

Rosa Burç

NON-TERRITORIAL AUTONOMY AND GENDER EQUALITY: THE CASE OF THE AUTONOMOUS ADMINISTRATION OF NORTH AND EAST SYRIA - ROJAVA

ABSTRACT

The Kurdish-led autonomous entity called Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (NES) – also known as Rojava – considers women's liberation an imperative condition for shaping a democratic society. The practice of autonomy in NES shares strong resemblances with Non-Territorial Autonomy (NTA) models; however, it introduces a novelty in the role of women as active agents in building a plurinational democracy. This paper examines (1) the intellectual and political origins of the political role ascribed to women in autonomous administrations and (2) how the practice of autonomy in Rojava has advanced women's rights by shedding light on both institutional implementation of women's rights, as well as the creation of (non)-territorial spaces of women's emancipation within the autonomous model. The argument made is that the conceptual framework of the Rojava model goes beyond the Kurdish question and can be considered an attempt to resolve a democratic deficit of liberal democratic nation-states through bringing together solutions that address the intertwined subordination of minorities and women.

KEYWORDS

women, representation, plurinational democracy, non-territorial autonomy, Kurdish question, Syria, Rojava, PKK, minorities

Introduction

Divided between Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria and rendered minorities in the respective nation-states, Kurds in the Middle East have been the largest stateless people in the world struggling with the question of self-determination and recognition. While the emergence of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) in the early 1990s institutionalized a first accommodation of Kurdish rights and demands for self-determination in form of territorial autonomy, the Kurdish political movement with its roots in Turkey has been developing an alternative articulation of autonomy known with the twin-concepts of Democratic Confederalism and Democratic Autonomy. Focusing on societal emancipation and the deconstruction of dominant categories that presume the conflation of territory and nation, the alternative proposal for autonomy shares strong epistemological resemblances with modalities of Non-Territorial Autonomy (NTA), yet at the same time introduces new approaches to the question of minority representation.

More than 100 years after the Sykes-Picot agreement that led to the division of land in the Middle East, today the same region is yet again undergoing a reshuffling of national boundaries, redefinition of collective identities and fundamental bottom-up questioning of the order of domination as imposed by nation-states. Not least with the Arab uprisings in 2011 the Middle East proved to be a vital political arena of contentious politics. In the case of Syria, the upheavals created a vacuum of power that facilitated the building of alternative structures in the wake of the local resistance against the Islamic State group in Syria. In this context, the wider global audience was exposed to the emergence of a political system evocative of what Murray Bookchin, exponent of libertarian municipalism, had advocated back in the 1990s for the American context, a “new politics that is unflinchingly public, electoral on a municipal basis, confederal in its vision and revolutionary in its character” (2015: 86). In a completely different geography and almost three decades later, these ideas were now expanded on and implemented by systematically marginalized groups, historically disregarded and deprived from participating in the making of the modern Middle East, such as religious and ethnic minorities, as well as women.

The Kurdish-led autonomous entity called Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (NES) – also known as Rojava – advocates grassroots organization and women’s liberation as an imperative condition for democratization in general and minority protection specifically. Contrary to a widely spread scholarly approach to the Kurdish question as either an issue of territory, nationalism, or a human rights issue constrained within the politics of one of the four nation-states, this novel articulation of the intertwined subordination of minorities and women as implemented in the Rojava model promises to contribute to the wider scholarly discussions on the ways of overcoming the democracy deficit inherent to (liberal) nation-states. The attempt at providing minority protection and gender equality through the creation of participatory spaces as spheres of *coming into existence* for underrepresented groups, like for example minorities within the Kurdish population, articulations of non-territorial autonomy as practiced in Rojava challenge existing Eurocentric categories of the imaginative geography that is mostly associated with feudalism, sectarianism and patriarchy, which as a consequence has thus far overshadowed a genuine scholarly engagement with how spheres of freedom, creativity and minority agency are created bottom-up, despite conflict and through the re-articulation of dominant categories of the (Western) nation-state paradigm.

More specifically, while widely cited as a women’s revolution, this paper aims to shed light on why gender equality is considered an imperative condition for minority protection by the Kurdish movement, in order to question the extent to which the Rojava case advances discussions on plurinational democracies, as well as minority participation in deeply divided societies.

Starting with a brief contextualization of the so-called Kurdish question within the scholarly debates on territoriality, nation-state, social movements and the Middle East, this paper will assess the ideational origins of the political role ascribed to women in the autonomy concepts as proposed by the

Kurdish movement under the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Following an analysis of the ways its institutionalization in the autonomous administration in Rojava has advanced women's rights and gender equality, this paper further argues that the Rojava case not only manifests a modality of NTA to resolve the so-called Kurdish question without reinstating the nation-state paradigm. But rather should be evaluated as the expansion of the NTA framework by including women's agency and gender equality as an imperative precondition for fostering plurinational democracies, hence demonstrates a case of cardinal importance for the study of non-territorial autonomy models.

Territoriality, Nation-States, and the Kurdish Conundrum in the Study of the Middle East

The Kurdish context offers a broad spectrum of opportunities to research alternative conceptualizations of democracy, minority representation, limitations to the nation-state system and to challenge the Fukuyamian thesis of the "end of history" (1992) as well as Samuel Huntington's prophecy of a "clash of civilizations" (1993). Yet, usually referred to as either the "Kurdish problem", "Kurdish issue" or "Kurdish Question" (Gunter 2019; Bozarslan 2012), scholarly literature in the field of political science has thus far mostly engaged with the reasons that led to the lack of a Kurdish nation-state and its consequences embedded within the framework of security studies or human rights issues. This approach has led to a situation where politics from below put forward by communities within the wider predominantly Kurdish geography have been vastly disregarded or marginalized when studying popular politics in the Middle East. Methodological nationalism, hence conceiving the nation-state as the sole unit of analysis, further has led to a situation where minority groups in the margins of the dominant nation, which enjoys cultural hegemony, were mostly seen as passive recipients or victims rather than active agents in reassembling political and societal constellations during and after conflict.

This approach in the study of the Middle East can be considered as an academic continuum of the expansion of the modern nation-state system to the Middle East. Commenced after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, new categories of statehood and a changing political geography were introduced. Some borders were designated along railroad tracks that initially supposed to unite peoples, then were used to delineate new nation-states, hence divide entire cities, villages and families, as is the case with the Turkish-Syrian border. An imaginative geography, as Edward Said calls it in his seminal work *Orientalism* (1978), became the main driving force of the colonial constellation and its sites of appropriation, domination, and contestation in the region (Gregory 2000). Hence, statelessness, status-lessness, denied citizenship and precarious minority rights have since then been prevailing themes of the so-called Kurdish question in the Middle East.

