Conflicting Goals Among Syrian Opposition Diasporic Community Leaders: Peace Leadership and Intragroup Conflict Transformation

By

Hammoud Jumaa

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Joint Master's Program in Peace and Conflict Studies

University of Manitoba / University of Winnipeg

Winnipeg, MB

Abstract

I aim to explore intragroup conflicts among the Syrian opposition diasporic community leaders (SODCLs) and the potential of peace interventions that might enhance peace leadership in this community. I asked: what are the topical, relational, identity, and process conflict goals among Syrian opposition diaspora community leaders? What type of conflict transformation interventions might help Syrian opposition diasporic community leaders improve their capacity to transform conflicts and serve as peace leaders? I have employed the content analysis method to conduct qualitative research and collected my data from published online databases. Also, I have used the Facebook wall posts of SODCLs, as a study sample, to enhance the credibility of my findings. My research confirms the utility of the topic, relationship, identity, and process (TRIP) model of Hocker and Wilmot (2017) and expands its scope of use to include the analysis of ethnic intragroup conflicts. I find that changing the identity of the Syrian state is the manifest topic and identity goal among the SODCLs. This dispute also includes latent issues such as the meaning of freedom and equality, representation in political and social organizations, and access to resources. Relations among SODCLs are built on domination rather than cooperation and are mostly established on being anti-Assad only, which is an insufficient base for alliances. I conclude that community leaders working with peace interveners may achieve conflict transformation through shift-thinking about conflict narratives and potential resolutions as well as viewing each grievance as a unique and important human experience. I also find that nonviolence is key to successful peace talks, and understanding the culture, religion, identity, and communication styles of disputants contribute to the formation of peaceful leadership.

Keywords: intragroup conflicts, conflict transformation, Islamists, secularists, Arabs, Kurds, identity, Syria, peace leaders

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my utmost appreciation to everyone who has accompanied me on this journey of learning and exploration to have completed this thesis, especially my thesis committee members and my family.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis advisor Dr. Adam Muller for his continuous support and constructive feedback; I could not have undertaken this journey without your encouraging and inspiring comments that have helped me complete this project successfully and fine-tune my critical thinking skills as a researcher. I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to Dr. Sean Byrne and Dr. James Christie for their constructive feedback that has enriched my research and helped me discover dimensions of peace that had been invisible to me. Further, I would like to express my thanks to the staff and colleagues at the Arthur V. Mauro Institute for Peace and Justice, St. Paul College. You have made my learning journey rewarding and memorable.

I would like to express my most tremendous gratitude to my wife Hanaa whose love, trust, constant encouragement, and patience have brought hope to my life and made me a person who believes that the wrong can be made right when vision, perseverance, and patience are present. I will always appreciate your love and companionship.

I would like to thank my parents Abdulrahman and Karima whose love, kindness, and prayers have enlightened my life. I will always appreciate your unconditional love and care.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my family members Hanaa, Rayan, Lillian, and Loren as well as the community of peacemakers in Manitoba; your presence in my life has made me more resilient and capable of learning to serve peace. Also, I dedicate this work to my friends Gordon and Ernie, as well as to every person who believes in peace and cares for others in Canada, Syria, and the entire world. I hope my thesis will shed light on the potential of conflict transformation through collaborative work that includes and empowers all stakeholders united against prejudice, despotism, and violence.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In this introductory chapter, I outline my research problem and questions along with their theoretical background. Also, I provide the context of my research. Additionally, I list my research objectives and contributions to peace and conflict studies (PACS). I conclude with an overview of forthcoming chapters and a summary of this chapter.

1.2 My Research Problem and Questions

In my research, I employ the content analysis method to conduct qualitative research. I employ the findings of Rothman (2020), conflict transformation theory, and the topic, relationship, identity, and process (TRIP) model of Hocker and Wilmot (2017) to identify a research gap and develop research questions.

Rothman (2020) notes that intragroup conflict transformation for intergroup conflict transformation is under-studied in PACS. Rothman, in his exploration of identity-based conflicts, refers to the work of Ernst and Chrobot-Mason (2011) who suggest that defining and managing boundaries internally between the members of a given group is necessary for enhancing the group's capacity to work collaboratively with other groups (p. 246). Rothman (2020) explains that his action research project, which aimed to explore how young Jewish and Arab students in Israel envision their future, reveals that internal differences in goals among the members of each group separately from the other group are more "intense" than differences in goals between the two conflicting groups. Additionally, he explains that after long and intense conversations within the conflicting groups, Arab and Jewish students who participated in his project reached an

agreement. So, he theorizes that intragroup effective cooperation through "building internal consensus over goals within groups" might "foster consensus-building between groups" (p. 247).

Lederach (1995, 2014) proposes that the reactions of the conflicting parties determine whether the conflict will be a destructive or constructive aspect of life. Also, relationship building between the conflicting parties is essential for transformation, which is possible when the parties fully engage with one another as well as with peace interveners in processes to uncover and reframe their narratives and potential resolutions of their conflicts.

Hocker and Wilmot (2017) propose that conflicting parties pursue goals related to the content or specific topics of dispute that are important for the parties in a given context. Also, conflicting parties might pay attention to how they relate to each other (relational goals). Further, they may aim to achieve identity goals concerning "face-saving" or the desire to feel secure and protected against harm in a particular conflict situation. Additionally, they might have process goals related to the means through which conflicting parties attempt to achieve their desired outcome. Hocker and Wilmot use the acronym TRIP to refer to these four categories of conflict goals (topic, relationship, identity, and process). Hocker and Wilmot (2017) also observe that conflict almost always includes identity components and propose that this component overlaps with other types of disputes over topics (issues of debate), relationships (how the parties relate to each other), and processes (means of communication in conflict settings).

Informed by the conflict transformation approach to peace and conflict studies (PACS), the findings of Rothman (2020), and Hocker and Wilmot's (2017) TRIP model, I ask two questions: first, what are the topical, relational, identity, and process conflict goals among Syrian opposition diasporic community leaders? Second, what type of conflict transformation

interventions might help Syrian opposition diaspora community leaders improve their capacity to transform their conflicts and serve as peace leaders?

1.3 Context

Lederach's (1995, 2014) conflict transformation theory suggests that conflicts must be viewed in their contemporary contexts taking into account their roots. Accordingly, in the next part, I provide a brief background of the historical political discourse of Syria. I aim to highlight some details about the Syrian state that are related to the ongoing conflict in Syria. I will do this by dividing the next part into two eras: from the independence of Syria in 1946 until 2000 and from 2000, when Bashar Assad inherited the rule of Syria, until the date of writing this thesis in 2022.

1.3.1 Syria from 1946 to 2000

Syria became an independent state when the French mandate ended in 1946. Syrian Army chief of staff, Husni al-Za'im led a military coup and overthrew the democratically elected government in 1949, which entered the country into long-term political unrest. In 1958 Syria and Egypt merged into one state named the Arab United Republic, which ended in 1961 when separatists took over in Syria. In 1962, the Syrian government conducted a special census in Al-Hasakah through which a large number of Kurds were defined as non-Syrians. In 1963, the Arab Socialists Baath Party (the Baath party) led a coup and took over.

The Baath party implemented nationalization and agrarian reform policies through which the government took over the privately owned land and means of production. In 1964, the Baath party repressed Muslim Brotherhood-led protests by killing more than fifty citizens. In 1965,

Talab Hilal was appointed as the governor of Al-Hasakah. Hilal proposed and started the implementation of the Arab Belt project. This project is detailed in a study, by Hilal, that suggests the Syrian government must eliminate the Kurdish issue in Syria by (1) relocating Kurds to spread them into interior cities to prevent them from constituting a mass of people that might threaten the Arab dominating authority; (2) preventing Kurds from access to higher education and economic resources; (3) encouraging internal division among Kurds; and (4) relocating Arab tribes to spread in the Kurdish areas (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2013).

In 1970, Hafez Assad, a member of the Baath party, led an internal coup and became the Secretary General of the Arab Socialists Baath Party and the president of Syria in 1971, which is also the head of the military forces in the Syrian republic. Van Dam (2006) explains that Hafez successfully terminated the Damascene leaders in the Syrian army (Sunni) first. Next, he dismissed the Durzi military leaders. Finally, he arrested his partners in the Alawites (his own sect) who opposed him, and loyalty to Hafez became the doctrine of the army and the base of promotion in the Syrian army. Moreover, according to Aljazeera (2020), Michel Seurat explains, in his book *syrie l'état de barbarie (Syria the State of Barbarism)*, that Hafez Assad applied the theory of Ibn Khaldun which suggests that kingdoms are established by fueling tribal or religious fanaticism and employing a religious or political call (doctrine/message) as a cover for fanaticism. Michel Seurat further explains that Hafez Assad employed his Alawites sect as fanaticism and turned it into a political group united around him, linking its existence with his. Additionally, he adopted Arab nationalism and socialism as a doctrine of his state (kingdom). Hence, the doctrine of Baath and the fanaticism of Alawites became the leverage for Hafez Assad’s state of terror.

In the 1980s Assad's authority was challenged by the Muslim Brotherhood group. Hafez used the Syrian army and repressed the uprising. To do so, according to Van Dam (2006), Hafez's brother Refaat and his soldiers, in 1980, shot to death 550 unarmed civilians in Tadmor prison as they were accused of joining the Muslim Brotherhood. Additionally, Hafez's brother Refatt led military troops and committed the massacre of Hama in which his troops destroyed the city of Hama and killed more than 15 thousand citizens (ten percent of the city's population) (Van Dam, 2006). Victims in Hama were unarmed civilians and many of them were killed with their family members including children and women in public squares, in mosques while praying, and even in their homes. The news of these two massacres travelled across Syria and spread terror among Syrians, which made Assad's rule stable and his opponents silent; even after he died in 2000 when his son Bashar illegitimately inherited the republic and continued his father's policies, Hafez's opponents were unable to act or speak.

Al-Maaloli (2016) explains that the constitution of 1973 was designed to support the hegemony of Baathist (Hafez's loyalists) through Article 8, which states that the Baath party leads both the state and society in Syria. The interpretation of this article in practice meant that only members of the Baath party had access to military, security and other government positions including teaching positions at schools and universities and so on. For example, approvals to establish civil society institutions were given only to the organizations that supported the Baath party such as Talaa Al-Baath and Etihad Shabebat Al-thowra.

Al-Maaloli (2016) explains that Talaa AL-Baath (The Baath Vanguards) is an organization that involuntarily recruits students in elementary schools and educates them to become Baathists in the future. It teaches the children to glorify Hafez and his party. Moreover, it aims to teach students obedience through the use of arts and sports activities supervised by

strict educators and managers who come solely from the Baath party. Al-Maaloli explains that after elementary school, the students involuntarily enroll as members of Etihad Shabebat Al-thowra (Revolutionary Youth Union). This organization continues what The Baath Vanguards starts and adds to its activities military training through which students learn how to use weapons and obey military orders. Additionally, Al-Maaloli explains that at the Syrian universities and colleges, the National Union of Syrian Students organizes the social and political life of students and runs activities that serve the Baath Party solely and glorify the nation's leader Hafez Assad. Moreover, similar institutions to the Baath Vanguards and Revolutionary Youth Union were established to control the women's and labour movements as well as every cultural and organizational aspect of life. Even the religious institutions were forced to establish Al-Assad Centers for the Memorization of the Noble Qur'an (معاهد الأسد لتحفيظ القرآن الكريم), and only Baathists were allowed to administrate these organizations.

Finally, during the era of Hafez from 1970 to 2000, the Kurdish issue almost ended. Only Kurdish leaders affiliated with the Turkish Kurdish militia (PKK) were welcomed by Hafez, who provided this group with military training campsites in Syria to train fighters who were willing to fight for establishing Kurdistan as the national homeland of Kurds in parts of Turkey. This alliance did not improve the status of Kurds in Syria. Hafez continued to implement the Arabic Belt discriminatory policies, and Kurds were not allowed to learn or speak their language or celebrate their cultural festivals, and almost 4000 Arabic families were deported from their land to live in newly built towns around the pre-existing Kurdish towns in northern Syria. Moreover, even the alliance with Kurdish leaders ended in 1998 when Assad signed the Adana agreement with Turkey through which he expelled Abdullah Ocalan, the founding member of the Kurdish

Turkish PKK party who was arrested later and kept in detention in Turkey (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2013).

1.3.2 Syria since 2000

The death of the dictator Hafez in 2000 was significant in Syria. Bashar inherited the rule and promised to reform the country, which allowed for the emergence of a social and political movement named Damascus Spring. This movement brought together former political prisoners and community leaders who participated in forums resulting in the articulation of political objectives including: "Multiparty democracy with particular emphasis on public freedoms and the lifting of the emergency and martial laws, the rule of law, recognizing freedom of assembly, press, and speech -release of political prisoners, granting of economic rights due to all citizens, [and] ending the special status of the Baath Party as the 'the leading party in society and state," (Carnegie Middle East Center, 2012a). The year 2000 also witnessed the rise of local networks called Muntadayat al-Mujtama al-Madani (literally translated to civil-society forums). For security concerns, local leaders of these networks held conversations in their homes and discussed economic and political issues. As a result of these discussions, they issued statements that demanded the implementation of Human Rights and democratic change in Syria (Fanack.com, 2012).

The Damascus Spring movement was repressed and ended in the fall of 2001 when the regime arrested most of its leaders. According to Bishara (n.d.), Bashar ceased the reformation process claiming that political and economic stability is the priority while political change is not. Second, the international environment represented in the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Iraq invasion, and the assassination of the prime minister of Lebanon Hariri made the security issues a priority

(security in this context refers to state security rather than citizens' security). Third, the Syrian society is complex and diverse, and it is not ‘ready for democracy.’

Additionally, Bishara suggests that Bashar’s economic policy was another factor that destructively affected Syrian society. Bishara explains that Bashar Assad implemented a liberalizing policy that allowed private ownership of vital institutions that are traditionally owned by the state in Syria such as universities, banks, and media organizations. Bishara adds that this private ownership occurred under the control of the Syrian state, which meant that government figures and rich individuals in the society became wealthy by benefitting from a corrupt system and their connection with Assad family members who took over the economic system in Syria. These three small groups formed an elite community situated in opposition to a huge lower class. The former enjoys wealth and fruits of governmental connections while the latter is denied access to both (Bishara, n.d.).

Coincidently, with the arrival of Bashar to power, Iraq witnessed dramatic changes following the commencement of the US war against terror, which was a factor that made the formation of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq in 2003 possible. Also, in 2003, the Democratic Union Party (it is called PYD since its name in Kurdish is Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat) was established in Syria. In 2004, Kurdish protests took place and were repressed brutally by the regime. In 2005, the Damascus Declaration, which was a political statement written by Syrian opposition political and social leaders, was published. The statement included, for the first time, Arab and Kurdish parties and figures who supported the rights of the Kurdish people and demanded the Syrian authority start political reform and find a democratic and just solution for the Kurdish issue. In 2011, the Syrian protests and revolution erupted with protestors

marching into the street chanting “one, one, one, the Syrian people is one” and “freedom; freedom”.

In 2011, new protests erupted in Syria. Community leaders held their first public conference on June 27, 2011, in Damascus at the Semiramis Hotel. Attendees included former political prisoners, journalists, and activists. Pro-regime individuals attended the conference and claimed to be part of the opposition; they and other opposition leaders were divided regarding the role of the Syrian army in the conflict on the one hand and the role of opposition leaders inside and outside Syria (diaspora community leaders) on the other. One perspective viewed the conflict as a terrorism problem that required military intervention to maintain stability. Other community leaders perceived the conflict as a political and social problem that required immediate and dramatic change. These two conflicting perspectives prevented consensus from forming among the attendees. The conference called for peaceful resolutions and refused all types of violence and external interventions. Many protestors and local activists considered this outcome unsatisfactory especially since the regime of Bashar Al-Assad was arresting and torturing protestors. The unsatisfactory outcome of the Semiramis conference was a key factor in making it possible for Syrian diaspora community leaders to play an active role in the Syrian conflict. This role became significant when diasporic leaders created organizations and began claiming to represent the protestors in the international arena.

Syrian diaspora community leaders held the Rescuing National Conference (مؤتمر الانقاذ الوطني) in Istanbul, Turkey, on July 16, 2011. During this conference, division among the attendees appeared publicly, and Kurdish representatives withdrew from the conference in objection to the phrase "Syrian Arab Republic" in the conference's slogan, while several independent Kurdish personalities remained. The Kurdish attendees wanted the name to be the

Syrian Republic while the Arab attendees argued that changing the name of the country was not on the agenda of their meeting and that it must occur only from a legitimately elected government, which was not the case with the attendees. The conference participants seemed overly focused on the future period that would come after the collapse of the Assad regime and little attention was paid to how to get the regime to collapse. So, in this way, the conference failed to represent the protestors on Syrian streets. Another conference was held in Cairo/Egypt on September 9th, 2011, a third took place in Brussels, and a fourth conference took place in Paris. Finally, on October 2nd, 2011, Syrian diasporic leaders established the Syrian National Council (SNC) in Istanbul, Turkey.

In 2011, both the regime and Arab opposition competed to win Kurdish support. For example, on April 1, 2011, Assad made a decree giving Kurds Syrian nationality while the opposition and protestors commemorated the 2004 Kurdish uprising by naming one of their rallies Azadi, which is a Kurdish word that means freedom. However, Kurdish political parties were hesitant to take a stance for or against the regime until they understood how the revolution would move forward. Hence, Kurds experienced internal conflicts regarding how to deal with the new circumstances. Kurdish politicians formed three main political organizations: The Kurdish Future Movement, which was founded by Mashal Tammo inside Syria and actively participated in the peaceful protests with Arab opposition leaders and protestors; the Kurdish National Council, which joined the diasporic Arab opposition in the National Syrian Council; and the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which maintained its relations with the PKK and the Syrian regime by refusing to join the diasporic opposition. The PYD preferred to work with the internal Arab opposition in Syria, and later, received military support from the United States (US) to free

the town of Kobane/Ein Al-Arab from ISIS in 2015. It has since become the predominant Kurdish group in Syria and imposed its agendas on local Arabs as well as Kurds by force.

Burhan Ghalioun, the first president of the Syrian National Council (SNC), notes in his book *Self-Injury* (عطب الذات) that the Council's influential members refused to work with one another, and every party tried to increase its gains regardless of what others felt or did. He explains that the SNC's most influential members were the Muslim Brotherhood Group, Damascus Declaration, and the Group of National Work or the so-called 74-Group, which also split into two rival groups competing for chairs. Also, he suggests that the interactions among these members were destructive and constituted an obstacle to collective work inside the Council. He describes the dynamics of interactions between the Council members by highlighting that the Muslim Brotherhood Group worked with everyone with no commitment to others' interests (Ghalioun, 2020).

The Group of National Work, Ghalioun (2020) explains, included many young leaders with charisma, skills, and higher education. Many of them came from Islamist backgrounds and combined political experience with feelings of anger and frustration as the Assad regime defeated them for decades. However, members of this group seemed to believe they solely deserved to lead the struggle. They formed a lobby inside the Council instead of working with others as partners; they pushed toward their goals without paying attention to others' ideas. Additionally, Ghalioun notes that Damascus Declaration representatives did not trust anyone. He explains that they insisted that the presidential period of the SNC must be one month and that the parties, in turn, occupy the chair of the president, and finally, they agreed to make it a three-month period. Uniting the Syrian diaspora community leaders was impossible under these conditions, according to Ghalioun. So, he thought that calling the General Authority of the SNC

to meet at a conference would help. The members of the General Authority came together in Tunisia to discuss the situation in Syria. However, they mainly focused on the presidential term and engaged in verbal and physical violence against each other. Ghalioun explains that he realized then that the protestors inside Syria would be abandoned to face their fate with no proper advocacy or aid from the diaspora community leaders (Ghalioun, 2020).

To conclude, studying the historical and political background of the conflicting parties is essential for understanding the roots and current issues of dispute. The military coups between 1949 and 1970, and the dictatorship from 1970 until the date of writing this thesis are factors that contributed to the division in Syrian society by spreading distrust and fear among the society members as a result of brutal aggression from the state on its population.

Bashar's policy was not less damaging than his father's. Bashar, like his father, has employed Ibn Khaldun's theory and ruled by creating an upper and lower class: the upper is small, dominating, rich, and loyal to his authority while the lower class is large, marginalized, and disloyal (being a lower class member does not necessarily mean a person is anti-Assad, but it does mean s/he is not willing to actively participate as a member of the oppressive regime that treats the state and its resources and population as booty to take over). Bashar continued his father's discriminatory policy against Kurds and Arabs. The Syrian opposition comes from different ethnic and ideological backgrounds and has internal issues of dispute that prevent its political bodies from working together to be free from their oppressor.

1.4 My Research Objectives and its Contribution to PACS

My research aims to explore internal conflicts amongst Syrian opposition diasporic community leaders (SODCLs). I hope my research contributes to Peace and Conflict Studies

(PACS) by shedding light on the dynamics and impacts of intragroup conflicts on peace leadership. Accordingly, I aim to explore the potential of peace interventions that might help conflicting parties achieve a higher level of effective cooperation and thus successful conflict transformation. Also, I aim to evaluate the utility of the TRIP model in explaining and resolving intragroup and intergroup ethnic conflicts despite the fact that the model was designed by Hocker and Wilmot (2017) to analyze interpersonal conflicts primarily.

Additionally, I hope my research will introduce ideas and models of conflict transformation that might be useful to the community of leaders among the Syrian opposition conflicting parties, especially those who believe in nonviolence and peace. Moreover, I hope my research, since it will explore materials written in Arabic by SODCLs, will help to make the voices of Syrian community leaders audible to those in the non-Syrian community of peacebuilders. Also, by exploring the meaning of peace leadership as a process in which local influential figures and outside interveners might link stakeholders to one another and to the available resources in order to develop constructive relationships, I hope my research will uncover ways through which such leadership might be formed. Finally, and hopefully, my research findings will apply to similar explanatory contexts such as national analyses of the Arab Spring, which should be of interest to Canadian and international scholars and policymakers.

