

**Lobbying for North and Eastern Syria: The PYD-PKK's
Strategic Framing of the Syrian Civil War in the US and
the UK**

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Abstract

Several studies on ethnic lobbying within the US/UK seek to explain what makes an ethnic lobbying campaign successful (Herner-Kovács, 2013; Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002) and understand reasons/strategies for the mobilisation of ethnic lobbies (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011). They approach framing either as a facilitator in a successful lobbying campaign process or a strategy to explain the mobilisation of ethnic lobbies, however they tend to ignore the role of framing itself as a dynamic process, and particularly the role of frames. This thesis develops a new perspective regarding the role of frames and framing in ethnic lobbying through a dynamic framing process, which includes the creation and presentation of frames/counter-frames (Kaufman et al., 2013) by considering the developments and the interaction between frames and counter-frames within the concentrated period. The thesis conceptualises three key political opportunities, the outbreak of the 2011 Syrian civil war, the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 with the start of Aleppo battle, and the rise of ISIS in 2014 within the ongoing process of Aleppo battle for the Syrian Kurds' lobbying efforts through framing. Through content analysis and interviews, it analyses the framing efforts of the Kurdish PYD, and as a significant component of the dynamic framing process, the counter-framing efforts of the Turkish government against the PYD framing in the US/UK through the Syrian civil war from March 2011 to 20th January 2017. The thesis argues that framing success is explained through the responsiveness of the targeted countries towards frames. Findings demonstrate that the US/UK's responsiveness may not be merely addressed through the characteristics of frames, which can play an important role in framing success. These countries' policy stances and policy objectives in Syria, which can also be understood through the dynamic framing process, must be considered while explaining these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames. The US/UK's policy stances and policy objectives in Syria are also essential factors to understand what extent the Turkish counter-frames managed to challenge these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames.

Key Words: Ethnic Lobbying, Framing, Dynamic Framing Process, Syrian Civil War, PYD, PKK, Kurdish Question, Turkish Government, the US, the UK

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List of Abbreviations

AA: Anatolian Agency [Anadolu Ajansi]

AANES: Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria

AKP: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi [Justice and Development Party]

APPG: All-Party Parliamentary Group

ANF: Agency News of Firat [Ajansa Nuceyan a Firate]

ARGK: People's Liberation Army of Kurdistan

AZDW: The Celadet Bedirxan Academy for Kurdish Language, History, and Literature - [Akademiya Ziman, Derik u Wejeya Kurdiya Celadet Bedirxan]

BDP: The Peace and Democracy Party [Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi]

CCC: Central Coordinating Committee

CENTCOM: The United States Central Command

DDKO: The Eastern Revolutionary Cultural Hearths

DEP: Democracy Party [Demokrasi Partisi]

DHKP-C: The Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front

DTP: The Democratic Society Party [Demokratik Toplum Partisi]

ERNK: National Liberal Front of the Kurdistan [Eniya Rizgariya Netewa Kurdistan]

EU: European Union

FCO: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office

FSA: Free Syrian Army

HADEP: The People's Democracy Party [Halkın Demokrasi Partisi]

HC: House of Commons

HDP: The People's Democracy Party [Halkların Demokratik Partisi]

HEP: The People's Labour Party [Halkın Emek Partisi]

HHRF: The Hungarian Human Rights Foundation

HL: House of Lords

HPG: People's Defence Forces [Hezen Parastina Gel]

HRK: Force of Eastern Kurdistan [Hezi Rojhelati Kurdistan]

ISIS/Daesh: Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham

KADEK: Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress [Kongreya Azadiya u Demokrasiya Kurdistan]

KCK: Kurdistan Communities Union [Koma Civaken Kurdistan]

KDPS: The Kurdistan Democratic Party in Syria

KJB: The Community of Assertive Women [Koma Jinen Bilind]

KNC: Kurdish National Council

Kongra-Gel: The People's Congress of Kurdistan

KNK: National Congress of Kurdistan [Kongra Netewiya Kurdistan]

KRG: Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq

MFN: Most Favoured Nation Status

MP: Member of Parliament

MSD: The Syrian Democratic Council [Meclisa Suriye Demokratik]

NATO: The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

OSCE: Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PAJK: Party of Free Women in Kurdistan [Partiya Azadiya Jin a Kurdistan]

PCWK: Peoples Council of Western Kurdistan

PÇDK: Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party [Partiya Çareseriya Demokratik a Kurdistan]

PJA: The Women's Party

PJAK: Free Life Party of Kurdistan [Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistan]

PKK: Kurdistan Workers' Party [Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan]

PLC: People's Local Committees

PUK: Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

PYD: Democratic Union Party [Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat]

Rojava: Western Kurdistan

YDK: People's Democratic Union in Kurdistan [Yekitiya Demokratik a Gele Kurdistan]

YJA–STAR: The Free Women's Units

YPG: People's Protection Units [Yekineyen Parastina Gel]

YPJ: Women's Protection Units [Yekineyen Parastina Jin]

SCP: Syrian Communist Party

SDF: Syrian Democratic Forces

SNHR: The Syrian Network for Human Rights

SOC: The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces

TEV-DEM: The Western Kurdistan Democratic Society Movement [Tevgera Civaka Demokratik a Rojava]

TIP: The Turkish Workers' Party [Turkiye İşçi Partisi]

UK: United Kingdom

UN: United Nations

US: United States

WWI: World War I

WWII: World War II

Introduction Chapter

Introduction

The Syrian Kurds are nearly 10 per cent of the entire Syria's population and mostly live in the northern Syria along the Turkish border, in the Kurd Dagh/Mountain or Afrin, Kobane (Ain al-Arab) and Jazira regions (Gunter, 2014). They sought autonomy, especially for the Jazira region since the 1920s (Allsopp, 2015). After the withdrawal of the French administration from Syria in 1946, particularly with the impact of Arab nationalism in Syria (Allsopp and Wilgenburg, 2019), Kurds were perceived as a threat to the Arabisation process of Syria (Allsopp, 2015; Tejel, 2009). This perception continued during the Baath regimes since the 1960s, mainly following the 1962 Al-Hasakah census through which the Syrian Kurds' identity was denied and most of them lost their citizenship and basic rights (Allsopp, 2015; Tejel, 2009). From then onwards, Kurds had sought for basic rights such as recognition as Syrian citizens with their Kurdish identity, the possession of property, identity cards, passports and access to the same education like other Syrians (KurdWatch, 2010), in addition to political and cultural rights (Allsopp, 2015). Despite these happenings, the Kurdish question in Syria had not drawn international attention until the 2011 Syrian civil war (Gunter, 2014).

Following the outbreak of the 2011 civil war, however, the Syrian Kurds managed to establish a de facto autonomous governance in northern Syria under the control of the Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekitiya Demockrat, PYD), the Syrian affiliate of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan, PKK) (Gunter, 2014). Then, Kurds began not only seeking recognition for basic rights, citizenship and autonomy but also recognition for their model of governance in north and eastern Syria (Paasche and Gunter, 2016; Federici, 2015). The outbreak of the 2011 Syrian civil war was perceived as a historical opportunity by the PYD leadership (Muslim quoted in KurdWatch, 2011) and experts focusing on the Syrian Kurds (Allsopp, 2015; 2013; Federici, 2015; Gunter, 2014), especially an opportunity, which could change the Kurdish politics and the map of the Middle East on behalf of Kurds (Allsopp, 2013). There are also other opportunities during the civil war. Accordingly, the thesis conceptualises three key and favourable political opportunities, the outbreak of the 2011 Syrian civil war, the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 with the start of Aleppo battle and the rise of ISIS in 2014 within the ongoing process of the Aleppo battle in the context of Benford and Snow's (2000; 1992) social movement framing approach to analyse

the PYD's external engagement in the US and the UK. Mainly, the thesis examines the lobbying efforts of the PYD for its model of governance in the US/UK outside of these countries from March 2011 to 20th January 2017 through a dynamic framing process. As will be explained in the further section, the thesis also investigates the counter-lobbying efforts of the Turkish government against the PYD lobbying in the US/UK as part of the dynamic framing process.

Research Question and Objective

In this thesis, the dynamic framing process mainly refers to the creation and presentation process of frames and counter-frames (Kaufman et al., 2013) for lobbying and counter-lobbying the US/UK. Therefore, the dynamism of the framing process can be explained in two ways. The first one is the dynamic impact of the happenings in Syria on the creation and presentation process of the PYD frames and Turkish counter-frames. Secondly, the dynamism comes through the interaction between the PYD frames and Turkish government counter-frames for the purposes of lobbying and counter-lobbying the US/UK. Accordingly, the framing efforts of the PYD is analysed through Benford and Snow's (2000; 1992) social movement framing approach and the counter-framing efforts of the Turkish government against the PYD framing is conceptualised in the context of Benford and Snow's (2000) counter-framing approach, and Kaufman et al (2013) and Gray's (2003) negative characterisation framing approaches for counter-lobbying against the PYD lobbying in the US/UK. Additionally, the thesis attempts to explain the US/UK's potential reaction towards the PYD framing through the concept of responsiveness (Koinova, 2011), which is reconceptualised through Snow and Corrigan-Brown (2005) and Benford and Snow's (2000) approaches to address the targeted audiences' (the US/UK) responsiveness towards frames or framing. In so doing, it also tries to understand the potential challenges of the Turkish counter-framing to the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD framing.

In general, experts on ethnic lobbying in the US/UK seek to explain what makes an ethnic lobbying campaign successful (Herner-Kovács, 2013; Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002) and understand reasons and strategies for ethnic lobbies' mobilisation (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011). While explaining successful ethnic lobbying campaigns, experts discuss using the voting as a power (Oswiecimski, 2013; Smith, 2000; Garrett, 1978), financial support to election campaigns (Oswiecimski, 2013; Smith, 2000), mobilising ethnic groups to interact

with policymakers, developing cooperation between lobbies having similar interests (McCormick, 2012; Ambrosio, 2002c; Smith, 2000), face-to-face meetings with policymakers (Oswiecimski, 2013), observing the policymaking process (Ambrosio, 2002a; 2002b; Dietrich, 1999) and providing information/policy analysis to policymakers, and framing (Oswiecimski, 2013; McCormick, 2012; Ambrosio, 2002a; 2002b) as strategies increasing the possibility of lobbying success. Accordingly, experts approach framing as one of the strategies facilitating a successful lobbying campaign process. Similarly, studies on ethnic lobbies' mobilisation for the sovereignty of their homelands in the US/UK approach framing as a moderate method, which is used by the lobbying elites during the mobilisation period towards their own communities in these countries or the host countries (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011). All these studies indicate that the investigation of successful lobbying process or the mobilisation process of ethnic lobbies takes precedence over the framing process since experts try to explain what makes an ethnic lobbying campaign successful or what accounts for the moderate behaviour of the conflict-generated ethnic lobbies during the mobilisation process. However, these approaches tend to ignore the role of framing itself as a process, and especially the role of frames in ethnic lobbying.

This thesis, therefore, will develop a new perspective regarding the role of frames and framing in ethnic lobbying by conceptualising the utilisation of political opportunities of the Syrian civil war by the Syrian Kurds in the context of Benford and Snow's (2000: 1992) social movement framing approach. Accordingly, it will analyse the framing efforts of the PYD and the counter-framing efforts of the Turkish government against the PYD framing in the US/UK through the Syrian civil war from March 2011 to 20th January 2017 as a dynamic framing process. In so doing, the thesis will approach framing not only as a lobbying strategy but also a dynamic process. Such an analysis is significant since it provides an understanding regarding the developments in the concentrated period and their impact on characteristics of frames/counter-frames, which are related to their capacity to influence the targeted audiences/countries (Ketelaars, 2016; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005) as well as the interaction between frames and counter-frames.

Framing and lobbying are highly interrelated terms. As discussed by Princen (2011), lobbyists apply framing to establish their agenda on their specific issues or to make these issues visible

in a decision-making process. Framing, therefore, can be accepted as a convincing issue-description strategy of lobbying organisations or individual lobbyists, and lobbyists can be perceived as “frame producers” to persuade decision-makers (Baumgartner, 2007). The extant literature on the strategies for successful ethnic lobbying in the US mainly concentrate on the established lobbies (McCormick, 2012) such as the pro-Israeli (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007) and Armenian (Zarifian, 2018; Ambrosio, 2002b) lobbies and the growing lobbies (McCormick, 2012, Ambrosio, 2002a) like the Cuban-Americans (Vanderbush, 2009; Haney and Vanderbush, 1999), Indian-Americans (Kirk, 2008), Turkish (Zarifian, 2018; Ambrosio, 2002c), African Americans (Shain, 1999), Arab (Koinova, 2011) or Palestinian (Marrar, 2009) and the Eastern European lobbies (Herner-Kovács, 2013; Koinova, 2013; 2011). However, all these lobbies have already had access to the policymaking community and process of the US (Haney and Vanderbush, 1999) and have an “institutional presence” in Washington D.C. (Ambrosio, 2002b). The existing debates in the ethnic lobbying literature in the US have not focused on the efforts of relatively new lobbies, such as the Kurdish ones. These lobbies, especially the PYD one, seeks to gain access to the policymaking community and process of the US through their limited resources and strategies such as framing.

The PYD is a political organisation, which had no access to the policymaking community and process of the US, at least until the end of Kobane siege in 2015. Lobbying efforts of the PYD representatives outside the US through framing the Syrian civil war are significant since the PYD aimed at reaching out not only the US but also the UK policymaking communities and selling its model of governance as a blueprint for Syria and the entire Middle East. It is also significant to examine the changes in the Kurdish politics of Syria by analysing the Syrian civil war during the process from 2011 to 2017 through framing compared to the pre-war conditions. Before the Syrian civil war, Kurds have been seeking basic rights, recognition as Syrian citizens with their Kurdish identity, the possession of property, identity cards and passports, and access to the same education as other Syrians (KurdWatch, 2010). The Kurdish parties were declared as illegal and had to act underground parties (Allsopp, 2015). Following the civil war, Kurds managed to establish a de facto autonomous administration in northern Syria under the dominance of the PYD (Gunter, 2014; Allsopp, 2013). From then onwards, the PYD began lobbying for the legitimisation of its model of governance (Paasche and Gunter, 2016; Federici, 2015) in addition to seeking recognition for basic rights and citizenship in Syria. By considering these changes and moving beyond the question of what makes ethnic lobbying

successful, this research examines framing as a process by concentrating on framing success through the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD framing. Therefore, the main research questions are: *How the PYD framed its model of governance through the Syrian civil war for lobbying the US/UK; and how successful their framing efforts at influencing the US/UK foreign policy elites and the wider media?*

As underlined above, the thesis analyses the dynamism of the framing process through the counter-framing efforts of the Turkish government, the creation and presentation of Turkish counter-frames and their interaction with the PYD frames as counter-lobbying. Mainly, it attempts to understand the potential challenges of the Turkish government counter-framing to the US/UK in terms of these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD framing. The Turkish lobby in the US is a growing one (McCormick, 2012). Either Turkish lobbies or Turkish governments counter-lobbied for the country's interests or against the perceived threats to their country. The main example of this was the Turkish counter-lobbying against the Armenian lobbies' efforts for the recognition of the alleged genocide by the US authorities. The Turkish counter-lobbying efforts happened either allying with other powerful lobbies such as the Pro-Israeli ones (Ambrosio, 2002c) or through the current Turkish government lobbying (Zarifian, 2018). Regardless of their political ideologies, the Turkish governments have always attempted to prevent the recognition of the alleged Armenian genocide by the US. Particularly, the current AKP government has increased the counter-lobbying efforts against the Armenian lobbies by applying variety of strategies such as diplomatic pressure on the US government and Congress through diplomatic visits, hiring lobbying firms or investing in public relations to influence the media and academia (Zarifian, 2018). It indicates that the Turkish governments countered the perceived threats against their country or pursued its interests in the US. The PYD is a Syrian affiliate of the PKK, which has been at a war with the Turkish state to form an independent Kurdish state since 1984¹. The PKK is designated as a terrorist organisation by the US and the EU countries due to its war against Turkey (Paasche and Gunter, 2016). Despite the fact that there have been ceasefires between the Turkish state and the PKK from time to time, regardless of their ideology, the successive Turkish governments have considered the PKK as a terrorism

¹ Since 2005, the PKK has been arguing a stateless governance, Democratic Confederalism, which has become an ideological basis for the PYD's model of governance in northern Syria. After the outbreak of Syrian civil war, the PYD leadership began practising this model. The details of this model will be discussed in chapters 1 and 3, respectively, while explaining the PYD's ideological links with the PKK and its framing policies in the US and the UK.

and national security threat to the Turkish state (Eccarius-Kelly and Musa, 2018; Gunter, 2014; 2000; Barkey and Fuller, 1998). As the PKK's Syrian affiliate, the PYD also seeks legitimisation and recognition for its model of governance in northern Syria (Federici, 2015). Therefore, the Turkish AKP government's position towards the PYD has been shaped by its stance against the PKK (Eccarius-Kelly and Musa, 2018).

Since the establishment of the PYD's model of governance in northern Syria in July 2012 following the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces with the start of Aleppo battle (Kusilek, 2019), Turkish government officials had concerns regarding its status due to the PYD's ideological links with the PKK, the PKK's potential impact on the PYD and its model of governance in northern Syria (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2012a; 2012b). The PYD's rising popularity in the Western countries due to the YPG's fight against ISIS since the ISIS siege on Kobane (Federici, 2015) in the context of Aleppo Battle, the alliance between the YPG and the US to fight ISIS, then the YPG-led SDF and the US in Syria, which expanded the territorial gains of the YPG into the Arab majority areas (Kusilek, 2019) through capturing strategic towns such as Manbij and Al-Bab from ISIS (Muslim quoted in ANF, 2016b; Abdurrahman, 2016) and these developments' potential contributions to the PYD representatives' legitimisation efforts for their model of governance in the US and the European countries (Paasche and Gunter, 2016), can be explained as significant factors urging Turkish government officials to block the lobbying and legitimisation efforts of the PYD's model of governance by counter-lobbying against the PYD lobbying in the US/UK. Accordingly, the thesis examines the Turkish government counter-framing as a process against the PYD framing. Therefore, the first secondary question is: *How did the Turkish government counter the PYD framing and to what extent the Turkish government counter-framing challenged the responsiveness of the US/UK foreign policy elites and the wider media towards the PYD framing?*

As addressed above, the thesis mainly analyses framing as a process by focusing on framing success and searching for the responsiveness of the US/UK. Princen (2011) underlines that frames can play a central role in establishing an agenda for the political purpose of lobbyists since frames have capacities to gain attention through making an issue interesting or building credibility over a given issue to decision-makers. This point suggests that a focus on framing

success requires specific attention to the creation and presentation of frames and counter-frames during the dynamic process. This need considering the ongoing developments in the concentrated period (Desrosiers, 2012), their impact on the characteristics of frames and counter-frames (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005), and the interaction between frames and counter-frames. Such an analysis helps understand characteristics of frames and counter-frames, especially their capacity to influence targeted audiences (Ketelaars, 2016; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005), and the expectations of the targeted audiences in the concentrated period (Desrosiers, 2012). By considering the developments in the Syrian civil war from March 2011 to 20th January 2017, and their impact on the creation and presentation of frames and counter-frames for framing success, the second secondary question asks: *What frames the PYD deployed to influence the US/UK policymakers and the media as part of their framing? Similarly, what counter-frames the Turkish government deployed to challenge the responsiveness of the policymakers and the wider media of the US/UK towards the PYD frames and what explains the targeted audiences' responsiveness towards the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames?*

While investigating the potential influence of ethnic lobbies on the US foreign policy, Garrett (1978) draws attention to the attitudes of US government officials in the foreign policymaking community with an emphasis that these officials always prioritise the US national interests. They avoid being deviated from this purpose by the attempts of ethnic lobbies. The US governments can be responsive to the lobbying groups by assessing whether the aims and policies of these groups help or damage the US national interests or policy objectives (Ibid). Honey and Vanderbush (1999) have also indicated that the governments in the US tend to support ethnic lobbies if the policies provided by lobbies are favourable for the government or their national interests, which also plays a role in successful ethnic lobbying. The recent studies in the ethnic lobbying literature have supported Garrett (1978) and Haney and Vanderbush's (1999) explanations. Ethnic lobbies, which have strove to align their interests with those of the US, have achieved their goals like the pro-Israeli lobbies (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007) or, at least, have had some level of success in their relations with the US administrations as done by the Indian-Americans regarding a nuclear deal agreement (Kirk, 2008). Additionally, there is an example that the US government officials have worked with lobbying groups like the Iraqi-exiled community and the Cuban-Americans (Vanderbush, 2009) as the US government's aims against Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Fidel Castro in Cuba aligned with those communities'

aims in their homelands. Building on these points and adding the concept of policy stance (Koinova, 2014) to these debates, the overlapping and conflicting policy stances and policy objectives between the frame producers (the PYD-PKK and the Turkish government) and targeted countries (the US/UK governments) become more important to consider and understand their potential role in framing success. Therefore, the third secondary question is: *To what extent overlapping and conflicting policy stances and objectives between frame producers and targeted countries could affect the targeted countries' responsiveness towards frames?*

Country Cases

The US/UK were chosen as countries in which the PYD lobbying and Turkish government counter-lobbying targeted the policymakers and media from March 2011 to 20th January 2017. The main reasons for the choice of country cases can be explained as follows: First, there is an understanding that the political representatives of emerging states or state-like entities need the support of major states for “potential domestic and international sovereignty” (Koinova, 2014; p.1048). Accordingly, ethnic lobbies, which sought self-determination (Shain, 1994) or recognition for the sovereignty of their homelands (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011; Marrar, 2009) lobbied the US and the UK. The political systems as pluralist democracies with either centralist or federalist execution (Coxall, 2001) and their impact on ethnic groups' access to these systems (Grant, 2000) and characteristics of societies, especially in the US (Smith, 2000), were the main reasons for ethnic lobbies to be active in these countries. As a relatively new lobbying group, the PYD had no access to the policymaking communities and processes of the US and the UK before the Syrian civil war like other groups. Therefore, the efforts of Kurdish PYD lobbying to gain access to these countries and seek recognition for their de facto autonomous region and model of governance are significant.

Second, as leading countries to the world international order during WWI, WWII and the Cold War, respectively, the US/UK have developed relationship with the Kurds and mainly the Kurdish-populated countries in the Middle East. For instance, the UK's relationship with the Kurds traces back to the colonialism period in Mesopotamia (Home, 2006). As one of the leading European countries around the world, the attempts to include Mosul vilayet into the Mesopotamian mandate due to its oil-rich fields and wealthy territories and create an Armenian state in Anatolia urged the UK to involve in the Kurdish question following the collapse of the

Ottoman Empire (Kaymaz, 2011; Eskander, 2001; 2000). It was the period when new nation-states emerged across the world and in the territories of the Ottoman Empire. It was also the beginning of the Kurdish question in the Middle East in modern meaning. Then, since the Cold War, the US rose as a leading country around the world and took precedence over the UK and developed relationships mainly with the Kurdish-populated countries and from time to time with the Kurds in these countries (Gunter, 2014, Charountaki, 2011).

Third, following the leading role of the US, the US/UK have had parallel policy stances and objectives towards Kurds, especially towards the Iraqi Kurds, during the 1991 Operation Provide Comfort (Frelick, 1993) and the 2003 Iraq War. They were leading countries during the 2003 Iraq war. As leading countries, they developed close relationship with the Iraqi Kurds to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein (Gunter, 2014). Additionally, these countries played an essential role in the stabilisation process of Iraq after the 2003 Iraq War.

Fourth, similar to previous reason, the US/UK have had a direct political involvement in the UN Geneva peace negotiations for the political future of Syria. They were at the forefront of Western efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Syrian civil war and to bring the conflict to an end.

Fifth, following the rise of ISIS in 2014, these countries had been leading ones within the global coalition against ISIS. Therefore, their strategies in the fight against ISIS are quite important. In addition to their airstrikes on ISIS targets, these countries supported the Kurdish Peshmerga Forces in Iraq against ISIS (Paasche and Gunter, 2016). They also backed the People's Protection Units (YPG, Yekineyen Perestina Gel), the military wing of the PYD, (Thornton, 2015) and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) –led by the YPG- as ground forces or ground partners to fight ISIS in Syria. Therefore, it is significant to understand whether these countries' military relationships with the Syrian Kurds brought some political results or benefits to the Kurds and whether the Syrian Kurds were successful at transforming this military relationship into a political one.

Finally, the US/UK have long-term relationship with Turkey, which is the only Muslim member of NATO. Despite the fact that there have been ceasefires from time to time, Turkey has been at a war with the PKK and designated it as a terrorist organisation (Eccarius-Kelly and Musa, 2018; Gunter, 2014; 2000; Barkey and Fuller, 1998). As NATO allies of Turkey, the US and the UK also designated the PKK as a terrorist organisation due to its war against the Turkish state (Paasche and Gunter, 2016). These countries' responsiveness towards the framing efforts of the PYD, which is the Syrian affiliate of the PKK, is quite significant to examine. Such an examination will help understand the political stances and objectives of these countries in Syria and their impact on these countries' responsiveness to arguments of the PYD by comparing their political responses to the military ones via consideration of strategies in the fight against ISIS. Therefore, the US and the UK were chosen as the main country cases. Following the explanation of the reasons for the country cases, the next section reviews the related literature to address why it is significant to analyse framing as a dynamic process and what it will bring to the literature as a new perspective.

Sources for Successful Ethnic Lobbying and Framing as a Lobbying Strategy

This thesis analyses framing as a dynamic process in addition to be a lobbying strategy. Therefore, it focuses on the creation and presentation of frames by the PYD representatives as a dynamic process (Kaufman et al., 2013) in ethnic lobbying through the social movement framing approach (Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005). Likewise, it discusses the Turkish government counter-lobbying efforts against the PYD lobbying through a dynamic counter-framing process. The thesis, therefore, seeks to investigate framing success as the targeted countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames. In so doing, it concentrates on the characteristics of frames and counter-frames, their creation and presentation processes, their interaction and impact of the developments in the framing process during the Syrian civil war from March 2011 to 20th January 2017. This section reviews the existing literature on ethnic lobbying in the US/UK, particularly factors facilitating ethnic lobbying success; the lobbying strategies and the role of framing amongst them to address the role of framing in ethnic lobbying. The section also engages in the debates regarding the efforts of ethnic lobbies seeking sovereignty or self-determination for their homelands in the US/UK by considering the role of framing in their campaigns. Such a review will explain the importance of approaching framing as a dynamic process in lobbying. Then, it reviews the current literature on the Syrian Kurds

or Kurdish politics of Syria and the Turkish government lobbying in the US/UK since the thesis aims at contributing to these research fields through analysing the framing efforts of the Kurdish PYD and the counter-framing efforts of the current Turkish government, respectively.

Analysing framing in ethnic lobbying as a dynamic process through the social movement framing approach brings a novel contribution to the existing literature on ethnic lobbying in the US/UK. This approach is also important because of the following reasons. First, it provides an understanding about the role of frames in lobbying (Princen, 2011) by focusing on their characteristics (Ketelaars, 2016; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005) through their creation and presentation process (Kaufman et al., 2013). These are related to frames' capacity to influence their targeted audiences (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). Second, the dynamic process covers the ongoing developments in the concentrated period and their impact on the creation and presentation of frames (Ambrosio, 2002b; Swart, 1995) by considering the expectations of targeted audiences (Desrosiers, 2012; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). Third, it helps understand the interaction between frames and counter-frames during their creation and presentation processes (Reese and Ramirez, 2002), and the interaction's potential challenge to the success of frames when the frame producers (Baumgartner, 2007) target the same audiences. It could also give some clues regarding the targeted countries' responsiveness towards frames and counter-frames as the analysis considers the influence of ongoing developments on the targeted countries' expectations, their policy stances or objectives (Koinova, 2014; 2011). These are quite significant points to explain framing success as the targeted countries' responsiveness towards frames, which have been ignored by the studies in the existing literature on ethnic lobbying in the US/UK.

The extant literature on ethnic lobbying is mainly based on the US, while there are a small number of studies in the UK focusing on the attempts of ethno-religious communities to influence the policymaking process in the White Hall (Ross, 2013; Adamson, 2011; Radcliffe, 2004). The existing literature on successful ethnic lobbying campaigns concentrates on four factors as sources of success. The first discusses the impact of international developments on ethnic lobbying success in the US/UK. These developments are the World War I (Pienkos, 2011; Grant, 2000; Shain, 1999; Swart, 1995), the Cold War (Ambrosio, 2002a; Dietrich, 1999; Shain, 1999; 1994), and the one in the post-war periods. Experts emphasise that Woodrow

Wilson's Fourteen Principles, which accentuated the right of self-determination for all nations, mobilised ethnic lobbies in the US (Pienkos, 2011; Shain, 1999) and the UK (Stewart, 1995). The emergence of new economic systems after WW1 and the necessity of revitalising the pressure/interest groups contributed to lobbying success of ethnic/interest groups in the UK as other international developments (Grant, 2000). Mainly the complexity to distinguish the friends or enemies of the US (Shain, 1994) and the decline of the traditional-minded policymakers, who played active roles in the policymaking process during the Cold War, affected lobbying efforts of ethnic lobbies and their success in the US (Ambrosio, 2002a; Dietrich, 1990; Shain, 1994).

The second source for successful ethnic lobbying mainly discusses the domestic factors in the US/UK. These are the political systems of these countries as pluralist democracies (Ross, 2011; Coxall, 2001), centralist or federalist administrations (Coxall, 2001), and their impact on ethnic groups' access to political systems (Grant, 2000) as well as the characteristics of societies in these countries, especially in the US (Smith, 2000). So, these domestic factors contributed to lobbying campaigns of ethnic groups as well as ethnic lobbying success. The third and fourth sources of successful ethnic lobbying are interrelated as the organisational structures of lobbies (Oswiecimski, 2013; McCormick, 2012; Smith, 2000; Haney and Vanderbush, 1999) and their lobbying strategies.

Lobbying strategies in the extant literature, particularly on ethnic lobbying success in the US are discussed as voting or using the voting as a power (Oswiecimski, 2013; Smith, 2000; Garrett, 1978), financial support to election campaigns (Oswiecimski, 2013; Smith, 2000), mobilising ethnic groups to interact with policymakers. Additionally, developing cooperation between lobbies that have similar interests (McCormick, 2012; Ambrosio, 2002c; Smith, 2000), face-to-face meetings with policymakers (Oswiecimski, 2013), observing the policymaking process (Ambrosio, 2002a; 2002b; Dietrich, 1999) and providing information/policy analysis to policymakers and framing (Oswiecimski, 2013; McCormick, 2012; Ambrosio, 2002a; 2002b) are other strategies contributed to lobbying success. These sources and strategies, however, are discussed by considering the lobbying campaigns of the established lobbies such as the pro-Israeli (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007), and Armenian lobbies (Zarifian, 2018; Ambrosio, 2002b). This literature also focuses on the lobbying

campaigns of growing lobbies (McCormick, 2012, Ambrosio, 2002a) like the Cuban-Americans (Vanderbush, 2009; Haney and Vanderbush, 1999), Indian-Americans (Kirk, 2008), Turkish (Zarifian, 2018; Ambrosio, 2002c), African-Americans (Shain, 1999), Arab (Koinova, 2011) or Palestinian (Marrar, 2009) and the Eastern European lobbies (Herner-Kovács, 2013; Koinova, 2011). The common characteristics of these lobbies are to have access to the policymaking community and process of the US (Haney and Vanderbush, 1999) through their institutional presence in Washington D.C. (Ambrosio, 2002b). Therefore, the debates in this literature tend to have two problems. First, they do not focus on the efforts of relatively new lobbies which seek to gain access to the policymaking communities and processes in the US/UK from the outside through limited resources or lobbying strategies such as framing. Secondly, these debates mainly investigate ethnic lobbying success and ethnic lobbies' influence on the US foreign policy (Zarifian, 2018; Herner-Kovács, 2013; Rubenzer and Redd, 2010; Vanderbush, 2009; Ambrosio, 2002a; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007; Haney and Vanderbush, 1999).

As addressed in the previous section, framing and lobbying are highly interrelated concepts. Princen (2011) underlines that lobbyists apply framing strategy to establish their agenda regarding their specific issues or make these issues visible in a decision-making process. Accordingly, framing can be accepted as a convincing issue-description strategy of lobbying organisations or individual lobbyists; and lobbyists can be perceived as “frame producers” aiming to persuade decision-makers through framing their issues (Baumgartner, 2007). Studies attempting to explain the reasons for successful ethnic lobbying campaigns in the US, in general, approach framing as one of the methods used for campaigns and consider this method as a facilitator of successful ethnic lobbying (Herner-Kovács, 2013; Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002).

Herner-Kovacs (2013; p.199), for instance, tested Haney and Vanderbush's (1999; p.199) criteria, which provided a ground for assessing successful ethnic lobbying campaigns through the efforts of the Hungarian Human Rights Foundation (HHRF) for “*the suspension of Romania's Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status*”. In this case, the lobbying campaign of the HHRF was built on human rights violations and anti-democratic implementations of the Ceausescu regime in Romania against the Hungarians. The implicit reference to the role of

framing contributed to the lobbying campaign's success with the existence of powerful allies in US Congress and changing perception against the Ceausescu regime in the US. Likewise, Kirk's (2008) research investigated the success of Indian American lobbying campaign in reaching a nuclear agreement with the US. Two factors affected the successful lobbying campaign of the Indian Americans for a nuclear deal agreement. They were the strength of the organisational structure of Indian lobby with the existence of professional lobbyists, particularly the highly mobilised second-generation Indian Americans, and the consolidation of economic capacity of the lobby by recruiting new members. Providing policy analysis to US policymakers and strategic framing of the deal through its global, economic and geopolitical advantages for the US and the US-India global partnership also contributed to the successful lobbying campaign of the Indian Americans.

Finally, Reese and Ramirez's (2002) research focused on a successful domestic ethnic lobbying campaign of the Latino-Americans in California for the improvement of the welfare rights of legal immigrants through the social movement approach. The lobbying campaign's success was dependent on three variables. They were a high level of mobilisation amongst the advocates, having powerful allies within the state legislature, who supported the campaign, and strategic framing as a counter-framing to refute the opposition's argument that immigrants detrimentally affected the state economy. These studies demonstrate that their focal point is the successful ethnic lobbying process and the factors or reasons, which played roles in these processes. In other words, these studies investigate what makes an ethnic lobbying campaign successful. Consequently, the framing strategy is presented as a facilitator of successful ethnic lobbying amongst other lobbying strategies and factors, and the investigation of successful lobbying processes or campaigns takes precedence over the framing process.

On the extant literature of ethnic lobbying in the US, Ambrosio's (2002b) study has come close to focusing on framing as a process. Ambrosio (2002b) has analysed the efforts of the Armenian lobby, which provided information and policy insights to US policymakers and framed the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan to accelerate the US involvement in this regional conflict and to stop the US foreign aid to Azerbaijan. Yet this study requires detailing to better explain the creation and presentation of frames as a dynamic process by considering the impact of developments on the frames' characteristics, their creation and

presentation during the concentrated period (Swart, 1995). Likewise, the potential success of frames can be better explained through the social movement framing approach, which analyses the characteristics and quality of frames (Ketelaars, 2016), and their capacity to influence the targeted audiences (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005).

Ambrosio's study indicated that the Armenian lobby transformed rhetoric of the Bush administration, "America and the world must stand up to aggression", particularly the "Iraqi aggression against Kuwait" to present it as the Azeris aggression against the Armenians in the Nagorno-Karabagh (Ambrosio, 2002b; pp.31-32). Following this transformation, the Armenian lobby connected the events of 1915, which took place between the Ottoman Turks and Armenians and argued by the Armenians as genocide, and the events in Nagorno-Karabagh. The lobby presented the happenings in the Nagorno-Karabagh as another genocide allegation committed by the Azeri Turks (Ibid). The recognition of the alleged Armenian genocide by US Congress is one of the main goals for the Armenian lobbies in the US. These lobbies have been investing in public relations to propagate this allegation to the US public and policymakers (Zarifian, 2018). Therefore, connecting the events during the Ottoman period and in the ongoing Nagorno-Karabagh conflict grabbed the US Congress' attention (Ambrosio, 2002b), as US policymakers have been familiar with the argument for a while. Additionally, the reality in the Nagorno-Karabagh area regarding the Armenian aggression against the Azeris, which caused the Azeri refugees, was presented differently. Therefore, the real situation was ignored by US policymakers due to the presentation of the Azeris as "aggressors" (Ibid).

Ambrosio's study provides four essential points to be refined through a new approach. First, it focuses on providing information, policy insights and framing efforts of an established and effective Armenian lobby in the US. This lobby has already access to the policymaking community and process in the US. Second, although this research analyses the framing policy of the Armenian lobby, the characteristics of frames have not been addressed while explaining the potential success of Armenian lobby's framing. Characteristics of frames and the impact of ongoing developments on their characteristics during their creation and presentation period are significant factors to explain framing success, especially when framing success is measured through the targeted countries' responsiveness towards frames. Third, it demonstrates that an institutionally existent lobby in Washington D.C. could build a close relationship with the US

policymakers in Congress by providing information about the issues in their homeland. The Armenian lobbies have been attempting to develop a close relationship with US policymakers since their establishment by presenting the events of 1915 as genocide to prepare policymakers and public for its recognition (Zarifian, 2018). Finally, an institutional existence in Washington D.C. and developing a close relationship with politicians through providing information, policy analysis/policy insights could increase lobbyists' perceived credibility in the eyes of US policymakers. This could also empower the possibility of lobbying or framing success. However, Ambrosio's (2002b) study has implicitly addressed the importance of lobbyists' perceived credibility and its impact on the lobbying or framing success. A theoretical explanation of lobbyists' perceived credibility as the credibility of frame producers is significant. It could be an example for new lobbying groups attempting to build credibility and having access to the policymaking communities and processes in the US/UK.