Although historiography puts the concept of the nation-state in contrast to so-called territorial states, it is common sense that all states are claimants

of a certain territory; hence nation-states do not constitute an exception but more so the norm (Dunn 1995). According to Karl Deutsch the idea of territory is mainly a political projection, nonetheless because “no person can be born at more than one spot on the map. The actual place of birth has the size of a bed or a room, not the size of a country” (1970: 18). Especially with regards to the concept of the nation, land transforms into a component of ideology and becomes a crucial aspect of the national project. The nation-state paradigm therefore is inherently built on the idea of territoriality, as well as the dichotomy of majority and minority populations, which eventually constitutes an asymmetrical hegemonic relationship between the dominant nation and its minority. Although the literature offers a wide spectrum of divergent theoretical principles and categories on nation-states, most paradigms analytically depart from a nation-state centrism as an unchallengeable principle. Whilst this epistemology has been an obstacle in accounting for the impact of globalization and transnationalism trends in the past, it continues to pose an analytical difficulty today when attempting to address inherent weaknesses of the nation-state paradigm itself. The latter is also the case for social movement research that epistemologically regards movements as actors of nation-states, hence reinstates an analytical hegemony that lies within the perceptions of the dominant nation. Predominantly categorized as a nationalist or separatist movement and mostly neglected in the study of social movements as agents in processes of democratic deliberation, the Kurdish movement’s articulation of non-territorial autonomy in Syria is a case that challenges also existing scholarly approaches to social movements (Gunes 2012; Watts 2009; 2006).

Out of this predicament, the Kurdish political movement, which operates from within the four nation-states, as well as from the diaspora, has developed a counter-hegemonic project beyond the rigid state vs. society dichotomy, where “society” becomes interchangeable with “dominant nation”, and proposes relational spheres of autonomy, where alternative articulation of democracy and minority participation becomes the means of recognition and *coming into existence* for systematically marginalized groups such as minorities within the Kurdish minority.

Scholarship in the field of social movements has developed in a multifold way, offering a variety of conceptualizations and categories of inquiry to analyze and make sense of emergence, characteristics, successes and failures of contentious politics and social movements (della Porta 2016). Being aware of early limitations deriving from a Western bias and the exclusion of knowledge from different fields of scholarship such as revolution, democratization or ethnic conflict, scholars like Charles Tilly and Doug McAdam introduced overarching categories that allowed cross-disciplinary analysis through independent variables such as frames, resources and mechanisms. The focus on the structural component like on mechanisms, made it possible to define social movements through forms of actions instead of movement types, hence opened the way for a more dynamic and integrative approach to social movements (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001).

Despite these novelties that certainly widened the spectrum of research on social movements, scholarship on movements continues to suffer from limitations coming from an underlying assumption that social movements are social realities that exist only within and in relation to the signifying nation-state, mostly emerging from within claim makers embedded within the dominant nation. Charles Tilly for instance puts forward that the emergence of nation-states contributed to the formation of modern social movements and their repertoires of action, moving the sphere of protest from the local to the national level (Tilly and Wood 2009). While this helps conceptualizing movements as actors on a national level, the question arises how to conceptualize for instance movements that mobilize from within more than one nation-state yet neither reinstate dominant categories such as separatism or ethno-nationalism nor make direct claims on the nation-state level? Taking the architecture of the nation-state for granted as a unit of analysis consequently creates blind-spots in accounting for minority mobilization, such as is the case in the Kurdish movement's mobilization for minority representation in form of non-territorial autonomy articulated across Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

The most recent innovative contribution to the scholarly literature on contentious politics in the Middle East has been made by John Chalcraft (2016) with his study on the role of popular politics in the making of the modern Middle East. He moves beyond the limitations of objectivist historical sociology of social change and of subjectivist social constructionism and successfully periodizes a history of mobilization from below in the Middle East by applying a Neo-Gramscian perspective and using counter-hegemony as a formative concept (Chalcraft and Souvlis 2017). While Chalcraft successfully introduces new tools to understand popular politics in the Middle East, hence challenges the state vs. society dichotomy, as well as Orientalist accounts, his study fails to escape epistemological determinisms that are rooted in the dominant logic of the nation-state paradigm as it lacks an analysis of counter-hegemonic politics from below put forward by *stateless* and *status-less* groups in the region, in particular by minority communities such as the Kurds, as well as minorities within such as Ezidis or Kurdish refugees in Kurdistan.

Further, looking at the ways how multi-ethnic to deeply divided societies have been studied in terms of conflict prevention and solution, the focus has mainly been on top-down approaches such as the implementation of (ethnic) federalism (Heinemann-Grüder 2011), consociation (Lijphart 2012; Lehbruch 1999), minority rights as liberal and communitarian versions of multiculturalism (Kymlicka 1996; Kymlicka and Pföstl 2014; Taylor 1994). These concepts however, in one way or another, reinstate majority-minority dichotomies that are inherent to the nation-state paradigm and that are imposed as top-down solutions like assigning autonomy within a nation-state based on a presumption of ethnically homogenous regions or closed group identities. This paper however will shed light on the more dynamic proposals and practices of autonomy from below, believing that assessing conceptualizations and implementations of forms of non-territorial autonomy in a region of the world, with

which feudalism, sectarianism, nationalism and conflict are mostly associated, will not only contribute to the study of popular politics in the Middle East but also to the theoretical debates on plurinational democracies. Hence, challenge and complement dominantly Eurocentric conceptualizations of democracy, as well as contribute to the study of NTA by advancing it by incorporating gender representation.

Kurdish Mobilization as a Non-territorial Movement?

The Kurdish movement under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan, founder and ideological father of the PKK, started off as a Marxist-Leninist guerilla movement in Turkey that fought for a separate Kurdish state. With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the PKK shifted its ideological paradigm toward a post-national movement, abandoning the desire for Kurdish statehood and promoting new governance structures that transcend and unmake nation-state paradigms (Jongerden and Akkaya 2011). The new paradigm puts forward the concept of Democratic Autonomy as part of the decentralized and cross-territorial model introduced as Democratic Confederalism. Both are a direct manifestation of how Kurdish movement actors have perceived and evaluated the history of cross-territorial systematic denial of political recognition and deprivation of rights for minorities. Social movement theory for instance mostly conceptualizes movement strategies and political opportunities in a state-centered way, meaning that windows of opportunities are considered most open, when the existing political system is vulnerable, hence movement actors can push through social change within the state (Meyer 2004; Tarrow 2011).