1.5 Limitations of My Research

Researchers who employ the content analysis method for conducting qualitative research risk overinterpreting their data. Also, they might be biased since they employ pre-existing theories and research findings to create research questions and so tend to start their research with assumptions about their topic and most likely confirm the utility of the employed theories and

findings. To address the first limitation, I will divide my research into descriptive and interpretive parts, and I will include a variety of information sources in addition to being restricted by the findings of my research theoretical framework, which I discuss in the literature review. To address the second potential limitation, I will employ elements of both directed and conventional methods of qualitative content analysis. This means that I will develop my research questions based on the TRIP model, which stands for topical, relational, identity, and process conflict goals. But I will endeavour to begin my research by looking for materials about identity conflict without making prior assumptions about the type of identities that might exist in the Syrian context. Next, I will explore my data to find other types of goals and conflicts. I will simply follow my material to generate categories and themes without specific expectations. Additionally, my research will go beyond the scope of the TRIP model, which is initially designed to analyze interpersonal conflicts, since I employ this model to analyze intragroup ethnic conflicts. This will allow me to explore the utility of this model and possibly expand it to be used in a broader setting than interpersonal conflicts.

Finally, one limitation to acknowledge is that my study sample includes only work of community leaders who are active on Facebook from Arabic, Kurdish, Sunni, and Durzi backgrounds while other groups and leaders in the field are not included. I acknowledge that other community leaders might have different perspectives that are worth exploring. Unfortunately, the Syrian conflict is still ongoing and working with local community leaders on the ground might be unsafe for both the researchers and participants.

1.6 An Overview of Forthcoming Chapters

To achieve my goals, I have divided my research into five chapters. In this chapter, I have presented my research problem and questions. Additionally, I provide a historical background of the Syrian conflict and its roots. Additionally, I present the significance and limitations of my research and an overview of forthcoming chapters. In chapter two, I explain that I will employ the content analysis method in conducting qualitative research. I explain my research method and methodology and highlight my research's strengths and limitations. Also, I explain my data collecting and analysis processes. In chapter three, I present a literature review that includes a presentation and discussion of PACS key terms that will be used in my research. In chapter four, I present and analyze my data to conclude with key findings of my data analysis. In chapter five, I provide a summary of my research, restate the significance and limitations of my research and propose research areas for future PACS researchers.

1.7 Summary

In this chapter, I identify my research problem as the absence of effective cooperation among the Syrian opposition diasporic community leaders and the ways through which peace interveners might enhance the capacity of this community of leaders to serve peace. I ask: what are the topical, relational, identity, and process conflict goals among the Syrian opposition diaspora community leaders? What type of conflict transformation interventions might help SODCLs improve their capacity to transform conflicts and serve as peace leaders? Next, I have provided a historical background of the Syrian conflict and its roots following the conflict transformation of Lederach, which explains that conflicts must be explored in their contexts and roots at the same time. In this context, I have explained that political unrest, military coups, and

dictatorship are factors that complicate the Syrian conflict, especially with the presence of the Syrian oppressive state that defines its population as the enemies. Also, my research's objectives include addressing the impacts of intragroup conflicts on the capacity of conflicting parties to serve peace, which is my major contribution to PACS. Moreover, I have discussed the significance and limitations of my research, and finally, I provided an overview of the forthcoming chapters and a summary of this chapter.

Chapter 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Before presenting my literature review, I would like to highlight that in my thesis, I only focus on recent work that serves my main topic of research. This explains why I have not discussed important work that I think might be helpful to explore in different contexts. This applies mainly to religion and secularism, which are vast topics that have been explored by several authors such as Bernard Lonergan (philosopher and theologian) and Charles Taylor (philosopher) who present splendid ideas from Western perspectives regarding religion and secularism. But since my research focuses on the Syrian conflict, I chose not to present these insights although I acknowledge their significance. Instead, in chapter four, I will present how religion and secularism are understood in the Syrian context hoping to highlight how these definitions are understood in the Syrian context. Similarly, I would like to highlight the presence of significant works that I have not explored in my thesis while I think readers and researchers who aim to achieve a better understanding of the impacts of culture on peace and conflict might find it insightful. But since my research is not mainly about culture, I chose to refer to these important works only without providing details that seem to me beyond the scope of my inquiry. These works include but are not limited to the work of Nathan Falk; Scott Appleby; Kevin Averach; and Mark Ross.

Accordingly, in this chapter, I provide a theoretical overview of some of my key research terms as they relate to the thesis topic. Specifically, I will explore conflict; conflict and culture; religion; identity; communication styles; Lederach's theory of conflict Transformation; models and frameworks of conflict transformation including Lederach's Inquiry, Byrne and Carter's Social Cubism, Dugan's Nested Foci, The Antagonism, Reflexive-framing, Inventing, and

Agenda-setting (ARIA) Model by Jay Rothman, Transformative Dialogue, and Everyday Peacebuilding models. Additionally, I will explore the meaning of peace leadership as well as conflict goals and then provide a summary and conclusions. These terms and models are significant for my thesis since they constitute tools that help me analyze conflict from different angles and then discuss a potentially effective peace intervention for conflict transformation.

2.2 Conflict

Conflict is a multidimensional phenomenon and thus it may be viewed from different angles. Galtung (1964) suggests that researchers should go beyond the visible elements of conflict. He differentiates between "positive" and "negative peace" explaining the latter as the absence of violence/war while the former is "the integration of human society" (p. 2). Galtung (1969) distinguishes between "direct violence" that is personal and visible such as killing or injuring others and "structural violence" that is invisible since it is usually embedded in social and political organizations (p. 169). Galtung (1990) proposes that "cultural violence" is a third type being added to "direct" and "structural" types of violence; he explains that this third type includes, for instance, symbols and narratives embedded in the structures of arts and religion that legitimize and normalize direct violence (p. 291). He further proposes that direct, structural, and cultural violence are interconnected, and one affects and gets affected by the two others.

Pondy (1967) also defines conflict as a "dynamic process" through which conflicting parties compete over resources, power, and different goals; he observes five dimensions of conflict: "latent, perceived, felt, manifest, and aftermath" (pp. 299 - 300). Conflicts are latent when the conditions that might create violence are present but are invisible to the individuals in a given situation. When one party at least recognizes the conflict and develops negative emotions

toward the other party, it becomes a felt conflict. Conflict becomes manifest as it is expressed through hostile actions. But, when a conflict is caused by a misunderstanding of the true position of another party, it is only then a perceived conflict. In this case, direct communication might be helpful when it adds clarity to the agendas of the parties. Finally, the aftermath is the stage that comes after the conflict is over and it can be described as the legacy of conflict, which might lead to stronger or damaged relationships (Pondy, 1967, pp. 296-306)

Moreover, Pinkley (1990) finds that disputants interpret conflict differently. While conflicting parties might seek to maintain their relationships, others might be less concerned about relations and more focused on the topic/issue of dispute. Pinkley categorizes these interpretations of conflict as “relationship versus task” conflicts. Also, he finds that conflicting parties might be concerned with the feelings that accompany the interactions more than the behaviour of others, or the opposite; he names these “emotional versus intellectual” conflicts. Further, Pinkley finds that disputants differ in their tendency to blame others or express their willingness to compromise; he suggests that these tendencies are indicators of the presence of two categories of conflict “compromise versus win” (p. 008).

In addition, Jehn (1995) explores the impacts of task and relationship conflicts, as suggested by Pinkley (1990), with a focus on performance in organizational conflict. She finds that relationship conflicts develop when parties have to complete interdependent tasks and they negatively affect the productivity and satisfaction of the participants in a given situation. Also, she finds that the impacts of task conflicts that include disagreement on the norms in a given context are negative on performance while conflict about newly introduced matters might be positive (p.275).

In contrast, Jhen (1997) observes that parties might have common goals and fine relationships and yet still fail to work together well. She attributes this failure to the absence of agreement on the means through which the parties plan to reach their goals. This state of disagreement characterizes what she calls “process conflict” (p. 241). She suggests conflicts of this kind compromise the third dimension that can be added to the distinction made by Pinkley (1990), and thus interactions between conflicting parties can be viewed as expressive of task, relationship, and process conflicts.

Thus, Greer et al. (2008) define intragroup conflict as a process that includes perceptions about “incompatibilities or differences between team members” (p. 280). They also suggest that conflict is not static and explore the effects of task-based, relationship-based, and process-based conflicts on the performance of members of organizations. They find that process conflicts at the early stage of teamwork are long-lasting and generate other types of conflict (task and relationship conflicts) which in turn negatively affect the satisfaction and performance of the group’s members. In contrast, they argue that resolving process conflicts early when they arise has positive impacts on the parties and dynamics of a conflict.

Mikkelsen and Clegg (2018) also argue that although scholars have stressed the necessity of agreeing upon a definition of conflict for the practical purpose of advancing conflict studies, consensus on what conflict means has not merged. They also conclude that three shifts have occurred in how scholars have perceived conflict during the sixty years preceding their research. First, researchers viewed conflict as a constructive aspect of life rather than as destructive. Second, they shifted thinking from what the conflicting parties *should do* to focusing on exploring *what they do*. Third, researchers started to view conflict as a social rather than an individual phenomenon, with the result that more attention has been paid to the organizational

and social contexts of conflicts. Accordingly, Mikkelsen and Clegg (2018) conclude that conflict transformation occurs on personal, cultural, and structural levels.

2.3 Culture

There is no agreement amongst anthropologists regarding a definition of the concept of culture; however, Hofstede (1994) defines it as a collective mindset based on which social groups are distinguished from one another, and Spencer-Oatey (2008) defines it as a "fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour" (as cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2012, pp.1-2). These definitions both indicate that common behaviours, patterns, routines, perspectives, and norms constitute significant elements of culture, and these elements together form an individual's worldview, which at least includes beliefs about religion, identity, and communication styles. Accordingly, it seems that exploring these three concepts might lead to a better understanding of the role of culture in peace and conflict, and this is what I will do next.

2.4 Religion

According to Silvestri et. al. (2015), there is little scholarly consensus on what religion means as a concept. However, Silvestri et al. (2015) differentiate between "substantive" and "functional" perspectives on religion explaining that the former includes "key scriptures, theologies, bodies of doctrine, and values and beliefs enshrined in these" while the latter includes identity, morality, law and order" and the sense of belonging to a community (p.5). They also

define religion as “a system of beliefs and values associated with particular organizational forms (ritual practices, institutions), and with a supra-natural deity embodying and emanating some absolute truths” (p. 6).

Silvestri et al. (2015) also note that religion is dynamic. They critique any binary vision that depicts religion as either a motive for “violence” or else “reconciliation” and note the findings of Fox (2003) which demonstrate that “self-determination and nationalism” are major incentives for ethnic conflicts whereas religious factors only “influence the intensity of conflicts” (pp. 1-18). Additionally, Galtung (2014) rejects the term “religious conflict” noting that religion is one among other dimensions of conflict and thus it should not be used to label the whole of a conflict. Instead, he explains that one can view religion as a “toolbox” from which individuals and groups might grab what they need to achieve their personal and socially pre-determined agendas. That said, he explains that by animating the idea of a “Chosen People” some religions create the capacity to cause direct violence by followers (as cited in Silvestri et al., 2015. pp. 19-20).

Accordingly, religion might be viewed as a system of life built on the assumption of a relationship with a God or gods organized along three dimensions: personal, social, and structural. The personal dimension of religion includes the views of individuals about the origins and workings of the universe and other individuals within and outside of their circle of faith; the social dimension relates to how one interacts with others based on their worldviews; and finally, the structural dimension refers to the organizations or institutions that claim the right to interpret scriptures and control members in communities of believers. This conclusion reveals that religion is a force for change that might be used to make life better or worse depending on how the followers of religion interpret and use their religion in a context. Hence, in the next part, I

will highlight the significance of shift-thinking on religious texts as well as the pros and cons of involving religious institutions in serving peace, as observed by scholars.

2.4.1 The Power of Shift-Thinking on Religious Texts

Zehr (2015) observes that religious texts might be interpreted differently in each context. He explains that biblical verses, for example, can be used to justify the punishment of offenders or reintegrate them into society through restorative justice.

Zehr (2015) explains that restorative justice is an approach to justice that seeks to move from punishing offenders to recognizing victims' needs. He adds that it is built on three principles: inclusion, accountability, and reintegration. First, inclusion means that community members, offenders, and victims are all included in the process of justice, which aims to make the wrong right rather than punish the offender. In this process, each party has the opportunity to explain how the offence has affected them to say how they see the move forward. Second, accountability in this context means that each party plays an active rather than passive role in the justice process. Offenders acknowledge the pain their actions have caused and mend the harm they have created. Victims also show commitment to speaking up honestly and expressing how they feel and what their needs are. Victims take the responsibility for their healing and should not wait for others to save them. Finally, reintegration means that community members make efforts to guarantee safety and access to resources when needed in the hope of reintegrating both victims and offenders. In other words, wrongdoers are given the chance to take responsibility for their actions and return to the community as productive members, and victims are allowed to heal and become survivors (also see Van Ness and Strong, 1997).

In his *Changing Lenses,* Zehr (2015) includes a chapter, entitled "Covenant Justice: The Biblical Alternative" in which he argues that restorative justice can be grounded in biblical verses to achieve a broader meaning of justice than modern criminal justice. He explains for example that the punishing approach in the latter is concerned with punishing criminals for breaking the law while the former views punishment, when it applies, as a means to "make things right". He adds that the biblical term "Shalom" is usually translated to peace while peace is only one dimension of Shalom, which also refers to "all rightness." Zehr refers to the work of Old Testament scholar Perry Yoder, who argues that "Shalom" includes three dimensions: physical and material well-being and abundance as well as prosperity; social relationships marked by a lack of hostility even when conflicts arise; and demonstrating ethical and moral principles when dealing with others "straightforwardness" (p. 146).

Additionally, Zehr (2015) presents several contradictory verses from the Bible which for him complicate the work of scholars who want to base their conclusions on biblical principles. For instance, he contrasts the Old Testament statement: "an eye for an eye" with Jesus's comment that a person needs to "do good to those who harm you." Zehr also suggests that the former statement is meant to set a limit rather than encourage revenge, no more an eye for an eye. Further, he adds that "an eye for an eye" in the Bible is followed by the reminder that "there must be one standard for all, for the stranger as well as the native" (As cited in Zehr, 2015, p. 147). Zehr's presentation of two different interpretations of one religious text demonstrates that religious texts enjoy the capacity to be reinterpreted in different contexts. Thus, religious texts are dynamic and might serve peace when community and religious leaders select the more humanitarian fitting interpretations in each context.

2.4.2 Pros and Cons of Involving Religious Institutions in Peace Work

Samuelsson and Robert (2019) highlight several pros of employing religious institutions in peacebuilding processes. They propose that Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) are influential in peacebuilding since they are "holistic", "grass root-oriented" and "not bureaucratic" (p. 15). They explain that FBOs are powerful since they enjoy a strong networking system among community members noting that FBOs provide "40-70% of all health care in several countries in sub-Saharan Africa" (pp. 15-16). Jakobsson also (2019) notes that the United Nations (UN) has been working with religious leaders as "key actors for reconciliation and relationship building" since the latter understand the local social and structural organizations very well. Also, they explain that religious leaders might contribute to peace through changing "attitudes and behaviours" of individuals within their circle of faith (pp.25-26)

On the other hand, Karam (2019) notes that a disadvantage of relying on FBOs is the potential of overlapping between religion and the distribution of power. Similarly, Jakobsson (2019) raises concerns about involving religion in peacebuilding processes. These concerns include challenges regarding the existence of internal conflicts within religious groups, especially regarding human rights perspectives. Other challenges involve tensions between individual and collective rights, gender roles, and the distribution of power. Jakobsson (2019) also notes that relationships between members of a community of faith are not necessarily better than relationships between individuals from different faiths. Accordingly, he differentiates between faith based on personal assumptions about the world on the one hand, and values that rely on personal experiences on how to approach and work with others on the other hand. He concludes that both believers and non-believers need to uncover their values so as to be able to include each other in their work. Similarly, both religious and non-religious civil society

organizations must come to a deeper understanding of their values so as to integrate religion into their ongoing development and cooperation work (p. 36).

To summarize, religion as a system of life contains the capacity to promote and demote constructive as well as destructive patterns of communication with others. The power of religion as a force for change can be observed in its texts' capacity of being interpreted differently in each context, as explained above regarding the interpretation of the "eye for an eye" verse. Additionally, when religion is institutionalized, it might become a powerful tool of peace work when sufficient attention is paid to its pros and cons to maximize the former and minimize the latter, as I explained about the work of faith-based organizations.

2.5 Identity

Cook-Huffman (2020) differentiates between personal identity, which includes a personal worldview as an independent individual, and collective identity which involves a group's membership and relationships with others. She proposes that categorizing people as "us" and "them" are the motives for either war or else social change. She explains that the feeling of belonging to a group is essential for mobilizing individuals to contribute to collective actions. She further suggests that peace interventions must be well designed in order to ensure that while building a majority group occurs, minority voices are also heard and included in peace processes. Finally, she stresses that building relationships without changing oppressive structures means that the harmony of the groups will be promoted over justice; hence, she suggests that relationship-building processes and the reformation of institutions in society go together side by side.

Moreover, Jeong (2020) proposes that differences within groups (intra-group conflicts) affect the dynamics of both conflicts and peace, and he stresses that these internal conflicts are affected by and may affect existing social and political structures in society. Jeong's observations mean that sustainable peacebuilding requires the reformation of existing structures in society and exploring identity conflicts between and within groups. Further, Rothman (2020) explains that the identity of a group is like a fence that maintains group members as insiders while others are conceived of apart as strangers/outsiders. He also stresses that individuals may achieve well-being through belonging to a group.

Additionally, Burton (1990) suggests that identity and self-determination are basic needs, like the needs for safety and well-being, and necessary for humans to perform well when they interact with others. He also notes that the failure to meet these needs is the main cause of conflict (as cited in Rothman 2020, p. 248). According to Reimer et al. (2015), John Burton theorizes that identity recognition is a universal intangible basic human need that constitutes a motive of human behaviour. Moreover, and probably based on Burton's observations, Rothman (2020) proposes that conflicts might be addressed on three levels interests, resources, and identity. He explains that while conflicting parties might see and directly address their interests and needs for access to resources, they might struggle to define their identity needs since they are intangible triggers of conflict.

Hocker and Wilmot (2017) explain that many elements of identity such as race, gender, social status, and sexual orientation also might hinder or support effective and productive communication in conflict (pp.22- 23). Similarly, Reimer et. al. (2015) argue that identity may be a destructive or constructive factor in the transformation process. They explain that the social identity of a given group includes the shared "markers like language, faith, historical

celebrations, and even eating habits that unite them and distinguish them from other groups" (p. 22). They also note that these shared markers are not limited to one group but rather some of them might be shared with other groups, which might enhance the conflict transformation processes when the shared markers among conflicting parties are uncovered.

To summarize, collective identity includes perceptions about who is a member and who is a stranger in a given situation. It is a factor that may promote effective cooperation within and between groups or else might promote conflicts over tangible issues related to resources and power distribution. Hence, as noted in Rothman's ARIA model below, including identity in dialogue is essential for peacebuilding.

2.6 Communication Styles

According to Bai (2016), Edward T Hall (1976) distinguishes high context (HC) from low context (LC) cultures. Bai (2016) explains individuals who come from HC cultures tend to communicate what they want to say indirectly. Thus, they might use a few words and expect listeners to comprehend what is not being said, relying on clues present in the context of interactions. Also, Bai explains that members of HC cultures tend to build their relationships in a hierarchal system so that the distribution of power is unequal. Additionally, Gudykunst (1996) explains that individuals in HC cultures tend to prioritize the harmony of the group over their own individual needs, and so tend to treat loyalty to the group as a precious commodity. They are loyal to the group and in exchange, the group takes care of their needs.

On the other hand, Bai (2016) explains that members of low context culture (LC) mostly hesitate to go beyond the interpretation of what they hear; only spoken words are interpreted. Hence, they tend to say what they mean and mean what they say. LC cultures are fact-based

cultures in which interpretations are just assumptions. Another significant aspect of LC cultures is that individuals tend to satisfy their own needs regardless of the group's harmony. Thus, individuals enjoy their privacy and do not perceive loyalty as precious, which is the opposite in HC cultures as explained above. Further, in LC cultures, individuals tend to have role-based relationships through which individuals attempt to satisfy their needs as individual community members rather than leaders and followers.

Hofstede (2011), after reminding readers that culture is influential and not the determinant of individuals' behaviour, explains six dimensions of culture that impact cross-cultural communication. These dimensions are: "Power/ Distance, Uncertainty/ Avoidance, Individualism/ Collectivism, Masculinity/ Femininity, Long/ Short Term Orientation, and Indulgence/ Restraint" (p. 2). Hofstede (2011) explains that power distribution varies in societies. Some societies employ hierarchal systems to achieve cooperation through domination while others seem to predicate their cooperation on participation in governance through acting as equal citizens. Additionally, he explains that members of the community might feel comfortable working with others when tasks are clearly divided, and structures are well designed so that they do not need to come up with interpretations of how things should be done. On the other hand, some members of the community might require more freedom to come up with their styles of doing things. Further, he observes that communities might be individual-centred or group-centred. He explains that individualistic societies are task-based, and their members tend to prioritize privacy and the expression of opinions and feelings over the harmony of the group, which is the opposite in collectivistic high context societies (pp. 9-11)

Additionally, Hofstede (2011) differentiates between communities that assign certain roles to their members according to their gender identity and others that tend to treat all

community members equally regardless of their gender. Also, he explains that communities view history and the future differently. History for some communities is a source of learning for the future while other communities might view certain past events of history as (ideal) moments that should be recreated. Further, some societies tend to attribute success to good planning and time management while others tend to have fatalistic interpretations of their events of life. Finally, Hofstede (2011) explains that communities differ regarding how they enjoy life, noting that some communities expect their members to restrain their desires and oppress their needs as a sign of being righteous while others might address their needs directly and openly (pp. 12-15).

Finally, Hocker and Wilmot (2017) adopt Rahim's (2011) classification of five conflict styles: avoiding; obliging (accommodating); dominating (competing); integrating (collaborating); and compromising (p.153). They note that no one person uses only one style although individuals tend to rely more on specific styles rather than others. Additionally, they highlight that no style is better than others and what determines the suitability of a given conflict style is the context in which the interactions take place and the goals pursued by individuals in that context. In what follows, I explore these five styles.

Hocker and Wilmot (2017) explain that conflict avoidance might be expressed in many ways including denial of conflict or changing the topic of interaction. Hence, avoidance in itself is neutral, and it could lead to negative or positive outcomes. One advantage of this style is that avoidants do not usually engage in unnecessary conflicts especially when the relationship is not important. On the other hand, a disadvantage of avoidance is that individuals with avoidant communication styles might be perceived as weak or as not caring enough to interact with others. Also, Hocker and Wilmot (2017) note that different cultures encourage or discourage avoidant responses to conflict. They explain that individuals who come from collectivistic cultures tend to

prioritize the harmony of the group over the individual's feelings or desires, and thus they tend to avoid conflicts to maintain harmony, at least on the surface. The situation is of course reversed in individualistic cultures.