Ambrosio (2002b), however, could not provide any details concerning to the aforementioned points and their role, especially role of frames, in framing success within ethnic lobbying. The social movement framing approach can provide such detailed and theoretical explanations. For instance, Swart (1995) has analysed the Irish nationalist movement's transformation process of the League of Nations' frames as a dynamic process by applying the social movement framing approach. In this process, the Irish nationalist movement transformed the League of Nations' frames "*the threat of imperialism to world peace*" and "*the self-determination to all countries dominated by foreign powers*". The movement reconstructed its frames as "*the threat of British Prussianism in Ireland*" and "*self-determination to Ireland*" to bring other nationalist movements together around the same goal by drawing the Irish people's attention to the nationalist aims of the movement and having a place at the Peace Conference (Swart, 1995; pp.472-476). This approach illustrates two essential points. Analysing the construction of frames as a dynamic process provides an in-depth understanding of their characteristics (Ketelaars, 2016). It helps assess the impact of developments on the constructed frames during the construction process within the concentrated period (Swart, 1995). Although the Irish nationalist movement's frames managed to bring some other nationalist movements together in their protests to influence the Peace Conference, only a few of them were invited, which did not include the Irish nationalist movement (Ibid). Therefore, this study also addresses the issue of responsiveness of the targeted audiences, which are not only related to the characteristics of frames but also the developments during the framing process, their impact on frames and

expectations of the targeted audiences. This point can be explained through social movement framing approach (Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005). Mainly applying framing as a dynamic process and conceptualising the factors related to the credibility of framing and applicable to the targeted audiences (Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005; Benford and Snow, 2000) can facilitate assessing the targeted countries' responsiveness (Koinova, 2011) towards frames as framing success.

Searching framing as a dynamic process will bring a new aspect to the extant literature on ethnic lobbying in the US/UK. Particularly, analysing framing not only as a method but also a dynamic process through the creation and presentation of frames (Kaufman et al., 2013) and doing this through the case of the PYD lobbying for its model of governance in the US/UK will bring new theoretical and empirical aspects to this literature. It will also contribute to the efforts of ethnic lobbies seeking self-determination/sovereignty for their homelands (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011). The existing literature on the efforts of ethnic lobbies, which seek sovereignty for their homelands, focuses on the efforts of the Albanians and Lebanese communities in the US (Koinova, 2011), the Armenians, Albanians and Palestinians in the UK (Koinova, 2014), and the Albanians in the US and the UK (Koinova, 2013).

These studies attempt to explain the mobilisation processes of these ethnic lobbies. They analyse the reasons for developing moderate arguments regarding the homelands' sovereignty (Koinova, 2011), mobilisation types as moderate/radical ones by considering the developments in homelands (Koinova, 2013) and the ways and reasons of using the host-state or transnational mobilisation channels for pursuing the homeland-based sovereignty claims (Koinova, 2014). These studies also refer to framing approach in different ways. For instance, Koinova (2011) analyses the role of framing as a method for developing moderate claims regarding the homeland issues and its role and contribution as a moderate behaviour to the Albanian and Lebanese lobbies in the US. These framing efforts have been analysed through the social movement framing approach. Koinova (2011) discusses the instrumental utilisation of liberalism by the Albanians and Lebanese. These lobbies linked Lebanon and Kosovo's sovereignty to the US foreign policy of promoting democracy. They argued that their homelands' sovereignty would contribute to the US policy of promoting democracy since these countries would be liberal democracies. This case indicates that the instrumental application of

framing through moderate claims has contributed to the perception of the Albanians as moderate groups (Ibid). It also demonstrates the positive attitudes of the US authorities to these moderate claims as their responsiveness, which could explain the behaviour of similar lobbies that uses framing as an only lobbying strategy.

Koinova's (2013) another research investigates four types of mobilisation in ethnic communities as moderate and radical ones for the sovereignty of Kosovo in the US and the UK. It refers to framing as a tool used by the homeland-based secessionist elites amongst the Albanians. These elites have applied framing as a method of moderate mobilisation to raise money in the US and the UK (Ibid). Finally, Koinova's (2014) another research investigates the mobilisation process through explaining the channels that the Armenians, Albanians and Palestinians used in the UK for voicing the arguments regarding the sovereignty of their homelands. In this case, the lobbying efforts of diaspora elites in these communities have been presented as a moderate mobilisation. Framing has been stated in the context of lobbying as a moderate mobilisation tool that the diaspora elites apply for their lobbying (Ibid).

These studies also demonstrate two significant points to be focused on and be detailed. First, they investigate the efforts of ethnic lobbies in the US/UK, which already have access to these countries and their political systems. Second, these studies concentrate on the behaviours of conflict-generated ethnic lobbies by focusing on the mobilisation types and processes. Although framing is included in the mobilisation process as a reason for moderate behaviour (Koinova, 2011; 2013) or an avenue of moderate mobilisation (Koinova, 2014), their main interest is to explain the process of mobilisation, not the process of framing. Particularly, one provides an insight that the instrumental application of framing by constructing moderate claims could grab the policymakers' attention and could affect their responsiveness towards the moderate claims in these countries (Koinova, 2011).

Building on these debates, this thesis offers a new perspective, conceptualising the social movement framing approach in the ethnic lobbying literature through the case of Syrian civil war. In so doing, the thesis investigates framing as a lobbying strategy used by a new ethnic lobby in the US/UK, the Syrian Kurdish PYD, which seeks recognition for its model of governance in northern Syria. In this way, it seeks to explain how a relatively new ethnic

lobbying, the PYD, managed to gain access to the policymaking communities and processes in the US since the end of Kobane siege in 2015 through framing as they had no access until the early stages of the Syrian civil war². Therefore, the thesis examines the creation and presentation process of frames (Kaufman et al., 2013) as a dynamic framing for lobbying in the US/UK from March 2011 to 20th January 2017 and attempts to explain framing success through the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD frames.

The concept of responsiveness needs to be specified and reconceptualised to address framing success in ethnic lobbying within the US/UK. Small number of studies contribute to developing this concept in the extant literature on ethnic lobbying in the US. While analysing the mobilisation behaviour of Africans in the US through the resonance of the commonality of circumstances between the US and South Africa, Scott and Osman (2002) implicitly investigate the responsiveness of the African American lobbying elites towards different issues in Africa. However, authors aim at explaining the mobilisation behaviour of the African American community to lobby for urging the US to change its policy towards the Apartheid regime in South Africa. Koinova (2011) has also contributed to the development of the concept of responsiveness by shifting the focus from the lobbying elites to the political elites in the US and analysing the attitudes of US policymakers towards lobbying efforts of ethnic groups in the US. Since the thesis analyses the lobbying efforts of the PYD in the US/UK, the scope of the concept of responsiveness requires not only focusing on the responsiveness of the US policymakers but also the UK ones. Additionally, ethnic lobbies not only target the policymakers but also the public of the targeted countries (Haney and Vanderbush, 1999). Accordingly, the concept of responsiveness needs to analyse the responsiveness of mainstream newspapers in the targeted countries as another targeting component of ethnic lobbying (Ibid). Finally, by considering the conceptualisation of framing in the context of ethnic lobbying through the social movement framing approach, the concept of responsiveness needs to be reconceptualised in accordance with the same approach. To be more specific for framing success in ethnic lobbying, such a reconceptualization requires including factors related to the credibility of framing and factors applicable to the targeted audiences to assess the targeted countries' responsiveness towards frames in the context of ethnic lobbying (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005; Benford and Snow, 2000). This can make a way for contributing to the

² The PYD has access to the UK since 2012 through its representative.

social movement framing (Ketelaars, 2016; Matesan, 2012; Benford and Snow, 2000) by developing a new perspective for framing success as an alternative to the concept of resonance by considering the difficulties and complications regarding the concept of resonance, and explaining framing success through the concept of the responsiveness of the targeted countries.

Accordingly, the thesis examines the characteristics of frames through their creation and presentation as a dynamic process (Kaufman, et al., 2013). It investigates the impact of developments on the creation and presentation process of frames in the period between March 2011 and 20th January 2017. This investigation also provides an understanding regarding the policy stances and objectives of the US/UK as their expectations during the framing process (Desrosiers, 2012), which play an important role in explaining framing success. Such an analysis also considers the PYD representatives' credibility, as frame producers' perceived credibility (Matesan, 2012) to discuss framing success in ethnic lobbying.

The Syrian Kurds or Kurdish politics of Syria are a growing research field. There are reports, briefing papers and policy analyses examining the situation of Kurds in Syria (Zaideh, 2009; Lowe, 2006) before the 2011 Syrian civil war. Particularly, following the civil war, the visibility of the Syrian Kurds increased, and researchers managed to gain access to the Kurdish areas of the country (Allsopp and Wilgenburg, 2019). The growing literature on the Syrian Kurds after the 2011 civil war concentrates on periodical developments, as kind of process analyses. Accordingly, experts emphasise that the outbreak of the Syrian civil war is a historical opportunity for the Syrian Kurds (Allsopp, 2015; 2013; Federici, 2015; Gunter, 2014). Some also argue that the outbreak of the civil war is a unique opportunity, which has a potential to change the Kurdish politics and the map of the Middle East on behalf of Kurds (Allsopp, 2013). Experts in this growing research field also discuss other political opportunities for the Syrian Kurds, after the civil war, particularly for the PYD, such as the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 (Allsopp, 2017; 2013; Federici, 2015; Gunter, 2014; Savelsberg and Tejel, 2013) through which Kurds managed to establish a de facto autonomous region in northern Syria and began practising a new model of governance (Allsopp, 2015; 2013; Gunter, 2014). The rise of ISIS in 2014 can also be assessed another key political opportunity for the Kurds (Dalay, 2018; Allsopp, 2017) since the countries in the global coalition to fight against ISIS supported the Kurdish Peshmerga in Iraq (Paasche and

Gunter, 2016), and the YPG (Gunter, 2015; Federici, 2015) (and then, the SDF–led by the YPG) in Syria, as ground partners to fight ISIS.

The extant literature on the Syrian Kurds and Kurdish politics of Syria attempt to analyse the PYD's efforts to seize these political opportunities in the context of the regional politics of the Middle East (Allsopp, 2017; Gunter, 2015; 2014; Federici, 2015). Accordingly, experts discuss the rise of the PYD as a dominant political actor in the Kurdish politics of Syria, mobilisation of the PYD-affiliated organisations for practicing the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan's Democratic Confederalism model in Syria, (Allsopp, 2017; Plakoudas, 2016; Federici, 2015) and the PYD's ideological links with the PKK (Kaya and Lowe, 2017; Paasche, 2015) and its relations with regional (Kaya and Lowe, 2017; Paasche, 2015; Gunes and Lowe, 2015; Gunter, 2014) and international actors (Wilgenburg and Allsopp, 2019; Allsopp, 2017; Gunter, 2014) in the context of the Syrian civil war. Despite the fact that each piece addresses the importance of political opportunities for the Syrian Kurds by focusing on specific time periods, none of them has developed a holistic approach. It would be more meaningful when a coherent approach is developed to explain the political opportunities and their utilisation for the Syrian Kurds' external engagement in the US/UK for their lobbying purposes. In other words, the political opportunities require a holistic conceptualisation, which explains them as significant and starting stages in the context of the dynamic framing process, which can be explained through the creation and presentation (Kaufman et al., 2013) of the PYD frames in the concentrated period, from the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in March 2011 to the end of the Obama administration on 20th January 2017, to lobby the US/UK on behalf of legitimising the PYD's model of governance in north and eastern Syria. Therefore, the thesis brings a new approach by holistically conceptualising the utilisation of three key and favourable political opportunities, the outbreak of the 2011 Syrian civil war, the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 with the start of Aleppo battle and the rise of ISIS in 2014 within the ongoing process of Aleppo battle for the Kurds, which is developed in the context of the social movement framing approach (Benford and Snow, 2000; Snow and Benford, 1992), by considering the PYD not only as a political party but also a social movement with its affiliated bodies (Kaya and Lowe, 2017).

As explained in the research question and objective section, the dynamism of the framing process includes not only the impact of the developments in Syria on the creation and presentation of the PYD frames for the PYD framing but also the counter-framing efforts of the Turkish government against the PYD framing in the US/UK. This requires the analysis of the characteristics of the Turkish counter-frames through their creation and presentation. In fact, there is no academic research on the political analysis of the Turkish government lobbying in the UK. The Turkish lobbying (Ambrosio, 2002c) or the Turkish government lobbying (Zarifian, 2018) in the US is a growing research field (McCormick, 2012; Pak, 1994). There are a small number of studies, which mainly focuses on debates such as the general characteristics of the Turkish lobby and its activities since the 1970s. This literature, first, attempts to explain the lobbying mechanism of Turkey through official companies and unofficial associations and assess their overall effectiveness (Pak, 1994). They discuss the alliance formed between Turkish and pro-Israeli lobbies after the Turkish-Israeli cooperation agreement of the 1990s and its positive impact on Turkish interests and lobbying in the US (Ambrosio, 2002c). There are also more specific studies examining the structure of Turkish lobby in general and its lobbying activities for the country's political and economic interests in 2018 by considering the areas of contention between the US and Turkish governments such as the Syrian civil war and Turkey's operations in Syria (Grafov, 2019).

There are also limited studies analysing Turkish counter-lobbying in the US. They concentrate on Turkish counter-lobbying against the genocide allegations of Armenian lobbies through alliance formation (Ambrosio, 2002c). Some also analyse the current AKP government's counter-lobbying against the Armenian lobbies through applying divergent strategies such as diplomatic pressure on US governments and Congress through diplomatic visits, hiring lobbying firms or investing in public relations to influence the media and academia (Zarifian, 2018). However, except for alliance formation with powerful pro-Israeli lobbies (Ambrosio, 2002c), these studies tend to examine more the Armenian lobbies instead of Turkish ones (Zarifian, 2018) and they only refer to the general strategies of the Turkish government counter-lobbying, which are, to some extent, successful at bringing some results against the efforts of the Armenian lobbies in the US (Ibid). Basing on an assumption that the Kurdish lobbies would be a serious threat to Turkey and its interests in the US (Pak, 1994), there is a need for a detailed approach, which would be analysing the counter-lobbying efforts of the current Turkish government through a specific lobbying strategy against this expected threat. Therefore, the

thesis aims at detailing the counter-lobbying efforts of the Turkish government in the US by focusing on the current Turkish government through a specific strategy, counter-framing against the PYD framing. It analyses the counter-framing as a dynamic process via the creation and presentation of counter-frames (Kaufman et al., 2013). In this way, the thesis seeks to investigate the role of Turkish counter-frames as a challenge (Benford and Snow, 2000) to the PYD frames by considering the Turkish counter-frames' interaction with the PYD frames during the framing process and their impact on the targeted countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames.

Accordingly, the thesis argues that analysing framing as a dynamic process helps explain the characteristics of frames and counter-frames, which are directly related to their capacity to influence the targeted audiences (Ketelaars, 2016; Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005) as well as their interaction. Such an analysis is essential to demonstrate the impact of the ongoing developments on the characteristics of frames and counter-frames during their creation and presentation processes and understand framing policies and strategies of lobbyists as frame producers (Baumgartner, 2007; Ambrosio, 2002b; Reese and Ramirez, 2002; Swart, 1995). However, this case demonstrates that the characteristics of the PYD frames may not merely explain the targeted countries' responsiveness towards frames. The policy stances and objectives of the targeted countries (Koinova, 2014; 2011), which can also be understood through the dynamic framing process, are significant determiners to be considered explaining the targeted countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames. The policy stances and objectives are also essential factors to assess the counter-frames' potential challenge against the targeted countries' responsiveness towards the frames.

Key Findings

The key findings of this thesis can be summarised as follows: The dynamic framing process of the PYD has been conceptualised as normative and strategic framing processes. The normative and strategic framing processes indicate the creation and presentation of the normative frames, the “regional role model” and “defending human values against ISIS”, and the strategic frames, the “protection of Europe/West”, “only effective force against ISIS” and “a political solution for Syria”. The normative framing process addresses why the US/UK should support the PYD's model of governance in Syria. The strategic framing process attempts to explain why these countries could provide their military support to the YPG's fight against ISIS and their political

support to the PYD's model of governance in Syria depending on the YPG's contribution to the fight against ISIS.

The counter-lobbying efforts of the Turkish government have been examined as a dynamic counter-framing process. The counter-framing process has been conceptualised as characterisation and counter-framing processes. Findings regarding these processes demonstrate that Turkish government officials created and presented "the PYD is a terrorist organisation", "the PYD's alleged cooperation with the Assad regime" and "the PYD's alleged ethnic cleansing" negative characterisation frames. Likewise, "the most effective ally against ISIS", "securing NATO and the European countries", and "no solution without Turkey" counter-frames were used for the same purpose. Through these counter-frames, the Turkish government attempted to undermine the legitimacy of the PYD-YPG. In this way, Turkish government officials addressed why the US/UK should not support the PYD's model of governance and the YPG's fight against ISIS in Syria. They also interacted with the PYD frames via counter-frames.

Framing success has been analysed through the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD frames. In so doing, the Turkish government counter-frames' challenges to the PYD frames and its potential impact on these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames have also been discussed. Findings illustrate that the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the frames and counter-frames were not only dependent on their characteristics, creation, presentation and their interaction with each other. It was also related to these countries' policy stances regarding the political future of Syria and policy objectives in Syria from March 2011 to 20th January 2017. When the policy objectives of the PYD in Syria overlapped with those of the US/UK governments, the framing efforts and strategies of the PYD representatives seemed to have been effective, and the targeted audiences were more responsive towards the PYD frames. Similarly, when the policy stances and particularly the policy objectives of the Turkish government in Syria overlapped with those of the US/UK governments, the Turkish government counter-frames, to a certain extent, challenged the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD frames, especially towards the normative ones. Additionally, the US/UK were more responsive towards the strategic PYD frames than its normative frames. In other words, they were more responsive to the frames, "the defence of human values against ISIS",

“protection of Europe/West” and “only effective force against ISIS” than the “regional role model” and “a political solution for Syria” frames since these frames were presented as an alternative set of solutions to deal with the ISIS issue.

Relevance and Originality

The thesis makes an original empirical and theoretical contributions to the literature on the Syrian Kurds/the Kurdish politics of Syria, the Turkish lobbying in the US/UK, the ethnic lobbying in these countries and literature on the social movement framing. Empirically, it is a new case, which analyses the Syrian Kurdish PYD lobbying for its model of governance in the US/UK. It focuses on a specific lobbying strategy, framing as a dynamic process, and the utilisation of frames for lobbying. As part of the dynamic framing process, thesis also investigates the Turkish government counter-lobbying against the PYD lobbying in the US/UK through counter-framing approach. This approach also analyses the utilisation of counter-frames for a government lobbying and their interaction with the opponent’s frames.

The major publications on the Syrian Kurds focus on the Kurdish question in Syria through the combination of anthropological, historic, sociological and political perspectives (Tejel, 2009), the periodical developments in the context of the 2011 Syrian civil war and their impact on the regional and international politics of the Syrian Kurds (Gunter, 2014), the changes in the Kurdish politics and political parties due to the impact of the 2011 Syrian civil war (Allsopp, 2015) as well as the identity and representation in the context of the PYD’s model of governance (Allsopp and Wilgenburg, 2019). Likewise, the current literature on the Syrian Kurds discusses some political opportunities for Kurds after the 2011 civil war. They are the outbreak of the Syrian 2011 civil war, the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 and the rise of ISIS in 2014 with the start of Aleppo battle (Allsopp, 2017; 2015; 2013, Federici; 2015; Gunter, 2014; Savelsberg and Tejel, 2013). These studies seek to explain the impacts of the 2011 Syrian civil war on the Kurdish political parties and the Kurdish politics of Syria by analysing the establishment of the Kurdish National Council (KNC) and the rise of the PYD (Allsopp, 2017; 2015), the PYD’s efforts to seize these opportunities in the context of the regional politics of the Middle East (Kaya and Lowe, 2017; Savelsbeg and Tejel, 2013; Gunter, 2014). They also analyse the PYD’s mobilisation efforts through affiliated organisations for practising the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan’s model of governance in northern Syria (Federici, 2015; Allsopp, 2015; Gunter, 2014) and the PYD’s

relations with the PKK (Kaya and Lowe, 2017) and its interaction with other regional or international actors (Allsopp, 2017; Plakoudas, 2016; Federici, 2015).

By differing from these pieces, this is the first publication approaching those political opportunities to analyse the Syrian Kurds' external engagement in the US/UK for lobbying as a dynamic framing process through the creation and presentation (Kaufman et al, 2013) of the PYD frames in the context of the social movement framing approach developed by Benford and Snow (2000; 1992). As a novel approach, the thesis conceptualises the utilisation of three favourable political opportunities, the outbreak of the 2011 Syrian civil war, the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 with the start of the Aleppo battle and the rise of ISIS in 2014 within the ongoing process of the Aleppo battle, by the PYD to frame its model of governance and lobby the US/UK externally, from outside these countries, between March 2011 and 20th January 2017. In other words, three critical and favourable political opportunities are conceptualised as starting points for the creation and presentation (Kaufman et al, 2013) of the PYD frames, which aimed at articulating "alternative set of arrangements" (Benford and Snow, 2000; p.613) and providing alternative solutions (Snow and Benford, 1992) for the issues of Syria to lobby the US/UK externally within the concentrated period. This is a novel contribution to the Kurdish politics in Syria through the analysis of the process of the PYD representatives' external engagement with the US/UK policymakers and media in these countries for two reasons. First, it demonstrates how the PYD obtained a chance to practise the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan's Democratic Confederalism model following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, as a model of governance, first in northern Syria (Muslim quoted in KurdWatch, 2011), and then in eastern Syria (Wilgenburg and Allsopp, 2019). Secondly, it shows how the PYD representatives called such a model of governance as a social democracy or democratic socialism (PYD's Party Program, 2013), which is inspired by Murray Bookchin's far-leftist, anarchist, libertarian municipality (Allsopp, 2015; Gunter, 2014), but how they sought to sell it during their framing process as a Western-style and liberal democracy following their interaction with the US/UK in Syria by considering these countries' policy objectives and expectations in Syria.

Secondly, the thesis contributes to the literature on the Turkish government lobbying in the US/UK through counter-framing approach (Kaufman et al., 2013; Benford and Snow, 2000).

This is the first scholarly analysis of the lobbying efforts of a Turkish government through counter-framing approach in the UK being independent from the Turkish governments' lobbying efforts in the European Countries, especially in the UK for Turkey's EU membership. This analysis indicates how the Turkish government tried to block the lobbying efforts of the PYD leadership, which managed to obtain access to the UK since 2012 to sell its model of governance through a specific counter-lobbying strategy, counter-framing for a government lobbying. Additionally, the existing literature on counter-lobbying efforts of Turkey against the Armenian lobbies and their genocide allegations in the US seeks to explain the effectiveness of Turkey. Accordingly, these studies focus on the general lobbying strategies of Turkey through lobbying mechanisms and representatives of the Turkish government in the US (Zarifian, 2018) or alliance formation strategy between Turkish lobbies and powerful pro-Israeli lobbies (Ambrosio, 2002c). By differing from these studies, the thesis develops a new perspective for the Turkish lobbying in the US through the current Turkish government's counter-lobbying efforts. These efforts are analysed through a specific counter-lobbying strategy, counter-framing against the PYD framing, and the utilisation of counter-frames for a government lobbying. The counter-framing is not only examined as a lobbying strategy but also a dynamic process through the creation and presentation of counter-frames (Kaufman et al., 2013).

As such, thesis demonstrates how a domestic PYD issue in Syria became a regional issue for Turkey following the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 with the start of Aleppo battle due the PYD's ideological links with the PKK. In other words, it explains how Turkey's security concerns based on the PYD in Syria due to its links and relations with the PKK in Turkey became a counter-lobbying matter for a Turkish government in the US/UK. It also shows how the US-led global coalition's support for the PYD-YPG in the fight against ISIS deteriorated the Turkish government's relations with its NATO ally, the US, especially with the Obama administration after the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane due to Turkey's security concerns regarding the PYD-YPG and the PKK (Parlar Dal, 2016). The dynamic counter-framing process also indicates how the ongoing developments in the Syrian civil war affected the characteristics of the Turkish counter-frames, and especially the Turkish government's relationship with the US government during the Obama administration. More significantly, the thesis addresses how the PYD-PKK issue became a matter for a Turkish government lobbying in the US/UK after the 2011 Syrian civil war,

particularly following the interaction between the YPG and the US-led global coalition since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane.

The thesis also develops a new approach in terms of explaining framing success as the responsiveness of the targeted countries through the analysis of a dynamic framing process. As such, it brings two novel contributions to the existing literature on framing in the ethnic lobbying within the US/UK and to the literature on the social movement framing. First, it applies the social movement framing approach (Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005) in ethnic lobbying, and analyses the PYD framing through the creation and presentation of frames (Kaufman et al., 2013) as a dynamic process. The current literature on ethnic lobbying approaches framing as one of the strategies applied by lobbyists and perceives framing as a facilitator of successful ethnic lobbying (Herner-Kovács, 2013; Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002) or a strategy for the mobilisation of ethnic lobbies (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011). As they investigate what makes an ethnic lobbying successful and focus on ethnic lobbies' mobilisation, their priority was the analysis of successful lobbying process or the process of mobilisation instead of the framing process.

By going beyond the investigation of successful lobbying process or the process of ethnic lobbies' mobilisation, the thesis seeks to analyse the framing process itself. It details Ambrosio's (2002b) study on the framing policies of the Armenian lobby in the US by explaining the utilisation of frames for lobbying through a social movement framing approach (Ketelaars, 2016; Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005; Benford and Snow, 2000). It analyses the frames' creation and presentation as a dynamic process (Kaufman et al., 2013) by conceptualising the utilisation of norms (Koinova, 2011), values (Herner-Kovacs, 2013; Shain, 1999; 1994) and foreign policy discourses (Vanderbush, 2009; Kirk, 2008; Ambrosio, 2002b; Shain, 1999; 1994) as normative and strategic framing processes. In so doing, the thesis focuses on the developments in the period from March 2011 to 20th January 2017, which played a role in affecting the characteristics of frames during their creation and presentation. This is an innovative and in-depth analysis, which provides an understanding concerning the expectations of the targeted countries, the US/UK, as well as their policy stances and objectives in Syria within this period. As such, the thesis indicates the relationship between the policy stances and objectives of the targeted countries and their responsiveness towards the constructed frames.

Additionally, the thesis develops a new explanation regarding framing success. It borrows the term, responsiveness, from ethnic lobbying, which refers to the attitudes of the targeted policymakers towards the lobbying efforts of lobbying groups (Koinova, 2011). Then, it reconceptualises the responsiveness through the concepts of the factors regarding credibility of framing (*frame consistency, empirical credibility, frame producers' perceived credibility*) and the factors applicable to the targeted audiences (*centrality, experiential commensurability and narrative fidelity*). This is also a novel contribution to the social movement framing, which tries to explain framing success via the concept of resonance (Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005; Benford and Snow, 2000). As such, the thesis brings a new perspective to the ethnic lobbying literature in the US/UK through the explanation of framing success in ethnic lobbying. The concept of responsiveness is implicitly referred by Scott and Osman (2002) to explain the responsiveness of the lobbying/diaspora elites, the African Americans, towards the issues in their homeland. Koinova (2011) has altered the term's focus from the lobbying elites to the political elites in the targeted country by analysing the attitudes of US policymakers towards lobbying efforts of the Lebanese and Albanian communities. This thesis details the concept of responsiveness in two ways. First, it uses this concept to explain not only the responsiveness of the US but also the responsiveness of the UK policymakers towards the PYD frames. Secondly, it adds the responsiveness of mainstream newspapers in the targeted countries (the US/UK) to the concept of responsiveness as another targeting component of ethnic lobbying (Haney and Vanderbush, 1999) to assess their approach towards the frames. Accordingly, the thesis analyses the responsiveness of policymakers and the mainstream newspapers in the US/UK towards the PYD frames.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is comprised of eight chapters, including the introduction and theoretical framework chapters, four empirical chapters and a conclusion chapter. Chapter one is a brief historical background which explains the rise of the key actor of the thesis the PYD in the Kurdish politics of Syria, its ideological links with the PKK. The chapter also briefly discusses the policies of the US/UK towards Kurds in the Middle East since the PYD's lobbying efforts targets these countries and these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD lobbying is related to their policy stances and objectives in Syria during the Syrian civil war. By analysing developments since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, this chapter develops three points. First, the Kurdish question in Turkey and Syria has similar characteristics due to Turkish and Arab nationalism and nation-state building processes in these countries after the Ottoman Empire. Secondly, the

PYD and PKK have ideological links and organisational similarities. Finally, the UK and the US had no well-defined policies towards Kurds in the Middle East, since their broader policy objectives had shaped their Kurdish policies in the region.

Chapter two is the theoretical framework. It develops a theoretical approach for the thesis to understand dynamic framing process in ethnic lobbying and its importance for framing success. In so doing, the chapter explains the concepts ethnic lobbying, political opportunities, frame and framing, dynamic framing process in ethnic lobbying and framing success. Then, it details the research methodology by elucidating the data collection and data analysis processes and addressing the ethical considerations of the thesis.

Chapter three is the first empirical chapter. This chapter discusses the lobbying efforts of PYD representatives in the US/UK for their model of governance. It examines these efforts as a dynamic framing process through the creation and presentation of frames (Kufman et al, 2013) in the context of social movement framing approach (Benford and Snow, 2000; Snow and Benford, 1992). It argues that there is a relationship between there key and favourable political opportunities of the Syrian civil war and the framing processes of the PYD. In this regard, the chapter conceptualises the dynamic framing process as normative and strategic ones by analysing the creation and presentation of normative and strategic PYD frames in the context of ethnic lobbying.

Chapter four is the second empirical chapter. It analyses the counter-lobbying efforts of the Turkish government against the PYD lobbying in the US/UK through a counter-framing strategy (Benford and Snow, 2000). The chapter conceptualises the Turkish dynamic counter-framing process as characterisation (Kaufman et al, 2013; Gray, 2003) and counter-framing processes (Benford and Snow, 2000). It also discusses the interaction between the PYD frames and the Turkish counter-frames. The chapter, therefore, argues that Turkey created and presented negative characterisation frames and other counter-frames to undermine the legitimacy of the PYD's model of governance and the YPG's fight against ISIS to challenge the US/UK's responsiveness towards the normative and strategic PYD frames.

Chapter five is the third empirical chapter. It investigates the responsiveness (Koinova, 2011) of the US/UK towards the normative PYD frames. In so doing, the chapter also examines the potential challenges of the Turkish government's characterisation frames to the US/UK's responsiveness towards the normative PYD frames. It argues that the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the normative PYD frames and characterisation frames of the Turkish government cannot be explained merely through frames' creation, presentation and interaction without considering these countries' policy stances regarding the political future of Syria and policy objectives in Syria. Especially when the policy objectives of the PYD against ISIS in Syria overlapped with those of the US/UK governments, the PYD's framing efforts and strategies seemed quite effective, and the targeted audiences were more responsive towards the normative PYD frames describing ISIS as a main problem. Similarly, when the policy stances, and particularly the policy objectives of the Turkish government in Syria and those of the US/UK governments overlapped, the Turkish government's characterisation frames, to a certain extent, challenged the PYD frames and affected these countries' responsiveness towards the normative PYD frames.

Chapter six is the last empirical chapter. It examines the responsiveness (Koinova, 2011) of the US/UK towards the strategic PYD frames and the potential challenges of the Turkish government counter-frames on these countries' responsiveness towards the strategic PYD frames. The chapter argues that the US/UK's responsiveness towards the strategic PYD frames and the Turkish government's counter-frames cannot be explained merely through frames and counter-frames' creation, presentation and interaction without considering these countries' policy stances regarding the political future of Syria and policy objectives in Syria. The US/UK were more responsive to the strategic PYD frames, which represented the overlapping policy objectives of the US/UK and the PYD and the Turkish government counter-frames' could not challenge these countries' responsiveness towards these frames. However, these countries were less responsive to some strategic frames, which conflicted with these countries' policy stances regarding the political future of Syria.

Chapter seven is the conclusion. The chapter answers research questions by bringing the findings from empirical chapters. It discusses the thesis' contributions to the related research fields.

Chapter 1 The Ideology of the Kurdish Political Movement and its International Relations

1.1 Introduction

The Kurdish question in Syria had not drawn adequate international attention until the 2011 Syrian civil war (Gunter, 2014; Allsopp, 2015)³. Following the independence of Syria from France in 1946, there was a rise in Arab nationalism as part of the state formation process of Syria (Allsopp and Wilgenburg, 2019) during which the political elites perceived the Syrian Kurds as a threat to the Syrian Arab Republic (Allsopp, 2015). Arab nationalist policies and the repression against the Syrian Kurds continued through the policies of the Baath regimes since the 1960s. In addition to the denial of the Kurdish identity, the vast majority of the Syrian lost their citizenship and basic rights as a result of the Al-Hasakah Census in 1962 (Allsopp, 2015; Tejel, 2009). The Syrian Kurd have been seeking autonomy since the 1920s (Allsopp, 2015) and following the Al-Hasakah census, they sought basic rights, recognition as Syrian citizens with their Kurdish identity, the possession of property, identity cards and passports and, access to the same education like other Syrians (KurdWatch, 2010). Following the 2011 civil war, however, the Syrian Kurds managed to establish a de facto autonomous governance in northern Syria under the control of the PYD (Gunter, 2014). Subsequently, their aims shifted not only to seek recognition for basic rights, citizenship and autonomy but also recognition for their model of governance in north and eastern Syria (Paasche and Gunter, 2016; Federici, 2015).

This chapter plays a role as a brief historical background by explaining the rise of the key actor of the thesis, the PYD in the Kurdish politics of Syria, its ideological links with the PKK. It also briefly discusses the policies of the US/UK towards Kurds in the Middle East since the PYD's lobbying efforts targets these countries and these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD lobbying is related to their policy stances and objectives in Syria during the 2011 Syrian

³ The Syrian Kurds, to a little extent, managed to draw the international community's attention to the Kurdish question in Syria through the 2004 Qamishli uprising. In terms of this thesis, for instance, only a piece in the mainstream newspapers in the UK (*The Guardian*) and four pieces in the mainstream newspapers in the US (one in *The Wall Street Journal*, one in *The Washington Post* and two in *The New York Times*), covered the Qamishli uprising and the Kurdish question in Syria with details. Similarly, in the early stages of the 2011 Syrian civil war, the Western media paid more attention to the Syrian Arab opposition instead of the Syrian Kurds (Allsopp, 2015) and asked the question why the Syrian Kurds had been holding back and not joining the protests against the regime.

civil war. Accordingly, the chapter discusses three points; first, Turkey's approach to the Kurdish question after the Ottoman Empire and the rise of PKK; second, Syria's approach to Kurds and the rise of PYD with the outbreak of the 2011 civil war; and finally, the policy stances of the UK and the US towards the Kurdish question in the Middle East.

The chapter seeks to explain three points. First, the origins of the Kurdish question in Turkey and Syria have similar characteristics which trace back to nationalism and nation-state building processes in these countries after the Ottoman Empire (Yavuz, 2001). Second, the main actors of the thesis, the PYD and the PKK have ideological links (Wilgenburg and Allsopp, 2019; Kaya and Lowe, 2017; Paasche, 2015; Allsopp, 2015) and organisational similarities (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011) as well as other implementations in their organisational bodies and military units (Kaya and Lowe, 2017). Finally, the US/UK policies towards the Kurds in the Middle East are divergent and shaped by their broader policy objectives in the region depending on the ongoing developments in different time periods. Following the rise of the US as a leading international power in the post-WWII era (Charountaki, 2011), it began developing relationships with the countries in the Middle East, where its official policy stance towards Kurds focused mainly on prioritising the territorial integrity of Kurdish-populated countries (Gunter, 2011). However, the US has also developed different policies towards Kurds in different countries by separating them as "bad/terrorist"⁴ or "good"⁵ Kurds (Meho and Nehme, 1991). In general, during the 1991 Operation Provide Comfort (Frelick, 1993), the 2003 Iraq War (Charountaki, 2011) and in the fight against ISIS (Barfi, 2016), the US and the UK followed similar policies towards Kurds in Iraq and Syria.

1.2 The Kurdish Question in Turkey after the Ottoman Empire and the PKK

This section briefly focuses on the final days of the Ottoman Empire with the rise of nationalisms across the world, including the impacts of Turkish and Arab nationalism on the Kurdish question, the developments until the rise of the PKK, and then, the political stance of the Turkish government against the PKK. While discussing Kurdish nationalism in the Ottoman Empire in comparison to Turkish or Arab nationalism, experts attempt to understand why the Kurds, as the most-populated ethnic group after Turks, Arabs and Iranians in the Middle East, could not develop a nationalist movement with modern meaning (Barkey and Fuller, 1998).

⁴ The term refers to the PKK and the Kurds who have a sympathy or relations to the PKK in Turkey.

⁵ The term refers to the Iraqi Kurds.

The reason for this largely stems from the geography that the Kurds inherited, which affects them sociologically, dialectically and consciously. Sociologically, the geography shaped Kurds' daily lives in a way that led to the development of strong clans/tribal structures (Barkey and Fuller, 1998). Dialectically, the different geographical inhabitants created different dialects amongst Kurds such as Kurmanji⁶ or Sorani⁷ (McDowall, 2013). Consciously, geography prevented Kurds from creating a united self-consciousness (Barkey and Fuller, 1998) or Kurdish unity (Yavuz, 2001).

Although the roots of Kurdish nationalism date back to the 1880s (Olson, 1991), the origins of the Kurdish question in Turkey trace back to the nation-state building process following the establishment of new Turkish Republic in the 1920s (Yavuz, 2001). Kurdish question in Turkey centred on the creation of a Kurdish independent state since the rule of the Young Turks (Elphinston, 1946). But following WWI, Kurds demanded, at the very least, a Kurdish autonomous administration (McDowall, 2013), inspired by the Woodrow Wilson's principle of self-determination (Gunter, 2014) and the rise of nationalism across the world. For instance, the social fabric of the Ottoman Empire was multi-ethnic and multi-religious, and the Empire's minority definition was based on religion (Barkey and Fuller, 1998). The Jewish and Christians were the minorities, while Kurds, as Muslim community, constituted the social fabric of the Empire with other Muslim communities (Ibid). Kurdish emirates of the Empire used to have some level of autonomy in their internal relations (Eppel, 2008) with a duty to ensure the stability of their territories. In return for their autonomous status, these emirates used to pay their taxes and provide soldiers to the Empire (Barkey and Fuller, 1998). Following the centralisation policies of the Empire by eliminating the Kurdish tribal emirates in the 19th century (Eppel, 2008), the politicised Islamist networks of Kurds resisted against these policies through armed Shakyh Ubeydullah rebellion (Yavuz, 2001). Despite these developments, the Empire used the Kurdish tribes to counter Russian influence and Armenian nationalism by forming the Hamiddiyye regiments, which had played a role in the rise of Kurdish nationalism (Yavuz, 2001; Olson, 1991). Following this, the idea of Kurdish independence began spreading amongst the educated Kurds through the newspaper *Kurdistan* in Cairo and the establishment of Kurdish Committees in European countries (Elphinston, 1946). Under the rule of the Young Turks by the Committee of Union and Progress, the prominent members of the Kurdish

⁶ Kurmanji is a Kurdish dialect spoken by the Syrian Kurds and Kurds in Turkey.