In the Kurdish case however, the question is what happens in highly centralized and authoritarian contexts where, let alone to push for social change on a national level, movement actors are only recognized as pseudo-citizens, if at all. Mesut Yegen (2009) argues that Kurds in Turkey for instance, have traditionally been perceived as outside the boundaries of the dominant nation, which not only has caused various assimilationist policies, displacements, persecutions but even the denial of minority rights and lack of recognition of Kurdish identity. The latter most severely manifested in the Turkish state's policies of banning the Kurdish language until 1999 (Bozarslan 2012).

The paradigm shift in the objectives of the Kurdish movement during the 1990s emerged at a time when Turkey, where the Kurdish movement started mobilizing first, was a cohesive state, consolidating the political elites and the dominant nation.¹ Cognitive liberation, as Doug McAdam (2001) puts it, was therefore not determined by taking advantage of a political opportunity that

1 Joel Migdal's definition of a "cohesive state" asserts that those states with a high degree of integrated domination, hence a power balance between state and society, as well as within the state, are guaranteed to be successful. Integrated domination therefore is when the state manages to uphold full decision-making autonomy, which stands in contrast to "dispersed domination," when neither state nor society have the ability to implement. See Migdal 2001: 126.

became available but to mobilize cognitive resources, such as the development of new ideas, in order to stem out a long term political opportunity. Consequently, the formation of transregional grassroots politics was introduced as an alternative to the previous assumption of the need for an own nation-state or ethno-territorial autonomy. Given the territorial dispersion of the Kurds in the course of forced migration, as well as the ethnic and cultural heterogeneity of the predominantly Kurdish populated regions, with minorities within the Kurdish minority such as Yezidis, Alevis, Zazas, or Assyrians, the paradigmatic journey away from the idea of national liberation towards a non-nation-state liberational discourse was also triggered by the realization that a Kurdish nation-state would very likely repeat existing errors and reproduce the inherent blind-spots of the nation-state model that have led to the unfree situation of the Kurds and the Middle East's other minorities in the first place.

As part of the paradigmatic transformation of the PKK from a Marxist-Leninist organization to a plurinational democratic body, the Group of Communities in Kurdistan (KCK) was founded in 2005 in order to gather different parties and civil society groups together under one roof – according to confederal principles of equal representation and consensual decision-making processes (Gunes 2017). This was the first step toward the practical formation of plural, decentralized and confederal political bodies that were cooperating with each other across four different nation-states.

Following this paradigmatic reconceptualization that reconstructed territorial and societal demands away from the oppressive undertones of the nation-state model toward a more emancipated and self-reliant understanding of society, the guerilla units of the PKK, which initially were only regarded as an armed threat to the nation-states, became aware of their social impact on the region. Conflict resolution in the form of village assemblies initiated by the guerillas were introduced and replaced traditional feudal mediators (Jongerden and Akkaya 2011). Women started relying on all-women guerilla units that educated women in the concept of self-defense – not only practically and physically but more significantly, ideologically (Öcalan 2017b). Women started not only to organize themselves in collectives to defend themselves against violence, forced marriages or honor killings but also participated in education and leadership, as well as in building structures of autonomous positions for women in society leading to increasing recognition of gender equality. The latter became the main pillar of Democratic Confederalism as exercised in Rojava today, emerging as a crucial contribution to the general paradigm of NTA for it helps to expand and enhance the epistemological framework.

While the early manifestations of the new non nation-state paradigm show how the focus was shifted from political claim making on the nation-state level to shaping an ethical and political society on the local level, in 2012, amid the developing Syrian civil war, the paradigm became the driving force behind the emergence of non-territorial autonomy in Syria, as well as oppositional politics in Turkey (Burc 2018). Given that one cannot assume identical articulations of the paradigm in all regions the Kurdish movement is mobilizing, the case of

northern Syria must be contextualized within its history of state authoritarianism against minorities in the north and its high degree of geographical interconnectedness with Turkey as mentioned above.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Syrian government's Arabization policies, like the "Arab Belt" project of Hafiz al-Assad in 1973, resettled Kurdish populations and exchanged them by Arab populations. Already in 1962 hundreds of thousands of Kurds in Syria were stripped from their citizenship, rendering the Kurdish population in the north stateless by definition (Taştekin 2016). This policy has an integral connection to the history of Turkification after the establishment of the Turkish republic in 1923 as among those who were stripped Syrian citizenships were families of former refugees who came with the stream of migration from Turkey when Kurdish populations fled the violent state homogenization policies in Turkey during the long 30s and settled on the other side of the border in Syria.

The perception of statehood and its lack is best illustrated in a statement that Selahattin Demirtaş, the imprisoned former co-chair of Turkey's pro-Kurdish left alliance Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), made after the state-orchestrated assassination of human rights lawyer Tahir Elçi (Forensic Architecture 2018). According to Demirtaş "not the state killed Tahir Elçi but statelessness" (Deutsche Welle 2015). Here statelessness is expressed twofold, hence as more than the simple lack of an own nation-state but rather as the lack of fundamental protection of human and minority rights by any of the states that Kurds inhabit.

Therefore, while state authoritarianisms in Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq have been distinct in their particular manifestations throughout time and region, Kurds and other minorities share a common history and collective consciousness of being subjected to necropolitical violence implied by nation-states that aim to preserve their state sovereignty through assimilation policies and enforced national homogenization (Mbembe 2003; Burç and Tokatlı 2020),

PKK founder Abdullah Öcalan's presence in Syria in 1979 is widely referred to as a critical juncture in the mobilization of northern Syrian populations for the politics of the Kurdish movement (Tejel 2011; Taştekin 2016; Schmidinger 2018). Öcalan himself describes his presence in Syria as a significant memory in the collective consciousness of Kurdish people in the north (Öcalan 2016: 452). The impact of the PKK during the 1980s and 1990s in Syria, as illustrated by Thomas Schmidinger (2018) has been mainly due to being the only movement that was able to fill the void of a collective vision for minorities in the region, given that traditional and conservative Kurdish parties failed to offer a strategy out of state authoritarianism imposed by the Ba'ath regime at the time. Fehim Taştekin (2016) emphasizes that the Marxist approach on the minority question and the Kurdish issue was attractive in particular to young students in Damascus, as well as for populations in multi-ethnic and multi-religious border regions like Afrîn and Kobanê that later became key regions for building today's autonomous self-administration.