Hocker and Wilmot (2017) also explain that individuals with dominating or competing communication styles view conflict as a battle to win or lose. And thus, they are less likely to compromise with others. One advantage of this style lies in the way it handles situations that require decisiveness. However, dominating persons tend to pay little attention to relationships with others, which is a disadvantage when the relationship is important to them. Hocker and Wilmot explain that individuals with dominating communication styles tend to achieve their goals by threatening others or warning them about potential consequences. Also, they might resort to promising others a positive outcome conditional on certain behaviour. Additionally, they might employ the recommendations as an indirect way to tell others what to do.

Hocker and Wilmot (2017) also explain that a compromising style involves a give-and-take approach to conflict. An advantage of this style is that it allows someone to achieve the most important possible goals in a given conflict situation. On the other hand, a disadvantage occurs when one is forced to give up valuable things due to a lack of power. They add that when the give and take are disproportionate, negative emotions may develop about others that can then contaminate the whole process. Hocker and Wilmot also define the obligating style as a willingness of individuals to serve others and pay little attention to their own needs. They explain that individuals who employ this style tend to think they are serving the other party whether it is family, friends …etc. This style requires a high level of balancing when determining whose needs should be served and how; otherwise, generosity might not be received well in a given situation. For instance, it might be linked to codependency and allow others to dominate the

relationship in an abusive way. Additionally, in general, this style risks reducing the productive interactions between the parties since the accommodator ends the interaction so quickly and gives up the struggle very easily (Hocekr & Wilmot, 2017).

Finally, Hocker and Wilmot (2017) explain that the integrating communication style is collaborative and thus may be considered the most constructive style. Individuals who employ this style tend to pay attention to the goals of all parties in an interaction. It is a "mutual problem-solving" style (p. 176). They also propose that one advantage of this style is that it can enrich the process of interaction with new ideas. Additionally, it builds relationships on mutual respect and understanding. On the other side, it is time and energy-consuming, which is a disadvantage especially when the relationship is not worth it for any of the conflicting parties (pp.152-183).

2.7 Lederach's Theory of Conflict Transformation

Chronologically, the field of Conflict Management (CM) developed into Conflict Resolution (CR), and the latter developed into the field of Conflict Transformation (CT). CM is concerned with achieving the best possible outcome for the group/organization by focusing processes on the issues under dispute, with comparatively little attention paid to the parties of the conflict. CR promotes a win-win rather than a win-lose process through which every party achieves some of their goals. Finally, CT is mainly concerned with relationship building as a goal as well as a means to other goals. It is a process that views conflict as a neutral interaction or aspect of life, and the parties' response to interactions in a given context determines whether the outcome will be productive or destructive. This approach is predicated on understanding interactions and relationships among the conflicting parties by recognizing the root causes and contexts of conflicts. Accordingly, CT practitioners study conflicts by looking at personal,

relational, structural, and cultural contexts (Reimer et al, 2015, pp. 8-13). In what follows, I will further explore details of the meaning of Conflict Transformation as well as its models which constitute analytical tools for conflict transformation practitioners and scholars.

Lederach (1995) views conflict as a normal aspect of life the responses to which serve to determine for conflicting parties whether the conflict is ultimately destructive or productive. He also assumes that raising awareness about parties' worldviews is key to building relationships between them. He adds that such relationships might lead to conflict transformation in the long term because they change the conflict dynamics as well as transform unjust structures. Finally, he suggests that dialogue, empowerment, and inclusion are significant for transformation to occur through shifting perceptions of the parties' positions, interests, relationships, and social structures. Thus, communication between stakeholders is significant in order to achieve transformation on personal, cultural, relational and structural levels. Further, he suggests that practitioners and parties to a conflict should address both visible (oppressing practices and structures) and invisible (cultural root) elements of conflicts to achieve transformation through "elicitive" rather than "prescriptive" learning processes. Lederach also explains that the former is a process through which leaders help local communities develop their learning processes and models to effectively deal with their problems locally rather than externally. In other words, Lederach stresses that local actors can define and achieve their own needs and goals, and the outcomes of such a process are more successful than when change is planned and implemented by outsiders (Leadrach, 1995; see also Lederach, 1997, pp. 37 – 55; Lederach, 2014, pp. 14-22).

Lederach (2014) explains that CT as a framework aims to end undesired situations and establish desirable ones. This can be achieved through building constructive relationships among parties to a given conflict. These relationships may lead to immediate resolutions but do not

necessarily do so. The focus of CT processes is to empower parties to find their resolutions collaboratively through inclusive processes that make every voice heard. Further, Lederach explains that CT views conflicts as a normal aspect of life and they can play a positive role in society through raising awareness of important issues that would not be discussed unless conflict has occurred. Thus, the engaged parties and conflict transformation practitioners achieve better outcomes when they fully, actively, and productively engage in order to openly listen to others' narratives and so as to express their own. Finally, one challenge to the successful implementation of the CT framework is that it is time-consuming. CT responds to conflicts through long-term processes; it is a framework that includes facilitating access to urgent humanitarian aid, but it goes beyond that to effectively deal with issues of the dispute before they develop into more complex conflicts (Lederach, 2014, p. 33).

2.8 Models and Frameworks of Conflict Transformation

Reimer et al. (2015) present four models that share similar features regarding the engaging of processes and actors for holistic and inclusive conflict transformation interventions. These are the Inquiry Model developed by John Paul Lederach, the Social Cube Model developed by Sean Byrne and Neal Carter, the ARIA Model developed by Jay Rothman, and the Nested Foci Model developed by Maire Dugan. Additionally, other scholars highlight the significance of the everyday peacebuilding model and transformative dialogue model. I will explain these next.

2.8.1 Lederach's Inquiry Model

Lederach (2014) proposes that conflicts should be studied in contexts that include relationships between the parties and their existing structures of institutions and society. Hence, conflict transformation might be achieved through a process that consists of three inquiries. The first inquiry includes the understanding of the current situation of the dispute, defining patterns of relationships between the parties, and the history of the dispute. In the second inquiry, the parties together imagine their desired future focusing on possible resolutions that might reframe their relationships and reform their existing societal and political institutions. Lastly, in the third inquiry, the participating parties create a flexible action plan for change to occur on personal, relational, cultural, and structural levels. Finally, Lederach stresses these three inquiries are interconnected, hence an ongoing process of reflection is essential for this model.

2.8.2 Byrne and Carter's Social Cubism Model

Byrne and Carter (1996) introduce six social factors that contribute to the escalation or de-escalation of ethnic conflict; these are "historical, religious, demographic, political, economic, and psycho-cultural factors" (p. 2). Byrne and Keashly (2000) also explain that narratives of a conflict's history are connected to the current politics of the conflicting parties. They further suggest that religious institutions play a significant role in both fueling disputes and healing the aftermath of conflict. Moreover, whether actors are part of the minority or majority groups is also a factor that shapes the positions of the parties in conflict (this is what the authors mean by demographic factor). Additionally, in a point related to demographics, they suggest that political organizations in a context affect how residents might participate in politics. Further, the accessibility to resources or lack of it is a factor that affects the perceptions and responses of

conflicting parties. Finally, they use "psycho-cultural" factors to refer to the perceptions of the parties regarding the value of the other's stance and narratives (pp. 99-104).

Byrne and Keashly (2000) add that these multi-modal and multi-level factors are affected by several mechanisms that include the impacts of governing structures, media influencers as well as business and religious figures, educators, grassroots, and outsider interveners. Finally, they propose that all these forces are interconnected with one another and create dynamics of conflict escalation or de-escalation, and they are all interconnected like a cube; hence, change for peace requires attention from the actors and interveners to multiple models and processes at the same time.

2.8.3 Dugan's Nested Foci Model

The Nested Foci Model includes four levels of analysis: issues, relationships, sub-system, and system. Marie Dugan (1996) explains that conflicts usually include issues that trigger interactions (e.g., a position in a workplace for which several employees compete, though only one will get it). Second, they include the emotional stances of the conflicting parties, which affect their direct interactions and relationships. Third, conflicts occur in sub-systems that impose special rules on the parties, such as neighbourhoods or workplaces for instance. Finally, the issues of dispute and emotions as well as the special rules all are embedded in a larger system that includes inherited structures of society (Dugan, 1996). This model is a valuable tool for conflict transformation analysis because it pays special attention to the linkages between the current issues of dispute and conflict contexts. Additionally, it breaks down the impacts of societal structure to be understood as a macro and micro-structure, which require different types of responses by the conflicting parties and the conflict transformation practitioners.

Lederach (1997) extends this model and proposes what he calls an "integrated framework for peacebuilding" (p.37). Lederach adopts the four levels of analysis advanced by Dugan and links each to actions by stakeholders and peace interveners. These actions include immediate crisis interventions that provide aid to affected communities; training that includes local cultures and improves the local capacity to engage and define community needs; imagining future "desirable structural, systematic, and relationship goals" (p. 77); and a "design of social change", which Lederach uses to refer to ideas and processes that link current crises to a desirable future.

2.8.4 The ARIA Model by Jay Rothman

The ARIA is an acronym for Antagonism, Reflexive-framing, Inventing, and Agenda-setting. This model was introduced by Rothman in 2001 as part of his effort to show that traditional negotiation processes include interest-based and resource-based arguments and concerns, but disputants rarely discuss the identities of participants. He notes that identity conflicts are usually invisible and expressed as conflicts over tangible issues such as resources and interests. Hence, including identity in conflict analysis and peace interventions is significant for uncovering the roots of conflict beyond tangible matters. He adds that the ARIA model can be implemented in four stages in which the parties, first, vent and express their values and needs and listen to the others; second, they reframe their narratives through reflection and hopefully see the merits in the other party's narratives, which might allow them to learn about their roles in both complicating and resolving the conflict rather than blaming the others; third, the conflicting parties together establish shared perspectives that include creative resolutions; and finally, they agree on practical steps to move forward and create change.

2.8.5 Transformative Dialogue Model

Transformative dialogue is a model informed by several previous models of conflict resolution such as Interactive Conflict Resolution (ICR) suggested by Fisher (2020). Fisher follows Burton (1990) and other human needs theorists and proposes that identity is a basic human need, which is essential for peacebuilding. He explains that ICR serves peace by offering parties the opportunity to have their identity recognized by others. Additionally, it helps the parties reflect on and reframe aspects of their culture such as values and practices.

Cleven and Saul (2021) also explain that the transformative dialogue model requires the inclusion of the conflicting parties in order to transform their conflicts. In this approach, conflicting parties together brainstorm solutions hoping to have a say in their healing journey. Further, this model assumes that individuals' well-being is essential for constructive engagement in transformative dialogue, and thus it pays special attention to individuals' basic needs such as safety and access to resources. Accordingly, Cleven and Saul stress that effective dialogue processes should build on local resources available in the community. They define transformative dialogue as: "a process in which a facilitator works with people in communities to support them in gaining clarity and making decisions as they co-create a process that supports changes in the quality of people's interactions, increasing the amount of pro-social interaction" (p.119). They explain that facilitators avoid assuming and interact with the parties ethically to achieve three tasks: educate the parties about the process and its potential, assist the participants to determine whether the transformative dialogue suits their needs, and provide the needed support to maintain constructive interactions (pp.120 -123).

2.8.6 Everyday Peacebuilding Model

Senehi (2020) explains that the role of everyday peacebuilders has increasingly become noticed by PACS scholars such as Lederach (1995) and Berents and McEvoy-Levy (2015). She adds that everyday peacebuilding includes voices of youth in Indigenous communities as well as Indigenous stories, which constitute a framework for the narrative of conflict from local perspectives. In addition, Hyma and Sen (2022) suggest that researchers who apply participatory research methods can uncover the strength of relationship building in vulnerable communities; they find that when individuals from vulnerable communities share their stories and listen to others, they develop a better understanding of their issues and positively affect relationships between their groups through networking and building advocacy groups in their communities.

Kroeker (2020) also explains that everyday peacebuilding is a bottom-up approach that aims to include grassroots, whose work is usually unrecognized by traditional views that focus the work on organizations and structures of society, in the processes of peacebuilding; it suggests that the macro level of change (on governmental and organizational levels) requires cooperation from grassroots to maintain a good and effective implementation of peace agreements. Additionally, Visoka (2020) acknowledges that changing oppressive structures is essential for empowering grassroots to participate in peacebuilding processes. However, he thinks changing structures alone is insufficient for conflict transformation and argues that in divided societies, elites might benefit from the conflict status quo; thus, they might employ their power to mobilize ordinary people to resist peacebuilding. Hence, Visoka proposes that the inclusion of ordinary people in peacebuilding processes might raise awareness among them about peace and promote constructive interactions among the conflicting parties.

2.9 Peace Leadership

Leadership is a relationship in which both so-called leaders and followers may participate so as to enhance the productivity of their interactions. Lederach (1995) suggests that local communities and cultures may play an important role in the process of learning how to deal with conflicts. He differentiates between “elicitive” and “prescriptive” learning processes explaining that the former is a process through which trainers, whom he calls leaders, help local communities develop their learning processes and models to effectively deal with their problems through local lenses rather than externals’.

Further, Lederach (1997) suggests that peace leadership may occur on three levels of leadership: “top, middle-range, and grassroots leaders” (p. 37). These leaders should all work together to commence top-down and bottom-up effective communication processes in order to achieve sustainable peace. The top level includes politicians and institutional decision-makers; the middle-range level includes well-respected figures in the community who may have power even when they have no formal political positions such as religious leaders and intellectuals; and the grassroots level includes invisible everyday peace leaders/makers who are in daily contact with the affected populations (e.g. camp leaders and local health officials). Communication between the three leadership levels is productive when grassroots and mid-range leaders play an active role in expressing their concerns, and when top-level leaders actively listen and productively respond to the voices of their communities (Lederach, 1997, pp. 37 – 55).

Byrne (2018) also suggests that different kinds of leaders collectively contribute to peacebuilding. He explains that leaders may use their cultural power to create social change; advocate to ensure the voice of their community is heard; help in the implementation of peace work on the ground; influence the dominant community to transform perspectives on vital issues

and push toward opening channels with the other parties of the conflict; and play a positive role in reconciliation by directing all these efforts together towards an agreement (Byrne, 2018). Further, Amaladas and Byrne (2018) conclude that peace leaders need to know who they are and how their community members are connected to transform their relationship with other groups who also have distinct identities and characteristics that must be taken into consideration while building peace processes. Reychler and Stellamans (2004) define leadership as a process through which "leaders" and "followers" interact to achieve pre-set goals (as cited in Amaladas and Byrne, 2018a, p. 6).

To summarize, peace leadership is a process through which peace leaders facilitate the accessibility of disputants to appropriate resources and skills. This facilitation might be achieved through training and dialogue in a safe environment to improve relationships among the conflicting parties. I propose that peace leaders are individuals who have an extensive understanding of the culture of disputants; understand current issues of disputes and their roots; comprehend the interconnectedness between processes and participants; and are welcomed by the conflicting parties to intervene and connect them with other stakeholders as well as the available resources to transform their own conflicts. I view peace leaders as facilitators of interconnected processes with a long-term vision of change; or, if I were to use Galtung's (1964) language, I would say peace leaders are facilitators of "positive peace" who make "the integration of human society" a reality (p.2).

2.10 Conflict Goals

Conflict goals can be approached from different angles. For example, Austin and Vancouver (1996) propose six dimensions along which such goals vary, that is, in: "importance,

difficulty, specificity, temporal range, level of consciousness, and complexity" (p. 343). These six categories mean that some topics or desires may be more or less important, difficult to achieve, specific or general, short or long-term, or visible or invisible to the parties while being connected or disconnected to other goals. Also, Dunaetz (2010) explains that researchers have studied conflict goals focusing on conflict motives, assuming that individuals' behaviours aim to achieve the maximum possible outcome for the self regardless of any impacts on relationships. Next, they accepted the assumption that individuals cooperate to maximize self-interests, as well as to create satisfying relationships. This approach also suggests that one may cooperate or compete with or accommodate their goals and behaviour in response to their needs of relationships with others. Finally, researchers started to divide conflict goals into two categories: tasks and relationship conflict goals. This categorization suggests that the former creates tension about specific issues that do not include damaging emotional reactions while the latter most likely does so. Dunaetz (2010) explains that task-based conflicts may enrich the performance of conflicting parties who explore different perspectives and alternatives while relationship-based conflicts negatively affect the capacity of group members to work with each other.

Dunaetz (2010) highlights that individuals may experience conflict over process and status (power) goals, which may negatively affect the performance of groups unless the voices of all members are acknowledged in a way that no one develops uncontrolled negative emotions about the process or other participants. Moreover, Bendersky and Hays (2008) note that social status correlates to content goals, and the latter is positive when the former is low. Ohbuchi and Teedischi (1997) extend this approach and include the desire to hurt others. They propose that conflict goals could be categorized as resource goals and social goals. The resource goals are content over which the parties dispute before interacting with each other, and social goals are

activated during this interaction. They explain that during the interaction parties aim to either maintain or damage relationships, and social goals can thus be sub-divided into four categories of desired outcomes: the maintenance of relationships; the domination of others; obtaining justice through the cultivation of fairness; and the protection of ego or identity.

Another approach researchers have used when analyzing conflict goals has been suggested by Fisher et al. (1991). It is called the interests (desires) versus positions (proposed resolutions) Model. This approach means that when conflicting parties focus on interests and are flexible regarding positions, they are more likely to achieve collaborative and satisfactory outcomes. Fisher et al. (1991) explain that interests might be universal and relate to human needs such as those famously identified in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, namely includes the needs for security, economic well-being, a sense of belonging, recognition, and control of one's life. They place Maslow's needs into two categories in virtue of their relation to conflict goals. These categories are marked substantive and relational, which are similar to "task" and "relationship" goals.

One final and related approach suggested by Hocker and Wilmot (2017) is the TRIP model. TRIP is an acronym that refers to four types of goals in interpersonal conflicts: topical, relational, identity, and process goals. Hocker and Wilmot (2017) explain that topical goals refer to the content or issues of conflict. For example, when an employee and employer discuss whether the former will get a promotion or not, getting the promotion is the topic goal for the employee and offering the promotion or not is the topic goal for the employer. Second, relational goals concern how conflicting parties relate to one another. These goals require the presence of respect and trust in the interactions of conflicting parties. So, for example, when a husband and wife discuss what is or is not acceptable to do or say at a family gathering, they uncover what

respect and trust mean to them in the context of their relationship. The couple expresses how they want to treat and be treated by others, which constitutes their relational goals in this context. Third, Hocker and Wilmot (2017) explain that identity goals concern "face-saving" or the desire to feel secure and protected against harm in a particular conflict situation. Fourth, Hocker and Wilmot (2017) clarify process goals are the means through which parties attempt to achieve their desired outcome. For example, the parties of a conflict might engage directly and meet face to face, or indirectly through a third-party intervener who shuttles between disputants in order to reach an agreement.

2.11 Conclusions

Conflict is a multidimensional phenomenon that may be viewed differently depending on the angle of the approach taken to it. It is an intentional and meaningful process for conflicting parties in a context involving interactions over tasks and emotions that affect relationships with others. Conflict might also arise from disputes over the means through which parties should attempt to reach their goals; these are the "process conflicts" which I have explained above. Furthermore, conflict can be visible or invisible to the parties who have to deal with it. It may also be constructive or destructive depending on the response by the parties and the contexts in which the interactions take place.

In addition, culture is significant since it represents the sum of several elements including religious identity and communication styles. In contrast, Religion has, at least, three dimensions to it: personal faith (i.e., an individual relationship with some kind of God); a social dimension (i.e. relationships with other people); and an institutional dimension (i.e., the shape of organizations inherited from earlier believers). Even when religion in itself is neutral regarding

certain issues, its followers can still employ religion to justify taking a stance for or against these issues. Additionally, identity is a significant element that may promote peace and conflict, and identity conflicts are usually invisible since they are expressed as conflicts over such tangible issues as the distribution of resources and power. Also, identity can cause destruction when it is used solely as a base for cooperation or forming alliances while it is a productive factor when it is combined with the primacy to achieve social justice for all regardless of where they come from. Consequently, communication styles vary, and individuals usually employ multiple styles rather than only one. Among the available communication styles, no style is better than another. Each can be beneficial in a specific situation. Raising awareness of religion, identity, and communication styles might provide conflicting parties with a better understanding of their positions and goals.

In addition, conflict transformation is a PACS approach that involves relationship building established through two core principles: empowerment and inclusion. The former ensures that vulnerable individuals and communities feel safe to fully engage and participate in the process of transformation while the latter ensures that existing structures and cultures are evolved to allow change to occur. PACS scholars and practitioners have developed several models to promote the capacity of local communities to achieve conflict transformation. These models are mainly based on combining efforts of local communities with peace interveners to facilitate access to resources and skills through training and productively engaging with others.

Moreover, peace leadership is a process through which peace leaders introduce and link disputants to appropriate resources and skills. This linkage might occur by including conflicting parties in training workshops and dialogue in a safe environment in order to improve the participants' relationships with each other. Accordingly, I propose that peace leaders are

individuals who have an extensive understanding of the culture of disputants; current issues of disputes and their roots; and the interconnectedness between processes and participants. Additionally, they are invited and welcomed by the conflicting parties to intervene and serve peace.

Finally, conflict goals vary and generally fall under two main and overlapping types: process goals and relationship goals. Process goals are related to the issues under dispute (topical) or the means of dispute resolution (procedural), while relationship goals are linked to how individuals are defined and expressed in and through their interactions with others. These types of conflict goals overlap and affect one another and may be understood as dimensions of conflict that are visible or not in each conflict's context.

Chapter 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will explain the content analysis method for conducting qualitative research. I will also provide details of my research procedure including my data collecting and analysis processes. Finally, I highlight the significance and limitations of my study and provide a summary of this section.

My research problem concerns the absence of effective cooperation among Syrian opposition diasporic community leaders (SODCLs). I aim to explore the potential of conflict transformation interventions to help this community of leaders shift their narratives and thinking about their conflict in such a way they become better able to serve as peace leaders. Informed by the conflict transformation approach to peace and conflict studies, as well as Hocker and Wilmot (2017), I ask two questions: first, what are the topical, relational, identity, and process conflict goals among the Syrian opposition diaspora community leaders? Second, what type of conflict transformation interventions might help SODCLs improve their capacity to transform their conflicts and serve as peace leaders? Informed by Rothman's (2020) findings, I assume that intra-group peacebuilding is a key step toward inter-group peacebuilding.

