَة بحقوق إخوة أرضنا السورية والمُشـتَـرَعَـة بها، باسم حفظ أجيالنا القادمة، باسم الحقيقة وباسم الله مُبتدى الحقيقة ومُنتهاها، نرسِمُ للعالم دستور هُوِيتنا الجديد ، هذا.

اشتراط خاص

هذا الإعلان الكِيانيّ لا يَنزعُ لابتدار إصلاحٍ دينيٍّ سواءَ في معتقداتٍ أو في طرائق، وليس في بنوده التالية ما يمكن تفسيرُه كذلك.

محور أول: العلويون وذاتُهُم

مادة/١ :نحن في مَسرى الإسلام على الأرض طائفةً مستقلة. لسنا من الإسلام النقلي، قطب التطيُّف السنّيّ، ولا من العقلي، قطب التطيُّف الشيعي، فكلاهما، والأول مثل الثاني، إسلامٌ، حسب آصائلنا الدينية، فقهي. إننا من الإسلام العرفاني، قطباً ثالثاً له.

مادة/٢ :أخـذاً بالاعتبار لاختلاف العلويّة عن الشيعية، في المعتقدات كما في الأعراف والطقوس والمفاهيم، فإننا نُلغي كلّ إلحاق لنا بها، أيّاً كانت وسائله أو أشكاله. إن جميع الفتاوى الخالصة إلى استتباع العلويين بالشيعية كفرعٍ من فروعها هي، لذلك، لاغيـة بالنسبة لنا وواقعة موقع العَدَم منّا.

مادة/٣ :وفاقاً لقيَم المُواطَنَة وقيَم الاندماج في مجتمعٍ طبيعي وذاتٍ الضمانةُ لمكوّناته، يُعلِن العلويون إقبالهَم على زمنٍ جديد لهم. ويقررون أنه، في مجتمع متنوّع الهويّات الدينية، ستكون خاصّتُهم، من الآنَ فصاعداً، مصدراً من مصادر أخلاقيات التواجد والعيش فيه، وليس سبباً لتشكيلهم له أو حكمهم عليه أو الترَدّد حيال كليّته.

مادة/٤ :في زمَنِهِم الجديد، يتوقّفُ العلويون عن جَعـلِ استمرارهم وتطورهم مقروناً بهاجس الزوال أو مطبوعاً بنَزعة التضامن حيالَ المحيط الأغلبيّ. يُقرّون بأن "الجَماعاتيّة" كانت رئيسياً من مظاهر تكوّنِهِم، وكذا من وسائل حفظهم وتعاقُبـهـم في بيئة مشغولة عبر التاريخ من سواد الهويات الدينية وتشاحُنِها. ليس الانغلاق العصبوي من لوازم العلويين

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المعتقدية ولكنه من شبهات مجتمعيّتهم. تُزالُ عبر هذه الوثيقة بإعلانهم عن أنها مُنافية لـمُقتضى التواجد المتوازن والموثوق في المجتمع وأنهـم، بمعنى الهوية الأولية، طائفةٌ لا جـماعة. يلتزم العلويون بالبَراء من"الجماعاتية" ويـتَعَهّدون لذلك بإنشاء ميثاق خاص على سبيل الشرح التفصيلي لتعريفهم الهويّاتي الجديد، وبنفس الوقت على سبيل مُدوّنةُ السلوك.

مادة/٥ :العلويون الجديدون يأبون صفة الأقلية أيّاً كانت معايير قياسُها، ويُسقِطوها عنهم كعنصر تعريف. حيثُ تكون هذه الصفة مُجدية للأخـذ بها، فإنهم يتنازلون عنها وحيث تكون عائقاً لتناسبهم في المجتمع فإنهم مُنكريها. لا يمكن من الآن فصاعداً أن تكون سبباً لحمايتهم ولا، بالمقابل، للإضرار بهم.

مادة/٦ :بمعنىً محضُ ديني، العلويّة هي ابتناءً من الإسلام على منهج السرّانيـة والتلقينيّـة الإبنويـّة وتؤمن بالعودات ولهذا فـمفهوم الزمن وفقـهـا يكتسي فَرادة خاصة وقد يُحمَـلُ المُتَّبعون على الاعتقاد بأن ابتداءَهم في الحياة هو ممّا لا يُقاس له أو به زمَن. إن العلويين في قيامهم إلى المجتمع، يُقرُّون بزمنٍ مما قبلَهم وبأن لهم ـ مثل باقي نظائرهـم ـ قصة ظهور في حيّزٍ حَدَثي خاص. هم مجموع بشري قد ظَهَرَ في آواخر القرن العاشر للميلاد، من قلب سكانَ جُزءٍ دولة سُنّيّة، صارَ فيما بعدُ هذا الجزء شيعياً واستقرّ أخيراً أهلُه في العلويّة.

مادة/٧ :ليس من العلوية في حقبتها الجديدة أن يُؤمنَ أبناؤها بأنهم وحدهُم من قـد يَظفرُ بالنجاة في امتحان المآل إلى الله. إن خلود الروح ليس، في العلوية، شأناً لتدبير الحياة على الأرض وانتظامها بالعيش المُقتَسَم مع الآخرين في مجتمع. يَقطَعُ العلويون بأنهـم عافونَ عن فكرة الطوائف الناجية والشعوب المُختارة ومؤمنون بفكرة وجود الأخيار والفُضَلاء من كل المِلل والنِحَل.