The political developments that were unfolding after the withdrawal of the Syrian military in 2012 must be assessed against this backdrop. Kurdish-majority

areas, in particular in the Turkish-Syrian border region, were left to the control of PKK-led forces and affiliated political parties such as the Democratic Union Party (PYD), supported by a local population in sympathy with the Kurdish movement's ideas since the first mobilizations during the 1980s. This opportunity led to the establishment of first grassroots autonomous administrations and in January 2014 the establishment of the Cantons of Rojava as administrative bodies to manage the de facto autonomy. Later, in March 2016, the Cantons were brought together under the umbrella federal administration of the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS).

In a two-day meeting, held in the Rimelan town of Girkê Legê/Al-Muabada, 31 parties and 200 delegates came together in a constituent assembly, representing the three self-administered Rojavan cantons Kobanê, Afrîn and Cizîre, as well as some of the Arab, Assyrian, Syriac, Armenian, Turkmen and Chechen peoples of the regions of Girê Spî/Tal Abyad, Shaddadi, Aleppo and Shehba (BBC 2016). The declaration expressed the northern Syrian population's will to not engage in the establishment of national independence in the classic sense, but to defend a pluralist confederal system as part of conflict resolution in the wider Middle East. Grassroots democracy, women's liberation and a full representation of all societal groups organized in a council system were made the constitutive principles of the social contract (Rojava Assembly 2016). Since 2018 the autonomous entity is formally known as the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria. Yet with the Turkish army launching the military operation "Olive Branch" in Afrîn in early 2018, and another offensive in October 2019 in other parts, the Rojava region has been partially under occupation by the Turkish army and its proxy militias, facing the threat of demographic engineering, persecution of minorities and forced migration (McGee 2019; Burc 2019).

Democratic Confederalism, a Model of NTA?

Important for the assessment of the Rojava model as a non-territorial case of autonomy is that despite being a Kurdish-led project, the self-administration is not organized along hierarchical ethnic lines, such as along binaries of majority vs. minority, but aspires to be a multi-ethnic entity with decentralized administration and representative bodies to accommodate all of the ethno-cultural and ethno-religious groups inhabiting the region (Akkaya and Jongerden 2012).

The shift from organizing under the name of "Rojava", which is a direct translation from Kurdish language and means "setting sun", hence describes the Western part of the wider region known as Kurdistan, to "Northern Syria" and later to "North and East Syria" can be evaluated as an expression of the non-ethnocentric claim of the project that however at the same time assumes a certain territory within the Syrian borders, precisely because of the need to incorporate all minorities living in the claimed autonomous administration. NTA models too see the need for a territorial state as contemporary

discussions on NTA models can be seen as a continuation of Otto Bauer and Karl Renner's thought on National Cultural Autonomy (NCA), where territorial representation is even preferred when the territorial space is culturally homogenous (Suksi 2015; Nimni 1999).

NTA approaches offer proposals also for those cases, in which minorities are dispersed or not inhabiting a specific region, hence where a homogeneity is not given. Yet in these cases too, the idea of minority protection and non-territorial autonomy engages within given state borders. The critique is therefore not made against the state as such but moreover against conceptualizations, in which nation and state territory are conflated and consequently lead to a political expression of a hegemonic relationship between the dominant nation and its minority. NTA moreover attempts to help distinguish between various modalities of autonomy to avoid assumptions of minority autonomy's potential threat to territorial integrity of existing states. Scholars also have emphasized that NTA models can be a mechanism to protect from regional autonomy being abused by minorities that want to promote their own interest at the expense and to the exclusion of others within the given territory (Nimni 2013; Villiers 2012).

Characteristic of both NTA and NCA models is the recognition of the need for minority representation within the plurinational state, which however does not entail the epistemological rejection of territorial representation – despite the terminological assumption deriving from calling these models non-territorial in the first place.

Modalities of NTA therefore propose the organization of nations into non-territorial publics with comprehensive autonomous rights that operate within a de-nationalized territorial state. Resolving the democratic deficit of the liberal democratic nation-state, which is considered essentially the system of one person/one vote or one state/one nation that can easily become a Tocquevillian tyranny of the majority given collective representation and political agency for minorities is not present, is the analytical point of departure in the assessment of alternative ways of minority representation in plurinational states (Nimni, Osipov, and Smith 2013).

The political project of Rojava resembles NTA as it incorporates both non-territorial claims within a given territory, yet can also be considered as an adjustment to the given political opportunity structure that was shaped by the developments connected to the loss of state authority in the northern region, geopolitical proxy wars and the need for organizational strategy amid a developing civil war. Territoriality therefore is an inborn condition for all political articulations of autonomy as no autonomy can exist outside a territory. In the Rojava example however, the idea of a territorial necessity is attempted to made obsolete for the daily practices of autonomy, as well as for the identification process during society building.

A simplistic approach to social movements and their articulations of social reality would evaluate the Kurdish movement in northern Syria as a nationalist movement that aims territorial autonomy or secession. The movement in

northern Syria though conceptualizes territory in non-ethnocentric ways and more with the motivation of deepening democracy through the creation of decentralized local self-governance structures that are designed to involve inhabitants of the region in the decision-making process and empower communities to become active in solving the immediate everyday problems they face.

The Kurdish movement's discourse on autonomy is very similar to NTA in its theoretical derivation as it takes the subordination of minorities as a formative pillar in articulating a political alternative to the predicament of minorities in the Middle East, particular those deprived from any sort of recognition and political participation. The Kurdish political movement's theorizing and practicing of autonomy also combines both territorial and non-territorial, as well as centralized and de-centralized elements. By placing the question of gender representation and participation in the center of democratic politics however, Democratic Confederalism incorporates hitherto neglected dimensions to NTA, hence the diagnostic perception that women as well as minorities suffer from a unique form of subordination. Taking both the subordination of minorities in liberal nation-states and of women in society itself as a point of departure, Democratic Confederalism enhances NTA by bringing together proposals that frame the question of autonomy and liberation not on national determinants but on the question of societal emancipation through gender and minority representation.

Democratic Confederalism and the Women's Question

In his writings, Abdullah Öcalan, architect of the idea of Democratic Autonomy, which was later concretized in the model of Democratic Confederalism, names three ills of our contemporary civilization, which he refers to as “capitalist modernity”: nation-states, capitalism and patriarchy (Öcalan 2017a). Concepts of alternative governance structures that challenge the idea of one nation and one state therefore are the articulations of an antithesis to these three ills of our time, offering a counter-hegemonic political solution from the perspective of the deprived (Öcalan 2015). Despite the harsh conditions of being in solitary confinement on Imrali prison island in Turkey since 1999, Öcalan has elaborated on existing democracy theories inspired by the lens of his own biography and the region's ongoing traumatic experience of cultural homogenization and oppression by the state system.