3.2 Content Analysis Method for Conducting Qualitative Research

Content analysis is the larger umbrella under which both my qualitative and quantitative approaches are embedded (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1; Bryman et al., 2011, p. 23). For example, Bryman et al. (2011) explain that content analysis has been employed in the leadership field to analyze "raw materials" such as "newspaper and magazine articles, speeches, mission statements, and letters" (p. 22). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) add that content analysis was

invented in the 18th century. It was initially a popular approach for conducting quantitative research even when the content was qualitative data, but more recently it has become widely employed in qualitative research that requires interpreting the meaning of texts. Shields and Twycross (2008) highlight that qualitative content analysis methodologies include analyzing texts so as to uncover both explicit and implicit meanings. They further explain that this technique includes analyzing data from a variety of sources such as interviews, observational field notes and/or media materials. They quote Holisti (1968) who states that "content analysis is any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics or messages," (as cited in Shields & Twycross, 2008, p. 38).

Additionally, Lindgren et al. (2020) explain that researchers conduct content analysis research by breaking data into chunks or "meaning units" and de-contextualizing as well as re-contextualizing these units to isolate categories and themes. They further explain that describing the data generates categories while interpreting the data generates themes (see also Graneheim et al., 2017). Schreier et al. (2020) further explain that inductive content analysis follows generating categories and themes according to the available data with a pre-set categorization while deductive analysis chooses concepts according to a theory or previous research findings and distributes the available data to the pre-set categories. Mende (2022) also notes that content analysis includes descriptive and interpretive phases. Then he links the former phase to positivism on the one hand and the latter to post-positivism on the other. He adds that description of the data creates categories and interpretation of the data creates themes.

Graneheim et al. (2017) also critique the lack of accuracy in the content analysis method and provides a solution to this problem. They explain that a high level of abstraction and interpretation affects the quality of research. Abstraction here refers to the number of categories

and interpretation to the number of themes. He suggests that a lower number of themes and categories provides research with a higher level of creditability. He explains that this is achievable by reflecting and expressing the linkages between the meaning units and the data as much as possible. Dahlberg and Dahlberg (2019) also discuss latent and manifest meaning. They highlight the significance of interpreting statements in their context. They explain for example that a statement like "I am in pain" might refer to actual pain in the body when it is being said by a patient in a hospital, while it might refer to deterioration or failure of a process when it is used in reference to social studies. Also, they argue that generating meanings is a dynamic process so that a researcher may understand text differently after a second reading, third reading, and so on.

In contrast, Bryman et al. (2011) outline that Berelson (1952) defines content analysis as a descriptive rather than an interpretive approach to communicative content (p. 21). Also, they add that content analysts "may work on unstructured, qualitative material, but the approach to analysis is emphatically quantitative" (Bryman et al., 2011, p. 21). Similarly, Elo and Kyngäs (2008) note that both qualitative and quantitative research approaches may employ the content analysis method to conduct research. Further, Morgan (1993) makes the point that the quantitative content analysis technique is concerned with counting and presenting results while qualitative content analysis is concerned with counting and interpreting meaning from texts. He further explains that both quantitative and qualitative content analysis includes coding and counting reoccurrences of words and themes, but the former goes beyond this to interpret the meanings of the identified themes. He goes on to note that the quantitative approach seeks to address questions related to quantity and frequency. It aims to describe the phenomenon in a given context and count how many times certain patterns have occurred. On the other hand, the qualitative approach seeks to explore questions related to why and how patterns have occurred.

Shields and Twycross (2008) explain that the first step in conducting qualitative content analysis research is to read the texts and ensure they are accurate. Next, the researcher must read a text multiple times in order to discover recurring themes which can be "words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that embody ideas about the topic under investigation" (p. 38). Afterwards, the researcher should count recurrences of the identified themes. Finally, s/he presents the results of this analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) furthermore state that qualitative content analysis may be defined as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (p. 1278). Additionally, they explain three approaches to qualitative content analysis research: conventional, directed, and summative. Only the first two approaches are relevant in this context (see also Assarroudi et al., 2018; Stephens, 2022)

That said, the *conventional approach*, according to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), aims to describe a phenomenon through an inductive coding process. This process means the researcher allows for categories to be generated from data with no previous assumptions being made regarding how that data will be grouped. The researcher analyzes the data in order to understand its meaning as a whole. Next, s/he re-reads the text so as to identify thematic categories. Third, the researcher reads the whole of the data to make notes and provide an initial analysis. These readings generate codes that lead to categories forming meaningful clusters under which much of the information from the data will fit. This process may be organized by creating a tree diagram to include categories and subcategories if needed. Finally, relevant theories and other research findings are addressed and definitions to describe each category are developed for reporting the findings in the discussion section (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

In directed content analysis, a theory or research is employed to develop a research question(s). This approach aims to confirm or extend incomplete theory or previous research findings of a phenomenon. It allows the researcher to develop concepts and codes for categorization before reading the data. For coding, researchers can either read the data as a whole and write down their notes on the relevant data, or they may define codes based on a theory and/or research findings and distribute the data into predetermined categories. Additionally, researchers may read the information that does not fit into their codes to determine whether or not they constitute new categories or sub-categories. Researchers who conduct content analysis research present their findings by describing their generated codes and providing their interpretation verbally since the findings do not necessarily come in the form of statistics for comparisons. Finally, the findings of the directed content analysis will either support the animating theory and other data or not (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

To summarize, content analysis is a research method that can be employed for conducting quantitative and/or qualitative research. It allows researchers to quantify qualitative content and interpret both stated and inferred meanings in a given context. Further, it allows researchers to identify or define the intentions and communicative styles of individuals and groups in order to better understand the dynamics of interactions in a given community. Additionally, researchers may employ a directed, conventional, or summative approach to conduct qualitative content analysis research, and it seems that the directed and conventional approaches overlap; the former starts with core categories before exploring the available data while the latter explores all the data with no previous assumptions.

3.3 Procedure

In my research, I have employed elements of both directed and conventional approaches. To achieve the objectives of my research, I have reviewed and analyzed the content of literature related to PACS and the ongoing conflict in Syria in addition to the Facebook wall posts of Syrian opposition diasporic community leaders, as I will explain next.

3.3.1 Data Collecting

I have obtained PACS materials primarily from web databases accessible through the University of Winnipeg and University of Manitoba libraries' online databases such as Wiley Online Library, Routledge, SAGE Publishing, Tylor & Frances Online, and SSRN Electronic Journal. The goal of obtaining this literature is to have a better understanding of my research theoretical background including the conflict transformation theory and its models of intervention. Additionally, I aimed to define a research gap, which turned out to be the absence of effective cooperation among conflicting parties in intragroup conflicts, which is under-studied according to Rothman (2020). Moreover, I used the PACS theories to develop my research questions, as I stated above.

Additionally, I have obtained literature on the Syrian conflict from several online sources including Noor Library, Haramoon Center for Contemporary Studies, Alarabi Aljadeed (The New Arab), Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Carnegie Middle East Center, Enab Baladi, Zaman Alwasl magazine, All4Syria on Facebook, Orient Net, and Aljazeera Media Network, and other online publishing websites. These websites include research papers as well as books written by Syrian and other Arab authors interested in the Arab Spring.

Finally, I explored the Facebook wall posts of seven influential Syrian opposition diasporic community leaders as a study sample. By including these leaders, I aimed to extend my understanding of their expressed identities on an interactive platform where users interact freely without the need to abide by the publishers' policies and concerns except for those general guidelines created by the Facebook/Meta company.

3.3.2 Data Analysis

As I explained above, qualitative data analysis occurs in two general phases: decontextualization and recontextualization. In the first phase, researchers classify their data into main themes. Next, they break the information in each theme into smaller meaning units (categories). In the second phase, researchers reorganize their generated units attempting to answer their research questions. Accordingly, and following my conclusions from studying the work of Lindgren et al. (2020), Shields and Twycross (2008), Dahlberg and Dahlberg (2019), and Hsieh and Shannon (2005), my research analysis has gone into five steps.

First, informed by Lederach conflict transformation theory, Hocker and Wilmot's (2017) TRIP model, and the findings of Rothman (2020), I developed two research questions: What are the topical, relational, identity, and process conflict goals among the Syrian opposition diaspora community leaders? And what type of conflict transformation interventions might help SODCLs improve their capacity to transform their conflicts and serve as peace leaders?

Second, using the accessible online databases, I searched for articles and books that relate to my inquiry. To do so I relied on Hocker and Wilmot's observation, which informs researchers that almost every conflict includes elements of identity that overlap with relational, topical, and procedural disputes. Hence, I searched for materials on the identity conflict in Syria. I

downloaded all the accessible and readable Arabic content written mostly by Syrian authors or Arabs who are interested in the Arab Spring. Additionally, I read and saved links to articles that are related to my research.

Third, I read the obtained material to generate themes under which my materials would be classified. I found that the identity conflict in Syrian might be approached by looking at the tensions between Islamists and secularists on the one hand, and Kurds and Arabs on the other. Hence, I classified my materials into these two themes and searched for more accessible online materials about these tensions. Accordingly, I obtained data about the identity conflict in Syria, tensions between Islamists and secularists, and tensions between Arabs and Kurds. These three types of written materials have been my main data sources, in addition to the study sample information obtained from the Facebook platform, which I will explain next.

Fourth, I read my materials to find reoccurring patterns (meaning units) and found that the authors of my research data mainly discuss the identity of the Syrian state. They argue over whether Syria must be seen as Islamist, secularist, democratic, decentralized, federalized or a combination of these identities. Hence, my next step was to compare what I learn from the academic literature to what the SODCLs suggest in the field, which in this context refers to the Facebook wall posts written by this community of leaders.

To facilitate my inquiry, I developed criteria to determine whose Facebook work might be included to enrich my research. These criteria require that leaders whose work will be included must be diasporic (not in Syria); second, they must be active and influential on the Facebook platform (the biggest number of followers is a determinant); third, they must be Anti-Assad (i.e. part of the opposition, not loyalists); fourth, only the relevant content of the Facebook

wall posts created by the leaders will be included (shared links and videos created by others will not be included).

Next, using research keywords such as the Syrian conflict, peace in Syria, transitional justice in Syria, Identity conflict in Syria, Peace talks in Syria, the Syrian constitutional committee, the High Negotiations Committee, and the Special United Nations Envoy to Syria, I identified fifty SODCLs who are active on the Facebook platform and regularly create content about the Syrian conflict. From this list, I selected only seven Facebook content creators, as a study sample. The Facebook accounts of these community leaders meet my research criteria; especially the highest number of followers and the relevance of the Facebook wall posts content have been influential factors.

The final list of SODCLs incudes Abdulkarim Bakkar (أ.د.عبد الكريم بكار), Maher Sharafeddine, Muhydin Lazikani, Ali Ferzat, Ahmed Kamel, and Taufik Alhallak (توفيق الحلاق). Samir Mattenti (الاعلامي سمير متيني). To explore the perspectives of this community of leaders on my topic of research and based on the results of my initial reading of the data, I employed research keywords related to identity conflict to search the Facebook pages/accounts of the SODCLs; these keywords are secularist, secularism, Islamist, Islamism, Kurdish, Arabic, identity, and democracy. After that, I read their relevant Facebook wall posts and summarized them in English in a Word document since they are originally written in Arabic. Lastly, I re-read all my data including the translated Facebook wall posts to find reoccurring patterns and categorize them.

Fifth, after finding these categories and themes, I recontextualized the meaning units by describing and interpreting the results in light of the theoretical background stated in my literature review, especially the conflict transformation models of intervention. By following

these steps, I have been able to explore the conflicting goals/agendas of the SODCLs and the potential of peace intervention to enhance their capacity to serve as peace leaders, which are the core of my inquiry as I stated in my research questions.

3.4 Significance of My Study

My research focuses on intragroup conflicts hoping to uncover factors that might enhance the capacity of community leaders to serve as peace leaders, a topic which according to Rothman (2020) is still under-studied. Also, it explores the complexity of identity conflict in the Syrian context by exploring linkages between identity goals and topical, relational, and procedural goals of the conflicting parties, which is also under-studied as far as I know after reviewing related Arabic and English literature.

Further, my study explores the utility of the TRIP model of Hocker and Wilmot (2017) in the explanation of ethnic intragroup conflicts, which is different from the usage of the model by its creators who initially proposed it to deal with interpersonal conflicts. Also, by exploring Arabic materials written by Syrian stakeholders as well as PACS literature, my study is designed to serve two types of stakeholders: peace interveners in the community of peacebuilders and Syrian Opposition Diasporic Community Leaders. It helps to make the voices of Syrian community leaders audible to those in the non-Syrian community of peacebuilders while exploring the potential of conflict transformation interventions among the SODCLs. Also, my study inquires into the meaning of peace leadership and the ways through which the capacity of community leaders to serve as peace leaders might be enhanced. Finally, and hopefully, my research will produce findings that are likely to be transferable to similar contexts such as

various national analyses of the Arab Spring, which will be of interest to Canadian and international scholars and policymakers.

3.5 Limitations of My Study

One advantage of content analysis research is that it is non-reactive since the individuals whose language is being studied have already created their materials unselfconsciously, without precautions arising from an awareness that their communicative content will be studied (Bryman et al., 2011). So, then, the materials I am selecting to work on can direct my research while the research does not affect how the materials are being generated. This in turn should yield higher levels of transparency and truthfulness in my analysis. Another advantage is that my research process does not include ethical risks either for participants or for the materials. The researcher's influence on participants is non-existent so the subjects are protected against harm. Additionally, since the materials are publicly accessible, they are easily verified and protected against any misinterpretation of the data or its manipulation.

However, Bryman et al. (2011) highlight two limitations to the content analysis research method approach that may apply in the context of my thesis. First, "it is difficult to determine the meaning of the findings" (p. 22); and second, researchers may over-interpret their data. Bryman explains the former by highlighting the work of Bligh et al. (2004) who studied the rhetoric of President George W Bush before and after 9/11. Although the researchers observe that Bush's rhetoric is more charismatic after 9/11, they can not be sure why this is the case. My reaction to these limitations is to collect information from different authors as well as from the work of several SODCLs who come from different backgrounds. This should provide me with a variety

of information sources that help me make informed interpretations when I get to present my findings.

Two additional strengths of directed qualitative content analysis that relate to potential weaknesses are worth noting here. First, this approach enriches existing theory and scholarship by supplementing extant work in the field. Second, content analysis guarantees that the research being undertaken is worth exploring since it has already been discussed within the community of scholars (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). However, these two points may lead to bias because the researcher initiates research in light of prior assumptions hard-wired to the theoretical framework within which the research questions have been first generated. My reaction to this potential limitation of explanatory reach and power is to apply elements of both directed and conventional methods of qualitative content analysis. Accordingly, I start my research based on the predetermined categories of the TRIP model, but I follow my materials to generate categories and themes without prior assumptions regarding the type of conflicting identities with which topical, relational, and procedural goals might overlap. Additionally, my research goes beyond the scope of the TRIP model, which is designed to analyze interpersonal conflicts since I employ this model to analyze intragroup conflicts. This should allow me to evaluate the utility of this model and possibly expand it to be used in a broader setting than interpersonal conflicts.

One more possible limitation of my thesis that must be acknowledged arises from the fact that my research will only focus on community leaders who are active in the media. I acknowledge that there must be active Syrian diasporic leaders who exist in the real world and who have a very limited presence on the media platforms I am looking at. I concede that these voices may be significant and worth exploring in future research at such a time when researchers have safe access to information about peacebuilding inside Syria. Unfortunately, the Syrian

conflict is still ongoing and access to leaders in the field is not possible due to safety-related issues for both the researchers and participants.

One final limitation related to the scope of my study is that my study sample includes only Arabic, Kurdish, and Durzi voices. Although the ethnic and religious backgrounds of the study sample participants are not a factor, coincidently, six of them define as Arab while one defines as Kurdish and all of them come from Sunni backgrounds except one who comes from a Durzi background, which means only perspectives from these ethnic and religious groups will be explored while other community groups are absent.

3.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have explained that in my thesis I employ elements of direct and conventional content analysis methods to conduct qualitative research. These methods mean that I have had to develop research questions based on pre-existing research findings and theories. Next, I have collected and read data through the decontextualization and recontextualization phases of my analysis. These phases required me to read texts and break them into smaller chunks, each chunk being a "meaning unit". After that, I observed and labelled recurring categories and themes. Finally, I reconstructed these units to present the results by describing and interpreting their meanings.

Also, I have explained that I have collected my data from accessible online databases including Arabic and English literature. My analysis will show that there is an identity conflict between Islamists and secularists on the one hand and the Kurdish and Arab communities on the other. Hence, I have classified my data into these two defined categories and searched for more materials about the tensions between these ethnic and political groups. I found that the authors of

my obtained materials are concerned with the identity of the Syrian state, and particularly with whether or not it must be Islamist, secularist, democratic, decentralized, federalized or a combination of these identities. Next, I explored the work of seven Facebook content creators from the SODCLs to learn about their perspectives on the tensions between Islamists and secularists as well as the tensions between Arabs and Kurds.

Chapter 4 - CONFLICTING GOALS ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction:

Informed by Rothman's (2020) findings, I think of intra-group peacebuilding as a step toward inter-group peacebuilding. My research problem concerns the absence of effective cooperation among Syrian opposition diasporic community leaders (SODCLs), and I want to highlight peacebuilding interventions that might help this community of leaders shift their narratives and thinking on their conflict to serve as peace leaders. In my research, I seek to answer two questions: first, what are the topical, relational, identity, and process conflict goals among the Syrian opposition diaspora community leaders? Second, what type of conflict transformation interventions might help SODCLs improve their capacity to transform their conflicts and serve as peace leaders?

To tackle my first research question, I will explore conflicting identities among SODCLs to uncover the perceptions of incompatibility among the goals expressed by SODCLs. I will employ the content analysis method to conduct qualitative research and explore the online data published on the following platforms: Noor Library, Haramoon Center for Contemporary Studies, Alarabi Aljadeed (The New Arab), Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Carnegie Middle East Center, Enab Baladi, Zaman Alwasl magazine, All4Syria on Facebook, Orient Net, and Aljazeera Media Network, and other online publishing websites. These websites include research papers and books written by Syrian community leaders and other Arab authors who are concerned with the Arab Spring. Additionally, I will employ the Facebook data created by SODCLs to extend my understanding of their expressed identities on an interactive platform on which users interact freely without the need to abide by the publishers' policies and concerns except those general guidelines created by the Facebook/Meta company.

My initial reading of the data reveals that SODCLs are concerned with identity conflicts between Arab Islamists and secularists on the one hand (Zeno, 2018; Asa'ad 2019; Abdulwahab, 2022), and between Kurdish and Arabic leaders on the other (Alkilani, 2016; Hasan, 2021; Abdulazizi 2020; Al-Estiklal Newspaper, 2022; Kaakarli, 2022). Accordingly, in this chapter, I will provide, first, an overview of Syrian political discourse since the country's independence from the French mandate in 1923. Second, I will explore different perspectives on Islamism and secularism in Syria. Third, I will explore the Kurdish issue in Syria by highlighting its roots and development. More specifically, I will explore the Kurdish political and military struggle in three stages: the first stage is from the French mandate era 1923 until 2000 when the dictator Hafez Assad died; the second stage starts once Bashar Assad inherited power from his father Hafez Assad in 2000 and ends in 2011 when the protests and revolution erupted in Syria; finally, the last stage runs from the eruption of the protests and revolution in 2011 until the date of writing this research 2022. Fourth, I will explore, as a study sample, the Facebook wall posts created by Syrian Opposition Diasporic Community Leaders (SODCLs) to learn about their perspectives on the Syrian identity conflict, especially regarding Islamism and secularism as well as the Kurdish issue in Syria. To do so, I will use the following keywords for research: secularist/secular, secularism, Islamists, Islamism, identity, democracy, Arabs, and Kurdish people. Finally, I will present a discussion and conclusions of this chapter.

To tackle my second research question, I will look at the applicability of peacebuilding models designed by peace and conflict researchers to deal with conflicts in divided societies in war-torn countries. As I state in my literature review chapter, these models include Lederach's Inquiry Model. The Inquiry Model is a theory of peace intervention through which the conflicting parties together explain the elements and roots of their conflict in order to better

understand the current situation of the dispute, imagine their desired possible future and improve it through an ongoing and shared process of reflection, and finally, create a flexible action plan that is supposed to make the desired future come true by the transformation of conflict on personal, relational, cultural, and structural levels.

Second, Byrne and Carter's Social Cubism Model includes dealing with the complexity of ethnic conflicts through exploring six social factors that contribute to the escalation or de-escalation of conflict. These are "historical, religious, demographic, political, economic, and psycho-cultural factors" (Byrne & Carter,1996, p.2). These six factors are interconnected and changes in one of them lead to changes in the whole picture of the conflict. Hence reconstructing the narrative of conflict, for instance, might lead to the reconstruction of current issues, which might lead to institutional changes, and so on. It is a cycle of change in which micro and macro levels are interconnected.

Third, Dugan's Nested Foci Model suggests that change is possible when intervention addresses four areas: issues of conflict that trigger interactions; relationships and emotional stances of the parties; the special rules of engagement in a particular situation; and the whole inherited structures of society in which the conflict takes place (Dugan, 1996). Fourth, the ARIA Model by Jay Rothman is an acronym for Antagonism, Reflexive-framing, Inventing, and Agenda-setting. Rothman suggests that in addition to interests-based and resources-based talks, peace interveners might incorporate identity-based talks. This can be achieved by allowing the conflicting parties to meet in a safe environment and express their emotions, reframe their narratives through reflection and hopefully see the merits in the other party's narratives, establish shared perspectives that include creative resolutions, and finally, agree on practical steps to move forward and create change.

Fifth, in the transformative dialogue model, according to Cleven and Saul (2021), the conflicting parties brainstorm ways of healing their conflict aftermath (consequences) and pay special attention to the individuals' survival needs assuming that well-being is essential for engagement in transformative dialogue. Further, this model stresses that effective processes should build on local resources available in the community, and process facilitators avoid assuming and interact with the parties ethically to achieve three tasks: educate the parties about the process and its potential, assist the participant to determine whether the transformative dialogue suits their needs, and provide the needed support to maintain constructive interactions (Cleven & Saul, 2021, pp.120 -123).