⁷ Sorani is a dialect spoken by the Iraqi Kurds.

Independence Movement abroad returned to Istanbul, formed the Kurdish National Committee and supported the Young Turks with an insurance of the 1908 Constitution (Ibid). Because of the negative perception amongst the Kurds regarding the Young Turks who disavowed their insurance toward Kurds and began suppressing the Kurdish movement, there were Kurdish rebellions against the Young Turks (Ibid).

The Ottoman Empire entered WWI under the rule of the Young Turks in 1914 (Eskander, 2000). Its results were detrimental to the Empire, which accelerated its collapse and led the changes on the map of the Middle East. The Kurdish region of the Empire in particular experienced the effects of this change starting from the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement between the UK and France, since the agreement envisaged new borders without considering the cultural ties and geographical location of Kurds in the Middle East (Gunter, 2014). Following Woodrow Wilson's principle of self-determination at the end of the war (Ibid), Kurds began seeking an autonomous administration (McDowall, 2013). Although the 1920 Treaty of Sevres proposed an autonomous region in Southern Kurdistan, with an option of holding referendum for its independence as long as the League of Nations was convinced, this had never been implemented due to the resistance of the Kemalist Nationalist movement (Ibid). The latest borders of new Turkish Republic under the rule of Kemalist Turkish nationalists were established by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne with the abolition of a Kurdish state (Elphinston, 1946). Since then, Kurds remained in the borders of different countries such as Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran and some territories of the former Soviet Union and Azerbaijan (Jwadih, 2012).

The early years of the one-party era of the new Turkish Republic (1923-1946) is significant for understanding the country's Kurdish question. By differing from the Ottoman Empire, the main ideology of the new republic was based on ethnicity rather than religion to build a Turkish "nation" and "state" with a centralist approach supported by modern and secular values (Barkey and Fuller, 1998). The 1924 Constitution equated citizenship with Turkishness, and so to become a member of the parliament or have a position at government offices, one had to either be a Turk or deny their ethnic identity through an acceptance of being Turkish (Ibid). Relating to the secular and modern state-building vision, the Kemalist government abolished the Caliphate in 1924 (Yavuz, 2001). Islam played a role as an adhesive agent to bind the Turks and Kurds during the Ottoman Empire (Barkey and Fuller, 1998). Abandoning Islam's adhesive role and embracing more secular and ethnic apparatus in creating a new nation-state had serious

ramifications, especially amongst the more traditional and religious Kurds such as the aghas or Sheikhs (Yavuz, 2001). There were rebellions against the Kemalist government such as the 1920 Kocgiri revolt, the 1925 Shaykh Said Rebellion, the 1930 Ararat (Agri) revolts and the 1937-38 Dersim (Tunceli) revolts (Yavuz, 2001; Barkey and Fuller, 1998; Olson, 1991). The Kemalist government used force to stop these rebellions, with leaders of these rebellions being subsequently tried and executed through the Independence Tribunals (Istiklal Mahkemeleri) (Barkey and Fuller, 1998). The motivation behind these Kurdish rebellions and whether they were religious (Barkey and Fuller) or nationalist (Kendal, 1993) is still controversial. The important point is that they facilitated the Kemalist government's legitimisation of secularist nation-state policy (Yavuz, 2001). This was particularly achieved by presenting these rebellions to the world as religious reactions aiming to bring the Caliphate/Ottoman dynasty back despite the participants being sentenced and executed following the accusations that they were attempting to create an independent Kurdistan (Kendal, 1993). As a consequence of such rebellions, new laws passed which exiled Kurds from east and south eastern Turkey to other parts of the country and made them "minority" in the new state (Barkey and Fuller, 1998; Kendal, 1993). As the Kemalist government announced Turkish language as the official one for all citizens, the utilisation of Kurdish language was banned (Barkey and Fuller, 1998). Although the existence of Kurds was not denied (Yavuz, 2001), one significant result of the one-party era was that those who acknowledged the Turkish identity by denying their Kurdish one possessed the rights of Turkish citizenship without any restrictions (Barkey and Fuller, 1998).

During the multi-party period in the 1950s, particularly the Democrat Party government lifted some cultural restrictions and the pressure of the security forces in the Kurdish region of the country as part of its election promises (Barkey and Fuller, 1998; Kendal, 1993). In this period, the new commercial bourgeoisie emerged, which included some Kurdish businessmen. However, these businessmen invested predominantly in western areas of the country at the expense of Kurdish ones. This created a huge gap between the developed western areas and underdeveloped eastern Kurdish areas of the country. Therefore, Kurds, especially the inhabitants of the underdeveloped areas in the east, engaged with left-wing activism to challenge such socio-economic differences (Barkey and Fuller, 1998). Groups in the country, including the Kurds, to some extent, enjoyed the freedom of expression at the beginning of the Democrat Party government. However, the government later held trials against the Kurdish intellectuals (Ibid), particularly the representatives of "Eastists" due to their writings in the

Advanced Country (İleri Yurt) regarding the need to address underdevelopments in the east (Kendal, 1993).

The Democrat Party government ended with a coup d'état in 1960 (Barkey and Fuller, 1998). The following military regime also approached the Kurdish question from the perspective of Turkish nationalism by giving Kurdish villages Turkish names and threatening Kurds with an immediate military response in any instance of unrest against regime policies (Barkey and Fuller, 1998; Kendal, 1993). One noteworthy development under the military regime, interestingly, was the creation of a more liberal constitution, which provided an opportunity to form trade unions and student organisations. The more left-wing political organisations such as the Turkish Workers' Party (Türkiye İşçi Partisi, TİP) subsequently used this opportunity through its Kurdish politicians and put the Kurdish question on the country's agenda as the "Eastern Problem" (Barkey and Fuller, 1998).

The period between 1960 and 1970 was significant for left-wing mobilisation in Turkey, particularly for the more secular Kurdish nationalist movements (Yavuz, 2001). The impact of the generational change (Barkey and Fuller, 1998) on the ascending leftist nationalist movements in Turkey and the Kurdish nationalist movement through a new definition of Kurdish identity (Yavuz, 2001) is important. While the older generation was more traditional, the new one in the 1960s embraced the ideological elements of the nation and nation-state (Barkey and Fuller, 1998). Additionally, the 1961 Constitution was more liberal in terms of individual rights (Ibid). This constitution facilitated the spread of "universal education and socio-political liberalisation" by creating modern intellectuals (Yavuz, 2001: p.9). These intellectuals, and the Alevi Kurds as secular groups, secularised the Kurdish identity in interacting with socialism (Ibid). Then, Kurds became active in politics by mainly engaging with the Turkish left to seek national rights (Barkey and Fuller, 1998). Accordingly, the leftist Kurds challenged the terms "capitalism" and "imperialism" as being the main reasons for the underdevelopment of Kurdish areas in Turkey (Ibid). So, the Kurdish identity question was conceptualised in the context of economic inequalities and the solution was seen through socialist policies (Yavuz, 2001).

Economic inequalities and underdevelopment in Kurdish areas accelerated the creation of leftist Kurdish groups by university students (Barkey and Fuller, 1998). Other left-wing Kurdish groups such as the Eastern Revolutionary Cultural Hearths (DDKO) became an impetus for the separatist movement, the PKK (Kendal, 1993). The DDKO harmonised Marxism and Kurdish nationalism to mobilise the Kurdish youth for social justice and identity, whilst Abdullah Ocalan, who would be the leader of the PKK, played an active role in DDKO activities by creating networks amongst students in the 1970s (Yavuz, 2001). Although the DDKO was outlawed following the 1971 coup d'état, the 1970s was the period when the Kurdish nationalists really began challenging the ideology of the Kemalist establishment (Yavuz, 2001).

The PKK was founded in 1978 by a group of students led by Abdullah Ocalan during the backdrop of the Cold War (Ocalan, 2012). The PKK presented itself as a political and practical movement (Ocalan, 2011b) and a revolutionary organisation differing from other Kurdish traditional parties (Barkey and Fuller, 1998). This type of presentation was the common characteristic of the leftist “national liberation” movements in the 1970s (Yarkin 2015). The party embraced the Marxist-Leninist, state-centred socialism (Ocalan, 2011b) and the anti-feudal, anti-capitalist rhetoric to address the lower-class Kurds such as workers, peasants and students (Yarkin, 2015). Accordingly, the PKK conceptualised the Kurdish-populated areas as an international colony of the imperialist powers which had to be liberated (Ocalan, 2012). Therefore, following its establishment, the PKK's main goal was to create an independent, unified, pan-Kurdish state in the Kurdish-populated countries of the Middle East (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011; Barkey and Fuller, 1998). Additionally, it proposed a socio-political revolution to transform the feudal structure of Kurdish society (Barkey and Fuller, 1998) by seizing state power and creating a classless society (Yarkin, 2015). It, therefore, used violent tactics or terrorist methods against the Turkish state (Gunter, 2000). The PKK leadership also perceived the Turkish state as an oppressor of the Kurdish people and treated the Kurdish tribal landlords as the collaborators of the Turkish state and foreign powers (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011; Barkey and Fuller, 1998).

During the second half of the 1970s, the political rivalry and conflicts between the left-wing, right-wing and Islamist groups of Turkey resulted in the 1980 coup d'état. Following the coup, Kurdish nationalism, radical Islamism and the Turkish Left became the main enemies of the Turkish state (Yavuz, 2001). The military regime targeted the organisation of Kurds through the destruction of their networks and pursued oppressive policies against Kurds (Ibid).

However, such policies accelerated Kurdish nationalism and were used by the PKK to locate sympathisers and recruit new members (Yavuz, 2001; Barkey and Fuller, 1998). The PKK's armed uprising against the Turkish state then began in 1984 (Yavuz, 2001) during which the PKK used violent tactics and terrorist methods against Turkish officials. This included teachers and civil servants by damaging public institutions or schools to decrease the presence of the Turkish state in Kurdish areas (Marcus, 1993; Barkey and Fuller, 1998). Similarly, the PKK used guerrilla tactics against the Turkish military which managed to achieve some success and support from the Kurdish people (Barkey and Fuller, 1998). However, this also added terrorism to Turkey's Kurdish question, since the authorities now approached the PKK from the perspective of terrorism (Gunter, 2000) and militarised the question with the involvement of the Turkish state army (Charountaki, 2011). In addition to the Turkish state, the US and the EU countries designated the PKK as a terrorist organisation to support their NATO ally Turkey (Gunter, 2014). Moreover, until the 1990s, the Kurdish representatives were active in mainstream Turkish parties, either left-wing (Kendal, 1993), right-wing or Islamist parties (Barkey and Fuller, 1998) to make the Kurdish question visible in the country. Since 1990, however, Kurds began establishing their own political parties. From then on, the People's Labour Party (Halkin Emek Partisi, HEP), the Democracy Party (Demokrasi Partisi, DEP), the People's Democracy Party (Halkin Demokrasi Partisi, HADEP), the Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi, DTP), the Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP) and the People's Democracy Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi, HDP) have been established by Kurds. Except for the HDP, which is currently an active Kurdish party in the Turkish parliament, others have been banned by the Turkish Constitutional Court due to their presumed connections to the PKK (Gunter, 2013).

The capture of the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan, in 1999 (Gunter, 2000), Turkey's EU application process (Ibid), the 2003 Iraq War and its impact on the PKK (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011) and the new AKP government noticeably affected the Kurdish question in Turkey. For instance, the AKP government launched the Kurdish Opening in 2009. Despite the Kurdish Opening policy of the Turkish government, the Turkish state policy, countering the PKK or the PKK-related organisations continued. For example, the DTP was banned by the Turkish Constitutional Court in December 2009 because of its reputed links with the PKK (Gunter, 2013), which was interpreted as the end of Kurdish Opening in the country (Gunter, 2014). However, the negotiations between the Turkish authorities and the PKK leader Ocalan

restarted in 2012 under the initiative of the Turkish government (Salih, 2015). Accordingly, during the Newroz celebration in March 2013, the PKK leader sent a letter to the Kurdish people and the PKK members in south eastern Turkey and Europe about a ceasefire. This included the withdrawal of the PKK militias from Turkey, release of the PKK prisoners and wishes for constitutional reforms in Turkey (Gunter, 2014). There were also negotiations between the Turkish Intelligence Service (MIT) and the PKK (Ibid) and between the Turkish government officials and the members of the HDP, who visited the PKK leader to discuss potential solutions to the Kurdish question.

These developments happened in parallel to the developments in the Syrian civil war especially regarding the PKK's affiliate, the PYD (Gunter, 2014). The Kobane crisis also happened between the Turkish government and the HDP in 2014 because of the different positions of the Turkish government and the HDP towards the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane (Salih, 2015). Then, before the June 2015 general election, the tension between the AKP and the HDP intensified and peace negotiations were halted (Ibid). The HDP managed to cross the 10 % threshold to enter the Turkish parliament for the first time in history and prevented the AKP's majority government (Ibid). Following that, the President Erdogan underlined the impossibility of the peace negotiations (Salih, 2015) and the Turkish government subsequently abandoned the negotiations in July 2015 (Eccarius-Kelly and Musa, 2018). This was followed by the ISIS and PKK terror attacks in July 2015 (Salih, 2015), which was an extremely chaotic period for Turkey due to the lack of government in the country until the November 2015 election. Following the AKP's election victory, the Turkish government's approach to the Kurdish question and the PKK became noticeably different from the one during the Kurdish Opening period. In other words, the new government's policy became quite similar to the policy of the official Turkish state during the 1990s (Eccarius-Kelly and Musa, 2018). Since 2014, the Turkish government's policy against the PYD has been shaped by its posture against the PKK by perceiving them identical (Ibid).

1.3 Syria's Approach to Kurds and the Rise of the PYD in the Kurdish Politics of Syria

This section briefly addresses the key developments affected the Syrian Kurds and Kurdish politics in Syria since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire until the 2011 Syrian civil war. Then, it explains the rise of the PYD as a political actor in the Kurdish politics of Syria and its

ideological links and organisational similarities with the PKK. The origins of the Kurdish question in Syria has similar root to the origins of the Kurdish question in Turkey due to the rise of Arab nationalism and the Syrian state-building process since the independence of Syria from France in 1946 (Tejel, 2009). The Syrian Kurds mainly live in northern Syria along the Turkish border, in the Kurd Dagh/Mountain or Afrin, Kobane (Ain al-Arab) and Hasakah or Jazirah region, while some live in Damascus, Aleppo and Homs (Gunter, 2014). Compared to the present, the Kurdish areas in northern Syria were not geographically contiguous, which resulted in communication problems between Kurdish areas in addition to the underdevelopment of organisational skills amongst the Syrian Kurds (Dunn, 2007). Following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, such a lack of connection periodically disappeared.

The exact population of the Syrian Kurds and their main settlements in Syria remained disputed. The uncertainty regarding the population of Syrian Kurds stems from speculating the numbers by the Syrian authorities and Kurds themselves. However, in general, the Syrian Kurds are estimated to be approximately 10 per cent of the Syrian population, which makes them the largest minority group (Gunter, 2014). Debates regarding the exact settlements of Syrian Kurds focuses on developments following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The first development was the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement between the UK and France, which considered the interests of each country in creating new borders (McDowall, 2013) but ignored the cultural ties and geographical location of Kurds in the Middle East (Gunter, 2014). The second was the 1921 Franklin-Bouillon⁸ Agreement between Turkey and France. This established the Turkish-Syrian frontier through the Aleppo-Baghdad railway; this was later confirmed by the 1929 Ankara Agreement between Turkey and France through which the Kurdish-populated areas remained in Syria (Elphinston, 1946). The third was the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne between the Kemalist Turkish government and the European Allies as the latest borders of the country was confirmed (Ibid). Since then, the Syrian Kurds remained in the borders of Syria (Jwadih, 2012). Finally, following the 1925 Sheikh Said Rebellion, the policies of the Turkish government contributed to the complexity of this issue. For instance, the perception of the rebellion as being religiously motivated against the Kemalist government in the middle of secular nation-state building process shaped its policies (Noi, 2012; Barkey and Fuller, 1998). Consequently, Kurds began fleeing from Turkey to northern Syria (McDowall, 1996). This

⁸ It is also known as Treaty of Ankara.

point would be the basis for the illegality/non-indigenoussness argument of the Baath regime against the Syrian Kurds, which then, brought the 1962 Al-Hasakah census.

During the 1920s, the political environment in Syria was changing, especially because of the developments such as the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, international approaches towards the protection of minorities and the emergence of the French Mandate (Tejel, 2009). Accordingly, after the Ottoman Empire, Syria remained under the French mandate from 1920 to 1946. This period was characterised by the rise of nationalisms across the world, including Turkish and Arab nationalism in the region which affected the French administration in Syria. To minimise the impact of nationalism amongst the Syrian Arabs, the French administration followed a “divide and rule” policy (Tejel, 2009). To support such a policy and counter the impact of nationalism amongst the Syrian Arabs, the administration also allowed the spread of Kurdish nationalism in Syria (Allsopp, 2015). Accordingly, as underlined by Allsopp (2015), from the 1920s until the establishment of the first Kurdish political party in Syria (1957), the following organisations with nationalist or regional motivations affected the Kurdish politics and political movement in Syria. They were Khoybun, the 1937 Kurdish-Christian autonomist movement of Jazira, the Muroud of Kurd Dagh and the Syrian Communist Party (SCP).

The Khoybun (Be Yourself) was the first nationalist and regional Kurdish organisation (Gunter, 2014; Tejel, 2009) with full of anger against the Kemalist Turkish government (Allsopp, 2015). Experts believe that the Khoybun was an intellectual movement and “school of Kurdish nationalism”, which attempted to conceptualise Kurdish nationalism and raise consciousness amongst Kurds by bringing together the well-educated and traditional Kurds from the Levant (Beirut, Damascus, Aleppo) and the Kurdish areas of the Middle East (Tejel, 2009; Allsopp, 2015). Therefore, its agenda mainly included concepts of nationalism, self-determination and oppression (Noi, 2012). It aimed at unifying the political efforts of Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran against the Kemalist government to liberate the Kurds in Turkey (Allsopp, 2015). The members of Khoybun believed that Kurds had sufficient rights in Iraq and Syria under the British and French mandates. However, this was not valid for the Kurds in Turkey (Ibid). Khoybun, therefore, played a significant role in organising the 1930 Ararat (Ağrı Dagh) Rebellion in Turkey (O’Ballance, 1996). The rebellion took place between 1928 and 1931 to establish a Kurdish state by declaring the Kurd Ava at Ağrı Dağı as its capital, but this was suppressed by the Turkish government army (Allsopp, 2015). Following the failure of the

rebellion, Khoybun collapsed. Although the Kurds could not realise their goals in Turkey, to some extent, Khoybun contributed to the foundation of Kurdish nationalism in Syria and the region more broadly (Gunter, 2014).

After the Khoybun, Bedirkhan brothers, especially Jaladat Bedirkhan followed a different path for the Syrian Kurds with an understanding that Kurds need intellect for being conscious about Kurdishness (Allsopp, 2015). Therefore, he focused on more cultural and intellectual points to bring an understanding of belonging for the Syrian Kurds to the Kurdish community (Tejel, 2009). While Bedirkhan brothers were pioneering cultural activities for the consciousness of the Syrian Kurds, the second organisation was on the rise, the 1937 Kurdish-Christian autonomist movement of Jazira as a response to the 1936 French Syrian agreement on the independence of Syria and an Arab nationalist government in Damascus (Allsopp, 2015). It was a local movement rising against the policies of the French Mandate, appointing Syrian administrators to Jazira from outside the region, which disturbed the Kurdish tribal leaders and Christian notables (Ibid); and granting administrative autonomy to the Druzes and Alawites (Tejel, 2009). Therefore, the leaders of the movement demanded socio-economic and administrative rights for the Kurds and Christians in Jazira from the French mandate (Allsopp, 2015). It seems that with a local/regionalist characteristic, the Kurdish-Christian autonomist movement, to some extent, negatively impacted the development of the Kurdish nationalist organisation and Kurdish unity since it caused divisions in the Kurdish regions of Syria as well as their socio-political improvement (Ibid).

The third organisation was another local movement, the Muroud of Kurd Dagh in the 1930s. The Muroud was a religious movement, which followed the Naqshbandi tradition of Islam, and a social movement advocating the rights of peasants and campaigning against the oppressive implementations of landlords (Allsopp, 2015). It was a popular and, to some extent, successful due to the socio-economic conditions of the Kurd Dagh region by changing some practices, especially the social ones between peasants and landlords (Ibid). However, the Muroud mainly contributed to the Syrian independent movement by struggling against the French mandate rather than the Kurdish nationalist organisation/movement or Kurdish unity (Ibid). The last organisation contributing to the Kurdish politics and the Kurdish political movement in Syria was the SCP. It appears that the local/internal, regional and international factors led the Syrian Kurds to join the SCP. Locally, the changing socio-political environment in the Kurdish areas

following the withdrawal of France from Syrian in 1946 and the Kurdish leader of the party, Khalid Bakdash, were important incentives for Kurds' participation in the SCP (Allsopp, 2015). Regionally, Mulla Mustafa Barzani's rebellion in Iraq and following its failure his role in the formation of the Republic of Mahabad in Iran in 1946 as well as the establishment of the KDP in Iran (1945) and in Iraq (1946) (Ibid). Internationally, the socialist characteristics of the liberation movements and Soviet support to these movements were other factors (Ibid). Accordingly, the Syrian Kurds seemed to align their nationalist interests and leftist tendency with the ideology of the SCP for realising emancipation, equality and justice for the Kurds (Ibid) by considering the support of the Soviet Union. The SCP's official stance against the Kurdish national rights and its reluctance to utilise Kurdish language in its publications led the great many Kurdish members to leave the Party.

However, as emphasised by Allsopp (2015), the SCP affected the Kurdish political movement of Syria in the following ways. The Syrian Kurds gained a political experience and built an organisational structure for the nationalist movement to follow their goals as a political party (Ibid). This experience brought the Kurds together from local areas such as the Kurd Dagh and Jazira, the places where the local movements, the Muroud and the Kurdish-Christian autonomists, arouse (Ibid). The SCP also contributed to the education and learning of the Kurd Dagh through sending students to the socialist countries (Ibid). It prepared an ideological ground for the Kurdish parties in Syria through the ideologies of socialism, communism and Marxism-Leninism the same as the characteristics of the leftist liberation movements of the period.

The developments regarding the Kurdish political movement in Syria, and the waves of nationalism affected both Kurds and Arabs by causing a rivalry between them following Syria's independence from France in 1946 (Caves, 2012). This further reinforced the emergence of new Kurdish parties in Syria such as the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Syria (KDPS). After the aforementioned organisations in the Kurdish politics of Syria, some Kurdish individuals had been defending the Kurdish rights in the Syrian parliament. But the Kurdish community had concerns over the lack of effective representation, which aroused an expectation to establish a new Kurdish political party (Gunter, 2014). During this period, the military played a central role in politics and new political elites such as Husni Zaim, Sami al-Hinnawi and Adib al-Shishakli seized power, particularly through the coup d'état (Tejel, 2009). Moreover, these

elites had been influenced by the Kemalist government of Turkey for transforming the Syrian society and political system around a strong leader (Ibid). The ascending Arab nationalism in Syria and fears of being controlled by a nationalist Arab government, urged the Syrian Kurds to form a new party (Ibid). Eventually, the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Syria (KDPS) was established on 14 June 1957, as a Syrian affiliate of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Iraq (Caves, 2012), which brought the Syrian Kurds from all Kurdish regions of the country (Allsopp, 2015). The KDPS demanded a democratic Syria with recognition of the Syrian Kurds as an ethnic group in the country, in addition to generating economic development for Kurdish areas (Gunter, 2014) and an autonomous or independent Kurdistan including the Kurdish enclaves of Syria (Allsopp, 2015; Tejel, 2009). Then, the origins of other contemporary Kurdish political parties in Syria, except for the PYD, traces back to this first Kurdish political party (Allsopp, 2015).

With the impact of increasing Arab nationalism, the Baath regime of Syria united with Egypt in 1958 to form the United Arab Republic which lasted until 1961 (Gunter, 2014). Following Syria's withdrawal from the union, the nationalist policies of Baath regime continued by renaming Syria, as the Syrian Arab Republic and excluding non-Arabs or Kurds (Caves, 2012). As part of these policies, the Baath regime took the 1962 Al-Hasakah Census by issuing a decree 93 (Tejel, 2009), which was a significant development for understanding the origins of Kurdish question in Syria. Experts underline that this was an unusual census for the Jazirah region (Tejel, 2009) through which the Baath regime wanted to make demographical changes in favour of Arabs to argue that it was not a Kurdish region (Allsopp, 2015). As will be discussed in the chapter 3 on the PYD framing, Jazirah is still multi-ethnic region and has importance for the PYD framing. This census was also highly related to the uncertainty of Kurdish origin and settlement in Syria and its utilisation by the Baath regime. According to the decree 93, the Syrian Kurds had to prove that they had been living in Syria before 1945 to remain Syrian citizens, since the Baath regime argued that both the identity documents of the Syrian Kurds and their entrance to Syria were illegal (Allsopp, 2015). Approximately 120,000 to 150,000 Kurds were unable to provide the necessary documentation and lost their Syrian citizenship, thus effectively rendering them stateless (Ibid). The Kurds who lost their citizenship were registered as *ajanib/ajnabi* or *ajnabiyah* (foreigners) and *maktumin* (unregistered stateless people) by the Baath regime (Allsopp, 2015; Federici, 2015) and lost their basic rights; political, educational and socio-economic rights (Allsopp, 2015). In 1970, Hafez al-Assad seized power

in Syria through a coup d'état (Tejel, 2009) and subsequently increased nationalist policies by founding new associations such as the Parliament and Ministry (Allsopp, 2015). The Hafez al-Assad regime perceived the Kurds and Kurdish identity as a threat and began implementing the resettlement policies against Kurds in northern Syria in continuation of the Al-Hasakah census. This was achieved through replacing Kurds with Arab tribes by calling this implementation as the Arab Belt Project (Allsopp, 2015; Caves, 2012). As will be analysed in the chapter 4 on the Turkish government counter-framing, this is a significant point since Arabs in northern Syria had been arguing that the PYD had been making demographic changes in the guise of fighting ISIS by replacing Arabs with Kurds for the emergence of geographically connected cantonal administration in Afrin, Kobane and Jazirah.

The final important development for the Kurdish question in Syria prior to the civil war was the 2004 Qamishli Uprising. This was a reaction and an emphasised solidarity of the Syrian Kurds towards the constructional recognition of the status of KRG in March 2004 to draw the international community's attention to the Kurdish question in Syria (Gunter, 2014). According to the Kurdish reports, the protests against the Assad regime began during a football match between Kurdish and Arab teams on 12th March 2004 and spread throughout the entire Kurdish region as an uprising (KurdWatch, 2009). These events were assessed as a reaction of the Syrian Kurds, who had suffered from the Baath regime since the 1962 al-Hasakah census (Allsopp, 2015) or as indicators of Kurdish revolution in Syria (Charaountaki, 2015). The Syrian Kurdish parties assessed these events as an eye-opening development for unifying the Syrian Kurds with Kurds in other countries (Gunter, 2014) to draw attention to the Kurdish question in Syria (Bingol, 2013). But, the Qamishli Uprising could not have results expected by the Syrian Kurds, since the Syrian government suppressed these Kurdish uprisings (Allsopp, 2015). The Syrian Kurds would have to wait until the outbreak of the 2011 civil war for a new era, and more important to become visible all across the world.

Following the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 to focus on more central parts of Syria (Gunter, 2014), the Kurdish parties fill the political and security gaps in northern Syria (Allsopp, 2013). The PYD became a dominant party and movement in the Kurdish politics of Syria (Kaya and Lowe, 2017) due to its armed forces (Savelsberg and Tejel, 2013). Then, it declared an autonomous administration in the summer of 2013 and created the Social Contract of Rojava for self-governance in January 2014 (Gunter,

2014). In March 2016, the PYD proclaimed a federal government in north and eastern Syria (Plakoudas, 2017). The PYD was established by the remnants of the PKK in 2003 as its Syrian branch (Allsopp, 2015). It has also organisational similarities and ideological links to the PKK (Jongerden and Akkaya, 2013; Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011) as well as other implementations in their organisational bodies and military units (Kaya and Lowe, 2017). Even, the PYD leadership accepts its ideological alliance with the PKK by underlining that having ideological alliance does not mean that the PKK controls the PYD and the PYD follows practically independent policies in Syria (Ibid, p.277). This is significant for two reasons; first, to understand the support of the PKK to the PYD and its policies in Syria, since the PKK leader Ocalan's ideas have been practised by the PYD as a "de facto party of government" (Kaya and Lowe, 2017; p.284); and second, to comprehend the origins of the PYD framing of its model of governance for lobbying in the US/UK.

Organisationally, the PKK witnessed some changes since the 2000s and especially following the establishment of the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK) (Kongreya Azadiya u Demokrasiya Kurdistan), which is called terrorist organisation by the EU right after the establishment (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011). In addition to this development, the 2003 US military intervention in Iraq, which ended up toppling of Saddam Hussein and provided new gains to the Iraqi Kurds as greater level of autonomy and even a path for independence (Ibid). Such a situation seems to have impacted the PKK leader to think that Kurds could have their administration in the existing states without changing borders or separation. It also affected the PKK itself since the members of the PKK began leaving (Ibid). To prevent such ramifications, the KCK (Koma Civaken Kurdistan/the Association of Communities in Kurdistan) was founded in 2004 as the PKK's new coordination body for military and political organisations (Ibid). In 2005, the co-presidency⁹ was added to the organisational structure of the PKK (Ibid), which is also embraced by the PYD (Kaya and Lowe, 2017). From there, the PKK has become a complicated organisation, including having a co-party, the PAJK (Partiya Azadiya Jin a Kurdistan/Party of Free Women in Kurdistan), which organised women in parallel with the PKK ideology (Ibid) and the sister parties. These parties are the Partiya Çareseriya Demokratik a Kurdistan/Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party (PÇDK) in Iraq, the Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat/Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Syria and the Partiya Jiyana Azad a

⁹ The presidency of men and women in the same time.

Kurdistan/Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK) in Iran (Jongerden and Akkaya, 2013). These political bodies also had guerrilla forces such as the HPG, the party's military organisation, the HRK (Hezi Rojhelati Kurdistan/Force of Eastern Kurdistan) in coordination with the PAJK and YJA–STAR, (the Free Women's Units), the women's guerrilla organisation (Ibid). Similar to the PKK, the PYD has its own guerrilla organisations, the YPG (Yekineyen Parastine Gel/People's Protection Units) for the men (Kaya and Lowe, 2017) and the YPJ (Yekineyen Parastine Jin/Women's Protection Units) for the women (Gunter, 2014). Additionally, the YPG and YPJ are supported and trained by the PKK's armed wing (Paasche and Gunter, 2016).

The PYD also has ideological links to the PKK (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011). Initially, the PKK embraced the Marxist-Leninist, state-centred socialism (Ocalan, 2011b) and the anti-feudal, anti-capitalist rhetoric to address the lower-class Kurds such as workers, peasants and students (Yarkin, 2015). The aim was to form an independent, unified, pan-Kurdish state in the Kurdish-populated countries of the Middle East (Gunter, 2000, Barkey and Fuller, 1998). From its establishment in 1978 to the 2000s, the PKK leader Ocalan inspired by Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, Georgi Dimitrov, Vo Nguyen Giap and Che Guevara (Yarkin, 2015). However, the PKK has been engaged in an ideological modification process since the 1990s because of following developments; the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 as its ideological protector (Yarkin, 2015; Gunter, 2000; Barkey and Fuller, 1998), the capture of its leader by a US-Turkish joint operation in 1999 (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011; Gunter, 2000), Turkey's EU application process; and therefore, its need for democratisation by solving the Kurdish question in the context of the rights of minorities (Gunter, 2000). Especially when the 2003 US military intervention in Iraq ended up with the removal of Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi Kurds had new political gains such as greater level of autonomy, and even a path for independence (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011). It appears that this situation impacted the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan to think that Kurds could have their administration in the existing states without changing borders or separation (Ibid). Then, the PKK leader proposed a new project of society-building rather than state-building by arguing a "peaceful" and "democratic" solution to the Kurdish question within the existing borders of the Kurdish-populated countries in the Middle East (Ibid). The PKK leader then focused on other leftist theoreticians (Yarkin, 2015), particularly Murray Bookchin's concepts of libertarian or confederal municipality (1990; 1991) which aimed at transforming a society by creating new citizenship and politics through confederal networks (Jongerden and Akkaya, 2013). Since

then, Ocalan modified the PKK's ideology from the Marxist-Leninist, state-centralised, left-wing nationalist and pan-Kurdish state to a radical democracy (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011) or a stateless governance model (Knapp and Jongerden, 2014). This was the ideological basis of the PYD's model of governance in northern Syria, which is followed and underlined by the PYD chair, Salih Muslim (quoted in KurdWatch, 2011) in the early stages of the 2011 Syrian civil war. The PYD would be practising this model after the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 (Gunter, 2014) and would be lobbying for its legitimisation (Paasche and Gunter, 2016; Federici, 2015) in the US/UK.

As a Marxist-Leninist, the PKK leader, Ocalan, attempted to justify his ideological transformation from a Kurdish state to a model of stateless governance in two ways. First, he (2011a, pp.12-13) described the nation-state as a monopolisation preventing diversity and pluralism. He (Ibid) also argued that this monopolisation assimilates "all kinds of spiritual and intellectual ideas and cultures" to "preserve its own existence", create a single "national culture", "national identity" and "unified religious community" for a homogenous citizenship. These were explained as the terms of capitalist modernity (Ibid). Secondly, Ocalan (2011b, p.57) criticised the perspectives of Marx and Engels on socialism, since they "were unable to argue outside the context of capitalism" and they "unwillingly became the left-wing extreme of the existing system". According to Ocalan (2011a), Kurds had been struggling with the repression of dominant powers and had been seeking both the recognition of their existence and liberation of their society from feudalism. Therefore, establishment of an independent Kurdish state means replacing "the old chains by new ones or even enhance the repression" of the capitalist modernity (Ibid, p.19). This idea would also reflect the interests of ruling class rather than the interests of Kurdish people (Ibid). Accordingly, he argued for an alternative model of governance as a solution to the Kurdish question in the Middle East.

Ocalan (2011a) described his model as a "non-state administration" or "democracy without a state". He introduced this model as an alternative to the nation-state, which could also work with states, republics and democracies and could compromise "state or governmental traditions" (Ocalan, 2011a: p.22) through a democratic constitution defining the "domain for each of them" (Ocalan, 2016: p.20). The democratic constitution could also transform the nation-state into a democratic republic through a democratisation process with the function of autonomous governance, local democracy, a democratic nation and democratic culture in all

social areas. Accordingly, Ocalan's (2016: p.21) conditions for the compromise/solution were the recognition of democratic autonomy and the right of self-governance by "sharing the governance between democratic social forces and the government or state". He (2011a) further argued that this governance would allow for a heterogeneous citizenship and "equal coexistence". These are significant terms providing clues regarding Ocalan's model of governance and its presentation by the PYD leadership during the framing process for lobbying.

According to Ocalan (2016: p.24), the mindset of his democratic nation was based on the "consciousness of freedom" and "solidarity" amongst communities and individuals via their self-governance. Thus, a society under this model relied on its original meaning, as a historical experience and collective heritage, which were embraced by the former empires for their internal government through different self-administrations such as "religious authorities, tribal councils, kingdoms and republics" (Ocalan, 2011a: p.23). By using these points as justifications, Ocalan (2016) argued that there was no need for a single state and language or dialect to become a nation and that he perceived other languages and the existence of other dialects as richness (Ibid). In trying to transform Kurdish societies, it appears that Ocalan is aware of the reality facing Kurdish societies in the Middle East. In this way, he seems to try and open a space for equal coexistence with other minorities to present his model as inclusive and democratic. This is a significant point, since the PYD presents this idea as a peaceful coexistence with other minorities and linguistic rights for people while framing its model of governance.

Ocalan (2016) also aimed to design a new society and politics with active citizens through education, particularly through the indoctrination of the new PKK ideology. Education, thus, was envisaged as a tool for transforming the Kurdish nation from a nation-state ideology to Ocalan's democratic nation. He (2016) separated existence into two categories as intellectual and social. Intellectual existence required opening schools to teach "intellectual and emotional education" and create active citizens of this new nation. These schools also had a duty to explain the existing societal structure of current century and its historical development or its transformation into existing capitalist modernity (Ibid). Ocalan asserted that the new Kurdish society would internalise the concepts of freedom and equality by respecting differences in the "public sphere" and in the "moral and political life of society" through these schools (Ibid: p.29). This is the theoretical basis for creating active citizens through the indoctrination of the

new PKK ideology. In practice, it would be achieved through active participation in the policymaking process. However, Ocalan's active citizenship is not limited to this. The new and active citizens should also defend their nation, society and administration in the context of self-defence, since the self-defence meant protecting the "identity", "political awareness" and "democratisation process" against the "internal and external interventions" (Ocalan, 2011a: pp.28-29). It is also a matter of existence for Ocalan's (2016) new nation. This indicates that Ocalan develops two implicit self-defences, as social and military. While social self-defence is compatible with the protection of identity, political awareness, decision-making and Ocalan's new nation; military self-defence considers protecting territorial gains of this model of governance against the perceived threats.

The PKK leader, Ocalan (2016), also argued the necessity of self-defence for women in his new society and model of governance. The women's organisations of the PKK, as military and political ones, have a long history (Jongerden and Akkaya, 2013). The first women's guerrilla organisation under the name of the Union of Women was established in 1995, which operates now as YJA-STAR (the Free Women Units) due to the ideological transformation (Ibid). Similarly, the PKK's first women party, the Women's Party (PJA), was formed in 1999, which operates as the PAJK (Partiya Azadiya Jin a Kurdistan/Party of Free Women in Kurdistan) to organise women ideologically by working with the KJB (Koma Jinen Bilind/the Community of Assertive Women) (Ibid). Ocalan (2011a; 2011b) defined women as an oppressed gender of the class society and a cheap labour of the patriarchal nation-state system to be exploited and used to produce men. Therefore, women should learn their history and form their own institutions, including their own defence forces, to have their place in Ocalan's new society and model of governance (Ocalan, 2016: p.56). Accordingly, the YPJ, which was established in 2013 in parallel to the YPG, operates as women's defence units in northern Syria (Knapp et al., 2016) in parallel with the YJA-STAR of the PKK. These views on women justify the co-presidency system in the PKK-related organisations since 2005 (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011), which is also practiced by the PYD (Kaya and Lowe, 2017), and presented to accentuate the gender equality.