مادة/٨ :العلويون في المجتمع، إننا لم نَعُدُ "نصيريّون"، نسبة ذاتُ دلالة ضدّية .فمحمد بن نصير المنسوبين إليه منذ مَطلعنا إن هو إلا بَشيرٌ و مسبوقٌ بآخرين لمبادئ الاعتقاد على نهج إسلام عرفاني. إنه آخرُ بناة النهج، وليس في حال من الأحوال، مؤسس للمجتمعية العلوية، فليست بالتحديد دعواه ما استتبع نشوء مجموع بشري بذاته حتى يُنسَب إليه.

مادة/٩ :نقِرُّ بأن تسمية "العلويون" في تعريف هويّتنا، هي جِدُّ حديثة العـهد وبأنها ـ فوق ذلك ـ ليست من دلونا الكيانيّ الخاص،"العلويون" تسمية، رغم ذلك، تكتسي قيمة موضوعية في الدلالة وفي الخصوصية وقيمة عرفية لذلك.

مادة/١٠ :إن تقَوُّمَ المُتَّبعين للعلويّة في طائفةٍ بذاتها، أمرٌ يَجِدُ جَذَرَه فيما بعدُ "ابن نصير"، فالأبَ الجاعلُ من هذه العَلويّة، بناءً ملموساً وقابلاً لأخذه من عموم الناس هو "الحسين بن حمدان الخصيبي"، عارفاً ومؤسِّساً لطريقة عيش الإيمان العلويّ، فهو بذلك

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مُوجِدُ العلوية في بعدها الطقسي. يَتواضعُ الخصيبي مع سيف الدولة الحمداني، مَلِكاً زاهراً غالِب، على حمل دعواه وترخيص شيوعها في مجتمع إمارته ويكون هذا بمثابة العهد المنشئ لطائفتنا. إن العلويين يأخذون في المُلك الحمداني معلماً لحدوثهم المجتمعي، وفي مَجده مصدراً لفخرهم وإلهامهم.

مادة١١/ :يؤمِّنُ العلويون باختلاف طُرق الفَهْم البَشَريّ للإسلام، ويُكَرِّسون في هذا الإطار اصطلاح "الإسلام الأول" هذا الإسلامُ ـ وفقَنا ـ كان ومنذ القرن السابع للميلاد قد ابتُنِيَ على أصلين: الأول إيمانيٌّ ومعرفيٌّ عبر قواعد فقه، والثاني تنظيميٌّ وأمرِيٌّ عبر منهج حكم. في خضم نظام، هكذا مُعتقديٌّ وهكذا سلطوي، فإن أي حَيْدٍ بابتناءٍ جَديد، كان محكوماً بأن يُعتَبَرَ مشروعاً ثُنائي الشقاق، ضد دين ثم ضد حكم. إن الاضطهاد أو إلا الإدانة أو الإعابة، كانت، لذلك، كلها، عاقِبة شبهَ بديهية. يبني العلويون على رؤويتهم هذه مقتضاها ويُجمِلون قصة ظهورهم في حلب ثم خروجهم منها وتغَرّبِيهم بهويتهم المُجافية لسياق محيطهم، كانت في الأصل طريقة تلقٍّ للإسلام مثل باقي الطرق البشرية، ولكن بالاختلاف المحفوف بالأخطار.

مادة١٢/ :في دستور الهوية الجديدة هذا، يُؤكدّ العلويون أن ظهوَرَهم كان تغايُراً عن أصل الانتظام السياسي والاجتماعي السائد حينه. لقد كان استمرارُهم وحفظهُم كمجموع، خَوضاً في سياقٍ لا بديل فيه عن البقاء أو الفناء. الانعزال والانغلاق صارا ـ لذلك ـ ملجأً بل ومنهجاً لحفظ الذات. عبر أحقاب اغترابهم عن مهدهم الأول وفي الأراضي الجديدة التي أتوها، لم تَنَل ضروراتُ التأقلم والتمازج مع الغير من نزعة الانعزال المُمنَهج. بل أصبحتَ ضرورة لتحقيق اقتضاء الذات بالإحساس الفعلي بهوية خاصة. في بيئتهم المحيطة. صَمَتَّ العلويون بالانكفاء، أما في بيئتهم الداخلية وللتعبير عن الشعور بالرفض الجمعي المُتبادَل بينهم وبين غيرهم، فقد نزعوا، ومحض حكم الطبيعة البشرية، إلى المبالغة واستيحاء صور المظلومِيّة في تكوين ثقافتهم حول ذاتهم وحول تتالي مراحلهم. لا يتردد العلويون المُتَجَدّدون بهذا الإعلان، عن التأكيد بأن المُبالغة الشعوريّة كانت مظهراً من مظاهر ثقافتهم الهوياتية وبأنهم في بعض ماضيهم قد استطابُوها لتعريف أنفسهم.

مادة١٣/ :هذا الإعلان يُلغي التعريفَ المأثور للعلويين عن أنفُسِهم بأنهم لم يكونوا خلال قرونٍ مَضَتْ إلا مُجرّدَ مجموعٍ مُعاقَبٍ من مُحيطه، وحصريٌّ العُرضة للاضطهاد الديني والمجتمعي. ويُحيل بدلاً عنه التعريفَ بأنهم شعبٌ ألْهمَ إيمانه وسبَّبَ نشوئه رغماً عن واقع مُضَاعَفُ السلطة دينياً ودنيوياً حوله، فَضمَين مسؤولية الكفاح في ذلك وتحمّلوا بصبرٍ وجلَّدٍ شِقَاءَه.