4.2 An Overview of the Political Discourse in Syria

After the collapse of the Othman Empire, Syria, as it is known today, was put under the authority of a French governance mandate between 1923 and 1946. After independence, a series of military coups began in 1949 and continued until Hafez Assad led the final military coup in 1970. In 1957, the first Kurdish party, named the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), was established just one year before Syria merged with Egypt to form the Arab United Republic. This republic ended in 1961 and a new regime took over until 1963 when the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party led a military coup and became the ruling party from 1963 onwards (Bashar Assad is the party's Secretary-General today). In 1962, the Syrian government conducted a special census through which thousands of Kurds were considered non-Syrian. Muslim Brotherhood-led protests took place in 1964; the reaction from the Syrian government was to use tanks against the protestors, resulting in the death of more than fifty citizens. The protests were renewed later and

reached their peak in 1982 when Hafez Assad committed the Massacre of Hama in which tens of thousands of innocent civilians were killed in the mosques, public squares, and their homes.

In 1965, Syria's Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) split into Left and Right wings. Between 1980 and 1998 Hafez Assad built alliances with Kurdish leaders who led the Kurdish armed struggle in Turkey for independence. For example, Hafez Assad offered Abdalla Ocalan, the founding member of the militant Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), access to camps to be used for military training. However, in 1998 after the Adana agreement between Hafez Assad and Turkey, Ocalan was expelled from Syria and later arrested and imprisoned in Turkey. In 2000, after the death of the dictator Hafez Assad, his son Bashar inherited Syrian rule and a new authoritarian era started.

Bashar started his rule promising to reform the country, which created the liberalizing preconditions required for the social and political movement named the Damascus Spring. This movement was repressed and ended in the fall of 2001 when the regime arrested most of its leaders; coincidently this occurred with the political changes in Iraq that led to the formation of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq following the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. Also in 2003, the Democratic Union Party (it is called the PYD since its name in Kurdish is Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat) was established in Syria. In 2004, Kurdish protests took place and were repressed brutally by the Assad regime. In 2005, the Damascus Declaration, a political statement issued by Syrian opposition political and social leaders, was published. This statement included for the first time, Arab and Kurdish parties and figures who supported the rights of the Kurdish people and demanded that the Syrian authority start political reforms to find a democratic and just solution for the Kurdish issue. In 2011, Syrian protests and revolution once again erupted

when protestors marched into the street chanting “one, one, one, the Syrian people is one” and “Freedom! Freedom!”.

4.3 Islamism and Secularism in Syria

The meaning of secularism and its application and limitations compared to Islamism constitute subjects of heated debate within the Syrian community of leaders. In what follows I explore different perspectives of Syrians who have published articles or books about secularism and Islamism in Syrian society. This exploration aims to understand better the nature of this conflict in Syrian society in general and among the SODCLs. However, before presenting my data, it is imperative to note here that in my research and the Arabic articles and books that I have reviewed, the term Islamists is used to refer to political parties with Islamist backgrounds as well as Muslim scholars and theorists, and these two categories should be noted as different from Jihadists such as Al-Qaida or ISIS. In my research, I discuss political Islamists only, not jihadists.

Al-Hussein (2005) suggests that secularism and democracy are inseparable, and the Muslim Brotherhood must change its name and ideology to become democratic. He argues that the Brotherhood is a sectarian group since it limits its membership to Muslims only and differentiates between citizens based on their faith and genders. He further proposes that secularism means that only people are the sole source of law, not God’s scripture. On the other hand, Ghadban (2005) responds to Al-Hussein and defines democracy as the rule of the majority that respects the rights of minorities. On his view, secularism requires the separation of state from religion, but it allows citizens to use scripture to shape laws when they win elections in a democratic polity; it is a human-made process, not God’s. He also states that Muslim

Brotherhood accepts the rule of the majority and acknowledges that all men and women are equal before the law. He adds that requiring the Muslim Brotherhood group to give up their faith and interpret their religion as a relationship between God and the worshiper only is a dictatorship against the Muslim nation implemented by a handful of secularists who do not understand secularism and democracy and perceive them as opposed to religion.

Sawah (2007) explains that Islamists themselves, like Wahbah al-Zuhayli and Youssef Qaradhawi, educate their followers to believe that secularism is a synonym for atheism and so it must be rejected by Muslims since establishing an Islamic state is the aim of all Muslims while secularism aims to separate the state from religion. He also notes that other Muslim scholars like Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi accept secularism, which means to him secularism is not against Islam but rather against one way of interpreting Islam. He critiques the secularist leader Muhammed Abid Aljabiri who states that Islam is a religion and state at the same time, and thus, the separation of religion from the state is meaningless in the Islamic world since there is no dominating church as the case used to be in the West'. Sawah replies to this argument by suggesting that since Islam does not have a church competing for power, it is more suitable for the implementation of secularism than Christianity. Sawah adds that even if it is accepted that secularism is a Western product, that is not a valid reason to refuse it. He further argues that democracy is also western, and those who reject secularism because it is western, must reject democracy as well, which they do not do. He also insists that secularism and democracy are inseparable and asserts that when religious groups seize authority, they tend to employ the state to serve their agendas in ways that are exclusionary by nature since they divide the world into believers and non-believers rather than equal citizens. He explains that the religious majority, in the absence of secularism, might employ democracy to impose a tyrannical regime against

minorities, and thus democracy combined with secularism guarantees equality in society, not democracy alone.

Galioun (2007), in his response to the critiques by Sawah, explains his view that minority issues in Syria are the outcome of the failure of the state to develop a proper political majority. This failure means that the dictatorship in Syria has prevented the rise of political or cultural symbols in Syria and allowed citizens to return to their initial religious ties for protection against the aggression of the state. Also, Galioun (2007) explains that when secularism is viewed as a sacred and ultimate end that it is forbidden to discuss or revise, it becomes like an exclusionary religion (doctrine). He adds that all concepts in social studies are dynamic; they are true when they reflect reality in the field. Hence it is in vain to attempt to reconstruct society and make it fit into a predetermined concept such as secularism. Instead, one must critique the concept and reframe it to fit into the new context. He adds that secularism in the Arab world has been imported by elites, who enjoy authority and impose their vision on society by force. He adds that this is the opposite of the European case, where historically secularism has functioned to support a revolution against elites that share authority with the church and dominate populations oppressively. Hence in Europe, secularism has come to guarantee individual freedom while in the Arab world it represses individual freedom and enhances the elite's control of the marginalized populations. Secularism in other words may be understood as a top-down ideology that separates religion from the state, not to protect the state and citizens, but rather to destroy them by demolishing the religious ties that constitute the last protective shield for the population against the brutality and oppressiveness of their tyrant state. Galioun adds finally that secularists may need to stop viewing their co-citizens as a group of ignorant and devalued individuals who need secular saviours to release them from the darkness of religion.

In a somewhat different gear, Asa'ad (2019) proposes that secularism means the separation of the state from religion. In here view, the two do not interfere in the work of each other, even though it is common in Syria to perceive secularism as an anti-religious and atheist ideology. She asserts that this false perception is the outcome of cooperation between the dictator regime and Islamists. She explains that corruption and inequality make individuals resort to their tribal and sectarian ties for protection and survival needs, and these religious ties are constructed hierarchically in a way that gives clergymen power over ordinary people, who become controlled by Islamists.

Amer (2021) presents a discussion on secularism that is located between two currents: one suggests that secularism is a must for any democratic state while another suggests that democracy might or might not lead to a secular state in Syria. He agrees with the latter perspective and explains that the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party (Assad's ruling party) is not democratic although it is secular. He then agrees with George Fahmi, who suggests that secularism has a bad reputation in the Arab world not because its populations are religious, but rather because they have experienced secular dictatorships supported by secular elites who fear the Islamists. They conclude that the failure in achieving development in the Arab world, as well as foreign defeats such as the American invasion of Iraq, make religion an appealing choice for many of the population who desire either to escape reality in favour of happiness in the afterlife or through Jihad to change the current situation.

Amer (2021) further wonders whether secularism is a realistic option for Syrian society. He notes that both the regime and the opposition include influential Islamist leaders and a wide base of people who want to organize their lives according to Islamic law. Also, he notes that Islamists have built modern organizations to serve as politically influential powers. He concludes

that a state does not have to be secular to be democratic. He proposes that, in the Arab world, many secularists shift thinking and use the term "civil state" (dawla madanīya) instead of "secular state" when they talk about their desired future for Syria, which is the perspective of Islamists as well (dawla madanīya is an Arabic political term that gained popularity after Egypt uprising of 2011; this term is still developing and mostly refers to a common ground between Islamists and secularists). He also proposes that Syria in the future should have a democratic system through which the majority rule and determine whether they want secularism or not. Arsheed (2016) explains that the term "civil state" gains special attention among Islamists and secularists since Islamists won power through free elections after the Arab Spring in Egypt. He adds that a civil state is established with the consent of its population, and not by coercion. A civil state uses the law to ensure that the social contract establishes the same rights and duties for all citizens. It accepts that every individual is fundamentally free and that pluralism and acceptance must be the orders of the day. Additionally, it is committed to democracy (majority rule) and the peaceful transfer of power.

To summarize, then, in the Syrian context, there seem to exist two kinds of secularists: one who aims to separate the state from religion, and another who aims to separate religion from both the state and society. On the other hand, many Islamists agree with a growing number of secularists working to build a civil democratic state.

4.4 The Kurdish Issue in Syria

I will now explore Syria's Kurdish issue by reviewing its history and status currently after more than ten years of the Syrian revolution. Specifically, I will approach the Kurdish

struggle via consideration of its three developmental stages: from the time of the French mandate until 2000; from 2000 until 2011; and from 2011 until today.

4.4.1 Kurds in Syria from 1923 to 2000

Kurds today live mainly in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria, which means they are one of the ethnic groups in the Middle East that do not live in an independent nation-state. Kurds constitute 9% of the population in Syria (Ziadeh, 2009). Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (2013) explains that historically, in the eleventh century, a large number of Kurds came to Syria led by the Muslim Kurdish leader Saladin, who was born in Iraq and led the Muslim military campaign against the European Crusader. Between 1925 and 1938 Kurdish rebels in Turkey engaged in armed conflicts with the Turkish government. As a result of this political unrest, many Kurdish people crossed the Syrian-Turkish borders seeking safety in Syria which was relatively stable under the French mandate. The French encouraged this migration and employed it to enhance local divisions and maintain their rule. Additionally, between 1945 and 1965, after the French mandate ended, another wave of migration of Kurds from Turkey came to Syria due to the aftermath of Turkish-Kurdish political unrest. This migration was mainly for economic reasons, especially as the Syrian government during this era implemented agrarian reform policies through which the government took over the land and gave it to farmers instead of feudal lords (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2013).

Kurds from the eleventh century integrated (but did not assimilate) into Arab society and did not experience identity conflicts in their new homeland. Instead, they enjoyed relatively free access to government institutions (including top military leadership positions), while actively participating in the Syrian national movements and political resistance against the French

mandate before independence. However, issues in Syria started to arise with the forementioned two waves of twentieth-century Kurdish migration when newcomers experienced identity conflict and oppression against the backdrop of a rise of nationalists among Turks, Arabs, and Kurds (Alkilani, 2016).

Syria's borders today were re-drawn by colonizers through the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916), the Cairo Conference (1920), and the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). The Syrian state since its independence from the French mandate in 1946 has targeted Kurds by forcing them to relocate and preventing them from accessing proper education and employment opportunities so that they do not come to threaten the dominant Arab authority. Anti-Kurd policies include prohibitions against learning and speaking the Kurdish language, the denial of Kurds' right to obtain Syrian citizenship, and the Arab Belt project in 1973 through which the Syrian government relocated 4000 Arab families to live in Kurdish regions (Radpey, 2016).

Ziadeh (2009) acknowledges that many, though not all, Kurds were denied rights to Syrian citizenship after the census of 1962, and the rise of the Baath party to power after the military coup in 1963 made the situation worse (this coup is different from the coup of 1970 that was led by Hafez Assad). He explains that Baath authorities in Syria banned elements of the Kurdish culture such as speaking in the Kurdish language, listening to Kurdish music, and celebrating Kurdish cultural festivals, in addition to changing the names of villages from Kurdish to Arabic. However, Ziadeh (2009), unlike Radpey (2016), proposes that Kurdish grievances in Syria should be understood as part of the human rights violations committed by the Syrian state against all citizens, whether Kurds or not. Thus, on his view, describing the Kurdish issue only as an ethnic problem is insufficient; rather, it is part of the despotism problem in Syria that requires a holistic reformation within Syria without connecting it to the Kurdish struggle in the regional

countries such as Turkey, Iraq, and Iran wherein Kurdish political parties are demanding full independence.

Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (2013) highlights that after independence from the French, the Syrian government applied restrictions on the registration of Kurdish newcomers in Syrian civil records requiring Kurds to have lived in Syria for at least five (and later ten) years before being eligible to enjoy Syrian citizenship. This policy made many Kurds obtain Syrian identification illegally benefitting from the corrupt legal system and their tribal and social networks in Syria. When the government became aware of this illegal ID issue and probably motivated by fear of the growing numbers of Kurds in Syria, the government decided to conduct an exceptional census in 1962. This census made it possible for the government to insist that all Kurds who were registered in the civil lists after 1945 be considered non-Syrian, or as the census called them: “Turkish foreigners”. This census contributed to the ongoing marginalization of Kurds, especially since it was arbitrarily and unprofessionally conducted. According to the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (2013), the census targeted specific individuals in order to exclude them, and inconsistently applied criteria left family members split into categories of citizen and non-citizen without proper reasons being given.

Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (2013) furthermore explains that Muhammad Talab Hilal (the governor of Al-Hasakah in 1965) proposed and started the implementation of the Arab Belt project. This project is detailed in a study by Hilal in which he suggests that the Syrian government must eliminate the Kurdish issue in Syria by (1) relocating Kurds to interior cities to prevent them from constituting a mass of people that might threaten dominant Arab authority; (2) preventing Kurds from accessing higher education and economic resources; (3) encouraging internal division among Kurds; (4) and relocating Arab tribes to

spread in the Kurdish areas. This project occurred coincident with the start of the Soviet work on the Euphrates dam in northern Syria. This created an artificial lake named Assad Lake, which caused water to overflow lands owned by Arab tribes, mostly members of Alwalda (الولدة) clan. The government seized the opportunity and aimed to relocate twenty thousand Arabs in the Arab Belt area. Arab clans initially refused to do so preferring to live in the desert, but when they were convinced that they could not fertilize the soil and survive, they accepted the government's offer and moved to the Arab Belt area. However, the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (2013) explains that these Arab clans were given land owned by the state (and that had been previously owned by Arab and Kurd feudal lords). Accordingly, no Kurds were forced to leave or give up land ownership. Instead, new Arab towns were created between pre-existing Kurdish towns.

4.4.2 Kurdish Struggle from 2000 to 2011

The death of the dictator Hafez Assad in June 2000 was significant for Syrians. Bashar Assad inherited the state from his father and promised to reform Syria. Bashar allowed opposition leaders and public figures to discuss economic changes in Syria, which was prohibited since 1970 when his father seized power. Opposition leaders took the initiative and formed a social and political forum called the Damascus Spring. This forum included former prisoners of conscience and community leaders whose political objectives included: "Multiparty democracy with particular emphasis on public freedoms and the lifting of the emergency and martial laws, the rule of law, recognizing freedom of assembly, press, and speech, release of political prisoners, granting of economic rights due to all citizens, ending the special status of the Baath Party as the 'the leading party in society and state" (Carnegie Middle East Center, 2012a).

However, in 2001, Bashar arrested the active community leaders and ended the Damascus Spring. This provided the regime with much-needed stability until 2004 when the Kurdish uprising took place.

The Kurdish uprising in 2004 took place after a tense soccer match between Arab and Kurdish teams developed into a violent confrontation in Qamishli. This confrontation was fueled by the American invasion of Iraq and the establishment of the Regional Kurdistan Government in Iraq. Arab Syrians empathized with the Iraqi resistance and the regime of Saddam Hussein and feared that Syrian Kurds in Syria attempt to copy the experiment of Kurdish independence in Iraq by building alliances with the US. Hence, when Assad's government put an end to the Kurdish uprising in 2004 by killing and arresting many Kurdish activists, only formally organized Arab opposition leaders expressed their solidarity and demanded that the regime give the Kurds their rights. Ordinary Syrian Arabs however were by contrast cautious in offering such support (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2013). The 2004 uprising ended with an amnesty decree issued in 2005 by Bashar Assad, who released all Kurdish political prisoners and promised to review Kurdish issue complaints. As a sign of the hollowness of the Assad promise, in 2008, a decree was issued by the Assad government through which Kurds were prevented from gathering and celebrating their cultural festivals (Darwish, 2021).

The Kurdish uprising in 2004 prepared the stage for cooperation between Kurdish and Arab opposition parties. According to Carnegie (2012b), the 2005 Damascus Declaration "included a large number of different parties who did not work together before the declaration such as the National Democratic Rally and the Muslim Brotherhood in addition to minority groups such as Kurdish and Assyrian parties." Further, in 2005, the Kurdish Future Movement was established by Mashaal Tammo. This movement, unlike other Kurdish parties, does not view

the Kurdish issue as a regional matter. Rather, it proposes that Kurds must employ all the possible non-violent and democratic means to end despotism and achieve a democratic state. This movement joined the Syrian National Council in 2011, which led to the assassination of its founding member Mashaal Tammo for his role in the anti-regime protests (Alhamidi, 2022)

4.4.3 Kurdish Struggle after 2011

The 2011 protests were started in Syria by local community leaders, who lacked coherent meta-level political organization. However, the Assad regime's brutal response and the long duration of the protests made the formation of a leadership cadre a necessity for the protests to continue. Accordingly, the opposition leaders started to form political organizations to regulate and direct their work, especially funding and later negotiations with the Assad regime. Political leaders inside Syria formed the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change, which included several parties and political figures in October 2011. Additionally, as explained in my introduction, Syrian diasporic political and community leaders established the Syrian National Council, which later became part of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces.

In 2011, both the Assad regime and the Arab opposition competed to win Kurdish support. For example, on April 1, 2011, Assad made a decree to give Kurds Syrian nationality while the opposition and protestors commemorated the 2004 Kurdish uprising by naming one of their rallies Azadi, which is a Kurdish word that means freedom. However, Kurdish political parties were hesitant to take a stance for or against the regime until they understood how the revolution would move forward in relation to their interests. Hence, the Kurds experienced internal conflicts regarding how to deal with these new circumstances. In what follows, I will

highlight three major Kurdish political directions that have been influential in Syria. Namely, I will highlight The Kurdish Future Movement, the Kurdish National Council, and the Democratic Union Party (PYD).

First, in 2005 a Syrian Kurdish political leader, Mashaal Tammo, established the Kurdish Future Movement party in Syria. In 2006, this party joined Yekiti and Azadi Kurdish parties and formed the Coordinating Committee, which became a member of the Syrian National Council in October 2011. Movement sources explain that the Kurdish problem is national, not regional, and should be resolved without outsider interventions through Kurdish full participation in the social and political processes as equal citizens who enjoy fair and proportional representation. The founder of this party was assassinated in his home in Damascus/Syria in 2011. Members of his party accuse the Syrian regime of his assassination, while others point to tensions with the Kurdish party PYD (Carnegie, n.d). This assassination weakened the movement and allowed for its competing Kurdish political party to be more influential in leading the Kurdish struggle in Syria.

Second, the Democratic Union Party (PYD) is a Syrian Kurdish political party that is affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Turkey. The PYD party was established in 2003 and was repressed by the Syrian regime since the Syrian regime had already signed the Adana Agreement with Turkey in 1998, which led to the expulsion of the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan from Syria. When the Syrian protests erupted in 2011, the PYD party prevented the formation of a united Kurdish front against the Syrian regime and refused to join the Kurdish National Council. Instead, the PYD preferred to join the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change, which works inside Syria and thus there are questions about its independence from the Assad regime (Carnegie, 2012c).

In 2012, the PYD announced the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (Rojava), which consists of de facto self-governing sub-regions in the areas of Afrin, Jazira, Euphrates, Raqqa, Tabqa, Manbij and Deir Ez-Zor (30 % of Syrian land). BBC News (2016) explains that the PYD established the YPG People's Defence Units in 2004. The YPG is a militia accused of child recruitment and of deporting thousands of civilians and destroying their homes. However, it became influential only after establishing an alliance with the USA to free the northern Syrian town of Kobani (Ein AL-Arab) from ISIS in 2015. YPG merged into a new military body named the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in October 2015, which is the army of "Rojava" with 60% of its members Kurds with the rest being non-Kurds from Arab, Assyrian/Syriac, Armenian, and Turkmen backgrounds. Also, in December 2015 the Syrian Democratic Council (MSD) was formed and became the political wing of the SDF (BBC News, 2016). These steps meant that the PYD proceeded in enforcing its military, political, and social vision without proper consultation with local Arabs. It seems that the PYD has decided to establish Kurdish independence from the Syrian government regardless of who is in power in Damascus.

The PYD announced its goal is to establish a secular, democratic and federal Syria in which ethnicities and differences between citizens have been removed. The PYD divides its area of control into three cantons: Jazeera, Kobane and Efrin. It suggests that its self-administration should be an example for other areas to follow. However, Efrin was taken over by Arab opposition militias supported by Turkey in 2018 and 2019 (Hasan, 2021). On the other hand, Alhamidi (2022) explains that the PYD party serves as an arm of the regime of Assad. He clarifies that the regime withdrew from areas in north Syria and gave them to the PYD party after 2011. In exchange, the PYD party terminated the revolution in the Kurdish areas by committing

the massacre of Amuda town on June 27, 2013, in which the PYD killed Kurdish protestors and ended the revolution against the regime among the Kurds.

Third, the Kurdish National Council (KNC) was established on 26 October 2011 in Erbil/Iraq. It maintains close ties with Massoud Barzani, the president of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. These ties create tensions with the PYD since the latter is affiliated with the PKK in Turkey. The Kurdish National Council conducted talks with the chairman of the Syrian National Council (Burhan Galioun) in 2011 but the talks did not go well. The main demand proposed by the KNC was federalism (after the expected collapse of Assad). But the SNC refused this demand and offered to recognize the Kurdish people as an ethnic group in the new constitution and to resolve the Kurdish issue through "the elimination of oppression, compensating victims, and recognizing Kurdish national rights within a Syria of united land and people," which was not considered enough by the Kurdish leaders (Carnegie n.d -a). The Kurdish national council joined the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, and it envisions Syria as a democratic, federal, and decentralized state (Hasan, 2021).