Ocalan's (2011a, p.27) political system and administrative structure were based on the confederal networks of the federative units, which would practise as the "germ cells of participatory democracy". These units would be able to "combine and associate into new groups

and confederations” through which power travels from the local to the global one (Ibid, p.27). Thus, villages and urban neighbourhoods needed these confederate structures (Ibid). In this way, Ocalan’s model was designed as a “political self-determination”, under which all groups and cultural identities could express themselves in the decision-making process through local meetings, general conventions and local councils (Ibid). This type of self-determination would encourage diverse groups and would “advance[s] the political integration of society as whole” owing to its duty to be “central tools of social expression and participation” (Ibid, p.26). The system, then, would politicise the society, and politics would become part of daily life (Ibid). Consequently, Ocalan believed that this new political culture and politics would create an active citizenship theoretically and practically (Ocalan, 2016; 2011a). Finally, these confederations would not be restricted in one particular area. They would become “cross-border confederations” (Ocalan, 2011a; p.32). In this way, Ocalan opens space for the aforementioned umbrella organisation, the KCK, to connect the Kurdish confederal networks in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

Ocalan (2011a; 2011b) asserted that his model of governance would solve the Kurdish question in the Kurdish-populated countries and would be a role model for the democratisation of the entire Middle East. He (2011a) described capitalist modernity and its nation-state ideology as the main problem for the states in the Middle East, since the region includes many societies such as Arabs, Turks, Turkmens, Kurds, Persians/Iranians, Assyrians, Armenians, Jewish, Palestinians. Therefore, he argued for a new solution, which would provide equal coexistence for these societies by differing from the nation-state system of capitalist modernity (2011a). According to Ocalan (2011b), the nation-states, which surround Kurds, are not truly democratic like the Western democracies. The democratic transformation of these societies in the Middle East through Ocalan’s model of governance without changing the existing borders, thus, would be an alternative solution to capitalist modernity (Ocalan, 2011a; Ocalan, 2011b). In this way, the model would provide opportunities to all ethno-religious identities for expressing themselves as well as contributing to the democratisation of Middle East (Ibid). Ocalan (2011b) went even further to argue that the Middle East would have a potential to create democratic institutions similar to EU through his model. Since the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012, the PYD leadership has been practising Ocalan’s model of governance (Allsopp, 2015) and has been framing it as a regional role model for lobbying and legitimising (Paasche and Gunter, 2016) in the US/UK.

1.4 The Policy Stances of the UK and the US towards Kurds

Before analysing the PYD's lobbying efforts for its model of governance through framing in the US/UK, it is significant to discuss these countries' policies towards Kurds. The policy stances of the UK and the US towards the Kurdish question have been mainly shaped by their policy objectives in the Middle East following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The nation-states across the world emerged as key elements of the new international order in the post-WWI. Woodrow Wilson's fourteen points encouraged this new order, and particularly the right of self-determination to all nations in the Middle East under the mandate of Great Powers affected the US/UK policies towards Kurds (Arikanli, 2010; Fontana, 2010). While the US aimed to form an Armenian state under its mandate (Kaymaz, 2011), the UK focused on Mesopotamia and Southern Kurdistan (present day northern Iraq), as a security of Mosul vilayet and Mesopotamian mandates (Arikanli, 2010). Therefore, Britain's relationship with Kurds trace back to its colonialism in India and Mesopotamia (Home, 2006). It appears that under this new world order, Britain had no well-defined policy stance towards Kurds (Eskander, 2000). Instead, its Kurdish policy had inconsistencies due to its policy objectives in Mesopotamia during different time periods (Arikanli, 2010) and the disagreements between British politicians and military or civilian officials either in the region or in London (Arikanli, 2010; Eskander, 2001). For instance, after WWI, Britain's Kurdish policy was shaped by these factors; the withdrawal of Russia from the WWI (Eskander, 2000), the British policy objectives such as forming an Armenian state in Anatolia (Kaymaz, 2011), including Mosul vilayet¹⁰ into Mesopotamia (Kaymaz, 2011), and using Southern Kurdistan as a buffer zone between Anatolia and Mesopotamia as a pre-emptive strategy against the ascending Kemalist Turkish threat to the British objectives in northern Mesopotamia (Fontana, 2010; Eskander, 2001).

The decision to include Mosul vilayet in Mesopotamia as well as the idea of forming an Armenian state in north-eastern Anatolia, made the British involvement in Kurdish areas inevitable (Kaymaz, 2011). Mosul vilayet had economic and strategic importance for Britain due to its oil-rich fields and wealthy territories, and for ensuring the security of Mesopotamia (Kaymaz, 2011). Britain occupied Mosul vilayet in October 1918 following the Mudros armistice (Eskander, 2000). The vilayet was surrounded by Kurdish-populated areas from the north, east and south east; and therefore, British officials preferred control of these areas as

¹⁰ It refers to today's northern Iraq.

buffer zones for the security of Mesopotamia (Kaymaz, 2011). However, there were some difficulties regarding Kurds and Kurdish regions. First, British officials had concerns over Kurds. These concerns regarded the geographic difficulties of Kurdish regions, the strong tribalism amongst Kurds, the lack of connection and/or solidarity between different Kurdish areas and tribes, and the common belief of the inability of Kurds in terms of governing themselves because of their internal divisions, in addition to the ongoing conflict between Kurds and Armenians (Kaymaz, 2011; Eskander, 2000). Therefore, British officials did not entirely trust Kurds (Kaymaz, 2011).

Second, despite the idea of forming a Kurdish entity, its implementation with forming Arab and Armenian states, the type of entity, whether it was an autonomous or independent state under direct or indirect British control, the amounts of entities, and whether a united one or three to four autonomous entities in different regions were crucial points to address (Kaymaz, 2011; Eskander, 2000). This was also related to the disagreements between and/or inside the British institutions which were responsible for policymaking, between British politicians and civilian or military officials either in London or in Mesopotamia (Arikanli, 2010; Eskander, 2001; 2000). Finally, if there was a Kurdish entity, what would be the criteria for drawing its borders? Would there be a consideration of ethnic lines in the region or the prioritisation of geographic, strategic and economic expectations of Britain? (Kaymaz, 2011). Considering these reasons and policy objectives in Mesopotamia, British authorities discussed at least ten different proposals for Kurdish regions after WWI (Kaymaz, 2011: p.104). They included an autonomous Kurdish state as security for Arab and Armenian states, two autonomous Kurdish states, one in Anatolia as a Kurdish-Armenian, and another in Southern Kurdistan, and three Kurdish states as Southern, Central and Western Kurdistan. Their capitals would be Sulaymaniya, Mosul and Diyarbekir, respectively (Ibid). Another proposal was not a united Kurdish state, but fringe autonomous entities in different areas, for instance, a tribal confederation in the east and autonomous entities in the north of Mosul (Ibid).

From 1918 to 1926, Britain's policies towards Kurds diverged from indirect to direct control, especially over Southern Kurdistan (Kaymaz, 2011; Arikanli, 2010). The individual and institutional disagreements between British authorities regarding direct or indirect British control over Kurdish regions, mainly over Southern Kurdistan (Eskander, 2001; 2000) affected such divergent policies (Arikanli, 2010). For instance, the decision following WWI was to have

indirect British control over different Kurdish regions surrounding Mosul vilayet through a tribal confederation and in the Kurdish region of Anatolia. This would be achieved through influencing the appointments of Ottoman officials who would work with British officials in the region by considering the objective of forming an Armenian state (Kaymaz, 2011). In the north of Mosul vilayet, indirect British control was attempted through creating fringe autonomous Kurdish entities under the control of Sheikh Ahmed of Barzan, Ahmed Faik Bedrkhan and Sayid Taha of Nihri and agitating the disagreements between tribes and different communities, especially between Kurds and Christians (Kaymaz, 2011; Eskander, 2000). Accordingly, the Kurdish autonomous government experiments took place in the east and south east of Mosul, which was called Southern Kurdistan, under the governorship of Sheikh Mahmud of Barzanji (Eskander, 2001; 2000).

The first experiment of Kurdish autonomous government was between 1918 and 1919. This government had its own military forces and as a governor, Sheikh Mahmud, had an independent authority to appoint government officials and to enlarge it through other towns and districts such as Kirkuk (Eskander, 2000). British officials were opposed to the status of this government and demanded direct British control through its incorporation into Mesopotamia (Ibid). Otherwise, the Southern Kurds under the rule of Sheikh Mahmud would have an independent Kurdish state separating from British control and could have damaged British interests in Mesopotamia (Fontana, 2010). The British decision to have direct control of Southern Kurdistan ended up with uprisings. In southern Kurdistan, Sheikh Mahmud revolted against Britain by declaring independence in May 1919 (McDowall, 2013). In northern areas of Mosul, Kurdish tribes started other uprisings such as Amadiya against British authorities (Kaymaz, 2011).

The second experiment of the Kurdish autonomous government took place between 1920 and 1923 against the ascending Kemalist Turkish movement in Anatolia and its policies towards Southern Kurdistan. The creation of an Armenian state (McDowall, 2013), and ensuring the security of Mesopotamia through Southern Kurdistan were still two important British policy objectives in the 1920s (Eskander, 2001). Therefore, the 1920 Treaty of Sevres promised autonomous Kurdish and Armenian governments in Anatolia with a lack of clearly demarcated borders between them (McDowall, 2013). According to the Treaty, Kurds could hold an independence referendum once they convinced the League of Nations that they could govern

themselves, and that the autonomous Kurdistan would join Southern Kurdistan to form a Kurdish state (Kaymaz, 2011). Although the Ottoman Empire had to sign this treaty under pressure from the Allied forces in Istanbul, the Kemalist nationalists did not recognise the treaty (Fontana, 2010), since it would mean a partition of Ottoman territories.

Following the perception of Kemalist nationalists as a threat to British objectives in Mesopotamia, the debates regarding Southern Kurdistan were based on its status, whether it should be incorporated into Mesopotamia under the Arab rule or an independent entity as a buffer zone between Mesopotamia and Anatolia for the containment of the Kemalist threat (Eskander, 2001). The initial position was to have Southern Kurdistan as a separate state (Fontana, 2010), since its incorporation into Iraq could cause Kurdish resistance and end up with Kurdish alliance with the Kemalists (Eskander, 2001). Despite these debates, British officials included the Southern Kurds in a referendum for the future of Iraq, especially regarding the candidacy of Faisal as a King of Iraq. However, Kurds voted against his candidacy (Ibid). Considering this rejection, and the increasing influence of the Kemalist nationalists in the region, Britain brought back Sheikh Mahmud from exile to form the second autonomous government in Southern Kurdistan in 1922 (Ibid). Although Mahmud formed the government and managed to mobilise the Kurdish nationalists under his rule, British authorities later changed their policy and decided to incorporate this administration into Iraq (Eskander, 2001) as another vilayet with Baghdad and Basra (Fontana, 2010). The internal politics in Britain, Sheikh Mahmud's attempts for an independent Kurdish state, which caused British officials' lack of trust in him, and the agreement between Britain and the Kemalist Turkish government regarding the status of Southern Kurdistan at 1923 Lausanne Conference, were the main reasons behind this incorporation (Eskander, 2001). Consequently, the Kurdish autonomous government experiments were ended by direct British control and Southern Kurdistan's incorporation into Iraq.

Although the Treaty of Lausanne declined Kurdish and Armenian autonomous and/or independent states (McDowall, 2013), the Kemalist Turkish government argued for some rights on Mosul vilayet (Fontana, 2010), and the status of vilayet remained as a main problem between Britain and Turkey (McDowall, 2013). Therefore, the treaty left the final decision regarding the status of Mosul to the League of Nations (Fontana, 2010). The Turkish government attempted to hold a referendum through which the local people could decide which country they would

live by considering their sympathy towards Turkey. However, amongst the developments in Turkey, such as the abolishment of caliphate in March 1924 and the Sheikh Said revolt against this decision, the League of Nations' commission declared that Mosul would be part of Iraq under its mandate within next twenty five years (McDowall, 2013). Later Mosul came under the British control (Kendal, 1993). Britain and Turkey signed a treaty on 5 June 1926 to accept this decision (McDowall, 2013). Following the recognition of the borders of Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran through the Treaty of Lausanne, Kurds remained in the borders of these countries.

While the UK was dealing with Southern Kurdistan, the US focused on Kurds and Armenians in Anatolia to form autonomous Kurdish and Armenian states under its protection after WWI (Kaymaz, 2011; Gunter, 2011). However, the Turkish War of Independence and the British policy objectives in Mosul vilayet and its Kurdish policy seemed to have hindered these US objectives (Ibid). With the Cold War, the US became the leading country in the Western bloc against the Soviet Union (Charountaki, 2011) and began developing relations with the countries in the Middle East. In this regard, the official policy stance of the US towards Kurds was based mainly on the Kurdish-populated countries of the Middle East by prioritising their territorial integrity (Gunter, 2011). The US relations with Kurds started in the 1950s to contain the Soviet expansion in the Middle East (Charountaki, 2011). In general, the US paid less attention to the Iranian Kurds (Gunter, 2014). The main reason for this trace back to the establishment of Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in Iran between 22 January 1946 and 14 December 1922 with the support of the Soviet Union. US officials perceived that the Iranian Kurds were Soviet dependents and the Kurdish movement in the country was pro-Communist (Charountaki, 2011). Additionally, the control of the Kurdish opposition in Iran by the US-backed Shah regime during the Cold War led the US to pay less attention to the Kurdish question in Iran (Ibid).

The US policy stance towards the Iraqi Kurds was also shaped by its policy objectives in the Middle East. For instance, the substantial US relations with the Iraqi Kurds started in the 1970s under the pressure of the Cold War. This was largely due to fears of Soviet influence on Iraq and its Kurdish region, especially since the regime of Saddam Hussein began cooperating with the Soviet Union (Charountaki, 2011). Therefore, the main US policy was to encourage the Iraqi Kurds to work with the Iranian Shah regime against Iraq (Ibid). Accordingly, Saddam Hussein had been interacting with the Iranian Kurds to mobilise them against the Shah regime (Gunter, 2014). The Nixon administration with the supervision of national security advisor,

Henry Kissinger, supported the Kurdish Mulla Mustafa Barzani's revolt against Saddam Hussein financially and militarily (Meho and Nehme, 1991). While supporting this revolt, the Nixon administration also considered other points such as the nationalisation attempts of the Iraqi petroleum (Charountaki, 2011) and the positions of US allies Israel and Iran against the Soviet ally Iraq (Gunter, 2011). Barzani could not overthrow Saddam Hussein (Gunter, 2014). The US ally of the time, Iran, signed the Algiers Agreement with Iraq and abandoned the Iraqi Kurds against Saddam Hussein to prevent any Kurdish insurgency in Iran with the support of Iraq (Charountaki, 2011). This meant that the US withdrew its support to the Iraqi Kurds (Gunter, 2011). The US indifference to Kurdish genocide through the well-known 'Anfal Campaign' is indicative of the fact that the US had no specific policy towards the Kurds in Iraq (Charountaki, 2011).

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, President George H.W. Bush administration's policy was regime change in Iraq due to Saddam's aggression in the region and his rhetorical threats to Israel which brought the Iraqi Kurds back on the US radar (Charountaki, 2011). Especially, after the 1991 Gulf War II, the Bush administration encouraged Iraqis to overthrow Saddam Hussein and this resulted in another Kurdish revolt against Saddam (Gunter, 2011). This created a division of three different regions between Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds in Iraq (Meho and Nehme, 1991). Once US ended its support to Iraqis, the Saddam regime suppressed these groups and Kurds began fleeing to the Turkish-Iranian border (Gunter, 2011). Eventually, the UN Security Council, with the support of the US and the UK, authorised Resolution 688 to form a safe haven and no-fly zone in northern Iraq for protecting Kurds against the Saddam regime by conducting the Operation Provide Comfort (Byman, 2000; Frelick, 1993). In this way, the Iraqi Kurds had a de facto autonomous area in northern Iraq (Gunter, 2011). Despite the changing nature of relationship between the Iraqi Kurds and the US, Kurds supported the US for overthrowing Saddam Hussein during the 2003 Iraq War (Ibid). Considering these points, the US administrations perceive the Iraqi Kurds as its ally and call them as "good" Kurds (Gunter, 2011). US officials also involved in some crises of Iraqi Kurds such as the dispute between the Kurdish leaders Masoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani in 1994 (Byman, 2000) and the Kirkuk crisis between the KRG and Baghdad government in 2011 (Gunter, 2011). These involvements were to solve these crises in accordance with the US objective in Iraq, the territorial integrity of the country (Gunter, 2014). This was also seen when the US conducted

airstrikes to help the KRG in August 2014 within the Sinjar region, since the KRG military force, the Peshmerga, could not resist against ISIS attacks (Gunter, 2014).

While labelling the Iraqi Kurds as “good” Kurds, the US labelled the Kurds in Turkey, especially the sympathisers of the PKK, as “bad” Kurds (Gunter, 2011; Meho and Nehme, 1991). In general, the strategic importance of Turkey as a NATO country and US ally, the fears of Islamic extremism in the region and the Turkish alliance with Israel as a secular state, especially until 2009 (Gunter, 2014) could be interpreted as the main reasons for this general separation towards Kurds in Iraq and Turkey. The US also designated the PKK as a terrorist organisation in 1997 (Gunter, 2000) and played a role in capturing the PKK leader in 1999 (Charountaki, 2011). During the Operation Provide Comfort in northern Iraq, while protecting the Iraqi Kurds against Saddam Hussein in coordination with Turkey, the US allowed Turkey to conduct operations against the PKK in northern Iraq (Gunter, 2014). However, Turkey refused allowing US personnel to use Turkish territory as a base against Saddam Hussein during the 2003 Iraq War and opposed the status of KRG (Gunter, 2014). These created serious problems between two allies as seen through US officials’ apprehension of Turkish soldiers in northern Iraq (Gunter, 2014). Despite these disagreements, the US supported the Kurdish opening process and negotiations between the Turkish authorities and the PKK in 2013 (Ibid) depending on its policy objectives in the region.

The US had no substantial relationship with the Syrian Kurds until the 2000s, whilst its Kurdish policy was shaped by its policy against the Syrian regime. Especially following the Kurdish uprisings in 2004, the US administration communicated with the Syrian Kurds and funded their protests regarding their cultural and linguistic rights in Damascus and the Kurdish Exiles’ Washington Conference (Charountaki, 2011). Similarly, members of US Congress, the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate and State Department officials had meetings with the Kurdish representatives including the representatives of the Kurdish National Assembly of Syria as well as the Kurdish National Congress of North America to assess political developments in Syria within 2006 (Ibid). In the early stages of the Syrian civil war, the main US policy objective was to side with the Syrian opposition against the Assad regime (Allsopp and Wilgenburg, 2019). When the Syrian government forces were withdrawn from the Kurdish-populated northern areas following the outbreak of the Aleppo battle between the opposition and the regime forces in July 2012, the PYD took the control in these areas (Kusilek, 2019).

The PYD declared an autonomous government in these areas a year after (Gunter, 2014). But US officials underlined their concerns about the PYD ambitions and its ramifications in the region (Paasche and Gunter, 2016). Turkey's support to the Syrian opposition against the Assad regime (Philips, 2018) its concerns about the PYD due to the PKK and the US policy objective of siding with the Syrian opposition against the regime in Syria within the early stage of the civil war can be given as the main reasons for these US concerns (Allsopp and Wilgenburg, 2019). Thus, instead of having direct relations with the PYD administration and the PYD representatives, US officials preferred backchannel meetings in the European countries until 2014 (Ibid). However, following the rise of ISIS in 2014, especially starting from the ISIS siege on Kobane (Thornton, 2015), the US developed military alliance with the YPG to fight ISIS in Syria (Balanche, 2018).

It seems that the US preferred divergent approaches to the Kurds in different countries and its Kurdish policy is shaped by its policy objectives in the Middle East, its policies towards the regimes/countries of the region in the context of the ongoing developments within different time periods (Gunter, 2014; 2011). This could also be the US preference not to have an official Kurdish policy. As emphasised by the US diplomat Francis J. Ricciardone, in this way, the US could interact with individual Kurds or Kurdish organisations in the region whenever it is seen necessary for the US objectives (Ibid). This can be seen through the ongoing development in the Syrian civil war. For example, following the start of Aleppo battle between the opposition and the regime forces in July 2012, the regime began losing its control in the northern parts of the country to focus on more central cities such as Damascus or Aleppo (Kusilek, 2019). Then, different groups began entering Syria to control territories in the different settlements of northern Syria such as the Syrian Islamic Front, the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front and Al-Nusra, the Al-Qaeda affiliate (Ibid). As part of this ongoing process, the ISIS emerged in Syria in 2014. Following the rise of ISIS, the Obama administration's main policy objective became to degrade and defeat ISIS with limited military intervention and allow the return of local people to their ISIS-occupied lands following its defeat (McGurk, 2019). To do so, the US sought a ground partner in Syria (Philips, 2018). Starting from the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, the US supported the YPG through airstrikes and airdropping of weapons and ammunition (Thornton, 2015) and the YPG became US ground partner against ISIS in Syria (Allsopp and Wilgenburg, 2019). Consequently, the US/UK media described the YPG as the most effective and reliable US ally against ISIS (Kardas and Yesiltas, 2018; Federici, 2015). Normally, the US designated

the PKK as a terrorist organisation (Gunter, 2000) and its sympathisers as “bad” Kurds (Gunter, 2011) by siding with Turkey. However, it supported the YPG and YPJ against ISIS in Syria when the US policy objectives necessitates (Thornton, 2015; Federici, 2015). Following the establishment of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in 2015, the US-led global coalition, which includes the UK, supported the YPG-led SDF through airstrikes (Ministry of Defence, 2018) and Special Forces units (McGurk, 2019) to fight ISIS in Syria. This shows that the US and the UK’s relationship with the Syrian Kurds, particularly with the PYD and the YPG were based on security or military objectives against ISIS in Syria instead of political ones, which will be discussed in the chapters 5 and 6 on the success of frames. Particularly for the US, this security objective is considered to have leverage in north-eastern Syria through the SDF for realising the goals, preventing ISIS’ return and Iran’s military presence as a threat against Israel (McGurk, 2019).

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has played a role as a brief historical background of the thesis in two ways. First, it has explained the history of Kurdish question in Turkey and Syria after the collapse of Ottoman Empire until the 2011 Syrian civil war by considering the key actor of this thesis, the PYD, and its ideological links and organisational similarities with the PKK. Second, the chapter has discussed the policy stances of the US/UK towards Kurds in the Middle East by assessing their policy objectives, since the thesis will analyse the PYD lobbying in these countries. In this way, the chapter has attempted to develop three points. First, the origins of Kurdish question in Turkey and Syria have similar characteristics due to nationalism and nation-state building processes in these countries after the Ottoman Empire (Yavuz, 2001). Second, it shows that the PYD and the PKK have ideological links (Wilgenburg and Allsopp, 2019; Kaya and Lowe, 2017; Paasche, 2015; Allsopp, 2015) and organisational similarities (Jongerden and Akkaya, 2013; Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011). Finally, the US/UK policies towards the Kurds in the Middle East are divergent and shaped by their broader policy objectives in the region depending on the ongoing developments in different time periods. Accordingly, during the 1991 Operation Provide Comfort and the 2003 Iraq War, and in the fight against ISIS, the US/UK followed similar policies towards the Kurds in Iraq and Syria. By considering these points, the next chapter will explain the key concepts of this thesis such as ethnic lobbying, political opportunities, frame and framing, dynamic framing process and framing success in ethnic lobbying.

Chapter 2 Dynamic Framing in Ethnic Lobbying

2.1 Introduction

The extant literature on framing in the ethnic lobbying within the US/UK approach framing as one of the strategies applied for lobbying campaigns (Herner-Kovács, 2013; Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002) or a moderate way for the mobilisation of ethnic lobbies (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011). Studies analysing the lobbying campaigns in the US discuss framing with other lobbying strategies and factors to explain what makes an ethnic lobbying campaign successful and consider framing as a facilitator for successful ethnic lobbying (Herner-Kovács, 2013; Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002). Studies focusing on ethnic lobbies' mobilisation for the sovereignty of homelands in the US/UK approach framing as a moderate strategy, which is used by lobbying elites during the mobilisation period towards their own communities in these countries or towards host countries (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011). These studies indicate that the investigation of successful lobbying process or the process of mobilisation takes precedence over the framing process. Additionally, these studies attempt to explain what makes an ethnic lobbying campaign successful or what accounts for the moderate behaviour of the conflict-generated ethnic lobbies during the mobilisation process. By differing from these studies, this thesis prioritises to explain framing success in ethnic lobbying within the US/UK through analysing the processes of framing and counter-framing as dynamic processes. Therefore, the thesis does not only apply framing as a lobbying strategy. It also conceptualises framing as a dynamic process in the context of ethnic lobbying through the social movement framing approach. As will be discussed in chapters 3 and 4, the dynamic framing process refers to the processes of creation and presentation (Kaufman et al, 2013) of the PYD frames and Turkish government counter-frames as well as their interaction with each other from March 2011 to 20th January 2017.

There is a close relationship between the characteristics of frames and their capacity to influence the targeted audiences (Ketelaars, 2016; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). This is a necessary point to be considered while assessing the responsiveness of the targeted countries towards frames. Analysing framing and counter-framing as dynamic processes through frames and counter-frames' creation and presentation by applying social movement framing (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005) and counter-framing approaches (Benford and Snow, 2000) brings

these new perspectives to the ethnic lobbying in the US/UK. (1) It examines the characteristics of the PYD frames and the Turkish counter-frames through their creation and presentation processes (Ketelaars, 2016; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). (2) It explains the impact of the developments during the concentrated period on the creation and presentation of the PYD frames and the Turkish counter-frames (Swart, 1995) by considering the expectations of the targeted countries (Desrosiers, 2012; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). (3) It shows the interaction between the PYD frames and the Turkish counter-frames (Reese and Ramirez, 2002), and this interaction's potential challenge for the success of the PYD frames since the lobbyists as frame producers (Baumgartner, 2007) targeted the same audiences. (4) It can give some clues regarding the targeted countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames as the analysis considers influences of the ongoing developments on the expectations, policy stances or objectives of the targeted countries (Koinova, 2014; 2011) concerning the framed issue by the sides.

The thesis argues that analysing framing as a dynamic process help explain the characteristics of the PYD frames and the Turkish counter-frames, which are directly related to their capacity to influence the targeted audiences (Ketelaars, 2016; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005) as well as their interaction. Such an analysis also demonstrates the ongoing developments' impact on the creation and presentation of frames and counter-frames (Ambrosio, 2002b; Reese and Ramirez, 2002; Swart, 1995). This case shows that the characteristics of the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames may not merely explain the responsiveness of the targeted countries towards the PYD frames as their potential success. The policy stances and objectives of the targeted countries (Koinova, 2014; 2011), which can also be understood through the dynamic framing process, are significant determiners to explain these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames. These determiners are also essential to understand the Turkish counter-frames' challenge to the success of the PYD frames. Accordingly, this chapter develops a theoretical approach to understand the dynamic framing process of the PYD before analysing the PYD's external engagement in the US/UK for lobbying through the dynamic framing process and the importance of the dynamic framing process for framing success in ethnic lobbying within the US/UK. It is essential to reiterate and explain how the key terms have been understood. Therefore, the further sections will explain the concepts, ethnic lobbying, political opportunities, frame and framing, dynamic framing process and framing success in ethnic lobbying within the US/UK, respectively. Then, the chapter will detail the research

methodology by discussing the data collection and data analysis processes and will explain the measurement of framing success and ethical considerations.

2.2 Defining Ethnic Lobbying

In the extant literature on ethnic lobbying in the US/UK, the concepts ethnic groups, ethnic minority groups, ethnic interest groups or ethnic identity groups and diasporic communities are interchangeably used to explain ethnic lobbies or their lobbying efforts (Rubenzer and Redd, 2010; Rubenzer, 2008). Additionally, experts tend to define ethnic lobbies and ethnic lobbying activity depending on approaches or conceptualisation that they applied, or their focus point their research. Accordingly, a pre-eminent expert Shain's (1994; p.814) definition of an ethnic lobby is based on diasporic communities by referring to "*people with common national origin who reside outside a claimed or an independent home territory*". From Shain's (1994; p.814) viewpoint, these people "*regard themselves or are regarded by others as members or potential members of their country of origin (claimed or already existing), a status held regardless of their geographical location and citizen status outside their home country*". Another prominent expert in this research field, Ambrosio (2002a; p.2), describes ethnic lobbies as "*political organisations established along cultural, ethnic, religious, or racial lines that seek to directly and indirectly influence U.S. foreign policy in support of their homeland and/or ethnic kin abroad*". Consequently, while some experts acknowledge ethnic lobbies as political organisations or ethnic (minority) interest groups (Rubenzer and Redd, 2010; Ambrosio, 2002a; 2002b; Smith, 2000; Dietrich, 1999), others call them diasporic communities (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011; Herner-Kovacs; 2013; Shain, 1994) or exiled communities (Vanderbush, 2009). However, these definitions are mainly based in the US and, to a lesser extent, in the UK. Therefore, these definitions only consider lobbies having direct access to the policymaking communities and processes in the US/UK with their "institutional presence" in Washington D.C. (Ambrosio, 2002b) and London or other parts of the UK (Koinova, 2014).

This thesis approaches ethnic lobbying as an activity, which was mainly undertaken by a political organisation (Ambrosio, 2002a), the Kurdish PYD, by constructing meaning through the creation of frames (Benford and Snow, 2000; Snow and Benford, 1992) and their presentation for lobbying in the US and the UK. The PYD representatives had no direct access to the policymaking communities and processes in the US/UK before the Syrian civil war. Therefore, ethnic lobby in this thesis refers to the PYD as a political organisation (Ambrosio,

2002a) and ethnic lobbying is the PYD representatives' efforts of creating and presenting their frames for lobbying the US/UK. These efforts also include the attempts for gaining access to the policymaking communities and processes especially in the US and influencing the US/UK's policies, either directly or indirectly on behalf of their homeland (Ambrosio, 2002a), since the political representatives of the emerging states or state-like entities need the support of major states for "*potential domestic and international sovereignty*" (Koinova, 2014; p.1048). In this regard, the definitions of ethnic lobby and ethnic lobbying in this thesis are close to Ambrosio's (2002a: pp.2) approach as he defines ethnic lobbies as "*political organisations established along cultural, ethnic, religious, or racial lines*" and ethnic lobbying as the efforts of political organisations which "*seek to directly and indirectly influence U.S. foreign policy in support of their homeland*" (Ambrosio, 2002a; pp.2). However, the thesis slightly differs from Ambrosio's (2002a) approach by mainly focusing on lobbying of the PYD (a political party) and the lobbying efforts of the PYD representatives through the dynamic framing process of the Syrian civil war from outside the US/UK. In other words, the lobbying efforts of the PYD representatives for their model of governance are analysed through their efforts of creating and presenting their frames without having access to the US/UK and their policymaking communities¹¹.

As explained in the previous chapter, the PYD is the Syrian affiliate of the PKK, which has been at war with Turkey since 1984 (Gunter, 2000). Although there have been ceasefires from time to time, regardless of their political ideologies, Turkish governments have always considered the PKK as a terrorist organisation and a national security threat to the country (Eccarius-Kelly and Musa, 2018; Gunter, 2014; Barkey and Fuller, 1998). The current Turkish government's position towards the PYD, thus, has been shaped by its stance against the PKK (Eccarius-Kelly and Musa, 2018). Accordingly, within the ongoing process of the Syrian civil war, especially following the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from the Kurdish populated northern areas in July 2012 with the start of the Aleppo battle, the PYD managed to

¹¹ In the early stages of the Syrian civil war, the PYD representatives could not obtain US VISA (Muslim, quoted in Rudaw.net, 2013; B3, 2018). Similarly, the PYD representatives had no access to the US and its policymaking communities at least until the end of the ISIS siege on Kobane (B6, 2018). Since then, in addition to their access to the US, Sinam Mohammed, the representative of the Syrian Democratic Council, the political body of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), was the first official political representative on behalf of the Syrian Kurds in the US (B10, 2018). Their Washington office was opened around the time of Turkey's Operation Olive Branch in Afrin in 2018 (B11, 2018). Compared to the US, the PYD has its foreign committee member, Alan Semo, as the party's representative in the UK since 2012.

control the region without fighting and began establishing its cantons (Kusilek, 2019) to practise its model of governance in these areas (Allsopp, 2015). In addition to these developments, the territorial gains of the PYD and the YPG even in the Arab majority areas and their increasing popularity in the context of fighting ISIS with the support of the US and the US-led global coalition within the ongoing process of the Aleppo battle (Kusilek, 2019) led the Turkish government to think the PYD and the YPG as serious security threats to their country (Kanat and Ustun, 2015) and act against these threats accordingly (Ataman and Ozdemir, 2018). By considering these points and to explain the dynamism of the framing through the interaction between frames and counter-frames, the thesis also analyses counter-lobbying efforts of Turkish government officials such as Presidents, Prime Ministers, and members of the cabinet in the country, as well as its ambassadors in the US/UK against the PYD lobbying through counter-framing.

2.3 Political Opportunities

The concept of political opportunities in this thesis is applied to explain the changes in the political environment (Opp, 2009) as “*open windows*” for actions (Gamson and Meyer, 1996), which encouraged the frame producers to create and present their frames for lobbying. In this way, this concept differs from the concept of political opportunity structures (POS) in the existing social movement literature, which tries to explain the emergence of social movements through political process theories. These theories concentrate on the structural factors such as political systems, institutions, regulations (Brockett, 1991; Eisinger, 1973), and openness of these systems (Tarrow, 1996) or the factors affecting the mobilisation, protest behaviour, and the consequences of protest behaviour through having powerful allies (Reese and Ramires, 2002), support groups or social networks (Fernandez and Pena, 2004).

In the existing literature, there is a confusing tendency to use the concepts of political opportunity structure, political opportunity or opportunity interchangeably for referring to the same thing with an assumption that they are all synonyms (Opp, 2009). However, these terms are not synonyms and point out different things (Koopmans, 1999). Accordingly, the political opportunities in this thesis are close to Charles Brockett and Tarrow’s (2005) concept of the configurations of political opportunities, which refers to a “conceptual construction” that cannot be “observed as existing out there” but depends on the perception (Brockett and Tarrow, 2005; pp.17-18) of the representatives of ethnic lobbies as frame producers or researchers who

conceptualise these opportunities to examine lobbying processes. Therefore, political opportunities are more like the configurations rather than structures as configurations “signify a constellation of situations” and “fluidities” through which the political actors could find a space for an action (Orhan, 2014; p.31) during some periods. As will be discussed in the further section, such a conceptual construction is also highly relevant to the social movement framing approach of Benford and Snow (2000), the main approach that the thesis applies for explaining the PYD framing and Turkish counter-framing as a dynamic process through the creation/construction and presentation (Kaufman et al, 2013) of frames and counter-frames.

There are great many examples in the extant literature on ethnic lobbying in the US, which shows the conceptual construction of political opportunities as moments perceived by the representatives of ethnic lobbies (as frame producers) for lobbying purposes and by researchers who examine these processes. For instance, Herner-Kovacs (2013) addressed how the representatives of the Hungarian Human Rights Foundation in the US perceived the annual review of the status of the Most Favoured Nations by the US Presidents as a hidden political opportunity. Accordingly, they built their lobbying campaign against the Ceausescu regime on this political opportunity for lobbying the US administration to change the status of the most favoured nations of Romania by accentuating the human rights violations and maltreatment against the Hungarian minorities in Romania. Shain (1994) also showed that the principles of democracy and human rights in the US foreign policy following the Cold War were seen as political opportunities by the ethnic lobbies in the US and were utilised to challenge the US policies towards the dictatorial practices of the regimes in their homelands.

Similarly, the ethnic lobbying experts illustrated how the atmosphere and political changes created by the Bush administration’s war on terror policy and its foreign policy discourse in the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attack were perceived as a political opportunity by ethnic lobbies. For example, Kirk (2008) analysed how the Indian American lobby perceived environment above as an opportunity or an “open window” to reach a nuclear deal with the US by building its lobbying campaign on this opportunity. Accordingly, Indian lobbyists aligned the Indians’ concerns about the threat of Islamist extremism with those of US. They accentuated the importance of the deal for the US, particularly gaining a ground for fighting Islamist extremism in India as a neighbouring country of Afghanistan (Ibid). Vanderbush (2009) also examined how the Iraqi lobby perceived the changing political environment in the US after the 9/11 terror

attacks and the existence of new neo-conservative officials advocating for the invasion of Iraq as a political opportunity to build their lobbying on this opportunity for accelerating the overthrow of the regime of Saddam Hussein.

In accordance with the definition above the thesis approaches political opportunities as open windows, moments or configurations, which came through the political changes in Syria since the outbreak of the 2011 civil war, and perceived and used by the representatives of the PYD to create their frames and present these frames for their lobbying campaign in the US/UK. However, by slightly differing from the aforementioned studies in the existing literature on ethnic lobbying in the US, the thesis conceptualises the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in March 2011, the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 with the start of Aleppo Battle and the rise of ISIS in 2014 within the ongoing process of Aleppo battle as three key and favourable political opportunities through the social movement framing approach (Benford and Snow, 2000; Snow and Benford, 1992) to analyse the PYD's external engagement in the US/UK for lobbying its model of governance as a dynamic framing process. This approach is significant to understand the developments played a role for the creation and presentation of (Kaufman et al, 2013) the PYD frames in the context of the Syrian civil war compared to the pre-war situation since the Kurdish parties in Syria were declared as illegal and acted as underground parties (Allsopp, 2015; Gunter, 2014).