مادة١٤/ :إصلاحُ الهوية، هو ساعة لقول الحقيقة بأن العلويين عاشوا يخلطون في تراكم ذاكرتهم الجَمْعية بين التمييز الخارجي ضدّهم بسب الشقاق الديني، وبين العَسَف الداخلي المُمارَس بحقّهم على يَدِ نظام إقطاعيٍّ، حاكمٍ وطَبعيٍّ التغَوُّل. وهنا، وعلى سبيل الإصلاح، يَتَذكرون أنهم قد عرفوا، في أواسط وأواخر القرن التاسع عشر، وفي ثلاث مرات

مختلفة تحت العثمانيين، نظامَ إدارة مستقلة يُناهِز نظامَ الحكم الذاتي. هذه التجارب ورغم جزئيتها الجغرافية والزمنية، تؤكّد أن العلويين لم يكونوا محض مجموعة مُهَمّشة أو مَقْصيّة من غيرها وتؤكّد أن عمومُهم قد عانى من جور داخله أكثرَ مما عانى من ظُلم خارجه.

مادة ١٥/٥: روح المبالغة في رواية العلويّة لذاتها، يُعاد النظرُ في تشخيصها. هي ليست في هذا الإعلان مَحَطّ تخطئة، إنما مَحَطُّ تعريفٍ مُرتجَع بأنها كانت التجاءً من ضميرنا الجَمعيّ إلى نوع من أنصاف الحقائق وتكملتُها رسائل ضمنية لتوجيهها إلى الآخرين عن مجموعةٍ بشرية متضامنة حول قيمها، مكافِحَةٍ للبقاء في روح نشأتها الأولى ومُتَمَسِّكةٍ بنقاء خصائصها الجوهرية.

مادة ١٦/٥: يَستَنزِلُ العلويون تعريفَ ذاتِهِم الجديد من قلب الحقيقة ويُسقِطونَ، في سبيل ذلك، بأنفسهم حكمَ الموت الصادر بحق جميعهم منذ قرون بعيدة في أمر ديني مشهور بفتوى "إبن تيميّة" والمؤسّسةُ على ما قبلها من فتوى "أبو حامد الغزالي". هذه الفتوى ـ وكل الفتاوى الأخرى ـ لم تعُد تعنينا ولم تعُد سبباً من أسباب توجيه مُجتمعيّتنا ولا حتى دينيّتنا. ندينُها دائماً ولكن باسم القيم الإنسانية السيّدة، لا باسم الحفاظ على العَلَويّة. العلويون، لم نعُد غافلين عن حقيقة أن تلك الفتاوى لم تعرف، خلال أكثر من سبعة قرون من عمرها، وعَدا تطبيق محدود وقديم، استقرار منهجي أو فقهيّ. يَتيمة ومعزولة، لم تأخُذ بها "السُنية السورية" التي حازت وخلال عهودٍ مديدة كل المَقْدِرات المادية والسياسية لإجرائها في التطبيق وإهلاكُ العلويين. تلك الفتاوى وما شابَهها ليست من روح الإسلام في شيء، وهي تُمثِّلُ من أفتى بها وحسب وليس أهلَ السُّنة. من الآن فصاعداً، لا يُقيمُ العلويون اعتباراً لتلك الفتاوى وهي لم تعد ملجأ لهم في حجّة، كما لم تعُد مصدراً من مصادر قلقهم الجيليّ.

مادة ١٧/٥: وثيقة الإصلاح هذه، تَستَبطِن بالإجمال روحَ التصالح مع الذات. يُعلنُ العلويون نهائياً أن سَلائفَ الاضطهاد الديني التي تعرّضوا لها فعلاً، وفي كل مراحلِهِم، لم تعُد عنصراً من عناصر تعريف هويّتهم، بل عنصراً من ذاكرتهم لِيَرفِدَ قيَمهم الرافضة لكل أشكال الاضطهاد من أيٍّ كان وضدّ أي كان.

محور ثاني: العلويون وسوريا

مادة ١٨/٥: إعلان الهوية الجديدة للعلويين في هذه الوثيقة، يُصادفُ التقاء مَسيرَين مشهودين نحو غدٍ وادعٍ للأرض السورية. فبقية السوريين يَبتَدِرونَ بالانتفاض، قوة الغضب المُحقّ، أما العلويون فَيَبتَدِرون بالإصلاح الهُوِياتي، قوة سلطة الضمير الجماعي.

مادة ١٩/٥: يَرى العلويون أن المجتمعيّة الطوائفية في سوريا ذات الطوق المُرهَف من الطوائف، وبالأخَصّ دينيّة، تَنزَع كي تكونَ قاعدةً تفضيل لأهلها وفي حالات الخلاف ترقى

إلى قاعدة احتكام بينهم. كلّ مجموعة تـتـخذ، بنوع من الروح العامـة، حكماً مسبقاً قبـلَ الأخرى. نعلـن خروجَنا من نظام التعايش بنزعة الأحكام المُسبقة هذا، ونادي في عيشنا مع سوانا بنظام الاحتكام إلى قيم الإخوّة الإنسانية والمساواة بالمواطنَة والحرية.

مادة/٢٠ :يَنشد العلويون، عبر هذه الوثيقة، وقوعَ مراجعة مَصدَريّة لسيرة النشوء الرسمي في مراحله المتتالية، لما هو حالياً الدولة السورية. إن من بين جميع القرارات المُوَقّـعة لتكوينها، منذ رحيل العثمانيين وحتى رحيل الفـرنسيين، لا يُوجدَ بينها ما هو صادرٌ بالفعـل عن مَحض الإرادة الجميعية لأبنائها، وحدَهم ودون سواهم من شريك أو وكيل. يُذَكّـرُ العلويون، هنا، بأن أهمّ تأسيسات هذه الدولة كالحدود وكالجنسية وحتى كالعلم الوطني، وكذلك أول دستور، قد صَدرت عن غير توقيع سوري صرف. يَحـقٌ، لذلك، على هذه التأسيسات الرجوعَ عليها، إن لم يـكن للتعديل فيها فلإعادة تكريسها وترسيمها بهيئة سورية مُفوَّضَةٍ ومَحفليّة.