In order to re-create a morally and politically capable society, something “capitalist modernity” has destroyed, Öcalan articulates the need to build a system in which decisions are made collectively, where the members of society know about their past and determine their present and future. Bearing in mind the risks of direct democratic decision-making, he submits that only in a society where the values are based on ecology, democracy, and women's freedom, can it be ensured that collectively taken decisions will be just. Intrinsic

to the establishment of Democratic Autonomy, he therefore argues, is an ecological women's revolution (Öcalan 2017b).

He characterizes "capitalist modernity" as the culmination of the hegemony of the state, capitalist classes, and of men that have throughout time appropriated and deprived society, the poor and women. History however has shown, as Öcalan submits, that the dispossessed have always resisted and fought against these strings of "capitalist modernity". Since resistance against the status quo has always been part of human history, it therefore has a place in our collective memory. He argues that this knowledge forms a natural self-defense mechanism against persisting dominant categories. Introduced as a Gramscian counterhegemonic category, he proposed the building of "democratic modernity" to ensure societal peace and emancipation from democratic deficits inherent to the nation-state paradigm (Öcalan 2015).

This means that even an already-created ecological and democratic society based on women's freedom for instance must continuously defend itself against the potential emergence of centralized power of statehood, especially in the aftermath of its revolution. For Öcalan, this only becomes possible if "democratic modernity" is continuously formulated as an antithesis to "capitalist modernity" by the society itself and through the legitimacy of its own institutions.

The word "democracy" is the key to Öcalan's theory. He claims that all liberal nation-states have been predestined to fail, since they have never opened enough space for society to democratize truly. Democratic Autonomy in a confederalist system however is essentially radical democratic in nature and aims at a new politics that is ethical in character and grassroots in organization. Here it is important to overcome Western biases that understand radical democracy as part of a state-centered concept of territorial autonomy, which is significantly "taking over" councils or constructing a more "women friendly" environment, as it is for instance the case in Switzerland and the implementation of consociation democracy (Burç 2019).

The idea of Democratic Autonomy, similar to the concepts of libertarian municipalism as put forward by Murray Bookchin (1991), goes further than this. It is narrated as a politics based on achieving a new ethos of citizenship and community in transforming and democratizing city governments, by rooting them in popular assemblies in order to then weave them together into a confederation consisting not of nation-states but cross-territorial municipalities.

Many times, Öcalan has insisted that the build-up of confederalist system would neither threaten the territorial integrity of nation-states nor disregard the sovereignty of the central government (Öcalan 2016; 2017b). However, the municipal structures would over time make those physical and imaginative borders of the nation-state obsolete for the political realm of community life. Democratic Confederalism, as put forward by the Kurdish movement, therefore is a model of dual power, in which a situation is created that makes it possible for self-administered, municipal areas to coexist next to the nation-state. Self-administrative bodies on all levels allow the political space to be open to all strata of the society and to politically integrate the entire society with all

its ethnic, religious, political groups (Öcalan 2017b). These groups are by no means regarded as static formations, as the idea of localizing political participation processes in an anti-hierarchical structure, also foresees the building of new associations, confederations and groups according to the given needs and situation, as well as their dissolution if needed. This dynamic approach challenges the idea of attributed identities to certain groups, which also means the unmaking of dichotomies such as majority and minority in how society is constituted politically. The integration of all social and political groups in the decision-making process is promoted by Öcalan as the central pillar of non-territorial autonomy as a way to ensure the society's capacity of problem-solving with regards to social issues, without the need for centralized power.

While the concept of Democratic Autonomy shares common features with modalities of non-territorial autonomy as well as reflects discussions on participatory democracy such as deliberative democracy and consociation, a novelty is certainly the role ascribed to women as significant agents in the decentralization process. Öcalan's writings engage with the inherent interconnectedness of the subordination of women and the inherent democratic deficit of nation-states. Öcalan argues that the society does not treat women as merely a biological separate sex but more as a "separate race, nation or class – the most oppressed race, nation or class" (Öcalan 2013, 10). The idea of a "weak sex" becomes a shared belief of the nation-state, which he defines as the institutionalization of power, which according to Öcalan must be read as "synonymous to masculinity" (Öcalan 2013, 27). Similar to Carole Pateman's (1988) thesis that the Rousseauian social contract in fact must be read as a contract based on men's sexual access to women, Öcalan describes it as a systematic housewifisation of women (2013, 11). He submits that this process of subordination of women predates the systems of slavery and must be understood as a blueprint of colonial practices. Different to Maria Mies, who described the exploitation of women as the last colony (Mies, Bennholdt-Thomsen, and Werlhof 1988), Öcalan argues that women in fact have been the first colony in human civilization.

If we see colonialism not only in terms of nation and country but also in terms of groups of people, we can define woman as the oldest colonized group. (...) It must be well understood that woman is kept a colony with no easily identifiable borders. (Öcalan 2013: 56)

The term "hegemonic masculinity" as coined by Raewyn Connell in her gender order theory, describes the institutionalization of gender relations that legitimize the subordination of women and other deviant forms of "being a man" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Deriving from the Gramscian theory of cultural hegemony, gender relations in the proclaimed liberal nation-state are shaped in a way that the hegemonic masculinity is not challenged significantly. Connell speaks of cyclical patterns that produce, reproduce and perpetuate social inequality between men and women, in which, according to Öcalan,

the constructed “weakness” of the female sex is institutionalized in the social reproduction of patriarchy, hence male dominance (Öcalan 2013: 11). Feminist scholars like Cynthia Enloe for instance have further been assessing the intersection of citizenship and nationalism from a gendered perspective, putting forward that “nationalism has typically sprung from masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope” (Enloe 1989: 44). Öcalan takes a step further and argues that it proves significantly difficult to transform nationalism from within the system of a nation-state, which is inherently built on hegemonic masculinity since contesting male dominance would be perceived like “a monarch’s loss of his state” (2013: 50). Öcalan consequently rejects proposals for a movement for woman’s statehood as he argues that the struggle for democratization entails the articulation of counter-hegemonic political realms outside the statist and hierarchical structures and not their reinstatement (Öcalan 2013: 54). Democratic Autonomy, as Öcalan submits, provides a fertile institutional ground of possibilities for women to organize as they are considered as a social group with distinct social realities, demands and needs that cannot be subsumed by any centralized processes of decision making as their bear the threat of reinstating hegemonic masculinity. Democratic Autonomy as described above therefore facilitates the establishment of women’s own political parties, the organization of a popular women’s movement, their own non-governmental organizations, and structures of democratic politics, as well as institutionalized participation on all levels of governance.