2.4 Frame and Framing

Framing is an interdisciplinary approach being applied by psychology (Kahneman and Tversky, 1984), linguistic or the language of politics (Pluwak, 2011), media and communication (Entman, 1993; Gamson, 1992), environmental studies, especially by the intractable environmental conflicts (Kaufman et. al, 2013; Gray, 2003; Gardner and Burgess, 2003), sociology (Goffman, 1974) and the social movement theories (Snow et al., 2014; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005; Benford and Snow, 2000; Snow and Benford, 1992; Benford, 1988; Snow et al., 1986). The thesis conceptualises the social movement framing approach of Benford and Snow (2000) in ethnic lobbying because of the following reasons. First, analysing the creation and presentation process of frames considers the ongoing developments in the Syrian civil war from March 2011 to 20th January 2017 and these developments' potential impact on frames' creation and presentation. Such an analysis help understand the characteristics of frames (Ketelaars, 2016); and therefore, their capacity to influence the targeted audiences

(Ketelaars, 2016; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). This type of analysis also examines the role of frame producers (Matesan, 2012; Snow and Benford, 2000), in this case, the role of lobbyists, and the expectations of the targeted audiences (Desrosiers, 2012), which are essential points for framing success.

Second, as one of the main actors in this thesis, the PKK has presented itself not only as a political party but also a practical movement (Ocalan, 2011b) and revolutionary organisation. Since its establishment, the PKK has sought to differentiate itself from the traditional Kurdish parties (Barkey and Fuller, 1998) and embraced the common characteristics of the leftist national liberation movements of the 1970s (Yarkin, 2015). Finally, as the main actor, and the PKK's Syrian affiliate, the PYD has been acting not only as a political party but also a movement in northern Syria through its umbrella organisation, the People's Council of Western Kurdistan (PCWK) including TEV-DEM (Western Kurdistan Democratic Society Movement or Tevgara Civaka Demokrat). This body encapsulates local, civil as well as women and youth organisations (Allsopp, 2015). This organisational structure has made the PYD as a dominant Kurdish political party and a political movement in Syria depending on the ongoing developments during the civil war (Kaya and Lowe, 2017). All these reasons indicate that the social movement framing approach fits the analysis in the ethnic lobbying conceptual framework.

The origins of the concepts of frame and framing in the extant literature on the social movements trace back to Erving Goffman's (1974) sociological study, "Frame Analysis". Goffman defined frame as a "*schemata of interpretation*" (Goffman, 1974: p.21). This definition was conceptualised in the social movement literature by Snow and Benford (1992; p. 137) as an "*interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions*". Accordingly, as a noun, frame refers to a systematic interpretation of the happenings around the public (Aldikacti, 2001). The verb framing is a signifying work or a meaning construction (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005) through giving a meaning to the happenings around the world so as to make them meaningful to others because of the lack of ability of these happenings to speak or explain themselves in a coherent way (Aldikacti, 2001; Gamson and Wolsfield, 1993). Therefore, this thesis approaches framing as a meaning construction (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005) by the representatives of PYD and the Turkish government

officials. Consequently, the frame is a constructed meaning through the articulation of “alternative set of arrangements” (Benford and Snow, 2000; p.613) or providing alternative solutions (Snow and Benford, 1992) to the issues in Syria.

Issues in this research are the political issues such as the political future of Syria and security issues against the perceived threats to the PYD in Syria during the civil war. In this regard, the representatives of the PYD diagnose political and security issues in Syria by identifying the “causal agents” (Gerhards, 1995). As a result, their frames attempt to express the PYD’s alternative solutions to these problems. This way of articulation is also followed by Turkish government officials while creating counter-frames by identifying their own causal agents and solutions to the issues in Syria.

2.5 Dynamic Framing Process in Ethnic Lobbying

Framing and lobbying are highly interrelated terms. Lobbyists apply framing to establish their agenda on their specific issues or make these issues visible in a decision-making process (Princen, 2011). Therefore, framing can be accepted as a convincing issue-description strategy of lobbying organisations or individual lobbyists, and lobbyists can be perceived as “frame producers” to persuade decision-makers regarding their specific issues (Baumgartner, 2007). This indicates that frames can play a central role in establishing an agenda for a political purpose since they have capacities to gain attention through making an issue interesting or building credibility over a given issue to the decision-makers (Princen, 2011). Particularly, for this case, approaching framing as a signifying work or meaning construction (Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005) increases its significance for ethnic lobbying, since it analyses a process of construction of meaning through the creation and presentation (Kaufma et al, 2013) of the PYD frames and Turkish counter-frames, which considers the developments of the 2011 Syrian civil war and their impact on the creation and presentation of frames and counter-frames.

As will be discussed below, there are other variables such as the policy stances and policy objectives of the targeted countries and their consideration by policymakers in the policymaking communities in these countries in addition to the characteristics of the constructed frames while assessing framing success. The dynamic framing approach through a specific focus on the framing process and ongoing developments’ impact on it can help contribute to the explanation of framing success, to some extent, by giving an idea regarding the characteristics of the

constructed frames (Ketelaars, 2016), which are straightforwardly related to their capacity to influence the targeted audiences (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). This approach can also provide an understanding about the expectations of the targeted audiences (Desrosiers, 2012), which could increase or decrease the possibility of framing success.

While analysing framing as a dynamic process for lobbying the US/UK through the construction of meaning by creating and presenting frames, this thesis conceptualises framing process in three categories. The first is the normative framing process of the PYD. This process refers to an instrumental utilisation of norms, especially liberalism (Koinova, 2011), values (Herner-Kovacs, 2013; Shain, 1999; 1994) or the foreign policy discourses of the US (Koinova, 2011; Vanderbush, 2009; Kirk, 2008; Ambrosio, 2002b) such as promoting democracy, human rights and moral values to obtain the political support of the US/UK for the PYD's model of governance in north and eastern Syria. In other words, this is a process of the creation and presentation (Kaufman, 2013) of the normative PYD frames to address why the US/UK should support such a model of governance, which is presented as a solution of the PYD to the political future of Syria. The utilisation of norms for ethnic lobbying campaigns in the US and, to some extent, in the UK is quite a common strategy, mainly because of the foreign policy approaches of these countries. For instance, in the US, since the President Woodrow Wilson, spreading the American ideology and values became one of the central purposes in the US foreign policy (Mead, 2001). Similarly, the Democrat Party Presidents and policymakers centralised the moral values in the US foreign policy as a tradition since the 1970s (Ibid). It was also seen in the Presidential election campaign of Jimmy Carter as a promise that the human rights would be central in the US foreign policy (Donnelly, 2017). Despite some problems during the Cold War, the US administrations, in general, had used the morality as a tradition for the policy objectives of the US (Ibid). Accordingly, there is a relationship between the advocacy of the US values such as pluralism, democracy and human rights by the ethnic lobbies and these lobbies' possibility to influence the US policymakers (Herner-Kovacs, 2013; Shain, 1999; 1994) or the US public (Vanderbush, 2009).

The lobbying groups in the US appeal the policy objectives of the US administrations and challenge these administrations through their own foreign policy discourses. In general, the African Americans, the Iraqi and Cuban-exiled communities, which attempt to make the regime changes in their homelands; and therefore, seek the US support, built their lobbying campaigns

on the lack of democracy or human rights abuses of the regimes in their homelands (Vanderbush, 2009; Shain, 1994). In this way, these communities sought to show that they had advocated democratic values and had deserved the US support for a regime change in their homelands. Additionally, ethnic lobbies seeking sovereignty for their homelands in the US and the UK such as Lebanese and Albanians instrumentally accentuated liberal democratic values in their campaigns to grab the attention of the policymakers in these countries (Koinova, 2013; 2011). Particularly, the Albanians in the US emphasised that Kosova can be governed democratically when it becomes a sovereign country (Koinova, 2013). The lobbying efforts of the PYD can be assessed in this category with noticeable differences from these lobbies since the PYD had no access to the US until 2015 and the UK by 2012 and this type of PYD efforts are conceptualised in the context of the social movement framing approach as a normative framing process from outside these countries by creating and presenting its frames. Although the lobbying groups keep applying this strategy, it may not be merely enough for lobbying success, in this research, for framing success. This case indicates that responsiveness of the targeted countries as framing success is closely related to the policy stances and policy objectives of the targeted countries, the US/UK.

The second category is the strategic framing process. The social movements framing approach explains strategic framing process as a goal-oriented and pragmatic one to achieve a specific purpose or some purposes (Benford and Snow, 2000). In this thesis, the strategic framing process refers to the creation and presentation of strategic PYD frames to address why the US and the UK could support the PYD's model of governance and the YPG's fight against ISIS in Syria. In order to achieve the short-term and long-term goals, the main strategy in this process was to align the policy objectives of the PYD with those of the US/UK in Syria, especially the one, "war on terror". The alignment of the policy objectives of ethnic lobbies regarding their homelands and those of the US is also a common strategy for ethnic lobbying in the US. Ethnic lobbies try to challenge the US administrations by appealing the US foreign policy discourses to achieve their goals. For instance, the Armenian lobby (Ambrosio, 2002b), the Indian American lobby (Kirk, 2008), and the Iraqi-exiled community (Vanderbush, 2009) built their campaigns on the alignment of their homelands' objectives with those of the US in Nagorno-Karabagh, India and Iraq. These lobbies also appealed the US foreign policy discourses like the "America and the world must stand up to aggression" (Ambrosio, 2002b: p.31) and "war on terror" (Vanderbush, 2009; Kirk, 2008). For instance, to prevent the US aid to Azerbaijan and

accelerate the US involvement in a regional conflict, the Armenian lobby presented the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict as Azerbaijani aggression against Armenians, which was compatible with the US foreign policy discourse of the “stand up to aggression” (Ambrosio, 2002b). To have a nuclear deal with the US, the Indian American lobby also aligned the concerns of Indians regarding the threat of Islamist extremism with those of the Bush administration. They emphasised that the US could use the Indian territory as a base for fighting Islamist extremist, since India was a neighbouring country of Afghanistan (Kirk, 2008). Similarly, the Iraqi-exiled communities appealed to the “war on terror” discourse by aligning their objectives of the overthrow of Saddam Hussein with those of the Bush administration (Vanderbush, 2009). However, the analysis of this thesis differs from these studies. It conceptualises the alignment of policy objectives and appealing the discourse of “war on terror” (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005) in the context of social movement framing approach (Benford and Snow, 2000) as a strategic framing process of the PYD through the utilisation of strategic frames for ethnic lobbying.

The dynamism of the framing process also comes through the interaction between frames and counter-frames in addition to the dynamic impact of the happenings on the creation and presentation processes of frames and counter-frames. Accordingly, the last process the thesis analyses is the contested framing process. The extant literature in the social movements discuss three types of framing contests such as frame disputes within movements/organisations, the dialect between frames and events, and counter-framing by the opponents (Benford and Snow, 2000). The contested framing process in this research refers to the counter-framing process of the Turkish government by creating and presenting counter-frames against the PYD frames. The type of frames used by Turkey mainly fell into the category of characterisation frames in addition to other counter-frames. The characterisation frames are generally produced to blame opponents/others and to accuse them as a reason for the problem (Gray, 2003) as well as to label the opponents (Gardner and Burgess, 2003). Particularly, the groups being part of intractable/long-term conflicts are more likely to apply characterisation frames to undermine the legitimacy of their opponents or to raise doubts on their motivations. The characterisation frames can be categorised as positive or negative (Kaufman et. al., 2013; Gray, 2003). This thesis conceptualises the Turkish government counter-frames against the normative PYD frames as negative characterisation frames (Gray, 2003) by considering the ongoing war between the Turkish state and the PKK since 1984 and the ideological links between the PYD

and the PKK, which also affected Turkey's Syria policy as the PYD-dominance in northern Syria in July 2012 with the start of Aleppo battle (Kusilek, 2019), and the PYD-YPG's territorial gains following the rise of ISIS in Syria within the ongoing process of Aleppo Battle (Ataman and Ozdemir, 2018).

When framing efforts are analysed as dynamic processes, it requires considering the ongoing developments and their impact on the framing processes, framing strategies as well as frames' creation and presentation. Particularly, the frame producers need to follow the latest developments regarding the issue that they frame to renew/update their frames periodically in accordance with the expectations of their targeted audiences (Desrosiers, 2012; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). Depending on the changing political or cultural environments, to update their framing or increase their frames' capacity to influence the targeted audience, the frame producers can make some changes in the scope of their frames by broadening or narrowing their scopes (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). In this thesis, the changes in the scope of frames and counter-frames are done by the PYD and the Turkish government while addressing their audiences. These attempts are conceptualised in two ways. The first is the general extension in the scope of frames. This refers to adding more elements to the content of frames and counter-frames while providing a solution to the problems in Syria or describing opponents as potential threats. The second is the geographical extension through which frames and counter-frames meant a broader geography as part of their solutions to political and security issues in Syria.

2.6 Framing Success in Ethnic Lobbying

As addressed in the introduction chapter, the thesis investigates framing success in the context of ethnic lobbying in the US/UK. The existing literature on framing in ethnic lobbying in the US and the UK perceive framing as one of the strategies for successful lobbying as a facilitator (Herner-Kovács, 2013; Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002) or a moderate way of mobilisation for the sovereignty of homelands (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011). These studies investigate a successful lobbying process or a process of mobilisation, instead of the framing process. This thesis seeks to contribute to framing in ethnic lobbying literature by focusing on framing success through analysing the processes of framing and counter-framing. In the social movement framing literature, framing success is explained through the concept of resonance. The concept of resonance is coined by Snow and Benford (1988), which focuses on the

mobilisation capacity of frames amongst the targeted audiences that led them take part in the protests or movements' activities (Benford and Snow, 2000). As a theory, resonance is a growing and underdeveloped research field in the social movement framing. Accordingly, the social movement theories approach resonance from a cultural perspective by asking why certain frames resonate with the targeted audiences but others are not (Benford and Snow, 2000). However, what resonance means or what it exactly refers/describes is not clear (Opp, 2009).

Additionally, the concepts of resonance and frame alignment can be used interchangeably in the literature on the social movement framing. In other words, what differentiates the concept of resonance from the concept of frame alignment is not explicitly addressed (Opp, 2009). The frame alignment, for example, discusses when social movements' arguments are acknowledged by individuals/bystanders who have not mobilised yet through focusing on social movement frames' alignment with their own (Ibid). In their article, Snow et al., (1986) refers to resonance as an occurring concept when social movement frames provide *“answers and solutions to troublesome situations and dilemmas that resonate with the way in which they are experienced”* through *“believable and compelling”* answers or solutions. (p.477). There are also some attempts to separate the concept of resonance from the concept of frame alignment. For instance, Ketelaars (2016) argues that there is a slight difference between frame resonance and frame alignment. Consequently, frame resonance is *“a frame attribute, as in some frames resonating more than others”*, but frame alignment *“can be attributed to something individuals do, as in some aligning with a certain frame or not”* (Ketelaars, 2016: p.344).

Likewise, due to the dynamic nature of framing, the justification of framing success is also straightforwardly related to researchers' judgements as well as findings of their empirical cases. Accordingly, researchers could use general opinion polls (Kornprobst, 2019; Matesan, 2012) or specific surveys (Ketelaars, 2016) to assess framing success when they approach public or individuals as targeted audiences. Some also prefer to analyse whether targeted individuals or texts referred to the frames or the component themes of frames (Kornprobst, 2019). To deal with the problems regarding the resonance theory and due to the varying nature of the justification amongst experts, the thesis approaches framing success through the responsiveness of audiences, the targeted countries towards frames. The term responsiveness refers to the attitudes of policymakers of the targeted countries towards lobbying efforts of ethnic groups or diasporic communities (Koinova, 2011). This thesis borrows the term responsiveness from the

literature on ethnic lobbying (Koinova, 2011) to discuss the responsiveness of the targeted countries towards the framing efforts of frame producers, the PYD representatives, and their frames in lobbying.

The thesis, therefore, analyses the US/UK's responsiveness towards frames in two ways. The first is the responsiveness of policymakers. The existing literature on ethnic lobbying in the US/UK indicates that the responsiveness of policymakers towards lobbying campaigns of ethnic groups are dependent on the policy stances (Koinova, 2014) or policy objectives of these countries (Koinova, 2011; Vanderbush, 2009; Kirk, 2008; Haney and Vanderbush, 1999; Garrett, 1978). Accordingly, this case shows that without considering policy stances and objectives of the US/UK towards the framed issues, these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames and the Turkish counter-frames' potential challenges to these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames could not be merely explained through the frames and counter-frames' creation, presentation and their interaction. In other words, policy stances and objectives of these countries must be taken into consideration in measuring the potential success of the PYD frames and the challenges of the Turkish counter-frames to their success in the concentrated period. The thesis shows that analysing framing as a dynamic process does not only explain the characteristics of frames and counter-frames by considering the impact of developments in this period on their creation, presentation and interaction. It also explains policy stances and objectives of the targeted countries by focusing on the impact of the same developments on these countries' policy stances and objectives as well as policymakers' attitudes towards frames and counter-frames.

In this thesis, the policy stance refers to the official positions of the targeted countries towards the framed issue or political goals of the lobbying group (Koinova, 2014). The thesis conceptualises policy stances of the US/UK through their positions regarding the political future of Syria to explain their attitudes towards the PYD's model of governance and their responsiveness towards the frames presenting this model. Policy objective focuses on the targeted countries' prioritised interests in the concentrated period, which could also vary depending on the developments during this period (Koinova, 2011). Policy objectives of the US/UK are explained through their priorities in the Syrian civil war from March 2011 to 20th January 2017 and changes in these priorities depending on the significant developments such as the rise of ISIS in 2014. This explanation considers the rise of ISIS in 2014, which affected

the policy objectives of these countries in Syria as well as policymakers' responsiveness towards the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames. The thesis also reconceptualises the term "responsiveness" in the ethnic lobbying literature in the US by borrowing the components of the concept of resonance to explain framing success as the responsiveness of the US/UK policymakers towards the PYD frames. In this way, the thesis brings an alternative explanation to framing success. In their article, Snow and Benford (2000), analysed frames' capacity to influence the targeted audiences by focusing on the factors regarding the framing or factors applicable to the targeted audiences. These factors are also closely related to the characteristics of frames, which can play a role in the responsiveness of targeted audiences (Ketelaars, 2016; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). Accordingly, thesis conceptualises the factors regarding the credibility of framing and factors concerning to the targeted audience in the context of the term responsiveness for explaining the framing success of the PYD in ethnic lobbying within the US/UK.

The credibility of framing is an important factor, which is contingent on frame consistency, empirical credibility and the perceived credibility of frames producers (Benford and Snow, 2000). *Frame consistency* addresses the compatibility between the articulated values, beliefs and claims by the group and its actions (Ibid). The inconsistency could occur in two ways, as appearance and perception-based inconsistencies (Ibid) and affect the credibility of framing. The *appearance-based inconsistency* refers to the contradiction between beliefs, values or ideologies of the group and its frames or arguments (Ibid). The *perception-based inconsistency*, on the other hand, reflects the contradiction between arguments and actions of the group or what the group argues, but what it does contradictory (Ibid). The *empirical credibility* focuses on reality by questioning the relationship between framing and happenings in the world to understand whether framing is based on the real indicators of an issue (Ibid). The *credibility of frame producers* takes the frame producers' status or trustworthiness into consideration while responding to frames produced by them (Ibid). As implicitly addressed by Ambrosio (2002b), the credibility of frame producers is an essential factor for the credibility of framing. The credibility of the Armenian lobbyists affected the decision of the Clinton administration and US Congress to stop the foreign aid to Azerbaijan due to the Armenian lobbyists' gained credibility. The Armenian lobbyists seemed to have obtained such credibility since they had been developing close relationships with the US policymakers by providing information regarding the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict or other issues related to Armenia (Ibid). Factors

affecting the credibility of framing are considered in assessing the responsiveness of the US/UK policymakers towards the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames' potential challenges to their responsiveness.

There are other factors applicable to the targeted audiences while assessing framing success (Benford and Snow, 2000). *Centrality* refers to “*how essential the beliefs, values, and ideas*” in framing to the targeted audiences. *Experiential commensurability* questions frames' compatibility with the personal or daily life of targeted audiences by considering their familiarity with the framed issue. In this way, it also asks whether framing is too abstract or distant from the daily experiences of targeted audiences (Ibid). The *narrative fidelity* refers to frames' congruence with cultural narratives, folklores and political/ideological environment of targeted audiences. These factors are borrowed to explain the relationship between characteristics of frames and frames' capacity to influence the targeted audiences while assessing the responsiveness of the US/UK policymakers towards the PYD frames and the Turkish counter-frames' potential challenge against these countries' responsiveness.

Additionally, Snow and Corrigan-Brown (2005) discuss some problems, which could affect the responsiveness of targeted audiences towards frames due to their relevance to the aforementioned concepts, characteristics of frames and framing strategies. The thesis considers these problems while discussing the responsiveness of policymakers towards frames and counter-frames. The *problem of misalignment* refers to finding/targeting the correct audiences for framing. The *problem of scope* is more technical, which focuses on whether creating specific, narrowed frames or more general, broader frames and its impact on the responsiveness. The *problem of exhaustion* is a problem of overusing successful frames since they become familiar to targeted audiences or being taken-for-granted, which causes a decline in their responsiveness. The *problem of relevance* is a concept related to the cultural congruence of frames with the political or ideological environment of targeted audiences.

As emphasised by Honey and Vanderbush (1999), ethnic lobbies not only target the US governments but also the broader public by striving to influence public opinion through their messages. The pro-Israeli lobbies, for example, take great efforts to shape the US public discourse about Israel in the academic and policymaking communities through think-tanks and

media (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007). These points demonstrate that ethnic lobbies attempt to influence the US public and the media. It explains the significance of the responsiveness of the media towards lobbying efforts of ethnic groups. Accordingly, the thesis assesses the responsiveness of the parliamentary transcripts and mainstream newspapers in the US/UK towards frames and counter-frames by analysing the coverage of frames and counter-frames or their component themes. As will be detailed in the methodology section, Kornprobst's (2019) concept, thematic congruence is applied to explain the responsiveness of parliamentary transcripts and mainstream newspapers in these countries towards frames and counter-frames. The concept of thematic congruence is developed by Kornprobst (2019), who was inspired by William Gamson's (1992) concepts of themes and subthemes in frames, to explain the resonance of framing in the parliamentary transcripts and mainstream newspapers of the UK. It requires identifying the component themes of frames and themes in the transcripts of parliaments and newspapers and checking the overlapping themes of frames and themes in these documents to explain the responsiveness of these text to framing or frames. All these points will be detailed in the further section. The further section, therefore, will explain the data collection and data analysis processes as well as the ethical considerations of this thesis.

2.7 Research Methodology and Ethics

This research is built upon the qualitative research methods, the document/text analysis and elite interviews (Bryman, 2012; Furlong and Marsh, 2010; Vromen, 2010). In general, the research questions and purpose of research are the main determiners of research methods (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). The research questions, which attempt to understand/explain how and why a process happened, the roles of political institutions/organisations in this process and the process' impact on the policies of political institutions can be best answered through the qualitative research methods (Vromen, 2018). Additionally, in the disciplines of the Political Science or International Relations, the processes whose explanations are based on the text-based answers can be detailed through these methods (Ibid). As explained in the research question and objective section of the introduction chapter, this research seeks to understand framing as a dynamic process and explain framing success through the responsiveness of the targeted countries towards frames which are used for lobbying. Therefore, it analyses the characteristics of frames, their creation and presentation as a dynamic process in the period from March 2011 to 20th January 2017. Accordingly, the main research question seeks to understand two points. First, how a political party (a political organisation), the PYD, framed its model of governance for lobbying the US/UK within this period. Second, how the PYD

framing was successful at influencing the political elites and the media in these countries. Similarly, this research strives to understand how the Turkish government (a governmental institution), counter-framed against the PYD framing and to what extent this counter-framing policy challenged the PYD framing as well as the US/UK policymakers and media's responsiveness towards the PYD frames.

While attempting to answer these questions, the thesis applies a frame analysis approach to explain the creation and presentation of frames and counter-frames (Kaufman et al., 2013), as construction of their meaning (Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005) by analysing the documents/texts, speeches, explanations or declarations of the representatives of the PYD and the Turkish government (Ketelaars, 2016). The responsiveness of targeted countries and potential challenge of counter-frames to the targeted countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames are searched through the analysis of transcripts (documents/texts) in US Congress and the UK Parliament and the mainstream newspapers in these countries (Kornprobst, 2019; Ambrosio, 2002b; Shain, 1999). Accordingly, this research is mainly based on document/text analysis. It is also supported by elite interviews to understand the responsiveness of policymakers towards frames (Brown, 2013) as targeted audiences and potential challenges of counter-frames to the frames' responsiveness. The elite interviews also facilitate the data triangulation between the document/text data and the interview data (Brown, 2013; Davies, 2001). The further sections will detail the data collection and data analysis processes and will explain the ethical considerations of this research.

2.7.1 Data Collection

The research data was collated within an approximately 17-month period between 2017 and 2018. Two types of data, the secondary data through political documents/texts and primary data through interviews with political elites in the US/UK were collected. Data collection for this research had five steps. While the first two steps were to identify the PYD frames and Turkish government counter-frames as well as their framing and counter-framing policies, the last three were regarding the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD frames and the challenge of the Turkish government counter-frames to their responsiveness towards the PYD frames.

The first step was the understanding of the PYD framing process. Three types of texts were gathered through the open-access PKK-PYD sources to identify the PYD frames. The first was

the textbooks of the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan, the *Democratic Confederalism* (2011), *War and Peace in Kurdistan* (2012), *Liberating Life: Woman's Revolution* (2013) and *Democratic Nation* (2016). These textbooks were crucial to comprehend the impact of the PKK ideology on the PYD (Muslim quoted in KurdWatch, 2011), and the policies of the PYD during the Syrian civil war (Kaya and Lowe, 2017) due to its ideological links with the PKK¹². They were also essential for understanding the details of the PYD's model of governance in northern Syria (Allsopp, 2015), and its framing policy of this model for lobbying. Additionally, the pieces of Murray Bookchin, the *Meaning of Confederalism* (1990) and *Libertarian Municipalism: An Overview* (1991) were read since Bookchin's concepts of libertarian/confederal municipality affected Ocalan's pieces regarding the type of governance (Gunter, 2014). The second was the official documents of the PYD such as its *party programme*, *the Political Resolution Declaration*, *the Initiative of Kurdish National Movement Parties in Syria to Resolve Current Crisis*, *the Project of The Democratic Self-Governance in Western Kurdistan* and *the Social Contract of Rojava* (2014).

The third type of document was the explanations, declarations, conference speeches and interviews of the PYD representatives such as the co-chairs Salih Muslim and Asya Abdullah, the foreign representative of the PYD in the UK, Alan Semo, the local administrators such the co-President of the Syrian Democratic Council (Meclisa Suriye Demokratik, MSD), Ilham Ehmed, and the YPG militias, commanders and activists. These texts were accessed through the websites of local and international organisations. Local organisations or their websites refer to the ANF (Firat News Agency), Kurdishquestion.com, Al-monitor and rudaw.net. These are the websites, which nominate information from the Middle East region. Except for the Al-Monitor; the rudaw.net, Kurdishquestion.com and the ANF are Kurdish websites publishing news regarding the developments in the Kurdish regions of the Middle East. Particularly, the ANF is the pro-PKK website propagating the PYD policies through interviewing with the PYD representatives in general and sharing the developments in the PYD-dominated northern Syria during the Syrian civil war. International organisations and their websites are Chatham House, Centre for Kurdish Progress, the KurdWatch, the Centre for Turkish Studies, London School of Economics and Political Science Middle East Centre, The National Press Club Washington and Carnegie Endowment. These websites and think-tanks provided chances to the PYD

¹² As remembered, the details of the ideological links between the PYD and the PKK are discussed in Chapter 1.

representatives for expressing the Kurdish perspectives regarding the Syrian civil war. Therefore, these websites are worth-following for data collection, which was applied by Ambrosio (2002b) to understand the Armenian lobby's framing policy of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict through its official website as well as other US websites. These three types of document are all "*meaningful source[s] and the best available point of reference*", which "*represent a shared interpretation*" of the PYD leadership and presents their policies to "*the outside world*" (Ketelaars, 2016; p.347). They are all in English and open to public access and consisted of overall 92 texts in the period between March 2011 and 20th January 2017.

The second step was the understanding of the Turkish government counter-framing process. Initially, the Turkish government refers to the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) (AKP) government. Texts including explanations, declarations, conference speeches and interviews of Turkish government officials with third parties and the joint press conferences with their counterparts were collated to identify the Turkish government counter-frames. Representatives of the Turkish government consist of officials such as Presidents, Prime Ministers, and members of the cabinet in the country, and its outside representatives such as the US and the UK ambassadors. These texts were gathered through the Anadolu Agency (Anadolu Ajansı) (AA) website. The Anadolu Agency is a Turkish state news agency, which does propagate not only the state policies of Turkey but also the policies of the governing parties as well as explanations of government officials regarding such policies. The Anadolu Agency has a website in English and representatives in the US/UK. As indicated by Ambrosio (2002b) and Waller and Conaway (2011), the official websites can be used for understanding the framing and counter-framing policies and identifying frames/counter-frames of the sides as primary sources¹³. Accordingly, for this research, the Anadolu Agency was a significant resource to understand the counter-framing policy of the Turkish government against the PYD framing as well as to identify its counter-frames. Documents on this website were points of reference representing a common interpretation of the Turkish government regarding the PYD and the Syrian civil war and presenting these policies to the outside world (Ketelaars, 2016). Entire documents were in English and open to public access. There were 770 texts such as pieces of analyses and news articles regarding the Syrian civil war, the PYD, the PKK and the YPG from

¹³ While Ambrosio (2002b) applied the website of an Armenian lobby as primary source to explain the framing policy of the lobby for the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, Waller and Conaway (2011) analysed an international sports business brand, the nikebiz.com, as primary resource to explain counter-framing efforts of Nike against its components and their arguments against the Nike.

March 2011 to 20th January 2017. 505 out of 770 included the quotes of Turkish government officials and were used to identify the Turkish government counter-frames.

The following steps of the data collection attempted to explain potential success of the PYD frames through the US/UK's responsiveness towards them. It also aimed at understanding potential challenges caused by the Turkish government counter-frames to these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames. Therefore, the third step was to understand the coverage of the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames by the parliamentary debates in the US/UK. Data were gathered through debates in the House of Representatives and Senate (Ambrosio, 2002b) between 2002 and 2017 to explain whether frames and counter-frames were covered by US Congress as its responsiveness towards them. Similarly, data were collated through debates in the House of Commons and House of Lords (Kornprobst, 2019) within the same period to account for the coverage of frames and counter-frames by the UK parliament as its responsiveness towards them. Data collection for the parliamentary debates started from 2002 by considering the US/UK as leading countries during the 2003 Iraq War to understand the positions of policymakers of these countries towards Kurds in general, and specifically towards the Kurdish question in the Kurdish-populated countries of the Middle East in this period. The keywords "*Syrian Kurds*", "*PKK*", "*PYD*", "*YPG*", "*Syrian Democratic Forces*" and "*Turkey and Syrian Kurds*" were used for searching documents. The debates regarding the Kurds in US Congress goes back to the 1960s. The UK parliament, on the other hand, began debating the points regarding the Kurds in 2010 although the UK was another leading country with the US during the 2003 Iraq War.

The fourth step was to understand the coverage of frames and counter-frames by media from 2002 to 2017. Data was gathered through the mainstream newspapers in the US such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal*, (Vanderbush, 2009; Ambrosio, 2002b; Shain, 1994) to understand the inclusion of frames and counter-frames as their responsiveness towards them. Likewise, the *Guardian*, the *Independent*, the *Times/Sunday Times*, the *Daily Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph* (Kornprobst, 2019) were used as the mainstream newspapers in the UK for a similar purpose. Data collection for the mainstream newspapers also started from 2002 due to the roles of the US/UK as leading countries during the 2003 Iraq war. It also helped understand policies of the mainstream newspapers in the US/UK towards

Kurds in general and the Kurdish question in the Kurdish-populated countries of the Middle East. The same keywords were also used for searching documents.

The last step was to conduct interviews with political elites in the US/UK to understand their responsiveness towards the PYD frames (Brown, 2013). The interviews also helped understand the potential challenges caused by the Turkish government counter-frames to the PYD frames and their impact on the policymakers' responsiveness towards the PYD frames. The political elites have always been a matter of discussion in the existing literature on research methods. According to David Richards, political elites are *"a group of individuals, who hold, or have held, a privileged position in society and, [...] are likely to have had more influence on political outcomes than general members of the public"* (Richards, 1996:pp.199). While his description is a general one, Lilleker (2003) has a specific focus for calling a person as a political elite. According to him, the closeness of a person to the ruling power and their relations to the policymaking process are essential implications for naming people as political elites (Lilleker, 2003). In this regard, *"all elected representatives, executive officers of organisations and senior state employees"* are political elites (Lilleker, 2003; pp.207). Peabody et al. (1990: p.451) adds *"Presidents and Cabinet members; Senators and Representatives; Supreme Court Justices; White House, [the] executive branch and congressional staff; political party and congressional campaign committee officials; lobbyists and media personnel"* to the context of political elites.

The thesis considered the definition of Peabody et al. (1990) while identifying political elites in the US/UK. Therefore, they referred to people who are familiar with the Kurdish question in the Middle East, particularly in Syria and Turkey. Additionally, they were people studying on the US/UK's relationship with Kurds, the Syrian civil war and Turkey. More specifically, the US interviews were conducted with former members of US Congress, the National Security Council and former officials at the State Department during the Obama administration. Experts on the Kurdish question in US universities and policy analysts at US think-tanks were also interviewed since they contributed to policymaking processes during the Obama administration through briefings. The UK interviews were conducted with the MPs who are members of All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) such as the APPG Friends of Syria, APPG Syria, APPG Turkey from the House of Commons and House of Lords, and some individual MPs from the UK political parties. Additionally, officials at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)

and experts on the Kurdish question in the UK universities were interviewed. The anonymised version of the US and the UK participants were listed in Appendix A.

The interviews were conducted with two purposes. The first was to understand the US/UK political elites' responsiveness towards the PYD frames (Brown, 2013) and the Turkish government counter-frames' potential challenges to the PYD frames and their potential impact on policymakers' responsiveness towards the PYD frames. Secondly, interviews helped the data triangulation by cross-referencing of the "*triad of primary sources (interviews, published first-hand accounts; and documentary sources [...] with published secondary-source information*" (Davies, 2001: p.78). This is important for the reliability of data. Accordingly, 29 semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 US and 12 UK political elites. Snowball sampling was applied for two reasons, reducing the problem of accessing political elites and reaching out to more participants (Richardson, 2014; Richards, 1996). As underlined by Richardson (2014), snowball sampling for the political elite interviews refers to the utilisation of recommendations or networks of interviewed political elites for accessing further participants. This sampling can also solve the problem of direct access to political or academic elites (Ibid). Due to these reasons, the snowball sampling was used as the main strategy for the political elite interviews.

The semi-structured interviews included open-ended questions to provide flexibility to participants (Burns, 2000), more like conversations (Leech, 2002), through which participants managed to explain their personal opinions, experiences, comments, beliefs and potential assumptions regarding the research topic. As suggested by Brown (2013), specific questions were developed. These questions included the description of the Syrian civil war by participants through considering the positions of the US/UK; their personal opinions regarding policy stances and objectives of these countries in Syria during the civil war, and especially, before and after the rise of ISIS, and participants' assessments of whether the US/UK achieved their policy objectives in Syria. By slightly differing from Brown's (2013) suggestion, these specific questions included the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames, which helped learn straightforward opinions of participants regarding frames and counter-frames. It also played a role in assessing their responsiveness towards the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames as well as the potential challenges caused by the Turkish counter-frames against the PYD frames. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours, and were

audiotaped and transcribed for analysis, respectively. The content of the semi-structured interview questionnaire for the US/UK participants were presented in Appendix B and Appendix C, respectively.

2.7.2 Data Analysis

The frame analysis is the main method of this research. The inductive thematic analysis is used to identify the components of the PYD frames and Turkish counter-frames. Thematic analysis refers to the “*process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data*” (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017: p.3352). The thesis applied an inductive thematic analysis to identify such themes and patterns as components of the PYD frames and the Turkish counter-frames. The inductive thematic analysis is a data-driven approach, which requires “*coding data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame*” or an “*analytic preconceptions*” such as a discourse analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006: p.83). The inductive thematic analysis was made through the qualitative data analysis software, Nvivo. Nvivo facilitates managing, organising or visualising qualitative data such as texts/documents and interviews (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). While coding data through Nvivo, users can create nodes for themes and organise these nodes and themes in accordance with the purpose of their research (Ibid). It has also special query characteristics such as text research and word frequency query, which assist data coding (Ibid). All these characteristics are significant for making thematic analysis through the documents/texts and interviews. Coding through Nvivo was also supported by the manual coding to ensure the reliability of findings by comparing two types of coding.

In parallel to the data collection process, the data analysis process also has five steps. The first two are to identify frames and framing policies of the PYD as well as counter-frames and counter-framing policies of the Turkish government. The last three are to explain the responsiveness of policymakers, parliamentary debates and mainstream newspapers in the US/UK towards the PYD frames. In so doing, these steps consider the counter-frames’ potential challenges to the PYD frames and their impact on the responsiveness of the targeted countries towards the PYD frames. In the first step, the PYD frames were identified and its framing policies from March 2011 to 20th January 2017 were explained via four avenues. First, three types of texts, the textbooks of the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan, the official documents of the PYD and explanations, declarations, conference speeches and interviews of the PYD representatives, 92 documents, were read and uploaded to Nvivo. Second, key themes within

these documents were studiously identified and coded through Nvivo. While coding, nodes were created for each main theme by considering subthemes and assessing them as part of the main themes. Accordingly, each main theme and subthemes were identified as the main components of each PYD frame. Third, the ongoing developments in the Syrian civil war from March 2011 to 20th January 2017 and their potential impact on the PYD frames and its framing policies were studiously searched. Key developments such as the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in March 2011, the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 with the start of Aleppo battle, the rise of ISIS in 2014 within the ongoing process of the Aleppo battle and the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane and the UN Geneva Peace negotiations for the political future of Syria in 2014 and 2016 were side-lined. In so doing, the policy objectives of the US/UK in Syria before and after the rise of ISIS and their potential impact on the PYD frames and framing policies were also considered. Finally, the PYD frames were categorised into normative and strategic frames by considering the normative and strategic framing processes for lobbying in the US/UK. All these analyses will be presented in the “Favourable Political Opportunities and the PYD Framing” Chapter, Chapter 3.