مادة/٢١ :إن من قبيل إصلاح العلويون لهويّتهـم، أن يَشهدَ العلويون بأن كل مُلـمَّة قد تأتي بالسوء على كيانـيّـة الدولة السورية ستجِدُ جَذرَها في إشكالية الاندماج الوطني. إن في تعريفنا للدولة كأداة لإدارة الاختلاف بتكوينات المُجتمـع، تأكيد على تمييز إدارة هذا الاختلاف عن تكريسه، أو بالمقابل عن إفنائه بالقهر أو بالتكاذب والنكران. كتطبيق وظيفيّ، لا رمزيّ لذلك، تكامَلت قيمة "المُواطَنة" كضامن لحالة "التكوُّن والانتظام والدوام" في المجتمعات الصائرة دولة. هذه القيمة الآمرة لا تَتَجَسَّدُ في معاني التضامن والتساوي والانتماء، بل في النظام الذي يكفل استمرار التضامن والتساوي والانتماء. فالاندماج الوطني ليس مُجرّدَ مَعانٍ بل نظامٌ لاستمرار المعاني، ويكون مُسبقَ الوضوح والإدراك، وذاتيّ الدوام مهما تقلّبت الصروف والأحوال.

مادة/ ٢٢ :يَشهدَ العلويون بأن الأرضَ السوريةِ، لم تعرف حتى العام ١٩٢٠ إلا النمط القهري والتذويبي لحالة "الكون معاً" مُتجسداً في الإمارات والسّلطنات والممالك من كل نوع، ثم بعد مرحلة الدولة الحديثة ـ وإلى اليوم ـ نَمطاً مُبهَماً، إجمالياً وتنـكريّ، وذلك عبر فعل النظم الطغيانية أو فعل ثقافة الأحكام المُسبقة. إزاء ذلك، وفي الحياة اليومية المُتلاحقة وتراكم الذاكرة قيد النشوء، كانت القيَم السياسية ومعاني الاندماج الوطني عند مجموعات السوريين تَتَصَنّعُ عبر غَمـرات من القواسم الذهنية والنفسية المشتركة التي أنتجت رابطاً، هو في أقصى أمره تراكميّ، عرقيٌ وعاطفي كما ويشغل الدين ـ والإسلام بخاصة ـ حيّزاً كبيراً بل وضميراً فيه. الإسلام، وبقطبه السُّنّيّ تحديداً، لم يكن غالبية مجتمعية فقط، بل عاملاً قطعياً ومُلهِـماً في قبول العبور إلى مرحلة الدولة الموضوعة ذات الدستور وسيادة الشعب وانتخاب المُشـّرِع والعدالة المُفوَّضة وفصل السلطات، وتفسير ذلك أن هذه المفاهيم الكبرى هي جميعُها مستوردة من الغير البعيد وتُراها في سياق تكريسها كقواعدَ دستورية قد اقترنت بتلك القاعدة الشهيرة معنىً في دساتيرنا المتتالية وهي أن الإسلام هو دين الدولة الرسمي وملحقاتها النصية المتعلقة بدين رئيس الدولة ومصادر التشريع، قاعدة، إن صريحة أو ضمنية،

لا يمكن إدراك مغزى وجودها إلا لجهة التدليل على أن الإسلامَ هو ـ أو كان هو ـ المصدر التأسيسي لقيم الانتظام السياسي فضلاً عن الثقافي والذهني.

مادة ٢٢/مكرر :طالما الإسلامُ يَتَنَوَّعُ إلى حدّ التشاحن، وطالما يَمضي الزمن طويلاً بعد توطين المفاهيم الكبرى المُستورَدة ويَتركنـ إطار الدولة، فإن تلك القاعدة وملحقاتها تـفقدُ لـزومَها، والعلويون في هذا الإعلان، يؤكّدون على تحييدها وعلى انقضاء علّة تضمينها في النظام الدستوري. يكون الإسلام بكل طيوفه مصدراً للقيم والمبادئ، إنما لا يكون أساساً لجَمعٍ، باسم الدولة، من هم باسمه ذاتِه متخالِفون.

مادة ٢٣/ :يَتَمسّكُ العلويون بقيم المساواة والحرية والمُوَاطَنة، وبفكرة أنها مبادئُ فعلية لتنظيم الكيان الاجتماعي ولحِفـظ أعضائه، وليس مجرّدُ مُثْلٍ سامية دون مضمون تطبيقي. يُنادون لذلك بـ"العلـمانية" باعتبار كونها ـ كالديمقراطية ـ إحدى آليات تشغيل هذه القيم، لا رديفاً لها أو نوعاً منها، وباعتبارها فصلاً وظيفياً للدين عن الدولة، وليس جذرياً أو ضدّيّ. لا نؤمن ـ مع ذلك ـ بأيّ مُطالَبةٍ بالعلمانية" ما لم تقترن بتعريفٍ تأصيليّ لمفهومها ومَغازي فكرتها معرفة التوفيق بين الاعتقاد الديني الذي يَعني تمَاثُلَ النـاس بهِ، وبين القواعد التي تعني تسييرَ تَغايُرهـم وتنوّعهم ووجودهم بحدّ ذاته ضمن الكيان الاجتماعي. هذه القواعد، خلافاً للقواعد المحضِ دينية، تقتضي كونـها واضحةٌ ويقينية، ومباشرة التوسُّل بالنسبة للمحكومين بها، وكونها قابلة لتحقيق المسؤولية عن سَنّها وعن تنفيذها وكونها ـ بالتالي ـ من وضع المعنيين بها وفقاً لكل مصادر استلهامهم لمعاني الخير والإنصاف:

• كل قاعدة وضعية تستمد مشروعيتها وصلاحيتها للنفاذ من توافقِها مع قاعدة أعلى تتوافق بدورها مع الأعلى حتى يتوقف التصاعد عند قاعدة أخيرة، كبرى وتأسيسية هي الدستور.