To summarize, Kurds in Syria have experienced discrimination by the Syrian state. The Kurdish struggle before 2000 was limited to a military alliance with Hafez Assad against Turkey. This alliance was not ultimately in the Kurds' favour since the state's discriminatory policies were in effect until Hafez died. Kurdish leaders, like Mashaal Tammo, benefitted from the changing circumstance between 2000 and 2011 and established good relationships with pro-democracy Arab opposition groups including the Muslim Brotherhood. Since 2011, when more protests erupted and developed into a revolution, the Kurds have experienced internal division; mainly the division is between the PYD, the KNC, and Kurdish Future Movement in Syria. The PYD is affiliated with the Turkish Kurdish party (PKK), the KNC is affiliated with the Kurdistan

Regional Government of Iraq, and Kurdish Future Movement in Syria has been less effective after the assassination of its leader Mashaal Tammo. Finally, the PYD is the most influential party on the ground since it has established an army alliance with the USA while the KNC has maintained a better connection with Arab diasporic opposition.

Historically, the Arab Belt project, the Kurdish uprising in 2004, and Kurdish political and military engagement in the Syrian protests and revolution of 2011 have been turning points in the Kurdish struggle and Arab and Kurd relations. The Arab Belt project is perceived among Kurds as Arabic aggression while on the Arabic side it is seen as an example of the discriminatory practices the regime directs against all Syrians, not only against Kurds. The Kurdish uprising in 2004 led to good relations with pro-democracy forces among the opposition, and finally, the military forces and the lack of positive engagement with the Syrian revolution have negatively affected Arab and Kurdish relations.

4.5 Study Sample: Facebook Wall Posts

For my research, I have selected seven SODCLs to analyze their Facebook wall posts, as a study sample. These leaders were selected because they are diasporic (not in Syria); they are active and influential on the Facebook platform (as judged by the biggest number of followers); third, they are anti-Assad. Only the relevant content of the leader's Facebook wall posts has been included here, shared links and videos created by other commentators will not be included. While I have elaborated in my Methodology chapter on my logic of selection, I would like to note here that I have selected the posts of seven leaders to analyze, employing research keywords to search for relevant content on their Facebook pages. Keywords I have used to direct and narrow my research are secularist, secularism, Islamist, Islamism, Kurdish, Arabic, identity, and

democracy. The leaders I am concerned with are Abdulkarim Bakkar (أ.د.عبد الكريم بكار), Maher Sharafeddine, Muhydin Lazikani, Ali Ferzat, Ahmed Kamel, and Taufik Alhallak (توفيق الحلاق). Samir Mattenti (الاعلامي سمير متيني). While the ethnic and religious backgrounds of these community leaders are not a factor in my analysis, however, coincidently, six of them self-define as Arab while one identifies as Kurdish. They are all from Sunni backgrounds, however, except one who comes from a Durzi background. This means that in this study, only Sunni, Durzi, and Kurdish perspectives will be explored.

Bakkar (n.d.) seeks to implement Sharia law, which he thinks must be implemented gradually rather than immediately, and not by coercion. He suggests that education is key to the proper implementation of Sharia law. Islamists must improve their capacity in science, sociology, and international affairs, which are fields of study and professional practice that are essential for implementing successful social and political change. Additionally, he thinks Islamists need to engage in politics especially through informed voting on the constitutions of their countries. They must link their theories to practice and practical reforms by running for elections and gaining practical experience instead of just theorizing about change. Further, they must acknowledge the diverse nature of their communities (Bakkar, n.d.)

Bakkar also explains that Islamic scholars state that Islam aims to protect five essential needs of humans “religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property.” Hence, Islamic work anywhere must be guided by respect for these five essential needs while the practical goals and the tools for reform and Islamicization must be varied and determined differently from one context to another. Additionally, for Bakkar it is the responsibility of the state to guarantee access of its population to all means that are necessary for protecting these essential needs. Accordingly, he stresses that

the governing system is a means not an end, and thus there is no meaning to the revival of the Caliph system in the Islamic world (Bakkar, n.d.).

Bakkar proposes that the process of change in the Islamic world must be non-violent if they are to succeed in getting rid of ignorance and despotism. In his view, violence must be used only for defence, when absolutely necessary. He adds that 90 % of Islamic law is addressed to be implemented by society members and organizations rather than by the state. This means for him that the focus of Islamists should be on the society and individuals who will eventually form the government. Hence, whether governments are Islamist or secular, it does not matter as long as the governing system is pluralistic and democratic and allows everyone to enjoy the same rights of participation in political and social life equally. Finally, rarely comments on Kurdish issues, but does state that he is strongly against the separation of Kurds from Syria (Bakkar, n.d.).

Sharafeddine (n.d.) in contrast defines himself as a secularist and hopes to achieve a decentralized administrative state in Syria. His main ideas include that his political identity, as a secularist, is accompanied by his belonging to his cultural and religious identity as a Durzi. Only the civil dimension of religion is important for him, which is especially distinct in the Durzi religion and community. One example of these dimensions is the freedom of Durzi individuals to choose whether they want to be religious or not. Additionally, Durzi as a religion is not a missionary and does not allow outsiders to join it, which de-fuels tensions with other religious groups. He adds that he adheres to Durzi's cultural and religious identity which is a dominant doctrine for himself and his community members, so they never tolerate any attempts by outsiders to change or manipulate this identity (Sharafeddine, n.d.).

Sharafeddine touches upon the Kurdish issue and explains that he is aware of Kurdish grievances since he was raised in northern Syria close to Kurdish communities. The Kurdish

struggle for full citizenship rights is legitimate, he thinks. However, he argues that the policies of the PYD Kurdish party and its affiliation to the Turkish party PKK negatively affect the Kurdish issue in Syria. Kurdistan does not exist in Syria, and thus, changing the name of north Syria by the PYD to Rojava is illegitimate. Also, he explains that PYD occupies Syrian cities and towns of local Arab by military force and treats them as foreigners in their own country. He clarifies that the PYD prevents Arabs from entering their controlled areas unless they obtain approval from a local Kurdish sponsor, which means that Kurdish leaders are cynically employing the Syrian revolution for their own interests instead of actively engaging to make the change occur and benefit Syrians as a whole (Sharafeddine, n.d.).

Lazikani (n.d.) is another SODCL who suggests that developing a Syrian national identity is a necessity since the bet on all sub-identities has proved its unproductivity. The development of events in Syria has made reconciliation and coexistence currently impossible; hence, Syria must be federalized. The Iraqi experiment has proven that Kurds, Turks, and Arabs benefit from good relations built on mutual respect and understanding rather than on hostility, and this should encourage Syrian Kurds and Arabs to start a dialogue and improve relations sooner rather than later. Further, he notes only the dictator, Bashar Assad, benefits from the ongoing conflict between Arabs and Kurds in northern Syria. He proposes that secularists should give up narcissism and engage with their people by showing respect for local choices. On the other hand, Islamists should give up their religious umbrella and engage with society members through accepting the transmission of power and establishing civil political parties to compete for power. He adds that Islamists might benefit from the Turkish experiment in which Islamists are in power through free elections with the presence of strong non-Islamist opposition serving their country together (Lazikani, n.d.).

Ferzat (n.d.) however suggests that religion must be kept separate from politics. This is because religion can create structures that demolish the capacity of individuals to judge things independently, and then they are easily controlled by clergypersons. Political Islam movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood group, employ religion to mobilize their followers and serve the selfish agendas of the group. He adds that other ideologies might do the same, so he defines himself as a Syrian only with no other affiliation to ideologies such as communism, liberalism, or Islamism. However, Ferzat wants Syria to become democratic and pluralistic, and so a country in which women and men have the same rights and duties, and power is transmitted from one president to another after an unrenewable four-year period. He proposes that secularists are necessarily democratic and must seize power only through free elections; hence, the Assad regime is non-secular. He also notes that the PYD has terminated Kurdish activists and peaceful protestors who aimed to work with non-Kurdish rebels against the Syrian regime. This policy by the PYD, he concludes, serves the agendas of Assad to divide the Syrian people and maintain power in his hand (Ferzat, n.d.).

Kamel (n.d.) aims to achieve a civil and democratic state in which the populations choose their representatives through free elections. These representatives make laws that can be but are not necessarily Islamic or secular. All the documents issued by Syrian opposition leaders interpret freedom as establishing a civil and democratic state, not a secular one. A secular state is not necessarily a state of freedom and human dignity; Assad is a secularist, but nevertheless a brutal dictator. Also, the USA was a secular and not religious nation when it enslaved part of its population. The assumption that Muslims will always vote for Islamists is false, Kamel concludes, and it is based on stereotypes about Muslim communities being a mass of people led by militant clergymen. He adds that in Morocco, for instance, Islamists won only twelve chairs

in the parliament while in previous elections, they won as many as one hundred and twenty-five chairs (Kamel, n.d.).

Kamel adds that secularism challenges the faith of the majority of the population in Syria, who believe that their religion (i.e. Islam) requires them to abide by Sharia law. Moreover, he notes that Syrian secularists criticize Islamic social practices, only highlighting oppressive practices of Muslims without showing the same criticism to oppressive social practices committed by other religious groups. This is an indicator for Kamel to argue that secularists in Syria use secularism as a cover for being anti-Islam. Kamel proposes that fanatic secularists serve an existing alliance of minorities against Arab Sunnis, and figures of this alliance control media through which they manipulate the narrative of the conflict in Syria. The outcome of this control is that Assad's crimes are never attributed to secularism while even the smallest mistake by individual Islamists is enlarged by media and attributed to Islam generally. Kamel suggests that secularists in Syria are separate from society and their perceptions of secularism are very limited. He explains, for instance, that many secularists with whom he has interacted degrade women and view secularism as licensing the freedom to have sex indiscriminately, practice atheism, and drink alcohol. Kamel believes that secularists among the opposition will be like Assad if they get into power since they have already adopted eradicating and exclusionary ideas and tactics. They aim to demolish Islam, and this cannot be achieved through democracy and Human Rights; it can only be achieved by establishing a regime like Assad's or worse (Kamel, n.d.).

Regarding the Kurdish issue, Kamel views the PYD as an expansive and discriminatory party affiliated with the Turkish terrorist party PKK. For him, it is therefore not a Syrian. Instead, it serves the agendas of Assad and the occupiers of Syria: Iran and Russia. Ironically, the PYD

works cooperatively with Assad's regime that oppressed Kurds for over 50 years even as it occupies the towns of Arabs whose revolution has weakened the regime's authority over the Kurds. He adds that the PYD has taken over two-thirds of Syria's wealth and aims to occupy land equal to 10 times the real Kurdish-majority areas in Syria. He adds that they already achieved 80% of their goals except that the Turkish intervention in Syria has stopped them. Kamel also stresses that the PYD occupies Syrian Arab land that never witnessed the presence of any Kurdish people before, and this occupation is only for exploiting natural resources including oil and water from Tigris and Euphrates rivers (Kamel, n.d.).

Alhallak (n.d.) suggests that Syria must become democratic and parliamentary. Religion for him is a personal issue and should not interfere with governing systems. All humans, whatever their religion, can live in a democratic state that is built on principles of justice, freedom, and equality for all its citizens. Cooperation among community members must be based on the good nature of humans as well as on common sense. For Alhallak, one's contribution to one's society is more important than their faith. When a person is drowning and someone jumps to save their lives, the faith of these people does not matter; only their good nature as humans serves as the determinant of what gets done (Alhallak, n.d.).

Alhallak adds that people are different and thus each ethnicity (referring to Kurds) and religious group (i.e. non-Muslim minorities) deserves to practice its rituals freely without fear, and all communities must be able to study their language and use it in diverse national media. Alhallak explains this point by expressing his hope to watch Kurdish films and T.V series that introduce the rich Kurdish culture to non-Kurds in Syria. He adds that he and others who believe in freedom represent a third party located between the two main Syrian political and social ideologies. These ideologies privilege the interests of, respectively, tyrannical military ruling

powers (the regime) and religiously dominated parties (extreme Islamists). However, he acknowledges that among this third party, there are narcissistic secularists who do not know how to work collaboratively with others. Additionally, Alhallak notes that secularists among the Syrian community of leaders (both in Syrian and the diaspora) do not have access to proper and stable funding. These two factors make them unable to influence others, and thus their voice does not get heard (Alhallak, n.d.).

On the contrary, Alhallak suggests that the Muslim Brotherhood is very well-organized with stable funding, but its leaders work undercover and push secularists to the front and control them as puppets from behind. Hence, the Brotherhood's alliances with others are unstable, untrustworthy, and ineffective. Finally, he argues that Islamists do not agree on one interpretation of Islam, and each Islamist group has its own interpretation of the right and the good. A properly civil-democratic state guarantees that all interpretations are valid, included and heard while no one is considered the dominant one. However, Alhallak does not explain details of how this civil-democratic system might function, which seems a little utopian. Alhallak also notes that hopes to see the relations between Kurds and Arab improve and succeed in living together in one country. He also hopes that Kurds and Arabs will be able to exchange and benefit from their differences in arts and cultures (Alhallak, n.d.).

Matteni (n.d.) is a SODCL who defines himself as a Syrian citizen and thinks of Syria as a multi-national and multi-ethnic state. He proposes that Syria must become free, democratic, civil, and united in a way that makes it the case all Syrians are equal. Transitional justice is essential. All political and other criminals must be held accountable for what they have done as individuals without consequences for their communities and families. Also, he expresses the view that he is a Muslim, and Islam for him is a religion of peace and love. However, Islamists

argue that all secularists will be like Assad, and secularists argue that all Islamists will be like the Taliban. In response, Matteni suggests that common ground must be found on which Islamists and secularists can meet and establish the preconditions for a mixed new sociopolitical system that satisfies everyone (Matteni, n.d.).

In his narrative of the conflict, Matteni notes that Kurds have participated in the revolution since 2011. However, they began to retreat at the end of 2012 when the revolution became dominated by Islamists who were not committed to the revolution's principles of establishing a democratic state. Matteni also thinks that the Syrian opposition has united with the regime against Kurdish rights. He proposes that Kurds are 50% of the population in Syria and without their participation, it is impossible to write a Syrian constitution that achieves a political solution. Hence, on his view, the formation of a united Arab and Kurd opposition front is the only way to end the dictatorial Assad regime (Matteni, n.d.).

Matteni proposes an initiative for dialogue between Kurdish and Arab political leaders. This initiative includes four main components. "First, The unification of the military and political forces, Arabic and Kurdish within a unified national army. Second: the dismantling of the Assad regime and the transition of Syria to a civil, democratic state with a decentralized federal system. Third: staying away from foreign agendas and dictates. Fourth: fighting extremist organizations that follow orders from abroad and do not want democracy and ensuring the unity of the Syrian territory and getting rid of the tyrannical regime and external tampering." However, Matteni explains that his initiative was not accepted by the Arab Syrian opposition leaders, which demonstrates to him that these leaders prioritize their bonds with Turkey over their relations with Syrian Kurds. Additionally, he indicates that many Arab opposition leaders are not

independent and follow directions of the Turkish decision-makers, and thus they cannot accept any initiatives from Kurds (Matteni, n.d.).

4.6 Discussion

In my research, I took into consideration that peace leaders might be viewed as influential figures with a vision. These influential individuals along with other peers create streams of ideas and actions that together affect other community members. Hence, I reviewed academic articles and research papers about the conflict in Syria. Additionally, I reviewed Facebook wall posts written by SODCLs as a study sample aiming to find perspectives of this community of leaders on the Syrian identity conflict among anti-Assad parties. My initial reading has revealed that the SODCLs discuss the identity of the Syrian state primarily from Islamist and secularist perspectives. This discussion is theoretical and has been ongoing for decades, which might explain why it has been fruitful. Its fruitfulness is evident in the establishment of common ground on which many Islamists and secularists agree. So, for example, there is general agreement that Syria must be democratic only, and that democracy might lead to an Islamic or secular system that guarantees pluralism and participation of all Syrians regardless of their ethnic, religious, and political affiliations. Additionally, latent and explicit identity conflicts have revealed enduring tensions between Arabic and Kurdish communities in Syria. By reviewing the history and status of this conflict, I find that it is more complicated than the conflict between Islamists and secularists since it includes identity components expressed as conflict over land and resources.

One factor that has added complexity to the Arabic and Kurdish conflict is the history of conflicting grievance narratives. The Arabic narrative indicates that the Syrian state has for

decades improperly employed Arabic nationalism as an ideology to justify its violence and aggression against members of the country's Kurdish community; on the other hand, from 2011 the PYD Kurdish military forces, backed by the USA, have been able to occupy Syrian Arab land, deport its population, and exploit resources in cooperation with the regime and other invaders of Syria such as Russia and Iran. On contrary, the Kurdish narrative suggests that Kurds have suffered from a systematic process of marginalization implemented by the Syrian Arab state. The Kurdish narrative rarely pays attention to Arab grievances, which include being subject to mass killings as well as deportation from traditional lands by the complicit Syrian state.

Another factor contributing to inter-communal hostility and distrust is that since 2011 Syria's Kurdish and Arab communities have acquired access to violent means of aggression and defence, which appear to have enlarged the hopes among members of the two communities that each of them can achieve its goals and be free from the marginalizing regime independently. It seems that both Arabic and Kurdish leaders have not realized the significance of cooperation in their battle against Syrian despotism. This failure to stake out common ground is evident in unsuccessful talks between the Kurdish National Council and the Syrian National Council that ended in 2011 without an agreement. Unsurprisingly, no more serious talks between these two groups have taken place up to and including the date of this writing in the summer of 2022. When I compare this failure to the results of the 2004 - 2005 talks between Syrian Kurdish movement leaders and pro-democracy Syrian Arab leaders, I conclude that nonviolence must be a key to successful talks on peace and transitional governance.

Among the six SODCLs whose work I have been studying two leaders adopt Islamist stances and five adopt secular ones. Among the Islamist leaders, one aims to achieve an Islamic state,

and he perceives doing so to be possible gradually alongside the emergence of a democratic and pluralistic state. The other six leaders aim to achieve a free and democratic Syrian state in which only the broad mass of people determine what type of political system should be achieved. Amongst the leaders who adopt secular positions, five hope that Syria will function as a decentralized state while only two suggest that federalization is needed to help Syrians overcome the aftermath of the civil war. Hence, I conclude that the seven SODCLs agree that Syria must be a state in which all people are equal and free, but important differences appear when they attempt to unpack the meanings of freedom and equality. Accordingly, I think discussing freedom and equality as an extension of Islamism and secularism is essential for establishing a common ground for effective cooperation.

Finally, the seven SODLCs who come from Arabic and Kurdish backgrounds are all against the separation of Kurds from Syria. All of them suggest that good relations between Arabs and Kurds will benefit both communities. However, the Syrian Arab perspective invests in the idea that the Kurdish political party PYD has been responsible for deteriorating relations between Arabs and Kurds. On the other hand, the Kurdish perspective holds that Kurds including the PYD remain open to free talks concerning the terms of reconciliation between Syrian's Arab and Kurdish communities. The Kurds also perceive division and a lack of engagement from the Arab opposition leaders as an obstacle to any such talks.

4.7 Conclusions

First, in response to my first research question, this chapter shows that the identity of the Syrian state is enmeshed in topical and identity conflicts between Islamists and secularists. These conflicts also include subterranean tensions over, for example, the meaning of terms like equality

and individual freedom. A significant part of the identity conflicts involving SODCLs concerns whether or not individuals are free to determine every aspect of their lives or whether their freedom may be limited to what is allowed by Sharia law. Islamists are committed to the latter doctrine while secularists are committed to the former. I have found that identity conflicts of this kind typically lead to a process conflict, which may be expressed as the problem of representation regarding who should act on behalf of people and how these representatives should be selected. I mean here that when each group involved in identity conflicts works to protect its interests and strengthen the bonds amongst its members against outsiders, they seem to want to be represented in the process. This is evident to me in the discussion on the majority and minorities in relation to the state responsibility, especially in the points made by Sawah and Galioun.

On the other hand, the Arabic and Kurdish conflict comprises a large identity conflict that has been expressed as an armed, economic, and ethnic conflict. This conflict reveals the presence of a relationship conflict regarding whether Arabs or Kurds can be the dominant power in Syria. It seems that Arabic and Kurdish political leaders have tended to prioritize domination over cooperation. Further, I have found that the process of conflict has varied: before 2011, Arab leaders used the power of the state against the Kurdish community while after 2011 Kurdish leaders employed their military power against the Arab community. Finally, I have found the discussion on decentralization and federalization embodies concerns regarding who should manage local resources and how wealth should be distributed between Arabs and Kurds. The dispute over resources includes invisible topical goals under the cover of the identity of the Syrian state dispute.

Second, SODCLs engage in complex internal conflicts about identity that possess ethnic, religious, historical, and ideological dimensions, in addition to involving issues related to land ownership and access to economic and educational resources. This means that their internal differences are more significant than their externally visible collective identity (i.e. being anti-Assad). There may well be common identity elements that are invisible to the conflicting parties, such as shared ideas about what democracy and equality are, that may serve as the foundations of a stronger alliance between Arabic and Kurdish communities. However, since these potentially shared elements remain invisible to most observers, attempts to build an oppositional alliance solely on the bases of hostility to the Assad regime have failed. Focusing on just one aspect of participants' identity while ignoring all other similarities and differences has proven ideologically and socially insufficient. This insufficiency has been demonstrated by many organizations that have granted membership to people based only on their being anti-Assad. These organizations include, for example, the Syrian National Council; the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change; the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces; and the Kurdish National Council may have learned the hard way that they cannot assume that every anti-Assad group will make a good ally in the struggle against his regime.

The third of my findings is that there is a chance to shift thinking about conflicts when conflicting parties explore each other's conflict narrative. This has been evident in the history of the Arab Belt project in which the role of Arab tribes such as Alwalda in refusing to occupy the land of their neighbours has not been sufficiently highlighted. Also, it seems that if the Kurds and Arabs leaders pay sufficient attention to the problem of Syrian despotism and its impacts on both communities such as the Arab Belt project that targeted Kurds and the massacres of the

1980s committed against Arabs, there is a chance that a mutual understanding will exist, and common ground will be uncovered and potentially grow further in the future.

My fourth finding concerns the ineffectiveness of victim groups comparing grievances, or what in other contexts has been referred to as a "suffering Olympics". As shown above, Kurds and Arabs have suffered from the Syrian dictatorship since 1963, when the Baath Socialist Party seized power. I find that instead of delegitimizing the suffering of others, conflicting opposition parties might instead acknowledge each grievance as a unique and important human experience. Otherwise, parties might remain stuck in a swirl of violence assuming their historical pain is the only (or most important) form of suffering while all others are merely privileged oppressors.