In the second step, the Turkish government counter-frames were identified, and its counter-framing policies were explained from March 2011 to 20th January 2017 through similar paths. First, the “PYD” was used as a keyword for searching documents. There were 505 documents/texts including explanations, declarations, conference speeches and interviews of Turkish government officials with third parties and the joint press conferences with their counterparts. These documents were related to the Syrian civil war, the PYD, the PKK and the YPG. 287 out of 505 documents included explanations/comments of Turkish government officials as direct quotes. These documents were read and uploaded to the Nvivo. Second, key themes within these documents were identified and coded by creating nodes for each theme and considering subthemes as part of the main themes. Each main theme and subthemes were identified as the main components of each Turkish counter-frame. Third, the Turkish government policy in Syria, the developments above in the civil war from March 2011 to 20th January 2017, and their potential impact on the Turkish government counter-frames and its counter-framing policies were analysed. Accordingly, the policy objectives of the US/UK in Syria before and after the rise of ISIS and their potential impact on the Turkish government counter-frames and its counter-framing policies were also considered. Consequently, the counter-frames were separated into characterisation frames and other counter-frames by

considering the negative characterisation and counter-framing processes of the Turkish government for challenging the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD frames. All these analyses will be presented in the “Turkish Government’s Response to the PYD Framing: Negative Characterisation and Counter-Framing” Chapter, Chapter 4.

The first two stages helped identify frames and framing policies of the PYD as well as the counter-frames and counter-framing policies of the Turkish government. The following stages focused on understanding the responsiveness of parliamentary transcripts, mainstream newspapers and policymakers in the US/UK towards the PYD frames. Additionally, they investigated the counter-frames’ potential challenges against the US/UK’s responsiveness towards the PYD frames. While assessing the responsiveness of parliamentary transcripts and mainstream newspapers towards these frames as framing success, Kornprobst’s (2019) thematic congruence was applied. Inspired by Gamson’s (1992) concepts of themes and subthemes in frames, Kornprobst (2019) has conceptualised the term *thematic congruence* and has applied it to explain frame resonance in the transcripts of the UK parliament and the mainstream newspapers in the UK. This term requires an in-depth analysis of themes as components of frames and themes in the transcripts of parliament as well as newspapers. After identifying themes, thematic congruence checks whether the component themes of frames match with themes in the parliamentary transcripts and newspapers to measure resonance in the text. As discussed above, this thesis applied Braun and Clarke’s (2006) inductive thematic analysis to identify the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames. This analysis was backed by Kornprobst’s (2019) method of thematic congruence. It identified themes in the parliamentary transcripts and mainstream newspapers in the US/UK and checked the overlapping and diverging themes to assess these sources’ responsiveness towards frames. While measuring the US/UK policymakers’ responsiveness towards the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames’ challenge to them, the semi-structured interviews were conducted through specific questions (Brown, 2013), which included frames and counter-frames to learn the opinions of participants regarding them.

Accordingly, the third step analysed the responsiveness of parliamentary transcripts in the US/UK towards frames and counter-frames via five phases. First, parliamentary documents in the US Congress and the UK Parliament from 2002 to 2017 were searched through the websites Congress.gov and Hansard, respectively. “Kurds”, “Syrian Kurds”, and “PKK”, “PYD”,

“YPG”, “*Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)*” and “*Turkey and Syrian Kurds*” were used as keywords. There were 1781 documents in the US Congress and 293 documents in the UK Parliament, which were read and uploaded to Nvivo. Second, key themes within these documents about the Syrian Kurds, the PYD, the PKK and the Turkish government were studiously coded in two ways, manually and through Nvivo by creating nodes for each theme (Kornprobst, 2019). Third, the component themes of the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames were compared to the themes in the parliamentary transcripts of the US/UK, which included topics regarding the Syrian Kurds, the PYD, the PKK and the Turkish government. The comparison was made to understand whether the component themes of frames and counter-frames, and themes in the parliamentary documents overlapped or diverged (Ibid). Fourth, the policy stances and policy objectives of the US/UK in Syria from March 2011 to 20th January 2017 were analysed. This analysis helped account for whether the overlapping/diverging themes of frames/counter-frames and the themes in documents possible results of these countries’ policy stances and objectives in Syria were. The periods before and after the rise of ISIS were also considered for this analysis. Finally, the context of conversations in which the US/UK policymakers referred to the component themes of the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames within the debates were identified. This point helped assess the responsiveness of the parliamentary transcripts towards the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames. In other words, this analysis measured the PYD frames’ thematic congruence with the parliamentary transcripts (Kornprobst, 2019) and the Turkish government counter-frames’ potential challenge to this congruence. All these analyses will be explained in the Success of Normative and Strategic Frames chapters, in Chapters 5 and 6, respectively.

The fourth step examined the responsiveness of the mainstream newspapers in the US/UK towards the frames and counter-frames. The similar phases were followed. First, documents in the mainstream newspapers of the US/UK were searched through the lexis-nexus platform of the University of Leeds Library. “*Syrian Kurds*”, “*Turkey and Syrian Kurds*”, “YPG” and “SDF” were used as keywords. There were 668 documents in the US newspapers (22 editorial papers, 139 personal opinion pieces and 507 news articles) and 829 documents in the UK newspapers (25 editorial papers, 59 personal opinion pieces and 745 news articles), which were read and uploaded to Nvivo. Second, key themes within these documents regarding the Syrian Kurds, the PYD, the PKK and the Turkish government were studiously coded both manually

and through Nvivo by creating nodes for each theme (Kornprobst, 2019). Third, the themes as the components of the PYD and the Turkish government frames and the themes in the mainstream newspapers of the US/UK regarding the Syrian Kurds, the PYD, the PKK and the Turkish government were compared. Similarly, this comparison was made to understand whether the component themes of frames and counter-frames and the themes in the newspapers overlapped/diverged. Fourth, the potential results of the policy stances and objectives of the US/UK on the overlapping and diverging themes of frames and counter-frames, and themes in the newspapers were also analysed. Likewise, the periods before and after the rise of ISIS were also considered. Finally, the context of themes in which the mainstream newspapers of the US/UK referred to the component themes of the PYD and the Turkish frames was identified. This analysis facilitated the responsiveness of the mainstream newspapers towards the PYD frames and the Turkish government frames and helped measure the PYD frames' thematic congruence with these resources (Kornprobst, 2019). All these analyses will be presented in the Success of Normative and Strategic Frames chapters, in Chapters 5 and 6, respectively.

The final step focused on the responsiveness of the US/UK policymakers towards the PYD frames and the Turkish counter-frames through the analysis of interview data. As explained in the data collection section, interviews included the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames. They were read participants to learn their straightforward opinions about them. Three paths were followed for analysing the interview data. First, the responses of participants were studiously coded manually and through Nvivo by creating nodes for each PYD frame and Turkish counter-frame. Second, these responses for each frame and counter-frame were compared with the findings of the parliamentary data and the newspaper data for the triangulation (Brown, 2013; Davies, 2001). This analysis helped identify the overlapping and diverging points in the responses of participants regarding the frames and counter-frames with those of the parliamentary and newspapers data. Finally, the participants' responses about the policy stances and objectives of the US/UK in the Syrian civil war from March 2011 to 20th January 2017 were compared with their responses about the PYD frames and the Turkish counter-frames. In so doing, the policy objectives of these countries before and after the rise of ISIS and participants' explanations about these points were also considered. In this way, policymakers' responsiveness towards the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames' potential challenges to their responsiveness were assessed. All these analyses will be

addressed in the Success of Normative and Strategic Frames chapters, in Chapters 5 and 6, respectively.

2.7.3 Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitive nature of the research at hand, the confidentiality, anonymity of participants and data protection were the main ethical considerations of this thesis. The Kurdish question is a long-term and sensitive one, particularly in Turkey. As explained in the Ideology of the Kurdish Political Movement and its International Relations chapter, chapter 1, the PYD is the Syrian affiliate of the PKK. While the US, the European countries and Turkey designate the PKK as a terrorist organisation, only the Turkish government proscribes the PYD and the YPG as terrorist organisations due to their ideological links with the PKK. This means that a direct interaction with the PYD representatives or the YPG militias could have adversely affected this research project and personal career of the researcher in the future. Thus, there was no direct interaction with these people. In place of approaching the PYD representatives, their arguments, frames and framing policies were identified through documents/texts such as their speeches at conferences, explanations at the local and international websites and their interviews with third parties.

The confidentiality between the researcher and participants is the main ethical consideration. The policy objectives of the US/UK in Syria overlapped with those of the PYD since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane. This meant that although participants had underlined the ideological links between the PYD and the PKK, they had not described the PYD as a terrorist organisation. All participants, including the officials of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK, former officials of the US State Department, and people at the think-tanks or defence units of these countries had direct or indirect interaction with the PYD or its military wing, the YPG. Therefore, participants could have avoided being interviewed on this sensitive topic not to impair policies of their countries. To avoid such a consequence and increase the participation, confidentiality was guaranteed by the researcher and provided through the official documents such as information paper and consent form which had underlined that all participants would be anonymised. This strategy, to a certain extent, increased the confidentiality/rapport between the researcher and participants. These documents explained that there would not be any risk to participants and researcher would approach the topic quite objectively to understand the process and participants' opinions regarding the process. Particularly, the information paper described

the general structure and main points of the research, the content of interviews as well as type of questions. The paper also emphasised that participants would have an opportunity not to answer any particular questions or to withdraw from the research project any time without providing any reasons until the thesis would be ready for the public access. This paper also underlined the chance of contacting not only to the researcher but also to the supervisors of researcher through their email addresses in the case of having questions or concerns. In this paper, it was underscored that participation was dependent on the consent of participants and researcher provided adequate time to participants for considering the potential sensitivity of the topic and their decisions to participate or not. This type of transparency helped researcher to reach out more participants than expected in the initial stage of interviewing process. As part of the confidentiality, depending on the consent of participants, conversations were recorded, and the transcripts and research notes were sent to participants. In this way, they had a chance to delete the answers which they were not satisfied with or add new points to their explanations.

Another ethical consideration was the anonymity of participants. The researcher always prioritised this point and anonymisation was offered at the time of approaching participants as well as before starting interviews. Accordingly, names of participants were not mentioned in the thesis. Researcher used A1, A2 and A3; and B1, B2 and B3 style anonymisation method to anonymise the UK and the US participants, respectively. Their responses were used for the analysis and the relevant ones were quoted in the thesis depending on the consent of participants.

The last ethical consideration was the data protection. The transcripts and recordings were stored at the University of Leeds secure M Drive storage facility, which was backed up regularly. The printed interview materials such as interview notes were secured in the locked desk drawer at the researcher's office and were transferred to the same storage through Microsoft Word software program. Only the researcher had access to original recordings which were deleted later and the transcripts as the University of Leeds desktop computer needs a personal password. It was the priority of researcher not to use personal laptop or computer for the data analysis to protect the research data.

2.8 Conclusion

The chapter has developed a theoretical approach to explain the dynamic framing process and its significance for framing success in ethnic lobbying within the US/UK. It has described ethnic lobbying as an activity, which was undertaken by political organisations (Ambrosio, 2002a), the Kurdish PYD in Syria and the current Turkish AKP government, to target the US/UK. The dynamic framing process is explained as a creation and presentation process of frames and counter-frames (Kaufman et al., 2013) as well as their interaction in the period from March 2011 to 20th January 2017. Framing success is addressed through the responsiveness of the policymakers and the mainstream newspapers in the US/UK towards the PYD frames and Turkish counter-frames' potential challenges to them within the aforementioned period.

The thesis argues that analysing framing as dynamic process helps explain the characteristics of the PYD frames and Turkish counter-frames, which are directly related to their capacity to influence the targeted audiences (Ketelaars, 2016; Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005) as well as their interaction. This approach demonstrates the impact of the ongoing developments on the characteristics of the PYD frames and Turkish counter-frames during their creation and presentation processes and provides an understanding regarding the framing policies and strategies of lobbyists as frame producers (Baumgartner, 2007; Ambrosio, 2002b; Reese and Ramirez, 2002; Swart, 1995). However, the case indicates that the characteristics of the PYD frames and Turkish counter-frames may not merely explain the responsiveness of the targeted countries towards frames as a potential framing success. The policy stances and objectives of the targeted countries (Koinova, 2014; 2011), which can also be understood through the dynamic framing process, have to be considered as other significant determiners to explain these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames. The policy stances and objectives are also essential factors to assess the counter-frames' potential challenge against the targeted countries' responsiveness towards the frames. In the thesis, the policy stances are the official positions of the US/UK regarding the political future of Syria to explain their attitudes towards the PYD's model of governance and their responsiveness towards the frames presenting this model. Policy objectives of the US/UK are their priorities in the Syrian civil war from March 2011 to 20th January 2017 and changes in these priorities depending on important developments such as the rise of ISIS in 2014.

Analysing the PYD framing and Turkish government counter-framing as dynamic processes through the creation and presentation of frames and counter-frame by applying social movement framing (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005) and counter-framing approaches (Benford and Snow, 2000) is a novel contribution to the literature on ethnic lobbying in the US and the UK, which develops new perspectives;

- (1) It helps examine the characteristics of the frames and counter-frames by analysing their creation and presentation processes (Ketelaars, 2016; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005).
- (2) It indicates the impact of the developments in the concentrated period (Swart, 1995) on the creation and presentation of frames and counter-frames as well as on the framing and counter-framing policies of lobbying groups by considering the expectations of the targeted countries (Desrosiers, 2012; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005).
- (3) It demonstrates the interaction between frames and counter-frames (Reese and Ramirez, 2002), and this interaction's potential challenge for the success of frames since the lobbyists as frame producers (Baumgartner, 2007) targeted the same countries.
- (4) It provides an understanding regarding the targeted countries' policy stances and objectives, which were key determiners for their responsiveness towards frames and counter-frames by considering the ongoing developments' influence on these countries' expectations.

The chapter has also accounted for the research method and ethical considerations of the thesis. The next chapter will discuss the PYD's framing process of its model of governance for lobbying the US/UK.

Chapter 3 Favourable Political Opportunities and the PYD

Framing

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to explain how the PYD framed its model of governance in lobbying the US/UK. By focusing on, and analysing, the textbooks of the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan, official documents of the PYD and explanations, declarations, conference speeches and interviews of the PYD representatives, this chapter examines how the PYD sought to frame its model of governance through the Syrian civil war to lobby in the US/UK between 2011 and 2017, and what type of frames they deployed for this purpose. The chapter argues that there were three key and favourable political opportunities for the PYD leadership since the beginning of the Syrian civil war until the 20th January 2017 to frame their model of governance for lobbying the US/UK. They are the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in March 2011, the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 with the start of the Aleppo battle and the rise of ISIS in 2014 within the ongoing process of the Aleppo battle.

As such, the chapter aims to make two contributions to the related research fields. The first is to the existing literature on the Syrian Kurds or Kurdish politics in Syria, particularly the one regarding the analysis of the developments in the Kurdish areas of Syria following the 2011 Syrian civil war within different time periods. While analysing the Kurdish politics in Syria, studies commonly acknowledge the outbreak of the 2011 civil war with the impacts of Arab uprisings in the Middle East as a historical opportunity for the Syrian Kurds (Allsopp, 2015; 2013; Federici, 2015; Gunter, 2014) or the one which could change the Kurdish politics and the map of the Middle East on behalf of the Kurds (Allsopp, 2013). These studies also refer to other favourable political opportunities for the Syrian Kurds, especially for the PYD, such as the withdrawal of the Syrian armed forces from northern Syria in July 2012 (Allsopp, 2017; 2013; Federici, 2015; Gunter, 2014; Savelsberg and Tejel, 2013) and the rise of ISIS in 2014 (Allsopp, 2017; Gunter, 2015; Federici, 2015) in the context of Aleppo battle. As periodical pieces, they discuss the Syrian Kurds' efforts to seize these opportunities in the context of the regional politics of the Middle East (Allsopp, 2017; Gunter, 2015; 2014; Federici, 2015), they analyse the rise of the PYD in the Kurdish politics of Syria after the civil war through its affiliated organisations and their mobilisation for practising the PYD's model of governance in Syria by considering the PYD's ideological links with the PKK (Kaya and Lowe, 2017; Paasche, 2015)

and its relations with other regional (Kaya and Lowe, 2017; Paasche, 2015; Gunes and Lowe, 2015; Gunter, 2014) or international actors (Wilgenburg and Allsopp, 2019; Kardas and Yesiltas, 2018; Allsopp, 2017; Plakoudas, 2016; Federici, 2015). However, these pieces review the ongoing developments in the Kurdish areas of Syria as the recent pieces in the different periods of the Syrian civil war. Although they discuss the importance of such political opportunities for the Syrian Kurds periodically, they assess each period separately. This chapter develops a new perspective by holistically approaching to the utilisation of these favourable political opportunities by the PYD. It conceptualises these opportunities as starting points for the creation and presentation (Kaufman et al, 2013) of the PYD frames in the contexts of the social movement framing approach, since the PYD representatives articulated “alternative set of arrangements” (Benford and Snow, 2000; p.613) and provided alternative solutions (Snow and Benford, 1992) for the issues of Syria to lobby the US/UK externally from March 2011 to 20th January 2017 and to receive support for their model of governance in Syria. This analysis addresses two points regarding the PYD and its model of governance. First, it shows how the PYD had a chance to practise the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan’s Democratic Confederalism model following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, as a model of governance, first in northern Syria (Muslim quoted in KurdWatch, 2011), and then, in eastern Syria (Wilgenburg and Allsopp, 2019). Secondly, it illustrates how the PYD leadership calls such a model of governance as social democracy or democratic socialism (PYD’s Party Program, 2013), which is inspired by Murray Bookchin’s far-leftist, anarchist, libertarian municipality (Allsopp, 2015; Gunter, 2014), but how they presented this model of governance as a Western-style, liberal democracy due to their interaction with the US/UK by considering these countries’ expectations in Syria.

Secondly, the chapter contributes to the literature on framing in ethnic lobbying in the US/UK. The extant literature on the framing in ethnic lobbying in these countries approach framing as one of the methods applied for lobbying campaigns as a facilitator of successful ethnic lobbying (Herner-Kovács, 2013; Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002) or a moderate method for diaspora mobilisation (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011). These studies indicate that investigation of successful lobbying process or the process of diaspora mobilisation takes precedence over the framing process. It is because they try to explain what makes an ethnic lobbying campaign successful or what accounts for the moderate behaviour of the conflict-generated diasporas during the mobilisation process. Additionally, they only focus on ethnic lobbies or diasporic

communities, which already have access to these countries and their political systems. Therefore, they have not focused on the lobbying efforts of relatively new lobbying organisations such as the PYD, which had no access to these countries until the Syrian civil war and even during the war. Despite this fact, the PYD tried to lobby from outside of these countries through limited strategies, such as framing. Meanwhile, on the extant literature of ethnic lobbying in the US, Ambrosio's (2002b) study has come close to focusing on the framing as a process. It has analysed the framing policies of the Armenian lobby, which framed the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan to accelerate the US involvement in this regional conflict and stop the US foreign aid to Azerbaijan.

Yet this study requires detailing to better explain the utilisation of frames for lobbying by analysing their characteristics through their creation and presentation as a dynamic process. It also requires considering the developments in the concentrated period since these developments play a role in affecting the characteristics of frames during their creation and presentation. These developments also provide hints concerning the expectations of the targeted audiences within the concentrated period (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005; Swart, 1995). Therefore, this chapter contributes to this body of literature by analysing framing not only as a lobbying strategy for the Syrian Kurdish lobbying but also a dynamic process through the creation and presentation of frames (Kaufman et al., 2013) and applying social movement framing approach to ethnic lobbying (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). As such, it provides an understanding regarding the characteristics of frames (Ketelaars, 2016) and the developments between March 2011 and 20th January 2017, which affected their characteristics. This point is significant to explain frames' capacity to influence the targeted audiences while discussing the targeted audiences' responsiveness towards frames as framing success (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005), which will be explained in chapters 5 and 6. Accordingly, the framing efforts of the PYD are conceptualised as normative and strategic processes through the creation and presentation of normative and strategic frames (Kaufman et al., 2013).

3.2 The Framing Process of the PYD's Model of Governance for Lobbying

This chapter argues that there is a close relationship between the three key and favourable political opportunities of the Syrian civil war and the framing process of the PYD's model of governance for lobbying in the US/UK. Before the 2011 Syrian civil war, the Kurdish parties were accepted as illegal structures by the Syrian regime and faced oppression, and therefore;

they acted as underground parties (Allsopp, 2015). With the outbreak of the 2011 civil war, there were three key and favourable political opportunities for Kurds because of the changing political environment in Syria. The first was the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in March 2011, which was an historical opportunity for the Syrian Kurds and the Kurdish politics of Syria in general (Allsopp, 2015). As part of this opportunity, in the early stages of the civil war, the President Assad tried to prevent the Syrian Kurds' participation in the protests against the Syrian government; and therefore, revised its former policy towards the Kurds by granting citizenship to the stateless Kurds and revising the decisions regarding the basic rights of Kurds. Assad also invited the leaders of the Kurdish political parties to meet with Syrian government officials to discuss further steps (Ibid). While the PYD used this opportunity by preparing for practising the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan's Democratic Confederalism model in northern Syria (Muslim quoted in KurdWatch, 2011), other Kurdish political parties including civil organisations such as Kurdish youth and women's organisations, individuals, human rights activists established Kurdish National Council (KNC) in October 2011 to unite the Kurdish opposition and to have a united Kurdish voice (Allsopp, 2015). Such a division caused a rivalry between the PYD and the KNC (Ibid). There were also attempts to unite the PYD and KNC, which was initiated and moderated by the KRG President Masuod Barzani in June 2012. Consequently, the PYD and KNC signed a power-sharing agreement (Erbil/Hawler Agreement) and formed the Kurdish Supreme Committee (Allsopp and Wilgenburg, 2019).

The second political opportunity for the PYD was the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern parts of Syria with the start of the Aleppo Battle. The nature of such a withdrawal is still controversial. The withdrawal seems more about Assad's attempts to keep the more central areas (Gunter, 2014), especially to focus on the control of Aleppo due to the outbreak of the Aleppo battle between some of the Syrian opposition units and the government forces in July 2012 (Philips, 2018). However, Savelsberg and Tejel's (2013) explanations imply some kind of a tacit agreement between the Assad regime and the PYD. Authors underline that the Iraqi President and the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Jalal Talabani, brought the Syrian government, the PKK and the Iranian government together in the early stages of the Syrian civil war (Ibid). As a potential part of this deal, the PKK's Iranian branch, PJAK, stopped acting against Iran, which was also the same period that the PKK militias from Turkey and Iraq and weapons from Iran came Syria to contribute PYD's grow (Ibid). This was a beneficial point for the Assad regime, since it would not have to fight or deal with the Syrian

Kurds or especially with the PYD, the Syrian branch of the PKK while struggling with the Syrian opposition (Savelsberg and Tejel, 2013) and the regime would “keep the opposition fractured” (Balanche, 2018: p.16). Whether it was an agreed or a spontaneous act, following the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces, the Kurdish parties filled the authority and security gaps in the region (Allsopp, 2013). Especially, the PYD became a dominant party mainly due to its armed forces (Savelsberg and Tejel, 2013) and also captured Aleppo’s Kurdish neighbourhoods, Ashrafiyah and Sheikh Maqsd (Allsopp and Wilgenburg, 2019; Philips, 2018). The PYD used this political opportunity to practise the PKK leader Ocalan’s Democratic Confederalism model as a model of governance in Syria (Allsopp, 2015) and to lobby in the European countries¹⁴. While the PYD took control over the Kurdish majority areas and established its local councils, the military opposition, the Free Syrian Army (FSA) dominated the Arab majority areas and found its own local councils in the early stage of this Aleppo Battle (Kusilek, 2019).

The last key political opportunity was the rise of ISIS in 2014 within the ongoing process of the Aleppo Battle. The opposition army, the FSA, was not the only military group trying to take control over the Aleppo Governorate between 2011 and 2014 (Kusilek, 2019). There were different military Islamist groups entering Syria to have control in some areas of this territory such as the Syrian Islamic Front, the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front and Al-Nusra, the Al-Qaeda affiliate, which was the effective group in seizing territories in the northern part of Aleppo governorate (Ibid). ISIS emerged from the ongoing competition amongst these groups (Ibid). While the majority of the Islamist military groups argued that they had been waging “jihad” against Assad and his regime, Al Nusra and ISIS pursued a different jihad whose aims were beyond the Syrian territory (Philips, 2018). Accordingly, ISIS occupied the territories to expand its control in the region and surrounded the Kurdish populated areas (Kusilek, 2019). The ISIS siege on Kobane started in September 2014 with the clashes between the YPG and ISIS militias (Philips, 2018). During this period, the US was under the pressure of the international community to intervene in the fight against ISIS in the Middle East (B1, 2018). As part of the reluctance or non-intervention policy of the Obama administration in any conflict in the Middle East following Libya (B1, 2018), the US began seeking ground partners to fight ISIS in Iraq and Syria (Paasche and Gunter, 2016). Especially starting from the 2014 ISIS siege

¹⁴ For more details, ANF News English, 23 September 2012, PYD co-chair in European tour, [Accessed: 7 May 2017] Available from: <https://anfenglish.com/news/pyd-co-chair-in-european-tour-6109>

on Kobane, the PYD's military wing, the YPG, developed a relationship with the US Special Forces and the US-led global coalition for fighting ISIS in Syria (Thornton, 2015). The PYD leadership sought to use this last opportunity not only for gaining territories through liberating or capturing strategic towns such as Manbij and Al-Bab from ISIS (Muslim quoted in ANF, 2016b; Abdurrahman, 2016) but also for legitimising its model of governance and lobbying in the US and the European countries (Paasche and Gunter, 2016; Federici, 2015). This chapter conceptualises these favourable political opportunities in the context of Benford and Snow's (2000; 1992) the social movement framing approach, as starting points of the dynamic framing process (Kaufman et al., 2013) of the PYD for lobbying in the US/UK. These efforts have been conceptualised and presented as normative and strategic framing processes.

3.2.1 The Normative Framing Process

The normative framing process indicates that the PYD instrumentally utilised norms such as democracy, human rights and moral values to obtain the political support of the US/UK for their model of governance. Since President Woodrow Wilson, spreading American values became a purpose of US foreign policy. In particular, Democrat Party Presidents and policymakers prioritised moral values and human rights as crucial traditions of US foreign policy (Mead, 2001; Donnelly, 2017). Ethnic lobbying experts have demonstrated that when ethnic lobbies advocate pluralism, democracy and human rights or, at least, utilise them for lobbying in their campaigns; they managed to influence the US policymakers (Herner-Kovacs, 2013; Shain, 1999; 1994) and the US public (Vanderbush, 2009). As Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) pointed out, these values can be accepted as internationally recognised Western values by others, or they can be used by the ethnic lobbies to challenge the US with its own values and/or rhetoric. Accordingly, the PYD leadership seems to have followed the same path by appealing to US policy objectives and its foreign policy discourses on promoting democracy in the Middle East (Gunter, 2014) and the "war on terror" (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005) to sell their model of governance in the normative framing process. This strategy is also related to the nature of the framing approach, which has to prioritise the expectations, values or interpretations of targeted audiences while creating and presenting frames; and lobbyists have a responsibility to know what type of frames could meet such expectations (Desrosiers, 2012; Baumgartner, 2007). This framing process has, thus, been explained through the creation and presentation of normative, the "regional role model" and "defence of human values against ISIS" frames, which addressed why the US/UK should provide their political support to the PYD's model of governance.

“A Regional Role Model” Frame

The regional role model frame has its roots in the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan’s “non-state administration” or “democracy without a state” argument, Democratic Confederalism (Ocalan, 2011a), which was developed in the 2000s to build a society instead of building a state (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011). Following its establishment, the PKK embraced the Marxist-Leninist, far-leftist, anarchist and anti-imperialist ideology (Ocalan, 2011b; Barkey and Fuller, 1998). However, as discussed in the Ideology of the Kurdish Political Movement and Its International Relations chapter, chapter 1, the PKK has been in the ideological transformation process since the 1990s because of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 as its ideological protector (Yarkin, 2015; Gunter, 2000; Barkey and Fuller, 1998), the capture of the PKK leader Abdualah Ocalan by a US-Turkish joint operation in 1999 (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011; Gunter, 2000), Turkey’s EU application process, which needed solving the Kurdish question in the context of the rights of minorities for democratisation of the country (Gunter, 2000). Such a transformation continued through Ocalan’s written text following his capture in the 2000s and, constructed the ideological framework of his new model of governance by going beyond the nation and state concepts of the nation-state idea (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011). When it comes to 2004, the ideological change of the PKK was considerable from Marxist-Leninist, state-centralism to the radical or stateless democracy, which was inspired by Murray Bookchin (Jongerden and Akkaya, 2013) as also discussed in chapter 1 on the ideology of Kurdish political movement. The details of this new ideology and its new model of governance is shared through Ocalan’s textbook, *Democratic Confederalism* (2011).

Through this model, the PKK leader proposed heterogeneous citizenship or equal coexistence; and accordingly, envisaged the existence of other dialects or languages as richness (Ocalan, 2011a). Additionally, Ocalan (2016) wanted to design a new society to create its active citizens through the new PKK ideology. Therefore, active citizenship should include the participation of men and women in the policymaking process and self-defence mechanisms (Ibid). This idea was practised as a co-presidency system in the PKK-affiliated organisations since 2005 and women took responsibilities in the administrative and military units (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011). The PKK leader also asserted that this model would solve the Kurdish question and be a role model for the democratisation of the entire Middle East because of these characteristics (Ocalan, 2011a; Ocalan, 2011b). So, the regional role model frame was used by the PYD leadership to sell their model of governance as a social democracy or democratic socialism

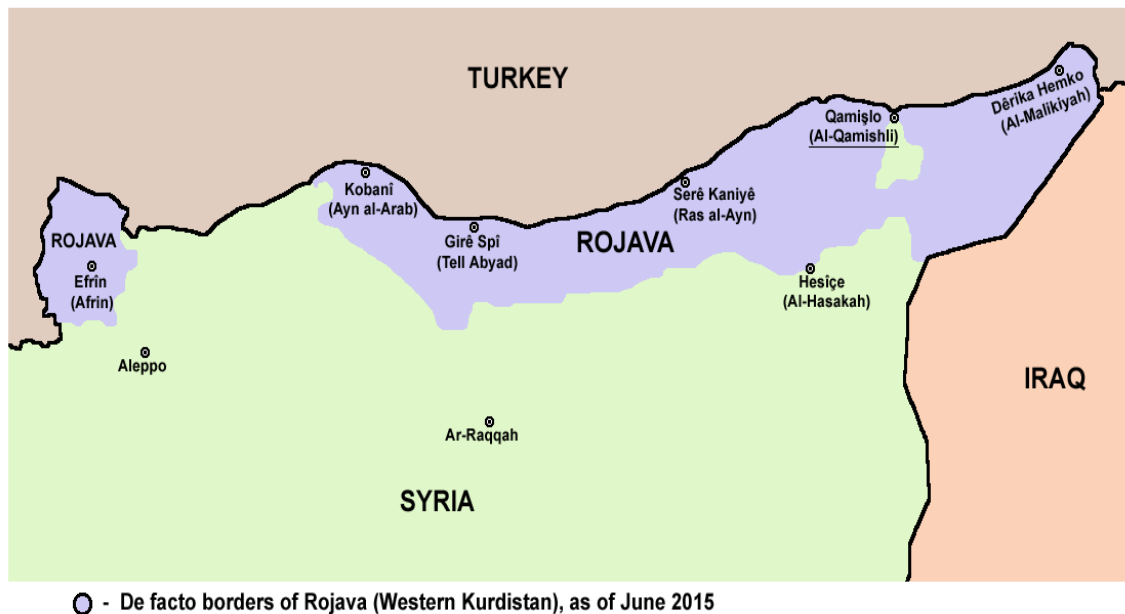
(PYD's Party Program, 2013) and to frame the model as a Western-style democracy by accentuating its key components during the framing process. In this way, as an alternative solution to the political problems in Syria and the Middle East, this frame addressed why the US/UK should support such a model, at least, for Syria.

As explained in chapter 2 on the dynamic framing in ethnic lobbying, by creating frames, the PYD leadership constructed meanings through the articulation of "alternative set of arrangements" (Benford and Snow, 2000; p.613) or providing alternative solutions (Snow and Benford, 1992) to the political issues regarding the political future of Syria as well as the security issues during the Syrian civil war. While diagnosing such issues, the PYD leadership identified its own "causal agents" (Gerhards, 1995) and emphasised its own solutions to such issues. In this regard, the outbreak of 2011 Syrian civil war was perceived as a historical opportunity by the PYD leadership to practise Ocalan's model of governance (Muslim quoted in KurdWatch, 2011). Unlike other oppositional groups in Syria and the Western countries which described the Assad regime as the main causal agent for the issues in Syria and which should be stepped aside in the initial stage of the civil war, the PYD leadership emphasised that it prioritised the issue of an "oppressive authoritarian system" as a causal agent for the issues in Syria in the early stages of the civil war instead of seeing the Assad regime as the main issue which should be stepped aside (Ibid). This position seems to have helped the PYD to maintain its relationship with the Assad Regime (B3, 2018; Allsopp, 2015; Savelsberg and Tejel, 2013). Accordingly, the PYD's solution was not to demand the fall or overthrow of the Assad regime publicly, but to prepare the Kurdish society for the post-Assad Syria by practising the PKK leader Ocalan's model of governance, Democratic Confederalism by calling it democratic autonomy for Syria (Muslim quoted in KurdWatch, 2011). This model of governance was propagated as the best solution to the Kurdish question in Syria (Ibid).

Accordingly, the PYD founded the People's Council of Western Kurdistan (PCWK), as an umbrella organisation and local assembly including executive and legislative branches to provide local and social services for people in the region (Gunter, 2014). The PCWK included other organisations such as TEV-DEM (Western Kurdistan Democratic Society Movement or Tevgara Civaka Demokrat) as local and civil structures (Kaya and Lowe, 2017), the Yekitiya Star, women's organisation, the union of Families of Martyrs, the Education and Language Institution and the Revolutionary Youth Movement of Western Kurdistan (Allsopp, 2015).

Following the aforementioned withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 with the start of the Aleppo Battle, the PYD began practising this model in Afrin, Kobane and Amuda, except for Qamishli (Kusilek, 2019), as cantonal administrations¹⁵ and the normative framing efforts of this model as a Western-style democracy commenced.

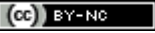
Map 3.1: De Facto Borders of the PYD Cantons in June 2015¹⁶



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Following the 9/11 terror attacks, the US foreign policy objective in the Middle East changed to promote democracy as a “*pre-emptive measure against the growth of terrorism*” (Koinova, 2011, p.453). As addressed by Dalacoura (2005) the objective of democracy promotion was implemented in different ways since 2001. One way of them was to provide support for the civil society organisations through the projects developed by policy initiatives and to encourage democratic changes by reforming the state institutions (Ibid). Given this US policy objective, and its implementation as well as the ethnic lobbying strategy to appeal US policy objectives by using its foreign policy discourses in lobbying campaigns, it was unsurprising that the PKK

¹⁵ After the end of ISIS siege on Kobane in March 2015, the PYD leadership declared that they wanted to unite these cantonal administrations geographically under the name of Rojava, for details: Exclusive Interview with PYD Co-chair Salih Muslim: Rojava Will Establish a New Civilisation, 28 March 2015, [Accessed: 8 May 2017] Available from: <http://kurdishquestion.com/article/3061-exclusive-interview-with-pyd-co-chair-salih-muslim-rojava-will-establish-a-new-civilisation>

¹⁶  This work is licenced under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/), Source: wikiwand.com, [Accessed: 3 September 2020] Available from: https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Talk:Autonomous_Administration_of_North_and_East_Syria/Archive_2

leader conceptualised this model as a regional democracy, which would be transforming the Kurdish society through civil society organisations like PCWK, which is also a body affiliated to the PKK (Savelsberg and Tejel, 2013). It was also unsurprising that the PYD leadership presented this as a Western-style democracy for lobbying in the US/UK after finding a chance to practise it. Rather peculiar was the changing rhetoric of the PYD and its position towards the US due to the changing political environment in Syria. For instance, the PYD co-chair Salih Muslim accused the US of training and designing some Kurds in accordance with US interests. Therefore, the PYD positioned itself against this US policy in the beginning of the Syrian civil war (Muslim quoted in KurdWatch, 2011). However, after dominating northern Syria to practise this model of governance in summer of 2012, the PYD's rhetoric changed. The co-chair Muslim (quoted in Rudaw.net, 2013), for instance, argued that the PYD had no animosity against the US. Instead, they perceived the US as a cradle of democracy and freedom, which were shared values and objectives between the US and the PYD. The leadership also argued that they had seen the Kurds' future as being in Western democracy and that the PYD had been disposed to work with the US to build a democratic Syria (Ibid). Following the PYD's interaction with the US authorities in the fight against ISIS, their anti-imperialist rhetoric changed, particularly at the international level (A10, 2018). These points indicate why the PYD began framing its model of governance as a Western-style democracy, particularly by abandoning its anti-imperialist rhetoric and by trying to align its policy objective in Syria with the US goal of democracy promotion in the Middle East.

As addressed in chapter 2 on the dynamic framing in ethnic lobbying, the dynamic framing refers to the creation and presentation process of frames (Kaufman et al, 2013). While framing this model of governance as a Western-style democracy for lobbying in the US/UK, the PYD leadership accentuated and presented four principles/components of this frame. The first component of a Western-style democracy argument was grassroots participation in the decision-making process of this model of governance through the creation of active citizens. Ocalan's (2011a) model had a bottom-up approach, which proposed the local level as central level for the decision-making process through the establishment of federative units from villages to urban neighbourhoods. In accordance with this ideological background, the PYD leadership established self-governments, city councils and the local committees in their Afrin, Kobane and Jazirah cantons to deal with the matters such as security, social services, politics, education and law (Abdullah quoted in ANF, 2012). Schools, culture centres (Muslim quoted

in KurdWath, 2011) and academies were also established (Abdullah quoted in ANF, 2012). These institutions would organise seminars or panel discussions to teach this model of governance and create active citizens by participating in these debates and decision-making processes by improving people's culture of democracy (Abdullah quoted in ANF, 2012), which is developed by the textbooks of Ocalan, *Democratic Confederalism (2011)* and *Democratic Nation (2016)*. The schools, culture centres and academies as elements of the gross-root participation in the Kurdish society in northern Syria were emphasised during the lobbying efforts of the PYD as part of the Western-style democracy (Muslim, quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2015).