• هذه القاعدة لا سَنَدَ ملموس لها إلا ما هو نوعٌ من كل شيء، يرضى به الجميع ويُبقيهم معاً، وإن في هذا الحيّز الأثيريّ الصفة، يَجدُ الدين مكانَه.

• إن القاعدة الوضعية ليست بذاتها عنواناً لفضيلة، فهي في آخر الأمر وسيلة مُثْلى لحل النزاعات، أما الدينية فقد تكون مصدراً لها.

• لا يجوز الاعتقاد الديني أن يُشَكّلَ تهديداً أو انتقاصاً من شروط الانتماء للكيان الاجتماعي، ولا، بالمقابل، امتيازاً قِبَلَ الغير.

• يكون الدين، لكل ذلك، مصدراً معنوياً وقيمياً وثقافياً وغير مباشر للقواعد، ويستوي في هذا المصدر الدين الإسلامي مع المسيحي وباقي الديانات.

مادة ٢٤/ :إن العلويين وقد أبّرَأوا ذاكرَتهمُ الجماعية من سِـيَرَ الاضطهاد، فعليـُها ورمزيُها، يُبادرون، حبّاً بالحقيقة ودونتها شرف الوجود في الحياةِ إلى إبراء "السُنّيّة السورية" من

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كلَّ فعلٍ اقتُرِفَ يوماً على سبيلِ الاضطهادِ أو على سبيلِ العدوانِ أو التغريبِ. فكلُّ ما وَقَعَ من ذلك، إن معنوياً أو مادياً، آتَتهُ آيادي الغرباءِ اللذين مَرّوا بالأرضِ السوريةِ من غُزاةٍ وطامعين. ليس السُنيّون من إخوةِ تُرابِهِم السوري، مَن آذى العلويين بل كان الغرباءُ عنه ومنذ مطلع القرن العشرين رَحَلوا. لا يُخطئُ الشعبُ الذي كان في ذاتِ نشوئه ثورةَ ثنائيةِ التحَدّي، هويةَ ظُلّامِه، وإن شعباً قَبِلَ في سبيل ما آمَن به خوضَ أخطارِ الفناء، لا يُقيمُ إيمانَه على الشكوى ونَدْب ما لاقاه في مسيرةٍ بقائِه. عاش السُنّةَ السوريون شِقاقهَمُ الديني مع العلويين، وكان بالطبع مُتبادَل، في نَمَطٍ ساكنٍ طوال قرون، ولم يُهَدَّدوا يوماً، وجودَهم.

مادة ٢٥/٣: في هذا الإعلانِ، يُسبِغُ العلويون على مسألة اشتِمَالِهِم، ضمن منطقة الساحل تحديداً من شبه دولة مستقلة أثناء الانتداب الفرنسي وتحت اسم "دويلة العلويين" بين ١٩٢٢/١٩٢٠ و ١٩٢٥، واسم "دولة العلويين" بين ١٩٢٥ و ١٩٣٠، واسم "حكومة اللاذقية" بين ١٩٣٠ و ١٩٣٦، يُسبِغونَ صفة العنصر من عناصر تعريفهم الهويّاتي. قصة هذا الكيان لم تعُد مصدرَ إشكالٍ لسُمعة العلويين السوريةِ، بل من الآن فصاعداً، هي مَحَطُّ استذكارِهِم وإقرارِهم، وهي وفق حقيقتها، مصدرٌ لقَرَارة ضميرهِم وثِقتِهم بقِيَمِهم. بمنطق الأمور وليس بأخذ الموقف منها، يُذكِّرُ العلويون أن الأرضَ السورية المُبَيَّضة، وابتداءً من ١٩٢٠، من الوجود العثماني، قد خضعت ليَدِ الفرنسيين التي أجرَت فيها ترسيماتٍ مُتعاقبة في خمس مَراحل:

- ٣١ آب ١٩٢٠: ولاية "بيروت العثمانية" تصيرُ في قسم جنوبي منها "دولة لبنان الكبير"، وفي الشمال المُتَبَقي، وهو ساحل سورية الحالية حيث يتوَطّن أغلب العلويين، يُقام وفي ذات اليوم ما سُمّيَ حينها "حكومة اللاذقية المستقلة".

- ١ تموز ١٩٢٢: أقيمَت، والهوية السورية لم تكن بعدُ قد أحْدِثَت رسمياً، "الفيدرالية السورية" من أقاليم "دمشق" و"حلب" ومتصرفية الزور و"جبل الدروز" مع إعادة إدخال إقليم الساحل فيها باسم "اللاذقية".