Women’s representation in the Self-Administration in Rojava

The practical manifestations and implementation of the Democratic Autonomy concept have been changed and adjusted according to the course of the on-going conflict in Syria, hence a clear assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, as well as types of implementation prove difficult from a scholarly perspective. It is also important to emphasize that the institutionalization of democratic autonomy in Rojava has not only been a development within less than a decade but more crucially has been under a constant attack by either the Islamic State group, jihadist militias as proxies by regional powers, a strict embargo by neighboring states, including the KRI, and as well as Turkish military presence and operation against the Autonomous Administration. With this disclaimer in mind, the structures of the self-administration can be broken down to three institutional building blocks and an additional women’s structure that is organized integrative yet independently at the same time.

The three main pillars of the structures of self-administration in Rojava are (1) Autonomous Administration, (2) Syrian Democratic Council and (3) TEV-DEM. Society organizes itself starting from the smallest political unit of society, the commune with approximately 150-1,500 inhabitants. All of them are represented bottom-up in councils of neighborhoods, then sub-districts, districts, cantons, region, and finally in the Autonomous Administration. However, Democratic Autonomy also facilitates society to organize parallel and outside

the communes in so-called civil institutions that are represented through committees on specific issues in the Autonomous Administration.

Next to the Autonomous Administration, which is responsible for coordination between the regions, there is the executive body known as the Syrian Democratic Council. The SDC is the political umbrella that provides the political framework for the resolutions of the Syrian conflict and can be considered a diplomatic body. Political parties can participate in the council, as well as representatives from civil society or the autonomous administrations.

While the Autonomous Administration aims at literal administration through elected bodies and ministries on issues such as health, education or infrastructure on the most local level, the council's aim is to represent political parties. The SDC is an umbrella that tries to integrate political parties in northern Syria into a federal, democratic, and women-led political entity.

And the third major institution is TEV-DEM, which was already established in 2011, and translates into "Movement for a democratic society". It is an umbrella body for civil society and acts like "counter-power" to the two other bodies (Rojava Information Center 2019; Knapp and Flach 2016).

With the institutionalization of the principles of Democratic Autonomy, also women's visibility in the governing institutions became more apparent. As described above, the ideological framework of the Rojava model understands women as revolutionary agents in the deepening of democracy as they not only allow the emancipation from systems of domination imposed on women in society but further allow men to overcome internalized hegemony over women. Beyond women's visibility as female fighters in the Women's Defense Units (YPJ) against the Islamic State group, civilian structures were built in the same logic of fostering women's rights and gender equality through the establishment of women autonomous structures. There are two parallel set of structures, on the one hand institutions that include men and women and on the other hand institutions that are women-only. The latter is represented by the Kongreya Star, a women's confederation of all women's groups in Rojava. The women's confederation gathers every two years to assess past development and to plan new roadmaps for women's autonomous structures in the NES and all women involved in any of the institutions of the self-administration are members of the women's confederation by default. This includes all governance levels such as councils, communes, cultural and artistic collectives, families", workers' committees as well as service institutions (Kongreya Star 2018).

While being represented in the women's confederation, all women continue to maintain their autonomy as members of the respective institutions they are coming from. Consequently, women do not only organize on a supra-level, in the women's confederation, but in every commune by creating their own women's commune parallel to the mixed structure. On every administrative and institutional level, the decisions taken by the women's body are binding for all structures, with an additional veto right reserved for women's structures for decisions taken in the mixed bodies. Further, all institutional bodies, from collectives, communes to political parties have a co-chair system, where one

seat is reserved for the man, who is elected by the mixed bodies and one seat is reserved for a woman, who is elected only by the women-only body, thus rendering equal representation an inherent feature of the political system (Kongreya Star 2018; Knapp and Flach 2016; Rasit and Kolokotronis 2020; Şimşek and Jongerden 2018).

It is interesting, especially from the perspective of NTA modalities, to observe autonomous women's organization in communes with mixed ethnic constellations, in which ethnic groups are also free to organize themselves in distinct autonomous structures as well as in multi-ethnic structures. Parallel to the mixed-gender and women-only constellation, therefore, according to the specific context, women of one ethnic group can organize separately in addition to being members of the multi-ethnic body. For instance, while Arab or Syriac women first were part of women's bodies mostly consisting of Kurdish women, the confederal structures of self-administration made it possible for them to also form their own women-only autonomous structures for their ethnic group while still owning membership in the women's (multi-ethnic) confederation (Dirik 2018).

Democratic Autonomy in Rojava therefore neither presumes a conflation of ethnicity and territory, even within the smallest organizational unit of the commune, nor does it homogenize women's autonomous organization based on a shared gender identity. The main idea is to create the self-reliant structure of community organization according to the specific needs of the very area and the societal group, while remaining within the general framework of shared values and principles.

In addition to women's visibility through political participation as a constituting principle of the self-administration, there are also non-territorial women's spaces built by cross-community women's initiatives like the women's houses called "Mala Jin" in every commune, as well as safe spaces for women like the establishment of a women's only village organized, built and maintained by women for women (Dirik 2018; Knapp and Flach 2016). While these women-only spaces help cross-community women to emancipate themselves from abusive relationships or function as a first shelter in case of gender-based violence, these spaces further have become a realm for collective education, unlearning of dominant gender norms, financial emancipation through self-organized cooperatives like women-run small businesses in textile, agriculture or food production (Dirik 2018). Women-only spaces as an integral part of society allows women to gain a strong sense of self-sufficiency, resilience and societal recognition and certainly should be considered intertwined with the institutionalization of women's rights within the structures of the self-administration based on Democratic Autonomy.