Fifth, nonviolence is key to success in negotiations and dialogue. My research shows the debate between Islamists and secularists tends to proceed more smoothly than that between Arabs and Kurds. My explanation for this phenomenon is that Islamists (I mean here scholars and theorists who come from Islamic backgrounds, not jihadists) and secularists negotiate without access to weapons that may replace the power of rights and logic, which is not the case with Syrian Arabs and Kurds after 2011. The PYD and the armed Arab opposition backed by Turkey have access to weapons and use arms to communicate rather than arguments. What my finding demonstrates is that the 2005 Kurdish and Arabic debate reached productive and promising outcomes in Syria when either of the two parties used violence. One among the two parties used violence, all this changed after 2011.

My sixth finding is that the role of culture and religion in peace and conflict is significant. As identified above, SODCLs Lazikani, Sharafeddine, Kamel, and Galioun all note that when secularists do not respect local cultures, they experience resistance from local communities. Furthermore, Sharafeddine, as stated above, is proud of his Durzi religious and

cultural identity, and never tolerates any attempts by anyone to change or cause damage to aspects of this identity. This merging of cultural and religious identities and one's aspects of life is not unusual. For instance, when the Baath party aimed to put an end to the Kurdish problem, it created laws to criminalize elements of Kurdish culture such as learning the language, listening to Kurdish music, and celebrating Kurdish traditions. Even so, what this attempt at suppression also shows is that one can use elements of culture and religion to revitalize and revive the spirit of marginalized groups. Briefly, I mean that culture and religion might be perceived as leverages for either building peace or escalating conflicts. I assume this linkage between culture and religion on the one hand and peace and conflict on the other requires special attention from actors and peace interveners as well as PACS scholars.

Finally, my seventh and last finding responds to my second research question about possible interventions that might enhance the capacity of SODCLs to serve as peace leaders. I find that dialogue among influential SODCLs might play a role in building peace and improving relationships between Syrian Islamists and secularists opposition leaders who come from Arab and Kurdish backgrounds. Such dialogue might benefit the parties when it successfully shifts thinking through analysis and direct communication between the parties concerning their narratives of conflict as well as non-violent means of struggle to build influential alliances on bases other than being anti-Assad groups. Accordingly, I propose that conflict analysis models that are concerned with direct communication between conflicting parties in a safe environment might constitute either tools or frameworks for interveners to design conflict transformation interventions. These models include but are not limited to the Inquiry Model developed by John Paul Lederach; the Social Cube Model developed by Sean Byrne and Neal Carter; the ARIA

Model developed by Jay Rothman; the Nested Foci Model developed by Maire Dugan; and the Transformative Dialogue model.

The above models all encourage the exchange of ideas among the conflicting parties to reframe their conflict narratives, imagine their shared future, and propose ways to deal with the complexity of history and current issues for sustainable change. These models also acknowledge that change is a long-term process which must be conducted in a safe environment where the well-being of the individual is secure. Most SODCLs are in stable countries, and thus I think they might enjoy the capacity to initiate dialogue or benefit from such opportunities when they are offered by conflict transformation interveners. I mean there is a chance for peacebuilders to improve relationships between SODCLs who currently live in stable countries, and this when it occurs might lead to positive outcomes in regard to shift-thinking and narratives of conflict among this community of leaders.

Chapter 5 – CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of my project including its literature review, methodology, and key findings. Additionally, it restates the limitations of my research. Finally, it provides recommendations for further research areas for PACS practitioners and a summary of this chapter.

5.2 Summary of My Research

In my research, I have aimed to explore the intragroup conflicts among the Syrian opposition diasporic community leaders (SODCLs). Along the way, I have uncovered and commented on aspects of the potential of applying conflict transformation theories to enhance SODCLs' capacity to serve as peace leaders. I have asked two questions here: (1) what are the topical, relational, identity, and process conflict goals among the Syrian opposition diaspora community leaders? (2) what type of conflict transformation interventions might help SODCLs improve their capacity to transform their conflicts and serve as peace leaders?

In my literature review chapter, I explored several concepts that are relevant to my research, including conflict; conflict and culture; religion; identity; communication styles; Lederach's, Byrne's and others' theories of conflict transformation; peace leadership; and conflict goals. I have explained that conflict is a multidimensional phenomenon that incorporates rational and emotional elements that lead to task-based and relationship-based interactions between conflicting parties. Also, I show how conflict might be manifest or latent and might lead

to constructive or destructive outcomes, depending on the response of the conflicting parties and the context of their interactions. I have additionally clarified the idea that religion, identity, and communication styles shape the culture and worldview of individuals and groups. Religion affects individuals' worldview and their relationships with others as well as societal faith-based organizations. Further, by studying restorative justice, I conclude that religious texts enjoy the capacity to be interpreted differently and then employed either for building peace or justifying violence. Thus, to the extent that religion plays a role in conflicts, it must be managed carefully in such a way that it becomes an essential instrument for social justice and peace.

Like religion, identity may contribute to peace or else serve to intensify conflicts. It can act like a fence that separates members of groups from others. This internal classification of people as insiders (us) and outsiders (them) fuels cooperation between those who are similar and antagonism between those who are different. However, I conclude that when cooperation is predicated on elements of shared identity, in a way that takes no account of wider principles of justice and equality, it is more likely to contribute to conflict escalation than to peace.

Further, "communication styles" refers to how one approaches others rhetorically when engaging in conflicts. These styles vary and affect the interactions of conflicting parties differently, depending on the contexts and nature of their disputes. According to Hocker and Wilmot (2017), these styles include such behaviour as "avoiding, obliging (accommodating), dominating (competing), integrating (collaborating), and compromising" (p.153). No one style is always better than another and they all can be variously used to enhance the potential of peace work in a given situation. I also have noted that raising awareness amongst conflicting parties about their religion, identity, and communication styles may provide them with a better

understanding of their conflicts and stances, and thus make them more likely to find resolutions together.

Conflict transformation approaches developed within PACS, and related models of intervention, are essential parts of my research. I have explained that PACS approaches rely mainly on establishing relationships between the conflicting parties through two principles: empowerment and inclusion. The former requires the full engagement of all parties to a conflict, and thus every party must be enabled to freely participate in transformation processes. Inclusivity requires that existing structures and cultures be reformed to allow much greater levels of others' access and participation.

I have also highlighted that conflict transformation scholars and practitioners have developed several models and frameworks of interventions including Lederach's Inquiry, Byrne's Social Cubism, Dugan's Nested Foci, The ARIA Model by Jay Rothman, Transformative Dialogue, and Everyday Peacebuilding models. These models are designed mainly to allow change to occur by cultivating direct interactions between the conflicting communities and the interconnectedness of peace processes. Hence, I conclude that these models constitute frameworks that might help a conflict's participants express their emotions, narratives of conflict, and life experiences so that they can begin to imagine and work toward achieving a better future together with the support of peace interveners. I consequently view peace leaders as community members and peace interveners who enjoy access to the conflicting parties and allow them to connect with other stakeholders as well as to the available resources. I propose that in order to succeed these peace leaders must have an extensive understanding of the culture(s) of disputants, as well as of the issues currently under dispute.

Finally, I have explained in my literature review that the goals of conflicting parties vary and generally fall into two main overlapping types: process goals and relationship goals. Process goals are related to the issues under dispute (topical) or the means of dispute resolution (procedural). On the other hand, relationship goals are related to how individuals are defined in the conflict (identity and relational goals). These types of conflict goals overlap and affect one another and may be understood as dimensions of conflict that are visible or not in each context.

In my research methodology chapter, I explain that I have employed elements of direct and conventional content analysis to conduct qualitative research. This hybrid method has allowed me to explore existing literature on PACS as well as the ongoing conflict in Syria. From the first set of literature, I conclude that intragroup conflicts and their impact on peace work have been under-studied. For this research, I propose that the absence of effective cooperation among the Syrian opposition diasporic community leaders is a phenomenon worth exploring. Additionally, from the PACS literature, I have taken away the idea that identity conflicts overlap with manifest and/or latent issues of dispute; this knowledge has motivated me to search for identity conflicts in the Syrian context.

My initial reading of the available online data revealed that the identity conflict in Syria, especially among opposition parties, can be better understood by studying the conflicts between Islamists and secularists on the one hand, and between Arabs and Kurds on the other. Next, I searched published online information about these two conflicts and obtained data about identity conflicts, Islamism and secularism, and Syrian Kurdish-Arabic relations. I found that Syria's opposition leaders disagree sometimes deeply about the identity of the Syrian state, about whether or not it must be Islamist, secularist, democratic, decentralized, federalized or a

combination of all of these things. In order to set up my analysis of what the community leaders think and disagree with about the role of identity in the Syrian conflict, I created a list of fifty Syrian opposition diasporic community leaders who are active on Facebook. From this list, I selected seven individuals whose posts I scrutinized as a study sample using the following keywords: secularist, secularism, Islamist, Islamism, Arabs, Kurds, identity, and democracy. I searched the SODCL's Facebook wall posts of my focus group so as to compare their perspectives with those of the authors of the print literature I also reviewed.

5.3 Discussion and Findings

In my thesis, I have several times noted that the conflict between Arabs and Kurds seems more complicated than the one between Islamists and secularists since the former is largely theoretical or ideological while the latter is more territorial since it includes disputes over land ownership and political rights. Also, have I noted that the identity conflict in Syria is expressed as a conflict over the identity of the state, but it includes latent issues such as the meaning of such concepts as freedom and equality. I have learned that Islamists and secularists are coming closer to finding a common ground. They seem to have given up on the idea of respectively building either an Islamist or a secular state and have instead agreed to work together to build a civil state. On the other hand, the Kurdish and Arabic dispute has deteriorated and has gone through two main stages: before and then after 2011. Before 2011 the Kurdish community was oppressed by the Syrian state while since 2011 Kurdish militias have gained enough power and become oppressors themselves. Today, the PYD Kurdish party de facto controls 30% of Syrian land and exploits its resources while treating the country's Arab residents as foreigners in their

indigenous territory. I have tried to explain here how different Arab and Kurd conflict narratives contribute to the complexity of the Kurdish situation in Syria, especially when it comes to the effects of the Arabic Belt project and the Syrian state's discriminatory policies against the country's Kurdish community, that were intended to eliminate elements of their culture.

The seven SODLCs who come from Arabic and Kurdish backgrounds are against the separation of Kurds from Syria in something like an independent Kurdistan. All of them suggest that good relations between Arabs and Kurds benefit both communities. However, the Arabic perspective suggests that the Kurdish political party PYD is responsible for worsening relations between Arabs and Kurds. On the other hand, the Kurdish perspective views the division and lack of engagement from the Arab opposition leaders as a major obstacle to improving Arabic-Kurdish relations.

In response to my first research question, I conclude that the conflicting parties' dispute over the identity of the Syrian state stands in this context as evidence of a disagreement over an identity and topic goal. This identity-based conflict over identity rests on a number of ostensibly implicit disagreements over such matters as the meaning and limits of equality and individual freedom; whether or not individuals should be free to manage their lives under the umbrella of religious laws or regardless? Islamists are committed to the primacy of religion over political/individual authority while secularists bend the other way. I find that identity conflicts often lead to process conflicts, which may be understood as concerned with the problem of who gets to represent whom politically, and in what specific contexts

I have additionally found that being anti-Assad is by itself insufficient as an identity base for meaningful socio-political alliances. I am also able to conclude that conflict narratives are significant and affect the interactions and possible resolutions between disputants. That said,

comparing grievances between victims of oppression is a destructive aspect of conflict; by contrast, validating each grievance as a unique human experience is more often productive. Overall, I have come to see that nonviolence is key to successful talks and interactions between Syria's conflicting parties, along with a deep understanding of the culture, religion, identity, and communication styles of the disputants. This deep understanding is one of the hallmarks of effective peace leadership.

5.4 Limitations of My Study

One limitation of my research method is the potential for overinterpretations of the data. However, by using multiple sources of data, I have acquired enough information to support my interpretations. Another potential limitation which applies to my research method is the researcher being biased. My reaction to this is that I have attempted to only follow my materials in order to generate categories and themes without specific expectations. One final limitation to acknowledge is that my study sample includes only community leaders who are active on Facebook. I acknowledge that other community leaders might have different perspectives that are worth exploring, and unfortunately, the continuation of the Syrian conflict makes working with local community leaders on the ground unsafe for both the researchers and participants. Finally, another limitation related to the scope of my study is that my study sample, which has been selected randomly based on the number of followers and relevance of Facebook posts content, includes only specific ethnic and religious backgrounds. Although the ethnic and religious backgrounds of the study sample participants are not a factor, they happen to come from Arabic, Kurdish, Sunni, and Durzi backgrounds only while the perspectives of other community groups are not explored.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

Although my study suggests that non-violence is key to successful change and peace talks, it does not explore non-violence at length in the Syrian context. More insights on the utility of non-violent struggle might serve as a topic for future research, especially given the apparent incompatibilities of non-violence doctrines with the Jihadist ideology of Islamists.

My thesis also proposed that there exists considerable confusion over the meaning of such concepts as individual freedom and equality, but it does not explore much of this confusion in the Syrian context, which might be researched in the future.

Additionally, in my research, I explored perspectives on the identity of individuals and the state in a discussion including references to decentralization and federalization. How these latter two concepts might apply and relate to PACS in the Syrian context would also be a worthwhile future research topic.

Finally, I observed that common ground is developing between Islamists and secularists, even though fanatics in these two groups still adhere to their narrow points of view. I wonder how these unsatisfied group members (spoilers) might be included in peace processes and be convinced not to resist the march towards peace.

Bibliography

Abbas, K. (2020). *العلمانيون في سوريا بين المعرفة والأيديولوجيا [Secularists in Syria between knowledge and ideology]*. الحوار المتمدن. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=682685

Abdulazizi, H. (2020). *مسألة أكراد سوريا الواقع - التاريخ - الأسطرة [The Issue of Syria's Kurds: Reality, history, myth]* . تلفزيون سوريا. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.syria.tv/%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A3%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D9%83%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%B9-%D9%80-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AE-%D9%80-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D8%B7%D8%B1%D8%A9

Abdulwahab, M. (2022). *في الهوية الوطنية السورية الجامعة [On the comprehensive Syrian national identity]*. الرأي الآخر. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://raiakhr.com/?p=25464

Akella, D. (2009). Satyagraha: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict Management. Journal of Workplace Rights. 14. 503-523. 10.2190/WR.14.4.g.

Alhamzah, M. (2020). *حول المسألة الكردية في سوريا [About the Kurdish Matter in Syria]*. صحيفة جسر. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.jesrpress.com/2020/06/28/%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A3%D9%84%D8%A9-

%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7/

Al-Estiklal Newspaper. (2022). *الهوية السورية بين 2011 و2020.. التغيرات والانقسامات ومظاهر التشظي [The Syrian identity between 2011 and 2020, changes, divisions and manifestations of fragmentation]*. صحيفة الاستقلال. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.alestiklal.net/ar/view/7133/dep-news-1610205619

Alhallak, T. (n.d.). توفيق الحلاق. Facebook. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.facebook.com/orwa.hallak

Alhamidi, S. (2022). *الحركة السياسية الكردية في سوريا وأحزابها [The Kurdish political movement in Syria and its parties]*. مركز أبحاث ودراسات مينا Mena Reasearch Center . Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://mena-studies.org/ar/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%88%D8%A3%D8%AD%D8%B2/

Al-Hussein, L. (2005). العلمانية حاجة لازمة للديمقراطية السورية (Secularism is a necessity for Syrian democracy). الحوار المتمدن. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=48135

Aljazeera, A. (2020). *سوريا الدولة المتوحشة". الكتاب الذي ألقى بصاحبه وراء الشمس" [Syria, the State of Barbarism "the book that ended the life of its author"] " الكتاب الذي ألقى . سوريا الدولة المتوحشة"*

بصاحبه وراء الشمس الجزيرة الوثائقية. Retrieved August 3, 2022, from https://doc.aljazeera.net/%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1/%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%AD%D8%B4%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B0%D9%8A-%D8%A3%D9%84/

Alkilani, S. (2016). *المسألة الكردية في ضوء تحول اتجاهات النخب والأحزاب الكردية السورية [The Kurdish issue in light of the shifting trends of the Syrian Kurdish elites and parties]*. المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies). Retrieved August 5, 2022, from https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjRiJWnra_5AhU2kokEHa5nBJ4QFnoECAkQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dohainstitute.org%2Far%2Flists%2FACRPS-PDFDocumentLibrary%2Fdocument_D4F2046E.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1OQVVPpa6njVhYynFheBrP

Al-Maaloli, R. (2016). *The ideology of authority: 50 years of education in Syria*. The Washington Institute. Retrieved August 3, 2022, from https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/ideology-authority-50-years-education-syria

Alomair, M. O. (2016). Peace leadership for youth leaders: A literature review. *International Journal of Public Leadership*, *12*(3), 227–238. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijpl-04-2016-0017

Alrumah, A. (2020). *سورية المستقبل.. علمانية أم إسلامية؟ [Syria's future..secular or Islamic?]*. Harmoon Center for Contemporary Studies. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.harmoon.org/reports/%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A8%D9%84-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D9%85-%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9%D8%9F/

Amaladas, S. (2018). The intentional leadership of Mohandas Gandhi. In Amaladas, S., & Byrne, S (Eds), *Peace leadership: The quest for connectedness* (1st ed., pp. 46–61). essay, Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Peace-Leadership-The-Quest-for-Connectedness/Amaladas-Byrne/p/book/9780367594800

Amaladas, S., & Byrne, S. (2018). Conclusion Peace leaders leading for peace. In Amaladas, S., & Byrne, S (Eds), *Peace leadership: The quest for connectedness* (1st ed., pp. 212–220). essay, Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Peace-Leadership-The-Quest-for-Connectedness/Amaladas-Byrne/p/book/9780367594800

Amaladas, S., & Byrne, S. (2018a). Leading for peace: peace leaders breaking the mould. In Amaladas, S., & Byrne, S (Eds), *Peace leadership: The quest for connectedness* (1st ed., pp. 1–14). essay, Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Peace-Leadership-The-Quest-for-Connectedness/Amaladas-Byrne/p/book/9780367594800

Amer, R. (2021). *ما مدى واقعية العلمانية في المجتمع السوري؟ [How realistic is secularism in the Syrian society?]* . الرئيسية. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from

https://www.harmoon.org/reports/%D9%85%D8%A7-%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%89-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3/

Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. (2013). The Questions of Syria's Kurds: Reality – History – Mythologisation. *Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. Retrieved from https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwilx4LCj7L5AhVJKkQIHU8TDw4QFnoECAcQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.noor-book.com%2F%25D9%2583%25D8%25AA%25D8%25A7%25D8%25A8-%25D9%2585%25D8%25B3%25D8%25A7%25D9%2584%25D9%2587-%25D8%25A7%25D9%2583%25D8%25B1%25D8%25A7%25D8%25AF-%25D8%25B3%25D9%2588%25D8%25B1%25D9%258A%25D9%2587-pdf&usg=AOvVaw3gmY5cXfp93zVy-GgdNbHE*

Arsheed, Z. B. (2016). *[The* Civil *State .. Is It an Antithesis to the Islamic State?]* الدولة المدنية.. هل تشكل نقيضا للدولة الإسلامية؟. وجهات نظر | الجزيرة نت. Retrieved July 20, 2022, from https://www.aljazeera.net/opinions/2016/10/5/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%87%D9%84-%D8%AA%D8%B4%D9%83%D9%84-%D9%86%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%B6%D8%A7-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9

Asa'ad, M. (2019). *العلمانية في سوريا ضرورة وطنية وديمقراطية [Secularism in Syria is a national and democratic necessity]*. Jadaliyya. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/40364

Assarroudi, A., Heshmati Nabavi, F., Armat, M. R., Ebadi, A., & Vaismoradi, M. (2018). Directed qualitative content analysis: The description and elaboration of its underpinning methods and Data Analysis process. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, *23*(1), 42–55. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987117741667

Austin, J. T., & Vancouver, J. B. (1996). Goal constructs in psychology: Structure, process, and content. *Psychological Bulletin*, *120*(3), 338–375. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.120.3.338

Badwan, A. (2017). *عن المسألة الكردية في سوريا [On the Kurdish Issue in Syria]*. جريدة الوطن. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.al-watan.com/article/6462/Writers/%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A3%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7

Bai, H. (2016). A cross-cultural analysis of advertisements from high-context cultures and low-context cultures. English Language Teaching, 9(8), 21–27. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v9n8p21

Bakkar, A. (n.d.). أ.د.عبد الكريم بكار. Facebook. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.facebook.com/DrBakkar1

BBC News. (2016). *نبذة: قوات وحدات حماية الشعب الكردي [Brief: Kurdish People's Protection Units]* . BBC News عربي. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2016/02/160218_ypg_kurds_forces_syria_profile

Becvar, R. J., & Becvar, D. S. (2018). Facilitating peace perspectives from eco-systemic family therapy. In Amaladas, S., & Byrne, S (Eds), *Peace leadership: The quest for connectedness* (1st ed., pp. 14–29). essay, Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Peace-Leadership-The-Quest-for-Connectedness/Amaladas-Byrne/p/book/9780367594800

Bendersky, C., & Hays, N. A. (2008). The fourth dimension: Status conflict in groups. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1298494

Bishara, A. (n.d.). Syria: *سورية: درب الألام نحو الحرية محاولة في التاريخ الراهن* [*The path of pain towards freedom: an attempt in the current history]* Arab Center for Research and Policy. Retrieved from https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4XCv995QWVjZkwtSGR6X3d4Ym8/preview?pli=1&resourcekey=0-0s2mcOHJ20hZDDwIXVUbAA

Bryman, A. (2011). *Research methods in the study of leadership*. In Bryman, A., Collinson, D., Grint, K., Jackson, B., & Uhl-Bien, M (Eds), *The Sage Handbook of Leadership* (1st ed.). SAGE. Amazon. Retrieved: https://www.amazon.ca/SAGE-Handbook-Leadership-Alan-Bryman/dp/1848601468

Byrne, S. (2018). The role of peace leadership, politics, and culture in protracted ethnopolitical conflicts. In Amaladas, S., & Byrne, S (Eds), *Peace leadership: The quest for connectedness* (1st ed., pp. 122–140). essay, Routledge.

https://www.routledge.com/Peace-Leadership-The-Quest-for-Connectedness/Amaladas-Byrne/p/book/9780367594800