The second component was the equality of men and women, which is also addressed as gender equality by the PYD leadership. In practice, the aforementioned TEV-DEM movement included women organisations working with the PYD leadership to raise awareness regarding the role of women in this new society and to transform them as active citizens. Therefore, the women councils in the districts and the largely Kurdish-populated Arab neighbourhoods and villages were established (Knapp et al., 2016). The equality of men and women was presented in two ways; at the administrative bodies and the military units of self-defence mechanisms. The equality of men and women was also underscored from the two perspectives, of human rights and dual leadership. These perspectives were concretised by the official document, the Social Contract of Rojava (2014), through articles 27 and 28:

“Women have the inviolable right to participate in political, social, economic and cultural life.”
(Article 27)

“Men and women are equal in the eyes of the law. The Charter guarantees the effective realisation of equality of women and mandates public institutions to work towards the elimination of gender discrimination.” (Article 28)

Likewise, articles 65 and 87, which described the administrative units, underlined that all administrative units should consist of, at least, 40 per cent of women. While article 65 explained the Judicial Council Administration, article 87 was more general in addressing all administrative bodies under this model:

“All governing bodies, institutions and committees shall be made up of at least forty per cent (40%) of either sex” (Article 87)

Additionally, while presenting the equality of men and women as a Western-style democracy, the Social Contract, especially article 21 referred to the international agreements on the rights and liberties of citizens under this model:

“The Charter incorporates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as other internationally recognised human rights conventions.” (Article 21)

The role of women in military units was also presented as part of a Western-style democracy argument. For instance, the YPJ, as women defence units, was established in 2013 to defend the PYD’s model of governance against its perceived enemies (Knapp et al., 2016). The PYD leadership emphasised this as the bravery of women, who defended their philosophy, territory and model of governance, particularly by referring to the YPJ’s fight against ISIS during the 2014 ISIS Siege on Kobane. It was called as women’s resistance and a historical revolution of women across the world for freedom and as an inspiration for other women in the Middle East, who wanted to democratise the region (Abdullah quoted in ANF, 2014e; ANF 2014g). In addition to defending their territory, administration and ideology, Kurdish women also fought for democracy and building an unprecedented life or society in the male-dominated Kurdish region and the Middle East (Abdullah quoted in ANF, 2015c; ANF, 2014g). These arguments were expressed in the speeches of PYD representatives, particularly during their visits to the European countries such as the UK (Muslim quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2016; 2015; in Chatham House, 2014).

It seems that the PYD presented the existence of women in the administrative and defence units as a unique revolution in the Middle East and referred to internationally recognised agreements in their main documents. In this way, the PYD tried to show why the US/UK should support this model in Syria. The PYD also attempted to send normative messages to the international community by emphasising that Kurds had been loyal supporters and implementers of Western values. Second, the PYD strove to show that a Western-style democracy, which led women to take more responsibilities in a Kurdish society and administrative units by differing from other countries in the Middle East, can operate through the PYD model. Especially after the rise of ISIS, these points were utilised to demonstrate that Kurds were different from ISIS and that they were secular and ideologically close to the West (Dalay, 2018; Kardas and Yesiltas, 2018) to grab the international community’s attention to the PYD’s model of governance. However,

other important matters such as the personal status of women in the society, their rights for divorce, marriage and inheritance have not been addressed by the Social Contract. It indicates that although the PYD members ideologically support the role of women in their society, this is the PKK tradition as part of its ideology, especially as a general characteristic and rhetoric of the leftist national liberation movements (A10, 2018). Although the PKK and PYD sympathisers might believe in the role of women in their society building, in general, it appears that the role of women was instrumentally used in framing to seek political support for the PYD's model of governance while lobbying in the West, for this research, in the US/UK.

The third component of a Western-style democracy argument was peaceful coexistence with other minorities, which was presented in three ways while lobbying. First, it was written in the introduction of the Social Contract of Rojava. It means that when the policymakers of the targeted countries and their media pay attention to this document, they could encounter with the principle of coexistence with other minorities:

“We, the people of the Democratic Autonomous Regions of Afrin, Jazira and Kobane, a confederation of Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Arameans, Turkmen, Armenians and Chechens, freely and solemnly declare and establish this Charter, which has been drafted according to the principles of Democratic Autonomy.” (Social Contract of Rojava, 2014)

Second, in their interviews with third parties (Muslim quoted in Al-Monitor, 2015; 2014; in Kurdishquestion.com, 2015) and speeches during their visits to the European countries, the PYD representatives underscored this principle as part of a Western-style democracy argument, which provides opportunities to the Arabs, Turkmen, Assyrians-Syriacs and Chaldeans (Muslim quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2016; 2015; in Chatham House, 2014). Finally, the PYD referred to the Jazirah canton for practising the principle of peaceful coexistence with other minorities (Muslim quoted in ANF, 2015a). Particularly, the city of Derik¹⁷ in Jazirah was presented to the international community as an example (Knapp et al., 2016). Derik is a city in Jazirah canton, and Jazirah's demography is multi-ethnic and multi-religious (Allsopp, 2015). Therefore, naturally, any type of governing model should consider and include all these groups. It seems that Derik was used to sell the PYD's model of governance as a Western-style democracy since the city is an entrance for the Western visitors to the PYD-dominated areas from the KRG border of Iraq:

¹⁷ In Arabic, Al-Malikiyah.

“The PYD knows that Derik gives people their first impression. They made a lot of effort, and everything is very well-managed. It is difficult to get any bad impression in Derik. It is also far from the frontlines, where the Arabs had been displaced. You can see the degree on their checkpoints. They have trained the staff to welcome people, especially when they see a western foreigner. If there are three people to welcome at the checkpoint, one would be a woman and one would be an Arab. They choose people, who are really good at public relations. You do not feel like you are at the checkpoint. You feel like at hotel reception. A lot of internationals when they go there, they say ‘Wow, it is amazing’. But they do not go beyond Derik” (A10, 2018)

The fourth and final component of the Western-style democracy argument was linguistic rights for people in parallel with their peaceful coexistence. The official documents of the PYD; its party program (2013), the declaration of political resolution (2013) and the Social Contract of Rojava (2014) emphasised the linguistic rights of people under this governance, respectively. The first two documents mainly focused on teaching and learning the Kurdish language (PYD’s Party Program, 2013), and publishing in Kurdish (Political Resolution, 2011) as part of democratic freedoms, which should be guaranteed by the new Syrian constitution. Article 9 of the Social Contract of Rojava (2014) also referred to teaching and learning other languages, particularly in Jazirah canton because of its demography. Additionally, the Contract provided linguistic freedom to other cantons:

“The official languages of the Canton of Jazirah are Kurdish, Arabic and Syriac. All communities have the right to teach and be taught in their native language.” (Article, 9)

This was also supported by the article 21 of the Social Contract by referring to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other internationally recognised human rights conventions. In parallel, articles 22 and 23 emphasised the linguistic rights of people in the context of these agreements:

“All international rights and responsibilities pertaining civil, political, cultural, social and economical rights are guaranteed” (Article, 22)

“Everyone has the right to express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and gender rights.” (Article, 23)

Additionally, the PYD co-chair, Salih Muslim, during his speeches at the Chatham House (2014) and the UK Parliament in 2015 and 2016 (quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2016; 2015)

emphasised the linguistic freedom for people under the PYD's model of governance while referring to the principle of peaceful coexistence with other minorities.

As a dynamic process, framing urges frame producers to follow the latest developments regarding an issue, particularly to update frames periodically or increase their capacity to influence by considering the changing political environment as well as the expectations of the targeted audiences (Desrosiers, 2012; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). It might require making some changes in the scope of frames (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). As lobbyists, the PYD representatives made some changes in the scope of the "regional role model" frame depending on the changing political environment in Syria and the perceived political opportunities. Therefore, the PYD, first, added new elements to the content of this frame by making updates. Second, it extended the geography that the frame had addressed as a solution. Following the outbreak of the 2011 civil war as a historic opportunity, the PYD declared that they would practice the PKK leader Ocalan's model of governance in northern Syria (Muslim quoted in KurdWatch, 2011). Initially, this model was conceived as the best solution to the Kurdish question in Syria and only included the Kurdish region of the country (Ibid). After the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012, with the start of the Aleppo battle, the PYD became a dominant party in the region to practise this model. Then, since the fall of 2012, either in their interviews with journalists or in the speeches during their visits to the European countries, the PYD leadership argued that this model would be a solution to democratise Syria (Ehmed quoted in ANF, 2013b; Muslim quoted in ANF, 2013a; Abdullah quoted in ANF, 2012). According to the PYD, the Kurdish question's solution is connected to the democratisation of Syria (Ibid). Accordingly, the PYD extended this frame's geographical scope from northern Syria to the entirety of Syria. It also described it not only as a solution (content) to the Kurdish question of Syria but also to all problems in Syria. Additionally, the PYD began preparing to discuss this model as a solution to the political future of Syria at the 2014 UN Geneva II peace negotiations since the summer of 2013 with an expectation that it would be invited to the negotiations (Muslim quoted in ANF, 2013c; in Rudaw.net, 2013; in Al-Monitor, 2013). The leadership also lobbied through Russia and the UN to be invited to the peace negotiations under the name of the Kurdish High Council (Muslim quoted in ANF 2013e; 2013d). In the fall of 2013, the leadership extended this frame's scope one more time, from Syria to the greater Middle East. So, the PYD extended the geographical meaning of this frame and its solution (content) to the problems from Syria to the Middle East by considering the

international community's efforts to end the Syrian civil war and find a solution for the political future of the country through the UN.

However, the PYD was not invited to the UN Geneva II peace negotiations because of Turkey's opposition. Amongst these developments, the third political opportunity for the PYD was the rise of ISIS in 2014 within the ongoing process of the Aleppo Battle. The PYD utilised this opportunity by developing relations with the US in fighting ISIS through the YPG starting from the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane (Thornton, 2015); since the US had been searching a ground force to fight ISIS in Syria (Paasche and Gunter, 2016). Particularly, after the formation of the SDF¹⁸ through which the military operations against ISIS were extended to the Arab majority areas (Kusilek, 2019), and the PYD received a chance to practise its model of governance in the Arab-populated areas, which were liberated from ISIS by the SDF, under the name of the Syrian Democratic Council (Meclisa Suriye Demokratik) (MSD) (Knapp et al., 2016). The formation of the SDF and MSD also changed the name of this administration from Rojava "Western Kurdistan" to the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES). These attempts can be seen as preparations for the 2016 UN Geneva III peace negotiations. During these preparations, the PYD leadership used the role and visibility of the YPG in the fight against ISIS to legitimise and sell their model of governance in the US and the European countries (Paasche and Gunter, 2016; Federici, 2015). Therefore, the leadership presented the regional role model frame in their lobbying campaign as not only a Kurdish project proposing a solution to the Kurdish question but as a project provides a solution to other communities in Syria and the Middle East (A10, 2018; Muslim quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2016). Although the Syrian Kurds were represented amongst the official Syrian opposition, the PYD was not invited to the UN 2016 Geneva III negotiations due to Turkish state opposition. In March 2016, the PYD proclaimed federal government in northern Syria. Since then, their lobbying as a Western-style democracy and regional role model continued. The rise of ISIS in 2014 also contributed to the PYD's framing efforts to create another argument. This argument was conceptualised as another normative frame, the "defence of human values against ISIS".

¹⁸ Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) was a combination of Arab and Kurdish militias which was formed in October 2015 and led by the YPG to fight against ISIS in Syria. More details: Barak Barfi (2016), Ascent of the PYD and the SDF. *Research Notes, No.32*: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy [Online] [Accessed: 6 July 2020] Available from: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote32-Barfi.pdf>

“Defence of Human Values against ISIS” Frame

The defence of human values against ISIS frame reflects the attempts of PYD representatives to demonstrate the ideological differences between the PYD and ISIS by referring to the principles of the PYD’s model of governance and accentuating the moral stance of the PYD against ISIS. This frame was developed since the beginning of the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane. It is mainly related to the PKK leader’s self-defence mechanism against the perceived threats such as the attitudes of countries against this Kurdish model of governance. As discussed in chapter 1 on the ideology of the Kurdish political movement, the PKK leader describes the self-defence mechanism as a matter of existence to protect the identity, political awareness, political nature and the decision-making capability of the transformed Kurdish society (Ocalan, 2016; 2011a). In this regard, he argues that Kurds must defend their administration and new society against the perceived, internal or external, enemies (Ibid). Following the rise of ISIS and especially since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, ISIS became the main causal agent for the security issue of the PYD in Syria. The PYD also rightfully made ISIS its main priority to protect its territorial gains in Syria. Since then, the PYD linked its fight against ISIS with the principles of its model of governance to provide its solution to ISIS issue and to demonstrate how secular and ideology closes its model of governance to the Western democracies (Dalay, 2018) and why it deserves the political support of the US/UK.

As addressed in chapter 2 on the dynamic framing in ethnic lobbying, dynamic framing is the process of creation and presentation of frames (Kaufman et al, 2013). In their framing efforts for lobbying in these countries through this frame, it appears as though the PYD leadership attempted these two things. First, they described ISIS as the main problem in Syria to be dealt with by demonising it as a brutal terrorist organisation and accentuated the YPG’s fight against this terrorist organisation as “war on terror” and “fight against common enemy” (Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005). This was a strategic reference to the US foreign policy “war on terror” to align the PYD’s objective to defeat ISIS with the US policy objective in Syria since this type of strategic referencing brought political results for other ethnic lobbies in the US, especially during the lobbying campaign of the Indian Americans for a nuclear deal with the US administration (Kirk, 2008). It appears that the PYD leadership attempted to transform its military alliance with the US into the political one to receive a political support for its model of governance. Secondly, the PYD emphasised its model of governance as a secular model and the representation of Western values against ISIS brutality (Dalay, 2018). In this way, such a

model of governance would deserve the political support of the US/UK. Accordingly, they presented Kurds as a solution to the ISIS problem or as freedom fighters, who stood with Western and moral values against ISIS for both short- and long-term purposes. While the short-term purpose was to receive military support from these countries such as weapons and ammunition for fighting ISIS (Muslim quoted in Al-Monitor, 2014; in ANF, 2014a), the long-term purpose was to obtain political support for this model of governance (A10, 2018; A11, 2018; B1, 2018).

In this dynamic framing process, the defence of human values against ISIS frame was presented in four ways. First, the PYD described the YPG's fight as a defence of human values against a brutal terrorist organisation, which started from the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane. PYD representatives defended providing material, moral and humanitarian support to the Kurds against ISIS as a matter of humanity and necessity (Abdullah quoted in ANF, 2015a; Muslim quoted in Al-Monitor, 2014; in ANF, 2014a; 2014c; 2014f). Second, the principles of the PYD's model of governance as the main components of the regional role model frame were presented in the context of the defence of human values against ISIS frame. In this way, the PYD conceptualised Kurds as people who were ideologically different from ISIS and closer to the West. They emphasised that Kurds stood with moral and internationally recognised values by defending them against ISIS terrorism. According to the PYD, defending such values made Kurds and the PYD's model of governance main targets of ISIS. Particularly, the equality of men and women principle; and as a result, the socio-political and militaristic role of women under this model of governance irritated ISIS, since ISIS had a different understanding regarding women's rights. Thus, the PYD's model of governance and the YPG's fight against ISIS deserved the political and military support of the international community (Muslim quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2016; 2015; Abdullah quoted in ANF, 2014e).

Third, the PYD added some key topics to this frame. These topics were dominant in the parliamentary debates and the mainstream newspapers in the US/UK, which could grab the targeted audiences' attention in these countries. The PYD leadership, therefore, drew attention to the atrocities of ISIS against humanity, especially against the ethnic/religious minorities in the Middle East such as Yazidis in Sinjar (Sengal). They also presented the YPG/YPJ militias as defenders and protectors of those people against ISIS in their speeches during their visits to the European countries (Muslim quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2015; in Al-Monitor, 2014).

Similarly, the PYD representatives described ISIS attacks on churches and historical, cultural and religious heritage of Christianity in the Middle East as the ones against the Western/Christian civilisation. Then, they argued that the Kurds had been defending these values to protect them against ISIS (Ibid). These topics were significant, particularly in the parliamentary debates and mainstream newspapers of the US/UK. For instance, since June 2014, the parliamentary debates of these countries mainly focused on ISIS' crimes against humanity, its atrocities against ethnic/religious minorities such as Yazidis, and sex slavery, and its attacks against the cultural and historical sites of Western and Christian values¹⁹. It also indicates that, as lobbyists, the PYD representatives was cognisant of the debates in these parliaments, since some PYD members can speak fluent English due to the PYD's links to the PKK through the PKK sympathisers in Europe (A10, 2018). Finally, the PYD leadership underlined the considerable number of Western or foreign participants in the YPG. According to the PYD, these people came to fight against ISIS alongside Kurds since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, and it demonstrated that Kurds had defended international and moral values (Muslim quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2015; in ANF, 2014b). Similarly, the PYD representatives described those who died while fighting ISIS as "martyrs". They used the term "martyrdom" to justify the argument that these people came, fought and died for defending human values alongside Kurds against ISIS brutality (Muslim quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2015).

To conclude, the PYD utilised four ways to demonstrate why the US/UK should support Kurds in the fight against ISIS, and mainly the PYD's model of governance in Syria. They linked their self-defence against perceived enemies with the defence of human values, presented their own principles as Western values and a reason for being targeted by ISIS. The PYD representatives also added key topics to their frame, which were dominant in the parliamentary debates and mainstream newspapers in the US/UK. Finally, they underlined the participation of foreign or Western participants in the YPG to fight ISIS alongside Kurds for defending human values. The existing literature on ethnic lobbying indicated that ethnic lobbies such as the Hungarian Americans and African Americans had built their lobbying campaigns on the human rights violations in Romania and South Africa, respectively. In this way, they had been successful at urging the US administrations and Congress to act against the regimes in these countries and for making policy changes (Herner-Kovacs, 2013; Shain, 1994). The Indian Americans also

¹⁹ Details will be provided in chapter 5.

built their lobbying campaign on the “war on terror” by emphasising Indian concerns about Islamist extremism as similar to the US ones. To some extent, this campaign helped them to have a nuclear deal with the Bush administration (Kirk, 2008). In other words, these lobbies utilised US values in their campaigns or challenged the US administrations through their values such as democracy and human rights or their foreign policy discourses such as “promoting democracy” and “war on terror”. The findings demonstrate that the PYD representatives followed a similar path. They argued that Kurds had defended, more secular, Western or internationally recognised moral values against ISIS terrorism; and therefore, they were ideologically, culturally and politically closer to the West (Dalay, 2018). Consequently, Kurds deserved the Western countries’ support, the military support in the short-term and political support to the PYD’s model of governance in the long-term (A10, 2018; A11, 2018; B1, 2018). The analysis in this section is significant for two reasons. First, it provides a new perspective on the utilisation of norms or values in the ethnic lobbying campaign, especially by conceptualising this strategy as a dynamic framing process through the social movement framing approach and through created and presented frames. Second, this type of analysis provides an understanding of the characteristic of the defence of human values against ISIS frame, which could help explain the potential capacity of this frame to influence the targeted audiences. This frame also implied that the PYD leadership had strategically utilised the threat of ISIS to gain visibility and sell their model of governance through the “war against a common enemy”. It was conceptualised as a strategic framing process through the creation and presentation of strategic frames.

3.2.2 The Strategic Framing Process

The strategic framing process refers to a goal-oriented and more pragmatic process to achieve a specific purpose or some purposes (Benford and Snow, 2000). In this process, the PYD used the US foreign policy discourse, “war on terror”, by describing the YPG’s fight against Islamist groups as a “war against common enemies”. The extant literature on ethnic lobbying has demonstrated that aligning the policy objectives of ethnic lobbies with those of the US and challenging the US administrations through their own foreign policy discourses are used by the lobbying groups to achieve their goals. For instance, the Indian American lobby (Kirk, 2008), and the Iraqi-exiled community (Vanderbush, 2009) used the “war on terror” policy and discourse of the US to have a nuclear deal with the US and overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein, respectively. Both lobbying groups aligned their policy objectives with those of the US and, to some extent, achieved their goals. The Indian Americans, for instance, underlined

their concerns regarding the threat of Islamist extremism and emphasised that the US could use the Indian territory for fighting this threat in Afghanistan in the case of having a nuclear deal with India (Kirk, 2008). The members of Iraqi-exiled community wanted to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein; and therefore, they worked with the US officials to achieve this goal and prepare the US public for the invasion of Iraq by aligning their objectives with those of the Bush administration (Vanderbush, 2009). The analysis in this section presents that the PYD leadership had aligned its policy objective of fighting ISIS in Syria with the US policy of degrade and defeat ISIS in the Middle East. In doing so, the PYD appealed the US foreign policy discourse, “war on terror” (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005) to achieve their short-term and long-term goals. While the short-term goals were to receive weapons or ammunition for fighting ISIS (Muslim quoted in Al-Monitor, 2014; in ANF, 2014a) and gaining visibility (Abdullah quoted in ANF, 2015c; ANF, 2014g; Muslim quoted in Rudaw.net, 2013), the long-term one was to obtain political support for the PYD’s model of governance by using the fight against ISIS (A11, 2018; B14, 2018). This strategy also reflects the nature of framing approach, since the framing approach prioritises the expectations of targeted audiences in the process of frame creation, presentation or construction of its meaning by knowing what type of frames could meet such expectations (Desrosiers, 2012; Baumgartner, 2007).

In general, the YPG’s fight against the Islamist military groups in Syria can be divided into three periods since the start of Aleppo battle in July 2012. The first was the period from the start of Aleppo battle in July 2012 (Federici, 2015) to the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane. In this period, there were military conflicts between the YPG and the FSA (Philips, 2018), and some other Islamist groups (Kusilek, 2019) such as the Jabhat al Nusra (Al-Tamimi, 2013), to control the key areas, border towns or resources in different parts of the Aleppo Governorate (Kusilek, 2019), including northern Syria (Federici, 2015). Especially in July 2013, the YPG managed to take the control of Kobane from Al Nusra (Philips, 2018). The second period explains the PYD’s resistance during the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane lasted from September 2014 to late January 2015 in the ongoing process of Aleppo battle. This Kurdish resistance was also relevant to prevent the expansion of ISIS control into the Kurdish-populated city, Kobane, (Kusilek, 2019), and to the control border against ISIS (Philips, 2018). This helped the PYD leadership to gain visibility by drawing the Western countries’ attention to the YPG’s fight (A9, 2017; A10, 2018; B1, 2018). The final period alludes to the YPG’s ongoing fight against ISIS since March 2015, which, then, included the SDF starting from the mid-October 2015 (Barfi, 2016).

During this period, the SDF's fight against ISIS was extended from the Kurdish areas to the Arab majority areas of Syria with the support of the US-led global coalition (Kusilek, 2019). Two significant developments took place since the ISIS siege on Kobane as components of the third political opportunity for the Syrian Kurds. The first was the interaction between the US and the YPG during the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane (B1, 2018; B10, 2018; A8, 2017). Initially, the US conducted airstrikes on ISIS targets; and then, airdropped ammunition to the Kurds in Kobane (Thornton, 2015). The second was the consequence of this interaction during Kobane resistance, which could be explained as an interest-based military alliance between the YPG as a ground force and the US-led global coalition to fight ISIS in Syria (Balanche, 2018), including the Arab majority areas of the country (Kusilek, 2019). By considering these periods, the strategic framing process has been explained through the creation and presentation of the strategic, "protection of Europe/West", "only effective force against ISIS" and "a political solution for Syria" frames. The political solution for Syria frame is more about the consequence of the first two strategic frames and the military alliance between the US-led global coalition and the YPG. These frames have been examined as the ones mainly addressed why the US/UK could provide their military support to the YPG in fighting ISIS and the political support to the PYD's model of governance.

"Protection of Europe/West" Frame

As discussed in the section on the defence of human values against ISIS frame, the PYD's motivation to fight ISIS was mainly the act of self-defence, which is also based on the PKK leader's self-defence mechanism assigned the Kurdish sympathisers to protect their model of governance and society against the perceived enemies (Ocalan, 2016; 2011a). Through the "protection of Europe/West" frame, the PYD described, first, the Islamist groups, and then ISIS, as main responsible agents (Gerhards, 1995) for the problems in Syria and the common enemies of Kurds and Western countries. After that, the leadership presented the Kurdish fight against ISIS as a solution to this problem, which would involve protecting the Kurds and the European/Western countries against this threat. In other words, the PYD strove to align their people's protection with those of the Western/European countries to demonstrate why Kurds deserved these countries' military and political support (B14, 2018). While fighting against the Islamist groups to control the strategic border towns and resources in northern Syria in the context of the Aleppo battle, the PYD argued that Kurds had been the only group in fighting against these threats in Syria by describing them as common enemies of Kurds and Western countries (Muslim quoted in Rudaw.net, 2013). Accordingly, they fought against these groups

to protect Kurds and other ethnic/religious minorities in the region; and therefore, they expected from the US public and the world to take a stance with Kurds and work with Kurds in their fight against Islamist extremism (Ibid). These explanations illustrated two purposes of the PYD in this period. The first being the protection of Kurds against the Islamist groups in northern Syria, and the second being more strategic to draw the US and international community's attention by adding the protection of other ethnic/religious minorities into Kurds' protection. However, it seems that the PYD could not achieve their second purpose until the ISIS siege on Kobane in September 2014. In an interview with an American think-tank in February 2014, the PYD co-chair, Salih Muslim, complained the Western countries' ignorance regarding the Kurdish fight against the Islamist groups in Syria. This was despite the fact that the PYD had shared policy objectives with those countries against these groups:

“We are knocking on every door in the West, from the United States to the United Kingdom and France, saying, ‘Hey, we are fighting against terrorists who are a danger to everybody, so let’s work together.’ But they’re not opening the door.” (Muslim quoted in Carnegie Endowment, 2014b)

During their visits to the European countries, the PYD representatives kept emphasising the Islamist groups as common enemies to draw their attention. For instance, during his speech at Chatham House, Salih Muslim (Chatham House, 2014) reiterated these points by describing a new threat, ISIS, as an ascending brutal organisation in Iraq and Syria. However, this time, the Kurdish fight had been framed not only to protect Kurds in the Middle East but also to protect Europe/West (Ibid). These points demonstrate that since the spring of 2014, the PYD followed two strategies for strengthening, justifying and presenting the “protection of Europe/West” frame.

First, they added two themes to this frame as its main components. The first was the strategic location of Syria in the context of stability. According to the PYD representatives, Syria was the heart of the Middle East, and the Middle East was the heart of the world. Accordingly, the stability in Europe/West was dependent on the Middle East, while the stability in the Middle East was dependent on Syria (Muslim quoted in Chatham House, 2014; in Kurdishquestion.com, 2016b). Therefore, by fighting ISIS, Kurds, particularly the YPG, strove to directly stabilise Syria and the Middle East; and indirectly Europe/West. The second theme was the foreign fighters, who came from European/Western countries to fight for ISIS. The PYD accentuated these radicalised people's situation by underlining the possibility of their

return to the homelands and its potential consequences for European/Western countries. From this point of view, by preventing these people's return through fighting against them in Syria, the YPG also protected Europe/West from radicalism (Muslim quoted in Chatham House, 2014). As will be discussed in chapter 6 on the success of strategic frames, the foreign or Western jihadists and their return to homelands were the main topics in the parliamentary debates of the US/UK starting from 2014. It appears that by adding dominant themes of the US/UK parliamentary debates to the scope of this frame, the PYD attempted to increase the influence of this frame on the targeted audiences.

As discussed above, the PYD representatives had been demanding attention to the YPG's fight against Islamist groups in Syria especially since the summer of 2013, and they were not adequately successful at this during the spring of 2014 (Muslim quoted in ANF, 2015b; in Carnegie Endowment, 2014b). However, the rise of ISIS in the ongoing process of the Aleppo battle, particularly the developments regarding ISIS increased both ISIS and the YPG's visibility in Western countries and their media (Federici, 2015). These developments were the capture of Mosul by ISIS in June 2014 (Rhodes, 2018; Gunter, 2015), its crimes against humanity, particularly the beheadings of the American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff (A11, 2018), its atrocities against the Yazidis in the summer of 2014 (Rhodes, 2018; Natalie, 2015; Gunter, 2015), and the ISIS siege on Kobane from September 2014 until the end of February 2015 (Thornton, 2015). Particularly, the YPG's fight against ISIS in Syria since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane positively affected the YPG's perception in the eyes of US policymakers (US. Senate, 2014; pp.1464-65; B6, 2018). Then, the PYD leadership strategically used the protection of Europe/West frame in the context of this fight to receive military and political support from the US and the UK (B1, 2018; B14, 2018, A9, 2018, A11, 2018). For instance, during the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, the PYD representatives emphasised the YPG's fight against groups like ISIS within the last two years via their limited sources (Semo quoted in Centre for Turkish Studies, 2014). According to the representatives, the Western policymakers' changing positions against ISIS positively affected the perception of the YPG, as the Kurds tried to protect Europe/West through their limited sources (Ibid).

As a second framing strategy, the PYD made changes in the scope of this frame, which were based on the developments in the Syrian civil war since the start of Aleppo Battle in 2012. There were two significant changes. First, the leadership extended this frame's content from

the protection of Kurds to other ethnic/religious minorities against the Islamist groups in the summer of 2013 (Muslim quoted in Rudaw.net, 2013). Secondly, they extended this frame's geographic scope from the protection of Kurds and other ethnic/religious minorities in northern Syria to the protection of Europe/West against ISIS (Muslim quoted in Chatham House, 2014; Semo quoted in Centre for Turkish Studies, 2014). It seems that the PYD used these strategies to increase the influence of the protection of Europe/West frame by considering the expectations of the US/UK (Desrosiers, 2012) as targeted countries since ISIS became a central security issue in these countries (B14, 2018). As suggested by Snow and Corrigan-Brown (2005) as an effective framing strategy, the PYD representatives appealed to the US foreign policy discourse, "war on terror" and strategically aligned the PYD's policy objective of defeating ISIS in the Kurdish territories with the US policy objective of degrading and defeating ISIS with limited military intervention by finding ground partners to fight ISIS in Syria (B10, 2018). By playing the ground force role and using the protection of Europe/West strategic frame, the PYD attempted to demonstrate why the US/UK could provide military support to the Kurds and political support to their model of governance in Syria. For the PYD, the YPG's resistance against ISIS during the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane was a cornerstone, in terms of having a military alliance with the US (Balanche, 2018), which was also used during the legitimisation efforts of the PYD's model of governance (Federici, 2015, Paasche and Gunter, 2016). Especially, the YPG's military alliance and its interaction with the US Special Forces and military personnel in the fight against ISIS created a reasonable ground for emphasising the Kurdish effectiveness (B6, 2018; B11, 2018; B14, 2018). Since then, the PYD formulated another argument, which framed Kurds as the only effective force against ISIS.

"Only Effective Force against ISIS" Frame

The "only effective force against ISIS" frame alludes to the PYD's legitimisation efforts of its model of governance by referring to the YPG's increasing visibility in Western countries and their media due to its relative success against ISIS (Federici, 2015). As discussed in the previous section, the PYD representatives described ISIS as the main problem in Syria after 2014. They also presented the YPG as a solution to this problem to receive military support from the international community (A11, 2018; B14, 2018). Therefore, this frame reflects the consequences of the YPG's fight against ISIS, particularly its interaction with the US Special Forces and military personnel in Syria since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, and its military alliance with the US-led global coalition against ISIS in Syria since then. The PYD leadership used this military alliance to express the Kurdish effectiveness against a common enemy to

realise their long-term goal. It was to gain the political support of the US/UK for the PYD's model of governance because of the YPG's contribution to the degrading and defeating of ISIS in Syria. In other words, the PYD leadership framed the YPG's effectiveness as a secular group's fight against the Islamist or jihadist ideology to legitimise the PYD's model of governance in the West (Dalay, 2018) and to gain the political support of Western countries during the negotiations for the political future of Syria (B14, 2018; Paasche and Gunter, 2016; Federici, 2015).

While framing the YPG's effectiveness against ISIS for lobbying, the PYD accentuated two points. The first was the role of airstrikes conducted by the US-led global coalition since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane. For example, during the siege, especially after the first airstrike campaign of the US-led global coalition on ISIS targets, the foreign affairs committee member of the PYD, Alan Semo (quoted in Centre for Turkish Studies, 2014), by referring to the YPG underscored that Kurds were competent and effective forces. If they obtained military support from the global coalition, they could defeat ISIS. According to Semo (Ibid), it was recently understood by the US and NATO or the European countries; therefore, these countries conducted joint airstrikes on ISIS targets around Kobane to help Kurds. After the second air campaign, the co-chair Muslim (quoted in Al-Monitor, 2014), emphasised the role of airstrikes on the Kurdish effectiveness against ISIS. But Muslim (quoted in ANF, 2014f) also argued that the international powers understood the YPG and YPJ's effectiveness; and therefore, helped Kurds after beholding their unique resistance against ISIS with their limited resources. While accepting the significance of airstrikes for the Kurdish effectiveness in fighting ISIS, during their visits to the European countries (Muslim quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2015), the leadership also underlined the central role of the YPG members for sharing intelligence with the coalition and coordinating its airstrike campaigns on the ground (Muslim quoted in Al-Monitor, 2015; Al-Monitor, 2014).

Secondly, the Kurdish effectiveness presented as a great success against a brutal threat through limited resources and weapons in the speeches and explanations of the PYD representatives. To strengthen this argument, the representatives compared the performances of the YPG and the YPJ with other nation-state armies such as the Iraqi and Syrian armies (Muslim quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2015). In this regard, the Kurdish forces were able to stand and resist against such brutality, even if the aforementioned nation-state armies were not (Ibid). Then, the PYD's

ideology and its ideological difference from ISIS were presented as the main reasons for such resistance and effectiveness (A10, 2018). Especially, the YPG militias ideological strength coming through the self-defence philosophy of Ocalan against the perceived threats of the Kurdish society led the militias be militarily organised and defend their land and administration against ISIS threat (Muslim quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2015). This point necessitated taking a position against the Islamist groups, which ended as effectiveness against ISIS brutality (Ibid). As a result of this success against ISIS and contribution to the policy objectives of the US/UK for degrading and defeating ISIS in Syria, the PYD leadership underlined that their model of governance had deserved the political support of these countries (B14, 2018). As explained above, the PYD leadership tried to use the YPG's increasing visibility in the Western media during their lobbying campaigns for legitimising and gaining political support to their model of governance (Paasche and Gunter, 2016; Federici, 2015). The PYD was not invited to the 2012 UN Geneva I and the 2014 UN Geneva II negotiations regarding the political future of Syria because of the Turkish government's opposition. However, the PYD leadership had an expectation to be invited to the 2016 UN Geneva III negotiations due to the YPG's role in fighting ISIS by working with the countries formed the international coalition. While preparing for these negotiations amongst the ongoing discussions regarding a federal Syria in the US (Barnard, 2016), the PYD also presented Kurds as an only side, who provided a political solution for Syria through their model of governance.

“A Political Solution for Syria” Frame

“A political solution for Syria” frame indicates the peak point of the PYD's legitimisation and lobbying efforts of its model of governance by using the risen visibility of the YPG. It was also a preparation for the 2016 UN Geneva III negotiations to present this model of governance as a solution, at least, for the political future of Syria. This frame also indicates that the PYD representatives, as lobbyists, were aware of the expectations of their targeted audiences (Desrosiers, 2012; Baumgartner, 2007) as well as debates regarding the political future of Syria to achieve their lobbying goals. However, it was not only the PYD lobbyists, who had been pushing for this model as a solution for Syria this time. The representatives of the Syrian Democratic Council (MSD)²⁰, which worked with the PYD in the north and eastern Syria, also emphasised the possibility of a federal Syria because of the debates amongst the Syrians and their negotiations with Russia and America (Ehmed quoted in Kurdishquestion.com, 2016a).

²⁰ The Syrian Democratic Council (MSD) is the political wing of the SDF in the Arab-populated areas of the north and eastern Syria.

According to the representatives, in the context of three federal regions as Northern Syria, Southern Syria and Central Syria, the PYD's model of governance would be the best solution for entire Syria. The federalism could also be backed by the Russians and Americans (Ibid). Additionally, the presentation strategy of this frame was different, since this frame was used as a narrow version of the regional role model frame by emphasising the Kurdish effectiveness against ISIS and efforts to find a solution for the political future of Syria.

However, neither the representatives of the PYD nor the Syrian Democratic Council were invited to the 2016 UN Geneva III negotiations due to the opposition of the Turkish government. The Syrian Kurds, especially the members of the Kurdish National Council (KNC), were represented amongst the official Syrian opposition. Following this decision, the PYD accentuated their party as the only conscious, planned and programmed one for a solution in Syria. Their model was also the best and practical one for the entire country (Muslim quoted in ANF, 2016a) due to its explained characteristics in the regional role model frame section. In March 2016, the PYD proclaimed a federal administration in the north and eastern Syria (Plakoudas, 2016). Since then, during their visits to the European countries, the PYD representatives presented their model of governance as the only solution for Syria by conceptualising the Kurds as people, who were aware of the happenings in Syria. Despite this reality, the PYD representatives underlined that the PYD had been the only side, which had provided a tangible solution for the future of Syria and it had been excluded from the 2016 UN Geneva III negotiations (Muslim quoted in ANF, 2016c; in Kurdish Progress, 2016). The diplomatic and political legitimisation efforts of the PYD model continued through the efforts of PYD and MSD representatives. As explained by the MSD co-chair, Ilham Ehmed (quoted in Kurdishquestion.com, 2016c), they tried to explain their model as a solution to Syria while discussing with the US, Russia, the Assad regime and other parties. The PYD and the MSD representatives underlined that these countries did not have to accept this model. The representatives expected that officials of these countries should have made a statement, which would suggest that it was a good project. These statements could have been used in the legitimisation and lobbying process (Ibid). In this way, the PYD hoped to be part of the negotiations regarding the political future of Syria at which they were not successful yet. To what extent these frames and framing strategies were successful are a matter of discussions in chapters 5 and 6 on the success of the normative and strategic frames.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter answered two questions. First, it examined how the PYD framed its model of governance for lobbying the US/UK from March 2011 to 20th January 2017. Thereafter, it explored the type of frames they deployed to lobby US/UK policymakers. It was argued that there is a relationship between three key and favourable political opportunities of the Syrian civil war and the dynamic framing processes of the PYD. In other words, until the 2011 civil war, the Syrian regime declared the Kurdish political parties as illegal structures. Therefore, these parties faced oppression and acted as underground parties (Allsopp, 2015). The 2011 Syrian civil war provided three favourable opportunities to the Syrian Kurds. First, following its outbreak, the Assad regime changed its policy towards the Syrian Kurds by granting citizenship to the stateless Kurds and revising the decisions regarding the basic Kurdish rights to prevent their involvement in the protests against the regime (Allsopp, 2015). In this period, the PYD began preparing to practise Abdullah Ocalan's model of governance in northern Syria (Muslim quoted in KurdWatch, 2011) and other Kurdish parties in Syria established the KNC (Allsopp, 2015). There were also attempts between the PYD and the KNC to have a united Kurdish policy in Syria under the moderation of the KRG President Masoud Barzani (Allsopp and Wilgenburg, 2019; Allsopp, 2015).