- ٥ كانون الأول ١٩٢٤: قرار إقامة دولة "سوريا" رسمياً وإحداث جنسيّتها الخاصة. مع أول يوم من سنة ١٩٢٥، تَدخلُ حيّز السريان وضمن نفس الفيدرالية الخماسية مع استقلالية مُضافة لإقليم "جبل الدروز"، وكذلك لإقليم "اللاذقية" بِمَنحه صفة الدويلة ولكن بِمُسَمّى "دولة العلويين".

- ١٤ أيار ١٩٣٠: تَتماوج الفيدرالية السورية بمنح "دويلة العلويين" نظام حكم خاص يُعادلُ دستوراً مُنتِجاً للسلطات ومع عَلَمٍ يرمز إلى ذاتيتها الخاصة ضمن الدولة الفيدرالية وباسم "حكومة اللاذقية" تحديداً. ونفس التطوير يجري على إقليم "جبل الدروز" الذي اختصَّ بدوره بنظام حكم وبراية ذاتية. أما الأقاليم الثلاثة الأخرى فتُشكلُ فيدرالية متساوية بنظام حكم واحد وعَلَمٍ تَتَوسّطُه ثلاث نجمات، ترمز كلُّ واحدة منها إلى إقليم.

- ٥ كانون الأول ١٩٣٦: ذكرى إقامة الدولة السورية، سلطة الانتداب تمنح السوريين استقلالَهم وتقوم بتذويب التشكيل المُتَماوج السابق في اتحاد يُجرّدُ حكومتي اللاذقية وجبل الدروز من دستوريهما ومن عَلَميهما كذلك، وتعيدهما أقاليم متساوية مع أشقائها الأخرى إلى دولة سورية جديدة ومُستقلة، ودائماً فيدرالية، كما ويَتَكَرّس لها عَلَم النجمات الثلاث، كعَلَم لاستقلال الدولة ولكن ذات الأقاليم الخمسة.

ثم يَخْلُصُ الاستقلال مع جلاء سلطة الانتداب، ولكن البلاد تستمرُ على ذات رموز المَنْح الفرنسي في ١٩٣٦ من دستور وعَلَم ثلاثيُّ النجمات، وتنظيم فيدراليّ أيضاً.

وعلى ذلك، فإن الكيانَ العلويَّ الخاصَّ قد كان عنصراً مثل غيره مأخوذاً في السياق، ولم يكن تجسيداً سياسياً وجغرافياً لإرادة عَلَويّة بالتخلّي عن حاضنة الأرض السورية أو إعاقة تَشَكُّلها نحو ما كان سيصيرُ سوريا الدولة. كما أنه لم يبلغ حتى في أقصى مستوى استقلاليته (١٩٣٠) صفة الدولة الكاملة السيادة والهوية. يؤكّدُ العلويون في إصلاحهم هذا الموقفَ الذي يُعتَدُ به لأسلافهم من قضية إعادة تجميع الأقاليم السورية في كيان مترابط وآيلٍ إلى الاستقلال (١٩٣٦)، هو موقفُ جُموعهم الفعليين والمُعبّر عنه في وثيقة كبرى مُوَقّعة في ٢ حزيران ١٩٣٦ ومُوَجّهة إلى مرجعية الانتداب، وتُعلِن تمسكَ طائفة العلويين بالبلاد السورية المُوَحَّدة وتعَلُّقِهِم بمدى ترابها. أما الوثيقة المشهورة المُطالِبَة بالافتراق عن تلك البلاد، والتي يَعتصِمُ بها البعض لإعابة العلويينَ في سوريّتهم، فهي صادرة عن أعضاء المجلس التمثيلي لحكومة اللاذقية ممن فيهم غيرُ العلويين، كما وأنها مُوَقّعَة بتاريخ أيام بعد تاريخ الوثيقة الأولى التي تَدلّ على أنها هي ما جَسّدَ الفعل، وأن الثانية كانت ردّ الفعل، وهي لا تعدو عن كونها، بذلك، لائحة استئناف سياسي لمجموعة من المُجرّدين من امتيازهم السلطوي وليست، كما الأولى، مُطالبةً صادرةً من خالص الضمير الجماعي للعلويين.

يُدمجُ العلويون في عناصر تعريف هويتهم المجتمعية، اعتزازهم بكيانٍ حين حَازَ جهازُ جهازه السلطوي الخاص في وقته، مَضى بدستور متضمّنٍ إعلاناً خاصاً للحقوق والحريات الأساسية، جعَل من جميع السكان، ونصفُهم إلا القليل كانوا من غير العلويين، مواطنين متساوين، ولم يشهَد، فوقها، أن آحاداً من العلويين أو من جماعاتهم نادى باضطهاد البقية أو إقصائهم بحجة أنها دولتهم. وكذا اعتزازَهم بتأييد إلغاء هذا الكيان حين امتحان وحدة التراب السوري ومجدُ غَدِه، لهم.

مادة ٢٦/٣: لا يأخذُ العلويون من أيّ نظام سياسي كان، أسباباً لهويتهم أو لسُمعتهم أو حتى لحِفْظهم واستحقاقهم، ولا هُم يُعطوه، بالمقابل، سَنَداً أو مصدراً خاصاً لوجوده. كلُّ نظام يُقاسُ في طابِعه وفق حقيقة تكوينه وحقيقة اتفاقه مع المعايير الأمثل لقواعد إنتاج السلطة وممارستها. نُنادي بأن تقومَ السلطةُ السياسية وفقَ أصولٍ تأسيسيّةٍ ووسائلَ ديمقراطية. إنها وإن قامَت كذلك، فلا تَملك شرعيّةً ذاتيّةً بل شرعيّةً مُفَوَّضةً من مجموع القواعد والقيم والضرورات التي تجعلُ من المجتمع دولة. لا تملك حق الدفاع عن النفس وهي مسؤولة بالنتائج ودون الحاجة إلى رابطٍ سَبَبيّ. ليس القمعُ ولا السلاحُ من وسائل مُمارسَتِها ولا من وسائل مُعارَضَتِها كذلك. كما وليس من قواعد إنتاج السلطاتِ في الدولة ما هو مُفتَرَضُ

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مُسبَقاً في صوابه وصَلاحِه، وما هو مُجمَلٌ وغيرُ قابلٍ للتعبير عنه مُتَقَدِّماً بأحكامٍ مُدرَكةٍ من جميع مَن سيَخضعونَ لهذه السلطات، وينطبق ذلك على الإيديولوجيات بأنواعـها.