Byrne, S., & Carter, N. (1996) "Social Cubism: Six Social Forces of Ethnoterritorial Politics in Northern Ireland and Quebec," Peace and Conflict Studies: Vol. 3: No. 2, Article 5. DOI: 10.46743/1082-7307/1996.1176 Available at: https://nsuworks.nova.edu/pcs/vol3/iss2/5

Byrne, S., & Keashly, L. (2000) Working with ethnopolitical conflict: A multi-modal approach, International Peacekeeping, 7:1, 97-120, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310008413821

Carnegie Middle East Center. (2012a). *The Damascus Spring*. Carnegie Middle East Center. Retrieved August 6, 2022, from https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/48516?lang=en

Carnegie Middle East Center. (2012b). *The Damascus Declaration*. Carnegie Middle East Center. Retrieved August 6, 2022, from https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/48514?lang=en

Carnegie Middle East Center. (2012c). *The Kurdish Democratic Union Party*. Carnegie Middle East Center. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/48526?lang=en

Carnegie Middle East Center. (n.d). *The Kurdish Future Movement*. Carnegie Middle East Center. Retrieved August 6, 2022, from https://carnegie-mec.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48524&lang=en

Carnegie Middle East Center. (n.d. -a). *The Kurdish National Council in Syria*. Carnegie Middle East Center. Retrieved August 6, 2022, from https://carnegie-mec.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48502

Chinn, P. L., & Falk-Rafael, A. (2018). Critical caring as a requisite for peace leadership. In Amaladas, S., & Byrne, S (Eds), *Peace leadership: The quest for connectedness* (1st ed., pp. 195–211). essay, Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Peace-Leadership-The-Quest-for-Connectedness/Amaladas-Byrne/p/book/9780367594800

Cleven, E., & Saul, J. A. (2021). Realizing the promise of dialogue: Transformative dialogue in divided communities. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, *38*(3), 111–125. https://doi.org/10.1002/crq.21296

Cook-Huffman, C. (2020). Identity matters: Social identity and social change. In S. Byrne, T. Matyók, I. M. Scott, & J. Senehi (Eds), *Routledge companion to peace and conflict studies* (pp. 269-279), New York, Taylor and France Group

Cook-Huffman, C., & Snyder, A. (2018). Women, leadership, and building peace. In Amaladas, S., & Byrne, S (Eds), *Peace leadership: The quest for connectedness* (1st ed., pp. 30–45). essay, Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Peace-Leadership-The-Quest-for-Connectedness/Amaladas-Byrne/p/book/9780367594800

Curhan, J. R., Elfenbein, H. A., & Xu, H. (2006). What do people value when they negotiate? mapping the domain of subjective value in negotiation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *91*(3), 493–512. https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjJmu3Tsa_5AhX4k4kEHcv9BFUQFnoECAYQAQ&url=http%3A%2F%2Fapps.olin.wustl.edu%2Ffaculty%2Felfenbeinh%2Fapa-svi-final.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2ZZ3Ndu_0mKOgAdmQ5RQMM

Dahlberg, H., & Dahlberg, K. (2019). The question of meaning—a momentous issue for qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, *14*(1), 1598723. https://doi.org/10.1080/17482631.2019.1598723

Darwish, M. (2021). *أكراد سوريا.. معركة الهوية والدولة من الاستقلال إلى الثورة [The Kurds of Syria.. The battle of identity and the state from independence to revolution]*. نون بوست. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.noonpost.com/content/42544

Daub, A. (2021). *عن ضرورة العلمانية في سورية [On the necessity of secularism in Syria]*. العربي الجديد. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.alaraby.co.uk/opinion/%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%B6%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9

Dinan, B. N. (2018). Conscious peace leadership: Examining the leadership of Mandela and Sri Aurobindo. In Amaladas, S., & Byrne, S (Eds), *Peace leadership: The quest for connectedness* (1st ed., pp. 107–121). essay, Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Peace-Leadership-The-Quest-for-Connectedness/Amaladas-Byrne/p/book/9780367594800

Dugan, M. A. (1996). A nested theory of conflict. Dugan_Maire_Nested-Model-Original.pdf. Retrieved August 13, 2022, from https://emu.edu/cjp/docs/Dugan_Maire_Nested-Model-Original.pdf

Dunaetz, D. (2010). Interpersonal conflict goals: A literature review. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3540592

Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *62*(1), 107–115. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x

Enab Baladi. (2017). *الحركة الحزبية الكردية في سوريا [The Kurdish party movement in Syria]*. عنب بلدي. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/145121

Fanack.com. (2021). *Bashar al-Assad (since 2000)*. Fanack.com. Retrieved August 3, 2022, from https://fanack.com/syria/history-of-syria/bashar-al-assad-since-2000/

Ferzat, A. (n.d.). Ali Ferzat (علي فرزات). Facebook. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.facebook.com/ali.frzat

Fisher, R. J. (2020). Interactive conflict resolution, identity, and culture. In S. Byrne, T. Matyók, I. M. Scott, & J. Senehi (Eds), *Routledge companion to peace and conflict studies* (pp. 259-268), New York, Taylor and France Group

Fisher, R., Ury, W., & Patton, B. (1991). *Getting to yes: Negotiating an agreement without giving in* (2nd ed.). Penguin Books. Retrieved from https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiE2JnEt6_5AhUuk4kEHYhTBDUQFnoECAYQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.academia.edu%2F5919054%2FGetting_to_YES_Negotiating_an_agreement_without_giving_in&usg=AOvVaw02lVJ6JUbmdNxZs4tp_Vpq

Galtung, J. (1964) An Editorial Source: Journal of Peace Research, 1964, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1964), pp. 1-4 *Published by: Sage Publications, Ltd.* Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/422802

Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, *6*(3), 167–191. https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301

Galtung, J. (1990). Cultural violence. Journal of Peace Research, 27(3), 291–305. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343390027003005

Ghadban, M. M. (2005). *لا .. ليست العلمانية حاجة لازمة للديمقراطية السورية [No, secularism is a necessity for Syrian democracy]*. .. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.asharqalarabi.org.uk/mushrakat/b-mushacat-251.htm

Ghalioun, B. (2007). *ردا على وائل السواح : من أجل علمانية إنسانية [In response to Wael Al-Sawah: For humane secularism]*. زمان الوصل. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/1456

Ghalioun, B. (2020). *عطب الذات [Self-injury]*. The Arab Network for Research and Publishing

Ghalioun, B. (2022). *الهوية الوطنية بين العنف وعبادة الشخصية [On the Syrian national crisis. National identity between violence and worshipping dictators]* صفحات سورية. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.alsafahat.net/2022/07/02/%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%87%d9%88%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%88%d8%b7%d9%86%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%a8%d9%8a%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b9%d9%86%d9%81-%d9%88%d8%b9%d8%a8%d8%a7%d8%af%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b4%d8%ae%d8%b5/

Ghalioun, B. (2022). *عن أزمة الوطنية السورية .. [On the Syrian national crisis]*. العربي الجديد. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.alaraby.co.uk/opinion/%D8%B9%D9%86-

%D8%A3%D8%B2%D9%85%D8%A9-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9

Graneheim, U. H., Lindgren, B.-M., & Lundman, B. (2017). Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper. *Nurse Education Today*, *56*, 29–34. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2017.06.002

Greer, L. L., Jehn, K. A., & Mannix, E. A. (2008). Conflict transformation. *Small Group Research*, *39*(3), 278–302. https://doi.org/10.1177/1046496408317793

Gudykunst, W. B., Matsumoto, Y., Ting-Toomey, S., Nishida, T., Kim, K., & Heyman, S. (1996). The influence of cultural individualism-collectivism, self-construals, and individual values on communication styles across cultures. Human Communication Research, 22(4), 510–543. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1996.tb00377.x

Hasan, M. (2021). *الحركات السياسية والمدنية الكُردية في سوريا وإشكالية التمثيل [Kurdish political and civil movements in Syria and the problem of representation]*. Syrian constitution. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://syrianconstitution.org/project/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%AA-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A9-
%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D9%8F%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-
%D9%81/?lang=ar

Hocker, J. L., & Wilmot, W. W. (2017). Interpersonal conflict. *McGraw-Hill Education*.

Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2(1), 1–26. https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014

Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, *15*(9), 1277–1288. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687

Hyma, R. & Sen, L. (2022): Inquiry as practice: building relationships through listening in participatory action peace research, Peace Review, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2022.2092396

Ilunga, Y. Y. (2020). A new era in global security: When peace means global complex operations. In S. Byrne, T. Matyók, I. M. Scott, & J. Senehi (Eds), *Routledge companion to peace and conflict studies* (pp. 281-290), New York, Taylor and France Group

Issa, A. M. A. (2021). *في المسألة الكردية السورية [On the Syrian Kurdish Issue]*. الأخبار. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://al-akhbar.com/Opinion/309901

Jakobsson, P. (2019). Mission and development: old stories or new possibilities. In Robert. O, Tore. Samuelsson, *For better for worse: The role of religion in development cooperation* (pp. 21–36). essay, Swedish Mission Council.

Jehn, K. A. (1995). A multimethod examination of the benefits and detriments of Intragroup conflict. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *40*(2), 256. https://doi.org/10.2307/2393638

Jehn, K. A. (1997). A qualitative analysis of conflict types and dimensions in organizational groups. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *42*(3), 530. https://doi.org/10.2307/2393737

Jeong, H. W. (2020). Conflict transformation. In S. Byrne, T. Matyók, I. M. Scott, & J. Senehi (Eds), *Routledge companion to peace and conflict studies* (pp. 25-34), New York, Taylor and France Group

Kaakarli, S. (2022). *الهوية الوطنية السورية وفرصة إعادة إحيائها [The Syrian national identity and the opportunity to revive it]*. أورينت نت. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://orient-news.net/ar/news_show/193863

Kamel, A. (n.d.). Ahmad Kamel (أحمد كامل). Facebook. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.facebook.com/Ahmadkamel0

Karam, A. (2019). The UN and faith-based organizations – Agenda 2030 and beyond. In Robert. O, Tore. Samuelsson, *For better for worse: The role of religion in development cooperation* (pp. 55–71). essay, Swedish Mission Council.

Kibiswa, N. (2019). Directed qualitative content analysis (dqlca): A tool for Conflict Analysis. *The Qualitative Report*. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2019.3778

Kirk, P., & Shutte, A. M. (2004). Community leadership development. *Community Development Journal*, *39*(3), 234–251. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsh019

Kroeker, W. (2020). The peacebuilding spaces of local actors. In S. Byrne, T. Matyók, I. M. Scott, & J. Senehi (Eds), *Routledge companion to peace and conflict studies* (pp. 57-67), New York, Taylor and France Group

Kurd Press (2022). Kurdish autonomy in northeast Syria; between Assad and Erdogan. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://kurdpress.com/en/news/2098/Kurdish-autonomy-in-northeast-Syria;-between-Assad-and-Erdogan/

Lamoureux, K. (2018). Peace leadership and the language of reconciliation. In *Peace leadership: The quest for connectedness* (1st ed., pp. 157–176). essay, Routledge.

Lazikani, M. (n.d.). Muhydin Lazikani. Facebook. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.facebook.com/muhydin.lazikani

Lederach, J. P. (1995). *Preparing for peace: Conflict transformation across cultures*. Syracuse University Press.

Lederach, J. P. (1997). *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies.* United States Institute of Peace Press.

Lederach, J. P. (2014). The little book of conflict transformation. *Good Books.* https://professorbellreadings.files.wordpress.com/2017/10/the-little-books-of-justice-peacebuilding-john-lederach-the-little-book-of-conflict-transformation-good-books-2014-1.pdf

Lindgren, B.-M., Lundman, B., & Graneheim, U. H. (2020). Abstraction and interpretation during the qualitative content analysis process. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 108*, 103632. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2020.103632

Mattenti, S. (n.d.). سمير متيني الاعلامي. Facebook. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.facebook.com/SamirMatiniOfficial

Matyók, T. G. (2018). Military peace leadership Space and design for connectedness. In Amaladas, S., & Byrne, S (Eds), *Peace leadership: The quest for connectedness* (1st ed., pp. 177–194). essay, Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Peace-Leadership-The-Quest-for-Connectedness/Amaladas-Byrne/p/book/9780367594800

McMaster, J., & Higgins, C. (2020). Transforming ethnic conflict: Building peace and diversity management in divided societies. In S. Byrne, T. Matyók, I. M. Scott, & J. Senehi (Eds), *Routledge companion to peace and conflict studies* (pp. 383-392), New York, Taylor and France Group

McNutt, M. S. (2018). Values-based, servant, and peace leadership as exemplified by Jane Addams. In Amaladas, S., & Byrne, S (Eds), *Peace leadership: The quest for connectedness* (1st ed., pp. 92–106). essay, Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Peace-Leadership-The-Quest-for-Connectedness/Amaladas-Byrne/p/book/9780367594800

Mende, J. (2022). Extended qualitative content analysis: Researching the United Nations and other international institutions. *Qualitative Research Journal*. https://doi.org/10.1108/qrj-11-2021-0127

Mikkelsen, E. N., & Clegg, S. (2018). Unpacking the meaning of conflict in Organizational Conflict Research. *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research*, *11*(3), 185–203. https://doi.org/10.1111/ncmr.12127

Miller, W. M. I. (2016). Toward a scholarship of peace leadership. *International Journal of Public Leadership*, *12*(3), 216–226. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijpl-04-2016-0013

Miller, W. M. I., & Wundah, M. (2018). The integral perspective of peace leadership: the life and work of Christiana Thorpe of Sierra Leone. In Amaladas, S., & Byrne, S (Eds), *Peace leadership: The quest for connectedness* (1st ed., pp. 62–74). essay, Routledge

Morgan, D. L. (1993). Qualitative content analysis: A guide to paths not taken. *Qualitative Health Research*, *3*(1), 112–121. https://doi.org/10.1177/104973239300300107

Naaom, S. (2015). *أكراد سوريا يرفضون عودة الدولة المركزية [Syria's Kurds reject the return of the central state]*. الأيام السورية. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://ayyamsyria.net/%d8%a3%d9%83%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%af-%d8%b3%d9%88%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%a7-%d9%8a%d8%b1%d9%81%d8%b6%d9%88%d9%86-%d8%b9%d9%88%d8%af%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%af%d9%88%d9%84%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%b1%d9%83%d8%b2/

Narayan S. (1968). An autobiography or the story of my experiments with truth, *India, Navajivan Publishing House Ahmedabad 380 014*. https://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/An-Autobiography.pdf

Ohbuchi, K.-I., & Tedeschi, J. T. (1997). Multiple goals and tactical behaviors in Social Conflicts1. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *27*(24), 2177–2199. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1997.tb01647.x

Oluo, I. (2019). So, you want to talk about race? *Basic Books*. Kindle Edition

Ooi, S. M., & Levy, S. M. E. (2018). Leadership for emancipatory peace Lessons from the South Korean student movement. In Amaladas, S., & Byrne, S (Eds), *Peace leadership: The quest for connectedness* (1st ed., pp. 141–156). essay, Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Peace-Leadership-The-Quest-for-Connectedness/Amaladas-Byrne/p/book/9780367594800

Paletz, S. B., Schunn, C. D., & Kim, K. H. (2011). Intragroup conflict under the microscope: Micro-Conflicts in naturalistic team discussions. *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research*, *4*(4), 314–351. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-4716.2011.00085.x

Pigg, K. E. (1999). Community Leadership and Community Theory: A practical synthesis. *Community Development Society. Journal*, *30*(2), 196–212. https://doi.org/10.1080/15575339909489721

Pinkley, R. L. (1990). Dimensions of conflict frame: Disputant interpretations of conflict. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *75*(2), 001–0010. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.75.2.117

Pondy, L. R. (1967). Organizational conflict: Concepts and Models. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *12*(2), 296. https://doi.org/10.2307/2391553

Pranis, K. Stuart, B., & Wedge, M (2003). Peacemaking Circles: From Crime to Community. *Living Justice Press.* Kindle Edition. Retrieved from amazon

Provence, M. (2005). The great Syrian revolt and the rise of Arab nationalism. *University of Texas Press.*

Radpey, L. (2016). Kurdish regional self-rule administration in Syria: A new model of statehood and its status in international law compared to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq. *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, *17*(3), 468–488. https://doi.org/10.1017/s1468109916000190

Reimer, L. E., Schmitz, C. L., Janke, E. M., Askerov, A., Strahl, B. T., & Matyók, T. G (2015). Transformative Change (Peace and Conflict Studies). *Lexington Books. Kindle Edition*. Retrieved from Amazon

Ricke-Kiely, T. (2016). New Developments in peace leadership. *International Journal of Public Leadership*, *12*(3), 197–204. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijpl-06-2016-0025

Rivera, S. (2020). *Emma Degraffenreid and the intersectionality metaphor*. Medium. Retrieved June 7, 2022, from https://ferauoft.medium.com/emma-degraffenreid-and-the-intersectionality-metaphor-39d1abb77fec

Rothman, J. (2020). Conflict intervention and reflexive evaluation. In S. Byrne, T. Matyók, I. M. Scott, & J. Senehi (Eds), *Routledge companion to peace and conflict studies* (pp. 245-256), New York, Taylor and France Group

Ryan, S. (2020). Conflict metanarratives and peacebuilding. In S. Byrne, T. Matyók, I. M. Scott, & J. Senehi (Eds), *Routledge companion to peace and conflict studies* (pp. 373-382), New York, Taylor and France Group

Saad, A. (2016). *القوى والفصائل الكردية في سوريا [Kurdish forces and groups in Syria]*. Jusoor. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from https://jusoor.co/content_images/users/1/contents/300.pdf

Samuelsson, T., & Robert. T. (2019). Religion as a resource in development cooperation. In Robert. O, Tore. Samuelsson, *For better for worse: The role of religion in development cooperation* (pp. 11–20). essay, Swedish Mission Council.

Sawah, W. (2007). *دراسات: بحث في العلمانية والعلمانية السورية [Research on secularism and Syrian secularism]*. رابطة العلمانيين السوريين. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://ssyriana.blogspot.com/2016/11/blog-post_8.html

Sawah, W. (2019). *حال العلمانية في سوريا بعد تسع سنوات من الدمار [The state of secularism in Syria after nine years of destruction]*. Jadaliyya. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/40257

Schellhammer, E. (2018). Authentic peace leadership. In Amaladas, S., & Byrne, S (Eds), *Peace leadership: The quest for connectedness* (1st ed., pp. 75–91). essay, Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Peace-Leadership-The-Quest-for-Connectedness/Amaladas-Byrne/p/book/9780367594800

Schreier, M., Janssen, M., Stamann, C., Whittal, A., & Dahl, T. (2020). An introduction to content analysis on qualitative data. *Qualitative Content Analysis: Disciplinary Perspectives and Relationships between Methods—Introduction to the FQS Special Issue "Qualitative Content Analysis II", 21*. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529727944

Senehi, J. (2020). Theory-building in peace and conflict studies: The storytelling methodology. In S. Byrne, T. Matyók, I. M. Scott, & J. Senehi (Eds), *Routledge companion to peace and conflict studies* (pp. 45-56), New York, Taylor and France Group

Sharafeddine, M. (n.d.). Maher Sharafeddine. Facebook. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.facebook.com/mahersharafeddin

Shields, L., & Twycross, A. (2008). Content analysis. *Paediatric Nursing, 20*(6), 38. https://uwinnipeg.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.uwinnipeg.idm.oclc.org/scholarly-journals/content-analysis/docview/218916709/se-2?accountid=15067

Sieda, A. (2020). *في المسألة الكردية السورية [On the Syrian Kurdish Matter]*. العربي الجديد. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from https://www.alaraby.co.uk/culture/%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%B7-%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A7-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A3%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9

Silvestri, S., Freedman, L., & Mayall, J. (2015). *The role of religion in conflict and peacebuilding*. British Academy.

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2012). What is culture? A compilation of quotations. *GlobalPAD Core Concepts*. Copyright Statement. Retrieved November 22, 2021, from https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/globalpad-rip/openhouse/interculturalskills/global_pad_-what_is_culture.pdf

Stephens, S. (2022). Qualitative content analysis: A framework for the substantive review of Hospital Incident Reports. *Journal of Healthcare Risk Management, 41*(4), 17–26. https://doi.org/10.1002/jhrm.21498

Van Dam, N. (2006). *الصراع على السلطة في سوريا* [The Struggle for Power in Syria]. Noor Book. https://www.noor-book.com/%D9%83%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%B7%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7-pdf.

Van Dam, N. (2017). Destroying a nation: The Civil War in Syria *(1st ed.). I. B. Tauris*. https://www.amazon.ca/dp/B07PBR12D2/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1

Van Ness, D. W., & Strong, K. H. (1997). Restoring justice: An introduction to restorative justice *(Fourth. ed). Routledge.* Retrieved from https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjS0b2BvK_5AhW9K0QIHbo5AF0QFnoECAYQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsilo.pub%2Frestoring-justice-an-introduction-to-restorative-justice-fourth-edition.html&usg=AOvVaw2JshzOAUn1iIHpl7fW5TLP

Visoka, G. (2020). Everyday peace capture: Nationalism and the dynamics of peace after violent conflict. *Nations and Nationalism*, *26*(2), 431–446. https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12591

Washington, M., Boal, K. B., & Davis, J. N. (2008). Institutional leadership: Past, present, and future. *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, 721–736.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kimberly-Boal/publication/237345189_Institutional_Leadership_past_present_and_future/links/02e7e53b178b0ee98a000000/Institutional-Leadership-past-present-and-future.pdf

Žagar, M. (2020). Engaging the root causes of past violence in Ireland: Ethical education for liberation. In S. Byrne, T. Matyók, I. M. Scott, & J. Senehi (Eds), *Routledge companion to peace and conflict studies* (pp. 414-424), New York, Taylor and France Group

Zehr, H. (2015). *Changing lenses: Restorative Justice for our times.* Herald Press.

Zeno, B. (2018). إعادة بناء الهوية الوطنية السورية في مواجهة الطائفية [Rebuilding the Syrian national identity in the face of sectarianism]. *United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (لجنة الأمم المتحدة الاقتصادية والاجتماعية لغرب آسيا)*, 90. https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjY2YCbmsb5AhUWoWoFHfT-BjsQFnoECAIQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fnafsprogramme.info%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2F2019-07%2FIdentity%2520in%2520Syria-En.pdf&usg=AOvVaw23Dhzl2F0X0z2B6v4Aw38r

Ziadeh, R. (2009). The political rights of Kurds in Syria. *The Kurds in Syria Fueling Separatist Movements in the Region*. https://www.usip.org/publications/2009/04/kurds-syria-fueling-separatist-movements-region