Conclusion

The dynamical structure of Democratic Autonomy with a strong emphasis on women's self-reliance as a revolutionary act of emancipation for both men and women, is what distinguishes the Rojava project from other modalities of

Non-Territorial Autonomy. Further, the conceptual framework proves to be of a cardinal contribution to the wider discussions on NTA and plurinational democracies, unpacking the intertwined subordination of minorities and women. The paper discussed the paradigmatic journey of Kurdish movement under the PKK from a nationalist to a confederalist movement, as well as the role of Abdullah Öcalan in developing the ideational framework that has facilitated the experiment in grassroots democracy, decentralization, women's autonomy and minority protection to be implemented in the midst of an on-going war. With a brief discussion of the scholarly approach to the Kurdish question and the blind-spots within the debates on territoriality, nation-state, contentious politics in the Middle East, the paper has shed light on the difficulties in conceptualizing the Kurdish movement and the Rojava case within the given scholarly labels such as ethnic, nationalist, secessionist, minority and/or territorial. Rojava's implementation of a decentralized model of autonomy based on participative democracy, non-territoriality and systemic gender equality through women's self-organization not only challenges conflating notions of territory, nation, ethnicity, state, and masculinity, mostly presumed in the dominant literature on minority governance, but further institutionally unmakes dichotomies such as majority vs. minority and gender relations constructed on masculine hegemony.

The paper has also shown the terminological and epistemological contradictions of NTA when proposing non-territorial autonomy as a means to overcome the blind-spots of the nation-state, yet continuing to reinstate the idea of homogenous groups, territorial autonomy and the territorial state in its theoretical modifications. Due to the Kurdish population being a minority in four different nation-states, with a big dispersed population across the region and the diaspora, the case of Democratic Confederalism has shown that although every autonomy exists within a given territory, this territory must not necessarily be static and tied to one state only.

The Democratic Confederal concept understands non-territorial autonomy as an opportunity to understand territorial borders as fluid, without abolishing or replacing them with new ones. It is rather an attempt at understanding territory as an interconnected space that might be represented by a state, however, is not solely defined by it. The Kurdish case therefore proves how a specific case, mostly disregarded in Western scholarship, can be indicative and of paradigmatic importance for universal claims made on the ways to foster plurinational democracies. The analysis of non-territorial autonomy as proposed by the Kurdish movement in Rojava, has shown that NTA can only fulfill its democratic promise of equal participation and representation, if the definition of subordination is extended beyond the category of minorities, incorporating subordinate groups within society that are not necessarily defined through ethnic and religious subjectivities, as the example on women's representation in Rojava has demonstrated.

References

- Akkaya, Ahmet Hamdi and Joost Jongerden (2012), “Reassembling the Political: The PKK and the Project of Radical Democracy”. *European Journal of Turkish Studies. Social Sciences on Contemporary Turkey*, no. 14 (June). <http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4615>
- BBC (2016), “Syrian Kurds Declare Federal System”, 17 March 2016, sec. Middle East. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35830375>
- Bookchin, Murray (2015), *The next Revolution: Popular Assemblies and the Promise of Direct Democracy*. London - New York: Verso.
- . (1991), “Libertarian Municipalism: An Overview”. The Anarchist Library. <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/murray-bookchin-libertarian-municipalism-an-overview>
- Bozarslan, Hamit (2012), “Between Integration, Autonomization and Radicalization. Hamit Bozarslan on the Kurdish Movement and the Turkish Left. Interview by Marlies Casier and Olivier Grojean”, *European Journal of Turkish Studies. Social Sciences on Contemporary Turkey* 14. <http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4663>
- Burç, Rosa (2019), “Demokratische Autonomie: Staatenlos Regieren als Gesellschaftliche Alternative zum Nationalstaat in Nordsyrien und der Türkei”, in Küpeli, Ismail (ed.), *Kampf um Rojava, Kampf um die Türkei*, Münster: Edition Assemblage, pp. 20–29.
- . “One State, One Nation, One Flag—One Gender? HDP as a Challenger of the Turkish Nation State and Its Gendered Perspectives”, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 21(3): 319–334.
- Burç, Rosa, and Mahir Tokatli (2020), “A Second Foundation? Constitution, Nation-Building and the Deepening of Authoritarianism in Turkey”, in Rayner, Jeremy et al. (eds.), *Back to the 30s? Recurring Crises of Capitalism, Liberalism and Democracy*, London: Palgrave Macmillan
- Chalcraft, John (2016), *Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chalcraft, John and George Souvlis (2017), “The Middle East and Marxist History: An Interview with John Chalcraft”. *Salvage* (blog). 26 January 2017. <https://salvage.zone/online-exclusive/the-middle-east-and-marxist-history-an-interview-with-john-chalcraft/>
- Connell, Raewyn and James W. Messerschmidt (2005), “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept”, *Gender & Society* 19(6): 829–859.
- Della Porta, Donatella (2016), *Where Did the Revolution Go? Contentious Politics and the Quality of Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Deutsch, Karl W (1970), *Nationalism and National Development: An Interdisciplinary Bibliography*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Deutsche Welle (2015), “Demirtas: “Tahir”i öldüren devlet değil, devletsizlik” | DW | 29.11.2015”. DW.COM. 2015. <https://www.dw.com/tr/demirta%C5%9F-tahiri-%C3%B6ld%C3%BCren-devlet-de%C4%9F-devletsizlik/a-18882662>
- Dirik, Dilar (2018), “The Revolution of Smiling Women”, in Rutazibwa, Olivia U. and Robbie Shilliam (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Postcolonial Politics*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 222–238.
- Dunn, John (ed.) (1995), *Contemporary Crisis of the Nation State?* Oxford – Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Enloe, Cynthia H. (1989), *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Forensic Architecture (2018), “Investigation of the Audio-Visual Material Included in the Case File of the Killing of Tahir Elçi on 28 November 2015”. Goldsmiths University. https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/FA-TE-Report_12_English_public.pdf
- Fukuyama, Francis (1992), *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press.
- Gregory, Derek (2000), “Edward Said’s Imaginative Geographies”, in Crang, Mike and Nigel Thrift (eds.), *Thinking Space*, London – New York, pp. 302–348.
- Gunes, Cengiz (2017), “Turkey’s New Left, NLR 107, September–October 2017”, *New Left Review* 107. <https://newleftreview.org/issues/III107/articles/cengiz-gunes-turkey-s-new-left>
- . (2012), *The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey: From Protest to Resistance*. London: Routledge
- Gunter, Michael M. (ed.) (2019), *Routledge Handbook on the Kurds*. Routledge: London and New York.
- Heinemann-Grüder, Andreas (2011), *Föderalismus als Konfliktregelung: Indien, Russland, Spanien und Nigeria im Vergleich*. Opladen: Budrich.
- Huntington, Samuel P. (1993), “The Clash of Civilizations?”, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/1993-06-01/clash-civilizations>
- Jongerden, Joost and Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya (2011), “Born from the Left: The Making of the PKK”, in Casier, Marlies and Joost Jongerden (eds.), *Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey: Political Islam, Kemalism and the Kurdish Issue*, Routledge: London and New York, pp. 123–142.
- Knapp, Michael and Anja Flach (2016), *Revolution in Rojava: Democratic Autonomy and Women’s Liberation in Syrian Kurdistan*, transl. by Janet Biehl. London: Pluto Press
- Kongreya Star (2018), “Kongreya Star and Its Committees”. <https://rojavainformationcenter.com/storage/2019/12/Kongreya-Star-2018-Brochure.pdf>
- Kymlicka, Will (1996), *Multicultural Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kymlicka, Will and Eva Pfössl (eds.) (2014), *Multiculturalism and Minority Rights in the Arab World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lehmbruch, Gerhard (1999), “Konkordanzdemokratie”, in *Lexikon Der Politik, Band 3: Die Westlichen Länder*. München: C.H. Beck, pp. 206–211.
- Lijphart, Arend (2012), *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Mbembe, Achille (2003), “Necropolitics”, *Public Culture* 15(1): 11–40.
- McAdam, Doug, Sidney G. Tarrow, and Charles Tilly (2001), *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press.
- McGee, Thomas (2019), “Turkey’s Occupation and Expansion in Syria”, *OpenDemocracy*, 11 November 2019. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/turkeys-occupation-and-expansion-in-syria/>
- Meyer, David S. (2004), “Protest and Political Opportunities”, *Annual Review of Sociology* 30(1): 125–145.
- Mies, Maria, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Claudia von Werlhof (1988), *Women: The Last Colony*. London – Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Zed Books.
- Nimni, Ephraim (2013), “The Conceptual Challenge of Non-Territorial Autonomy”, in Nimni, Ephraim, Alexander Osipov and David Smith (eds.), *The Challenge of Non-Territorial Autonomy: Theory and Practice*, Oxford, Bern and Berlin: Peter Lang, pp. 1–24.