مادة ٢٧/٥: من أجل سوريا وفي خصوص الكون منها ولها، هذا الإعلان لإصلاح الهوية العلوية هو في تكييفه الإجمالي، إجابةٌ على فئتـين من الأسئلة: الأولى، تلك التي تَناساها العلويون أو تَغيَّبُ عنهم أو يَتَجاهلوها. والثانية هي تلك التي يَطرحُها غيرهُم من السوريين وإن من شأن الإجابة بهذا الإصلاح عليها أن تكون باعثاً لطمَأنينة المُتَطلِّعين إلى بقـاء العلويين معهم في "عـهد اشـتراكٍ جديد"، وللمُتَطلِّعين إلى غير ذلك، باعـثاً إلى قلقهم أو إلى تردُّدهـم.

محور ثالث: العلويون والله

مادة ٢٨/٥: لسنا في هذا الإعلان الكيانيّ دعاةً دينيين، إنما شرُّاحاً ونَختص بتعريف استقلال العَلويّة عن الشيعيّة وعن السُّنيّة، سواهما. إنه في البـدء استقلالٌ أصيلٌ ومَصدريٌّ وغير ناجم عن تطوّر أو تَغَيُّر في تكييف العلويّة لذاتها. ثم إن العلويّة، إسلامٌ عرفاني إذا تُنبِئُ مناهجُه عن إن كل الجزئيّات والكليّات تَسـتَبطِنُ مَلَأ الله، ويكون المُؤمِنُ، لذلك، مُخَطَراً بنَذير يَهمِز داخله لاستقصاء هذا الملأ والعرفان به. أما مناهج الفقهي كما نراها، تخلُصُ إلى أن الله قد دلّ على مَلائه، فيكون المُؤمِنُ مُبَلَّغاً ـ وليس مُنَبَّهاً ـ برسالة مُحَدَّدة، يَعقِلها ويُقِرُّ بها داخله. إن ما يَتَوَلّى الإسلام العرفانيّ هو الانشغالُ فيما "يكون الله"، أما الفقهي فهو انـشغالٌ بما "يكون مِنَ الله".

مادة ٢٩/٥: لا يَجعلُ الاشتراكَ في بعض المَصادرِ الشكليّة أو الحَدَثيّة أو حتى التأصيليّة، من العلويّة بالمعنى الديني والمُعتَقدي، شيعيّة. إن الإسلامَ لتطبيقه الدنيوي، قد تطَلَّبَ تَدخُّلاً بشرياً بالتفسير والتأصيل على مصادره الصميمة وذلك لابتناء منهاج قابل لإدراك عقول المُتَّبِعين وإلجاء قلوبهم، وفي هذا السياق اشتُهِرَت مدرستان قطبان: هما السُّنيّة القائمة على مبدأ "تقديم النقل على العقل" بداعي الحفاظ على التماسك وعلى القداسة التي تأبى بطبيعيتها منطق المُغايرة الذهنية، والشيعيّة، وعلى المبدأ المُعاكس من "تقديم العقل على النقل" بداعي الحفاظ على دَوامية الإسلام ولزوم إسباغ القداسة على التفسيرات والاشتقاقات التي يفرضها تجَدُّد الأزمان. يعني العلويين، هنا، تمييزٌ بين المدرستين مختلفٌ عن كل ما هو سائدٌ في بابه، وهو الأسبقية الزمنية لظهور إحداهما على الأخرى.

إنها الشيعية، ومع بدايات القرن الثامن، ثم أتبَعَتها السُّنية كمَذهب مُحَدَّد بذاته لتأصيل الإسلام وتطبيقه في الدنيا. قبلَهُما كان الجميعُ مسلمينَ دون أقطاب تَطَيُّف، ولكن بالمقابل دون منهاج متكامل التفاصيل. لأنها أول مَن أدخَل الإسلام في نَمَط الحَلقات والتَدارُس، ومع ترخيصها الاجتهادَ والتخليقَ في دلالات النصوص والقواعد، كانت الشيعية نوعاً من المَمَرّ أو المنطلق لكل من أراد الإسهام في ابتناء طرائق "أو" مناهج تطبيقه البشري، وذلك تكييفاً أو تجديداً أو حتى تسييساً. لم تخرج العلويّة منها، بل مَرّت عليها، وكان ميمّن مَرّوا بعض

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المؤسسين الأوّلَ للسُّنّية نفسِها.

مادة ٣٠/٣ :ليست الباطنية العلويّة منهاجَ إيمان سِريّ، بل إيماناً بالسرّ الذي يَستَبطِن مَلأ الله ومُطلقَ كُليَّتِه. هذه الباطنية مَقصورة أبداً على التَعَبُّد إلى الله ولا نُدافعُ عنها بل نُفَسِّرها:

• يؤمِن العلويون بأن الله يَسمو على فكرة كونه ووجوده بذاته، وأنه ـ الجَلالُ ـ لا يُقاسُ لابتدائه إطلاقٌ أو تصوُّر. إنه سابق إذاً على كلّ تجلّياته للبشر فيما أوحى به من كتبٍ مُبينةٍ ومن رسلٍ مُبلغين.

• يؤمِن العلويون بأن الخَلْقَ مُعجِزة ويَجِلُّ عن أن يكونَ مَحضُ منظومةٍ حُكميّةٍ بين راع يرسمُ التدابيرَ، ورعيّةٌ تنضبط بها. إن الحكمَ هو من مظاهر الخلق وليس من جوهره، ولا يُعَرّفُ الخالقُ مُنتهاه ولا يُعرَّفُ مُقدَّماً منتهى الإيمان به، لكنّه يُلهِمُ أسرارَ الطريق إليه، فالباطنية طريقة اعتقادٍ بهذا التصوّر عن كيفية كونُ الإيمانُ بالغاً تمَامَه.

• يؤمِن العلويون بتفسيرٍ باطنيّ للنصوص القُرآنية، وليس بنصوص مُوازية مِنه له، أو ثنائية الوجوه به أو متَعَدّدة الطبقات فيه. باطنية التفسير هذه، ليست تَفَوُّضاً بما لا سنَد له، ولا تَفَوُّجاً على معاني النصوص، بل تفسيراً استنشائيّاً للمعاني وليس مجرد استنباطها بذات المنهجية على نصوص اللغة البشرية. إن كلُّ نصٍّ مُوَجّهٌ لتنظيم مجموع غيرُ مُعيَّنٍ من البشر، يكون بالضرورة مُرَمَّزاً وبالغُ التكثيف، فيَلزَمُ تفكيكه بشروح نافذة إلى أفهام وضمائر المُخاطَبين به. فحتى نصوص القوانين الوضعية العادية، لولا قاضياً يستقرؤها ويُعيد تَخليقُها، لبَقيت إجمالاً غيرّ قابل للاستخدام والتوَسُّل من الجميع، فكيف ـ إذاً ـ بنصوصٍ إلهية تُشِعُّ بما لا يُقاسُ في تكثيفه ولا في مدى شموله للمُخاطَبين.

مادة ٣١/٣: بحدّ ذاتها، فالباطنية طريقة يُعتَقَدُ أنها مُثلى في اقتضاء كنَه الأسرار المُعجِزة للخَلْق والعرفان بها، إنها إيمانٌ ومنهجٌ كذلك.

مادة ٣٢/٣ :ليسَ العلويون من يُوصفُ بالباطنيّ، بل العلويّة في بعدِها المُعتقدِيّ، وبالدلالة الإصطلاحية، تجدُ الباطنية جذرَها في استبطان آيات الخلق لأسرارها، وليس في إبطان الإنسان لكنّه ذاتِه وإضمارها في مجرد اعتقاده الديني. إن السرّ الإيمانيّ وفق العلويّة، لا يخصُّ الحياة المجتمعية مع الآخرين وهو ليس شأناً مجتمعياً ولا يكون.

مادة ٣٣/٣ :إن القرآن المُنزَلُ على "مُحمّد" و بنصّه الجاري بين أيدي جميع المسلمين هو الكتاب المقدّس الأوحَد للعلويّة والعلويين، وهو مُناط قسبتَهيم للإسلام. لا تتمتع كتبُ

الشروح ووصفِ المناهج والطرائق بصفة القَداسة، إنها مَصدريّةٌ ومُبَجّلة.

مادة ٣٤/٤: ليس للسرّانيّة الخَصيصة بالاعتقاد العلويّ، تطبيقاتٍ حياتية. لم تكن يوماً ولن تكونْ أساساً لرابطة برامجية أو تخطيطية تقودُ بطريقةٍ مُمَنهَجة شأن الطائفة العلوية بالإجمال في مُحيطها الاجتماعي والثقافي والذهني. ليس في العلوية ولا منها ما يمكن أن يَجعلَ منها "مُنظمةً لله" بل طريقاً إليه.

مادة ٣٥/٥: يُعلنْ أصحابَ العلويّةِ أن استِقاءَها من باقي التَوحيديّات هو مَصدرُ اكتمالٍ لها، وليس مَحَط تنويهٍ وإشارة فقط. وأن هذه التَوحيديّات بالنسبة لها هي تبليغُ وَحي من الله، ولكن مع اعتبار أن الله ـ سُبحانه ـ يبقى مُنَزّهاً في كُليّته وفي تَجَليّاتِه عن تحديدات الزمان وتَتاليه. يؤمنُ الإسلامُ الفقهيُّ ـ وفقَنا ـ بأنَ الإسلامَ هو خاتمة الـوَحيّ الإلهي ومُنـتـهى تبليغه، ويؤمـنُ الإسلامُ العرفانيُّ بأن اللهَ لا يَتَتالى في تبليغه ولا يَقتصرُ فيه ويَجِلُّ عن حاجةٍ لاستلحاقه. إن العلوية تـغتَني بالتوحيديّات ما سوى الإسلام، وليست فقط تَتأكَّد عبرها.

اشتراط ختامي: إن إعلانَ إصلاح الهويّةِ العَلويّةِ، صادراً ومُصادَقاً في هذه الوثيقة، هو في جوهره رَجـعٌ لصوت الضمير الجماعي لأبناء العلويين، أبنـاءُ الأرضِ السورية وشـقـيقوا أهلها، هذا الصوت كان يقول: علويون جُدُد، هم مَعبرٌ إلى سوريا جديدة.

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