- . (1999), “Nationalist Multiculturalism in Late Imperial Austria as a Critique of Contemporary Liberalism: The Case of Bauer and Renner”, *Journal of Political Ideologies* 4(3): 289–314.
- Öcalan, Abdullah (2017a), *Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization: Capitalism*, Vol. 2. New Compass.
- . (2017b), *The Political Thought of Abdullah Öcalan: Kurdistan, Woman’s Revolution and Democratic Confederalism*. London: Pluto Press.
- . (2013), *Liberating Life Woman’s Revolution*. Köln: Mesopotamian Publ.
- . (2016), *Demokratik kurtulus ve özgür yasami insa: (Imrali notlari)*. Neuss: Wesanen Mezopotamya.
- . (2015), *Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization: The Age of Masked Gods and Disguised Kings*, Vol. 1. New Compass.
- Pateman, Carole (1988), *The Sexual Contract*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Rasit, Huseyin and Alexander Kolokotronis (2020), “Decentralist Vanguard: Women’s Autonomous Power and Left Convergence in Rojava”, *Globalizations* 17(5): 869–883.
- Rojava Assembly, Declaration (2016), “Final Declaration of the Rojava-Northern Syria Democratic Federal System”, *YPG International* (blog). 17 March 2016. <https://ypginternational.blackblogs.org/2016/07/01/final-declaration-of-the-rojava-northern-syria-democratic-federal-system-constituent-assembly/>
- Rojava Information Center (2019), “Report: The Political System of North and East Syria”. <https://rojvainformationcenter.com/2019/12/report-beyond-the-frontlines/>
- Said, Edward W. (1978), *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books.
- Schmidinger, Thomas (2018), *Rojava: Revolution, War and the Future of Syria’s Kurds*. London: Pluto Press.
- Şimşek, Bahar and Joost Jongerden (2018), “Gender Revolution in Rojava: The Voices beyond Tabloid Geopolitics”, *Geopolitics* 23: 1–23.
- Suksi, Markku (2015), “Non-Territorial Autonomy”, in Malloy, Tove H. and Francesco Palermo (eds.), *Minority Accommodation through Territorial and Non-Territorial Autonomy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 83–116.
- Tarrow, Sidney G. (2011), *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Taştekin, Fehim (2016), *Rojava: Kürtlerin Zamanı*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Taylor, Charles, and Amy Gutmann (eds.) (1994), *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.
- Tejel, Jordi. 2011. *Syria’s Kurds: History, Politics and Society*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Tilly, Charles and Lesley J. Wood (2009), *Social Movements, 1768-2008*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.
- Villiers, Bertus de (2012), “Protecting Minorities on a Non-Territorial Basis: Recent International Developments”, *Beijing Law Review* 03(04): 170–183.
- Watts, Nicole F. (2009), “Re-Considering State-Society Dynamics in Turkey’s Kurdish Southeast”, *European Journal of Turkish Studies. Social Sciences on Contemporary Turkey* 10 (December).
- . (2006), “Activists in Office: Pro-Kurdish Contentious Politics in Turkey”, *Ethnopolitics* 5(2): 125–144.
- Yegen, Mesut (2009), “‘Prospective-Turks’ or ‘Pseudo-Citizens’: Kurds in Turkey”, *Middle East Journal* 63(4): 597–615.

Roza Burč

Neteritorijalna autonomija i rodna ravnopravnost: slučaj Autonomne uprave Severne i Istočne Sirije – Rožave

Apstrakt

Autonomna oblast pod upravom Kurda zvaničnog naziva Autonomna uprava Severne i Istočne Sirije (NES) – takođe poznata i kao Rožava – smatra oslobođenje žena kao imperativ za oblikovanje demokratskog društva. Autonomne prakse u NES jako podsećaju na neteritorijalne (NTA) modele, ali takođe unose i novine u vidu uloge žena kao aktivnih činilaca u izgradnji plurinacionalne demokratije. Ovaj rad razmatra (1) intelektualno i političko poreklo političke uloge dodeljene ženama u autonomnoj upravi, i (2) način na koji su autonomne prakse u Rožavi unapredile prava žena time što su bacile svetlost kako na institucionalnu primenu ženskih prava, tako i na stvaranje (ne)teritorijalnih prostora ženske emancipacije unutar autonomnog modela. Iznosi se tvrdnja da konceptualni okvir Rožava modela prevazilazi kurdsko pitanje i može se posmatrati kao pokušaj da se reši problem demokratskog deficita liberalnih demokratskih nacija-država putem objedinjavanja rešenja koja se odnose na isprepletene oblike podređenosti manjina i žena.

Ključne reči: žene, predstavljanje, plurinacionalna demokratija, neteritorijalna autonomija, kurdsko pitanje, Sirija, Rožava, PKK, manjine.