Second, following the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 with the start of Aleppo battle to focus on more central areas like Aleppo city (Gunter, 2014), the Kurdish parties filled the authority, and security gaps in the region (Allsopp, 2013). Especially the PYD became a dominant party in there because of its armed forces (Savelsberg and Tejel, 2013). This opportunity was also used by the PYD to practice the Abdullah Ocalan's model of governance in northern Syria (Allsopp, 2015) and lobby for political support of the European countries for this model. Finally, the rise of ISIS in 2014 within the ongoing process of the Aleppo battle was the latest critical opportunity for the Kurds in terms of having military alliance with the US. As part of the non-intervention policy of the Obama administration in any conflict in the Middle East following Libya (B1, 2018), the US began seeking ground partners to fight ISIS in Iraq and Syria (Paasche and Gunter, 2016). Starting from the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, the PYD's military wing, the YPG, developed relationships with the US Special Forces and the US-led global coalition to fight ISIS in Syria (Thornton, 2015). This relationship was used by the PYD to gain more territories through capturing strategic towns such as Manbij and Al-Bab from ISIS (Muslim quoted in ANF,

2016b; Abdurrahman, 2016) and to legitimise its model of governance and lobbying in the US and the European countries (Paasche and Gunter, 2016; Federici, 2015). These were crucial opportunities which affected the framing efforts of the PYD leadership to lobby the US and the UK. The chapter has conceptualised the utilisation of these political opportunities in the context of social movement framing approach (Benford and Snow, 2000; Snow and Benford, 1992) for framing by the PYD leadership as normative and strategic framing processes through the creation and presentation (Kaufman et al, 2013) of the following normative frames, the “regional role model” and “defence of human values against ISIS”, as well as the more strategic frames, the “protection of Europe/West”, “only effective force against ISIS” and “a political solution for Syria”.

The normative framing process has analysed the characteristics of the PYD frames, the “regional role model” and “defence of human values against ISIS” through their creation and presentation. The PYD’s model of governance is a radical democracy or stateless governance (Ocalan, 2011a; Knapp and Jongerden, 2014). However, the PYD called this model as a social democracy (PYD’s Party Program, 2013) and presented it as a Western-style, liberal democracy by accentuating its main principles, which are grassroots participation, the equality of men and women, peaceful coexistence with other minorities and linguistic rights for people in the context of the “regional role model” frame. The “defence of human values against ISIS” frame referred to the ideological differences between the PYD and ISIS by emphasising the moral stance of the PYD against ISIS. In general, the utilisation of norms, especially liberalism (Koinova, 2011), values (Herner-Kovacs, 2013; Shain, 1999; 1994) or the foreign policy discourses of the US (Koinova, 2011; Vanderbush, 2009; Kirk, 2008; Ambrosio, 2002b) are common strategies for the ethnic lobbying campaigns in the US, and to some extent in the UK. Mainly, lobbies, which attempted to make the regime changes in their homelands (Vanderbush, 2009; Shain, 1994) or sought sovereignty (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011) applied these strategies. The chapter, however, has conceptualised the utilisation of norms, values and foreign policy discourses for creating and presenting the normative frames as a normative framing process, which developed a new perspective in ethnic lobbying in these countries. As such, it has sought to explain the PYD’s lobbying attempts why the US/UK should support, or at least, consider the PYD’s model of governance in Syria.

The strategic framing process has focused on the characteristics of the “protection of Europe/West”, “only effective force against ISIS” and “a political solution for Syria” frames through their creation and presentation. Via the “protection of Europe/West” frame, the PYD aligned its policy objective of defeating ISIS in the Kurdish territories of Syria with those of the US/UK in the Middle East. Consequently, the PYD gained visibility because of the YPG’s fight against ISIS in Syria. Then, the PYD used this visibility for the legitimisation of its model of governance in the lobbying process through the “only effective force against ISIS” and “a political solution for Syria” strategic frames. Ethnic lobbies in the US apply the alignment strategy in their lobbying campaigns by linking their policy objectives with those of the US (Vanderbush, 2009; Kirk, 2008) to achieve their goals. By applying the strategic framing and creating and presenting the strategic frames, the PYD representatives sought to provide narrative ammunition for why the US/UK could provide military support to the Kurds against their common enemy, ISIS, and political support to the PYD’s model of governance. This conceptualisation develops a new perspective in ethnic lobbying, which mainly focuses on framing and the utilisation of strategic frames for lobbying in the US/UK. In so doing, the chapter does not only apply framing as a lobbying strategy but also analyses framing as a process. This analysis provides an understanding of the characteristics of frames and the potential relationship between the developments in the concentrated period and their impact on frames (Swart, 1995) as well as on the expectations of the targeted countries (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005).

This chapter has analysed the PYD framing through the creation and presentation of the PYD frames (Kaufman et al., 2013) as a dynamic process for lobbying in the context of the social movement framing approach (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). The chapter, therefore, makes two key contributions to the related research fields. First, it contributes to the extant literature on the Syrian Kurds or Kurdish politics in Syria which focuses on the political analysis of different periods after the 2011 civil war. This is made by holistically analysing the developments between March 2011 and 20th January 2017 and conceptualising the utilisation of the political opportunities by the PYD for framing its model of governance to lobby in the US/UK. The existing literature acknowledge the outbreak of the 2011 civil war as a historical opportunity for the Syrian Kurds (Allsopp, 2015; 2013; Federici, 2015; Gunter, 2014), which could change the Kurdish politics and the map of the Middle East on behalf of the Kurds (Allsopp, 2013). Literature also focuses on other political opportunities such as the withdrawal

of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 (Allsopp, 2017; 2013; Federici, 2015; Gunter, 2014; Savelsberg and Tejel, 2013) and the rise of ISIS in 2014 (Allsopp, 2017; Gunter, 2015; Federici, 2015). It discusses how the PYD had sought to seize these opportunities in the context of the regional politics of the Middle East (Allsopp, 2017; Plakoudas, 2016; Gunter, 2015; 2014; Federici, 2015). This chapter brings a new perspective to the literature on the Syrian Kurds or the Kurdish politics of Syria through this analysis, which explains the aforementioned political opportunities as significant starting points for the creation and presentation (Kaufman et al, 2013) of the PYD frames as a dynamic framing process in the context of the social movement framing approach (Benford and Snow, 2000; Snow and Benford, 1992) for lobbying the PYD's model of governance in the US/UK externally within the concentrated period. Such a process addresses two important points. First, it demonstrates how the PYD obtained a chance to practise the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan's Democratic Confederalism model following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, as model of governance, first in northern Syria (Muslim quoted in KurdWatch, 2011), and then in eastern Syria (Wilgenburg and Allsopp, 2019). Secondly, it shows how the PYD leadership called such a model of governance as a social democracy or democratic socialism (PYD's Party Program, 2013), being inspired by Murray Bookchin's far-leftist, anarchist, libertarian municipality (Allsopp, 2015; Gunter, 2014), but how they sought to sell it during their framing process for lobbying as a Western-style and liberal democracy following their interaction with the US/UK in Syria by taking these countries' policy objectives and expectations in Syria into consideration.

Similarly, the chapter contributes to the literature on framing in ethnic lobbying in the US (Herner-Kovács, 2013; Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002; Ambrosio, 2002b) and the UK (Koinova, 2014; 2013) by discussing the framing efforts of the PYD for lobbying as a dynamic process through social movement framing approach (Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005). As a novel approach, it explains the utilisation of frames for lobbying by focusing on the creation and presentation of frames (Kaufman et al., 2013). The extant literature on the framing in ethnic lobbying in these countries approach framing as one of the methods applied for lobbying campaigns as a facilitator for successful lobbying (Herner-Kovács, 2013; Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002) or a moderate method for diaspora mobilisation (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011). In other words, they prioritise the investigation of successful lobbying processes or the

processes of diaspora mobilisation. These studies also focus on ethnic lobbies or diasporic communities, which had access to these countries and their political systems.

The chapter has focused on relatively new lobbying organisation, the PYD's efforts for its model of governance from outside of these countries and has conceptualised the framing efforts as a dynamic process (normative and strategic framing processes) through creation and presentation of frames (Kaufman et al., 2013). It explains the utilisation of frames for lobbying (Princen, 2011) in the US/UK by conceptualising them as normative and strategic frames and by analysing their characteristics (Ketelaars, 2016) and the relationship between characteristics of frames and the developments in the concentrated period (Swart, 1995). As such, the chapter details the research of Ambrosio (2002b), which analysed the strategies of the Armenian lobby, such as providing information and policy analysis to policymakers and their framing policies. The utilisation of frames and mainly their role in the Armenian lobbying campaign was implicitly addressed. Although this research indicated the significance of frames for ethnic lobbying, it requires detailing the analysis by focusing on the characteristics of frames (Ketelaars, 2016; Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005) and the relationship between the developments in the concentrated period (Swart, 1995) and their impact on frames' characteristics, their creation and presentation. Therefore, this chapter refines the role of frames in ethnic lobbying by approaching framing not only as a lobbying strategy but also as a process. As such, the chapter prepares the ground for discussing the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD frames by considering the relationship between the characteristics of frames (Ketelaars, 2016), and their capacity to influence the targeted audiences (Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005). Before analysing these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames as framing success, the next chapter will discuss the counter-lobbying efforts of the Turkish government against the PYD framing as a counter-framing process.

Chapter 4 The Turkish Government's Response to the PYD: Negative Characterisation and Counter-framing

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explains counter-framing of the Turkish government against the PYD framing through the creation and presentation (Kaufman et al, 2013) of counter-frames as the Turkish government counter-lobbying against the PYD lobbying in the US/UK. Turkish governments, regardless of their political ideologies, have counter-lobbied for the country's interests, or against the perceived threats to their country in the US. A prominent example of this constitutes the current AKP government and its counter-lobbying against the Armenian lobbies by applying a variety of strategies such as diplomatic pressure on the US government and Congress through diplomatic visits, hiring lobbying firms or investing in public relations to influence the media and academia (Zarifian, 2018). By differing from these strategies and being more specific, the chapter focuses on the analysis of a specific lobbying strategy, counter-framing, used by Turkish government officials for counter-lobbying against the PYD lobbying the US/UK.

As discussed in chapter 1 on the ideology of Kurdish political movement, the PYD is a Syrian affiliate of the PKK, and the PKK has been at war with the Turkish state since 1984 (Gunter, 2000). Despite the fact that there have been ceasefires from time to time, regardless of their political ideologies, Turkish governments have always considered the PKK as a terrorist organisation and a national security threat to the country (Eccarius-Kelly and Musa, 2018; Gunter, 2014; 2000; Barkey and Fuller, 1998). The current AKP government's position towards the PYD, thus, has been shaped by its stance against the PKK (Eccarius-Kelly and Musa, 2018). Following the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from the Kurdish-populated parts of the Aleppo Governorate in July 2012 with the start of the Aleppo battle between the Turkish, Qatari and Saudi Arabian-backed opposition forces, FSA and the regime forces (Philips, 2018), the PYD took the control in the Kurdish areas, Kobane, Afrin and Amuda (Kusilek, 2019) and began practising PKK leader Ocalan's model of governance in these areas (Allsopp, 2015). Since the establishment of this model of governance in July 2012, Turkish government officials concerned its status, the PYD's ideological links with the PKK and mainly the PKK's potential impact on the PYD and its model of governance in northern Syria (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2012a; 2012b). Within the ongoing process of the Aleppo battle, the rise of ISIS in 2014, but mainly, the YPG's alliance with the US-led global coalition to fight ISIS in Syria

since the ISIS siege on Kobane were other concerns for the Turkish government (Kanat and Ustun, 2015). The YPG-US-led coalition alliance, first, expanded the YPG's existence into the Arab majority areas such as Manbij or Tel Rifaat (Philips, 2018) to connect the Kurdish cantons of Jazira and Kobane with Afrin (Balanche, 2018) throughout the Turkish border. Secondly, this military alliance contributed to the legitimisation efforts of the PYD's model of governance (Federici, 2015), which urged Turkish government officials to block the lobbying and legitimisation efforts of the PYD's model of governance by counter-lobbying against the PYD in the US/UK. Accordingly, this chapter focuses on the counter-lobbying efforts of Turkish government officials against the PYD lobbying through a specific strategy, counter-framing. By analysing explanations, declarations, conference speeches and interviews of Turkish government officials with third parties and their joint press conferences with counterparts, the chapter attempts to answer these questions. How the current Turkish government countered the PYD framing in the US/UK from March 2011 to 20th January 2017, and what type of counter-frames they employed.

The chapter aims to make three contributions to the related research fields by answering these questions. The first is to the existing literature on Turkish lobbying in the US. The literature focuses on counter-lobbying efforts of Turkey against the genocide allegations of the Armenian lobbies (Zarifian, 2018; Ambrosio, 2002c). Studies analyse the relative effectiveness of Turkish counter-lobbying strategies. They focus on the general lobbying strategies of Turkey through lobbying mechanisms and representatives of the Turkish government in the US (Zarifian, 2018). Literature also discusses the alliance formation strategy of Turkish lobbies with powerful lobbies such as the pro-Israeli ones as a consequence of a regional cooperation agreement between Israel and Turkey in the 1990s (Ambrosio, 2002c). By focusing on the current Turkish government's counter-lobbying efforts through a specific lobbying strategy, counter-framing; and analysing it as a dynamic process via the creation and presentation of counter-frames, this chapter contributes to the Turkish counter-lobbying in the US. The second contribution is to the literature on Turkish government lobbying in the UK as a new case since there is no scholarly analysis either on Turkish lobbying or on the Turkish government lobbying in this country. This is significant which indicates the lobbying efforts of a Turkish government being independent from lobbying efforts of the Turkish governments in the European countries, especially in the UK for Turkey's EU membership. Finally, the chapter contributes to the literature on framing in the ethnic lobbying within the US and the UK (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011; Kirk, 2008;

Reese and Ramirez, 2002), especially to the framing policies of ethnic lobbies through the counter-framing policies of the Turkish government (Ambrosio, 2002b) by analysing framing not only as a strategy (Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002) but also as a process of characterisation and counter-framing (Kaufman et al., 2013; Gray, 2003; Benford and Snow, 2000). In so doing, it does discuss the utilisation of the Turkish counter-frames for counter-lobbying by examining their creation and presentation process and their interaction with the PYD frames, which is a novel approach in the context of ethnic lobbying in the US and the UK.

The chapter argues that Turkey primarily drew on negative characterisation frames to counter the PYD frames. In other words, types of frames used by Turkey fall into the category of characterisation frames. Characterisation frames are mainly applied to undermine the legitimacy of opponents or to raise doubts about their motivation (Kaufman et al., 2013). Accordingly, the chapter conceptualises the counter-framing efforts of Turkish government as characterisation and counter-framing processes. In this way, this chapter, first, analyses the characteristics of Turkish counter-frames by considering the relationship between the characteristics of frames (Ketelaars, 2016) and their capacity to influence the targeted audiences (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). Second, it presents the dynamism of the framing process through the interaction between the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames and tries to understand whether the counter-frames could challenge the PYD frames' capacity to influence the targeted audiences, the US/UK policymakers and media, since both sides focused on the same audiences. This analysis will help pave the way for a detailed assessment of the potential challenges of Turkish counter-frames to the US/UK's responsiveness towards the PYD frames in chapters 5 and 6.

4.2 The Turkish Government Counter-Lobbying against the PYD Lobbying

This chapter argues that since the establishment of the PYD's model of governance in northern Syria in July 2012 as a result of the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces with the start of the Aleppo battle between the Turkish-backed opposition and regime forces, the current Turkish government raised concerns about its status and the PYD's legitimisation efforts regarding its model of governance. The framing efforts of the PYD have been conceptualised as normative and strategic processes to address why the US/UK should support the PYD's model of governance and could support the YPG's fight against ISIS in Syria within the previous chapter. The counter-framing efforts of Turkish government officials, therefore, have

been conceptualised as characterisation and counter-framing processes against the PYD's normative and strategic framing processes. The chapter analyses the dynamic counter-framing process through the creation and presentation of counter-frames and their interaction with the PYD frames, which developed a new perspective in framing within the ethnic lobbying in the US/UK. In this counter-framing process, Turkish government officials aimed at undermining the PYD's legitimacy to prevent the potential impact of the PYD frames in the US/UK. In this way, Turkish government officials tried to address why the US/UK should not support the PYD's model of governance and the YPG's fight against ISIS in Syria.

4.2.1 The Characterisation Process

In the characterisation process, Turkish government officials articulated negative characterisation frames to undermine the legitimacy of PYD and its model of governance as well as to challenge the US/UK's responsiveness towards the normative PYD frames by confronting these countries with their own values. Mainly groups being part of intractable/long-term conflicts are more likely to apply characterisation frames for undermining the legitimacy of their opponents or raising doubts on their motivations. The characterisation frames can be articulated through blaming opponents/others or accusing them as a responsible agent for the problem (Gray, 2003) as well as labelling them (Gardner and Burgess, 2003). These frames can be either positive or negative (Kaufman et al., 2013; Gray, 2003). This section argues that Turkish government officials articulated negative characterisation frames due to the long-term war between the PKK and Turkish state and the PYD's territorial gains in northern Syria in the context of the fight against ISIS by considering the PYD's ideological links with the PKK. In other words, Turkish government officials accentuated the PYD's ideological ties to the PKK to label it as a terrorist organisation, emphasised the alleged relationship between the PYD and the Assad regime, and described the YPG's actions against Arabs and Turkmens as ethnic cleansing. In this way, the Turkish government attempted to address why the US/UK should not support the PYD's model of governance and the YPG's fight against ISIS in Syria. This counter-framing process, thus, has been explained through the analysis of negative characterisation frames; the "PYD is a terrorist organisation", the "PYD's alleged cooperation with the Assad regime" and the "PYD's alleged ethnic cleansing".

"The PYD is a Terrorist Organisation" Frame

As discussed in chapter 1 on the ideology of Kurdish political movement, the PYD was established by the Syrian remnants of the PKK in 2003 (Allsopp, 2015). This counter-frame,

thus, refers to the PYD's ideological links and organisational similarities with the PKK. In their explanations, declarations, conference speeches, interviews with third parties and in their joint press conferences with counterparts²¹, Turkish government officials regularly accentuated this point. The PYD commenced framing its model of governance as a Western-style democracy since the summer of 2012, by mainly emphasising its principles, grassroots participation, the equality of men and women (gender equality), peaceful coexistence with other minorities and linguistic rights for people. To counter this framing, "PYD is a terrorist organisation" counter-frame aimed at undermining the legitimacy of the PYD and its model of governance. Turkish government officials labelled the PYD as a terrorist organisation by underscoring its ideological links and structural similarities with the PKK, as well as reminding that the PKK was designated as a terrorist organisation by the US and the European countries (Paasche and Gunter, 2016). The negative labelling of opponents, more specifically, labelling opponents as terrorists is in the nature of negative characterisation framing, particularly for the sides, which are at a long-term conflict with each other (Kaufman et al., 2013; Gardner and Burgess, 2003).

Once the PYD dominated the region to practise its model of governance in July 2012 (Gunter, 2014), Turkish government officials began voicing their concerns and their opposition to the PYD and its model of governance. For instance, Prime Minister at the time, Erdogan (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2012a), described the PYD's model of governance as an unacceptable "structure" and a "structure of terror" because of the cooperation between the PYD and the PKK. He emphasised that Turkey would not tolerate this model and would do whatever was necessary to stop this cooperation (Ibid). In the early stages of the civil war, the Turkish government had concerns regarding the PYD's model of governance, and government officials referred to it as a structure, which was established by a terrorist organisation, the PKK, and its Syrian affiliate, the PYD. However, they implicitly addressed the PYD as a terrorist organisation. Instead, the Turkish government worried about the PKK as a "national security threat" to Turkey in northern Syria (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2012d; Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2012b), the PYD dominance in the region and its potential and detrimental impacts on Turkey's official Syria policy, the territorial integrity of Syria (Ibid).

²¹ There were 505 documents regarding the Syrian civil war including the quotes of Turkish government officials and 287 out of 505 covers the quotes concerning the PYD and the YPG. Accordingly, Turkish government officials referred to the PYD's relations with the PKK and called the PYD as a terrorist organisation 90 times out of 287 quotes, which is approximately 32 per cent.

In the early stages of the Aleppo battle, while the PYD took control over Kobane and Afrin, the Turkish and Qatari-backed FSA also seized the northern cities of the Aleppo Governorate (Philips, 2018). Especially following the capture of Kobane and Afrin, the Turkish-backed SNC asked the PYD to leave these cities' control to the FSA, which was refused by the PYD and the clashes between the YPG and FSA militias started in the spring of 2012 (Ibid). In the following process, the divergent Islamist military groups such as the Islamic Front, the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front, Ahrar al-Sham and Jabhat al-Nusra began entering Syria to wage the so-called jihad against the Assad regime (Philips, 2018) and control territories in northern parts of the Aleppo Governorate (Kusilek, 2019). In this context the PYD fought against these groups in the summer of 2013, especially against the Al Qaeda affiliate, Jabhat Al Nusra to control the critical towns such as Kobani for border crossings (Philips, 2018) and resources in northern Syria (Federici, 2015; Al-Tamimi, 2013) on behalf of connecting the Kurdish cantons (Balanche, 2018).

Although Turkish government supported the Syrian political and military opposition against the Assad regime at this moment (Philips, 2018), it argued the importance of the territorial integrity of Syria by underlining Turkey's opposition to any fractions in the country. During their visits to the European countries, Turkish government officials explained these points. For instance, Foreign Minister at the time, Davutoglu (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2013c), described the PYD attempts to form an independent government as unacceptable. Before holding the parliamentary elections and establishing a new political system, these efforts would mean the partition of Syria (Ibid). Davutoglu (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2013c) also argued that Turkey was not against the rights of Kurdish people. Instead, Turkey urged the Assad regime to grant citizenship to the Syrian Kurds when Turkey and Syria had good relations before the 2011 civil war (Ibid). In this regard, the primary purpose of the Turkish government was to protect the territorial integrity of Syria and break the PKK's influence in northern Syria (Ibid). The PYD-dominated region in Syria may have turned into another PKK training base the same as the Qandil Mountain in the north of Iraq (Federici, 2015) because of the PKK's influence on the PYD. As underlined by Savelsberg and Tejel (2013, p.212), this was the case during the first few years of the Syrian civil war for the PYD and the PKK since they utilised this place to recruit new members and train them for the PKK's fight in Turkey against the Turkish state.

The rise of ISIS in 2014 as a continuous part of the entrance of Islamist military groups in Syria and their competition to control the territory in Syria within the ongoing Aleppo battle and its rise's contribution to the legitimisation efforts of the PYD's model of governance in the European countries because of the YPG's alliance with the US led coalition to fight ISIS in Syria since the ISIS siege on Kobane shaped the Turkish government's negative characterisation of the PYD and its normative frames. As will be discussed in chapters 5 and 6, the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD frames and the challenges of the Turkish government's counter-frames to these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames are dependent on these countries' policy objectives in Syria. In other words, overlapping or conflicting policy objectives in Syria between the US/UK governments and the PYD and Turkish government depending on the periods before and after the rise of ISIS are essential factors in understanding the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD frames and the potential challenges of the Turkish counter-frames to these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames. Additionally, as discussed in chapter 2 on the dynamic framing in ethnic lobbying, thesis approaches framing as a meaning construction (Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005) by the representatives of PYD and the Turkish government officials. Therefore, the frame refers to a constructed meaning, which identifies the causal or responsible agents for the framed issue (Gerhards, 1995) and provides alternative solutions (Snow and Benford, 1992).

Accordingly, before the rise of ISIS in 2014, both the Turkish government (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2012a) and the US/UK governments (A11, 2018; B6, 2018) described the Assad regime as a causal or responsible agent for the problems in Syria. Following the rise of ISIS in 2014, the US/UK governments shifted their focus from the Assad regime to ISIS as a central problem in Syria (B1, 2018; B7, 2018; A11, 2018). However, the Turkish government kept describing the Assad regime as the main causal agent for problems in Syria (Philips, 2018), and the one responsible for the rise of radical groups such as ISIS (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014a)²². Then, the US sought a ground partner to fight ISIS in Syria (B1, 2018; B10, 2018; A8, 2017) and began interacting with the YPG, the military wing of the PYD, since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane through conducting airstrikes on ISIS targets and airdropping ammunition to help the YPG (Thornton, 2015). Since then, the US-led global coalition began working with the YPG to fight ISIS in Syria. According to some anonymous participants, the

²² The details of the Turkish government's policy towards the Assad regime will be discussed in the section on the "PYD's Alleged cooperation with the Assad regime".

US invested in the army of the official Syrian opposition, the FSA, by training and equipping them (B6, 2018; B14, 2018). It also negotiated with the Turkish government to fight ISIS in Syria through the Turkish military forces (B10; 2018; B11, 2018). However, these were not successful attempts, which forced the US to work with the YPG in Syria (B6, 2018; B10, 2018; B11, 2018; B14, 2018).

Consequently, since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, Turkish government officials began explicitly labelling the PYD as a terrorist organisation like the PKK. President Erdogan (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014g) was the first person equating the PYD-YPG with the PKK as terrorist organisations while expressing his opposition to the US policy of arming the YPG against ISIS. He also criticised the US support to the YPG in Kobane and its expectation that Turkey would also support this US policy by accentuating its unacceptability for Turkey because of the YPG's links to the PKK (Ibid). The Turkish government also tried to reduce the YPG's influence in the fight against ISIS and exclude the YPG from this fight by using this counter-frame and suggesting the FSA as an alternative force to fight ISIS (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014i; 2014j) until the 2016 Euphrates Shield. At a press conference during the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, Erdogan (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014i) continued criticising the US aid to the PYD by questioning the importance of Kobane for the US. Then, he vilified the PYD's attitude towards the Peshmerga forces, which were preparing to help the PYD in Kobane with Turkey's support, by labelling the PYD as a "terrorist" group (Ibid).

As explained in the previous chapter on the normative framing process, the PYD articulated another normative frame, the "defence of human values against ISIS". Through this frame, the PYD tried to demonstrate ideological differences between the PYD and ISIS by referring to the secular principles of its model of governance (Dalay, 2018) as components of its Western-style regional role model frame and accentuating the moral stance of the PYD against ISIS. This frame also affected the efforts at negative characterisation by the Turkish government to label the PYD as a terrorist organisation. In their conference speeches inside and outside Turkey, their joint conferences with their counterparts and during their conversations with Turkish journalists, Turkish government officials attempted to show the pragmatic policies of the US and Western countries. For instance, President Erdogan (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014l) argued that the US and Western countries could cooperate with a "terrorist" organisation by distinguishing terrorist groups as secular and non-secular ones when their interests necessitate

doing so. It appears that the Turkish government attempted to challenge the “war on terror policy” and discourse of the US by accusing the Obama administration of working with a repudiated terrorist organisation (PYD-YPG) to defeat another one (ISIS). While labelling the PYD as a terrorist organisation like the PKK, Turkish government officials also underlined two concerns regarding the YPG and its military alliance with the US-led global coalition. First, Turkish government officials feared that the PYD could obtain political gains from this alliance in addition to the weapons and ammunition. Particularly, the PYD could have been invited to the discussions on the political future of Syria under the UN Geneva peace process (Kalin quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016b; 2016j). The region in northern Syria controlled by the PYD could have had independence or an official autonomous status (Federici, 2015).

The explanations of Brett McGurk, the former US Special Presidential Envoy for the global coalition to counter ISIS, could reflect these Turkish concerns. According to McGurk (2019), the US supported the UN Geneva peace process for the political future of Syria but also negotiated a deal with Russia in the case of the failure of the Geneva process. In this way, the US could have met inspirations of Syrians to have their administration under the control of the YPG-led SDF, since they fought alongside the global coalition against ISIS (Ibid). As underlined by the Foreign Minister at the time, Cavusoglu (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015b), this situation would have threatened the official Turkish policy in Syria, the territorial integrity of the country, since the PYD and PKK exploited the fight against ISIS to have their influence in northern Syria. It would have caused a national security crisis to Turkey and territorial integrity issue in the country because of the existence of the PYD-PKK in the region (Ibid) as well as Turkey’s stated position on the Kurdish independence or autonomy in Turkey.

The second concern was the existence of the PKK members in the YPG (Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016e) and at the PYD’s governing bodies, which was also underlined by an anonymous participant (B10, 2018) and some experts (Allsopp, 2017). In this way, the Turkish government attempted to show this reality with a normative expectation that the US should not work with a reputed terrorist organisation (PYD-YPG), which had ideological links with the confirmed terrorist organisation (PKK) by considering its NATO ally Turkey’s concerns (Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016e). Additionally, the PKK could have used the US-made weapons against Turkey after completing the fight against ISIS through its members in the YPG and the PYD. Therefore, by referring to the organic links between the PKK and the

PYD, Turkish government officials emphasised that no one can guarantee that the PKK-PYD would not use these weapons against Turkey (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015o).

During the negative characterisation process of the PYD and its model of governance, the Turkish government used every single opportunity to present the PYD as a terrorist organisation. For instance, on 18 February 2016, there was a terrorist attack in Ankara. During its investigation process, Prime Minister at the time, Davutoglu (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016g), argued that the YPG and the PKK had been responsible for this terrorist attack. Accordingly, the related documents were sent to the countries, which had denied the truth that the PYD-YPG and the PKK had been the same organisations (Ibid). In this way, Prime Minister attempted to prove that the PYD-YPG were terrorist organisations like the PKK and urged these countries, especially the US, which had rejected to see this truth (Ibid). Terrorist attack in Ankara also caused a quarrel between the US and Turkish government officials regarding the status of the PYD and the YPG. President Erdogan and the chief adviser for Prime Minister, Osman Sert, urged the Obama administration and the European countries to designate the PYD-YPG as terrorist organisations:

“While the EU countries are declaring the PKK to be a terror organisation, why are you still not declaring the PYD and YPG as a terror organisation? Declare them as well. What do you want else from us? We are providing you all the documents, information, whatever you want [about these organisations]” (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016i)

“I really wonder, at this corner [pointing to the scene of attack] 28 Turkish citizens were killed by PYD in Ankara and how many more Turkish citizens should be killed by YPG, PYD and PKK together that our American friends should believe that PYD is a terrorist organisation?” (Sert quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016h)

However, the Obama administration kept separating the PYD-YPG from the PKK (B11, 2018; B14, 2018), and these Turkish attempts were not successful enough. As a fundamental requirement of a dynamic framing process, frame producers have a responsibility to renew/update their frames periodically by considering the changing political environment to increase their frames’ capacity to influence the targeted audiences (Desrosiers, 2012; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). Therefore, frame producers could make some changes in the scope of their frames (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). The YPG’s military alliance with the US-led global coalition against ISIS urged the Turkish government to make some changes in the scope

of this frame, which had happened in three ways. First, since the beginning of 2014, Turkish government officials had been referring to the Al Qaeda, Al Nusra, ISIL, the PKK and the PYD as “all foreign elements”, “risk factors” and “threats to Turkey (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014a; 2014b). However, the Turkish government began labelling all these groups as terrorist groups, instead of foreign elements, risk factors and threats since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane.

Second, while Turkish government officials had been arguing that the PYD and the PKK had been the same and terrorist organisations, they added ISIS to the content of this frame. Then, they commenced arguing that there was no difference between the PKK-PYD and ISIS, all terrorist organisations (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015m; 2014l; Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015m). In so doing, Turkish government officials also attempted to urge Western countries to have a moral/normative stance against all terrorist groups, instead of standing only against the Islamist ones (Ibid). These attempts seem to have provided some level of influence on the US policy towards the YPG. Notably, in the mid-October 2015, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) was formed with the supervision of the US to fight ISIS in Syria (B1, 2018; Barfi, 2016). The SDF was the combination of the Arab forces with the Kurdish ones led by the YPG (Barfi, 2016). According to an anonymous participant, the SDF was the part of US policy to reduce the Turkish concerns regarding the YPG by forming a military force to fight ISIS with regional actors, which would consist of people in the region (B1, 2018). Additionally, this was another strategy to justify the American backing to the ground forces in Syria (A10; 2018; A9, 2017), particularly against the Turkish propaganda that the US worked with a terrorist organisation (the YPG) to fight against another one (ISIS).

The last change in the scope of this counter-frame came following the formation of the SDF. Turkish government officials included other groups such as the far-left Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C) (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015o) in addition to the Al Qaeda, Al Nusra, ISIL, the PKK, the PYD and the YPG. Notably, starting from the first quarter of 2016 onwards, in their debates with the US and the European countries regarding the PYD-YPG, Turkish government officials referred to this extended counter-frame to urge them to stop making a distinction between good and bad terrorist groups. For example, EU Minister at the time, Volkan Bozkir (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016k), emphasised during his panel discussion at the Harvard University that EU should have united against any type of terrorist

groups whether they were extremists or violent ones. Then, he argued that there was no difference between Daesh, Al Nusra Front, the PKK, the PYD or the DHKP-C (Ibid). Prime Minister at the time, Davutoglu (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016l), also criticised the European countries having some problems such as racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia during his speech in Strasbourg. Then, he argued that these problems led these countries to make a distinction between good or bad terrorist groups, but the PYD, PKK and Daesh were the same and all terrorist organisations (Ibid). The Presidential Spokesperson, Kalin (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016o), also used this frame to justify the 2016 Euphrates Shield Operation²³ of Turkey. Kalin emphasised that Turkey had been against all terrorist groups by labelling the YPG and ISIS as terrorist “elements” and underlining the national security of Turkey and territorial integrity of Syria.

To sum up, since the establishment of the PYD’s model of governance in northern Syria in July 2012 following the start of Aleppo battle, the Turkish government had been targeting the legitimacy of this model and the normative PYD frames through negative characterisation. The negative characterisation of the PYD had two crucial stages. In the first stage, from the establishment of the PYD’s model of governance to the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, the Turkish government emphasised the PKK as a terrorist organisation. It referred to the PYD’s links to the PKK. However, in the second one, starting from the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, particularly after the YPG’s military alliance with the US-led coalition in Syria, Turkish government officials straightforwardly labelled the PYD-YPG as terrorist organisations like the PKK. Since then, the Turkish government extended this frame’s scope by adding other groups such as ISIS, Jabhat al Nusra, the DHKP-C next to the PKK, the PYD and the YPG. It appears that the Turkish government sought to interact with the PYD’s normative “regional role model” frame to challenge this frame and prevent the US and the UK’s responsiveness towards this frame. Additionally, Turkish government officials attempted to demonstrate why the US and the UK should not support the PYD’s model of governance and the YPG’s fight against ISIS in Syria. In so doing, however, the Turkish government did not convincingly appeal the foreign policy discourses of the US and the UK such as “war on terror” or did not try to align its policy objectives with those countries like other ethnic lobbies employed in the US. The explanations of Turkish government officials indicated that they only labelled the PYD-YPG as terrorist

²³ The details of the 2016 Euphrates Shield Operation will be discussed in the counter-framing process of the Turkish government.

groups and did not provide more details, at least explicitly, why the PYD-YPG should be regarded as terrorists like the PKK by underlining the US foreign policy discourse “war on terror”. They strove to show the US/UK the organic links between them, the detrimental results of the PKK-influenced and the PYD-controlled administration on the territorial integrity of Syria and Turkish national security. By questioning the PYD’s control in northern Syria following the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from the region in July 2012 in the context of the PYD’s relations with the Assad regime through considering the historical relationship between the PKK and the Hafez al-Assad regime, the Turkish government also articulated the PYD’s cooperation with the Assad regime counter-frame.

“The PYD’s Alleged Cooperation with the Assad Regime” Frame

This counter-frame mainly emphasises the PYD’s relations with the Assad regime, which is interpreted through the historical relationship between the PKK and the Hafez Al-Assad²⁴ regime since the 1970s but also highly relevant to Turkey’s sharp policy change towards the Assad regime since the summer of 2011. Following its establishment in 1978, particularly from 1979 to 1998, the PKK found a basement in Syria (Gunter, 2014). Mainly, Turkey’s close relations with Israel and a water dispute between Turkey and Syria over the utilisation of the Euphrates River led the Hafez Al-Assad regime to support the PKK against Turkey by providing a ground to its leader and members in Syria (Gunter, 2014). In this way, the PKK managed to grow by establishing military training camps in Syria and Lebanon and finding new members in Syria (Kaya and Lowe, 2017). Due to the water dispute and security issues between Turkey and Syria in 1998, the Turkish government at the time, threatened war against Syria since it supported the PKK (Gunter, 2000). Consequently, Turkey and Syria signed the 1998 Adana/Ceyhan Agreement, which began normalising the relationship between two countries (Taspinar, 2012). Through this agreement, the Hafez Assad regime ended its support to the PKK (Demirtas, 2013) and expelled PKK members from Syria (Gunter, 2014). This agreement also accelerated the capturing process of the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan, by the Turkish authorities, since Syria expelled him (Gunter, 2000).

This frame also accentuates the attempt of the Turkish government to explain the situation in the early stages of the 2011 Syrian civil war regarding the PYD and the Assad regime. As

²⁴ The father of the existing Syrian president Bashar al Assad.

discussed in chapter 3, while explaining the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria with the start of the Aleppo between the Turkish back opposition forces and the regime forces as a political opportunity for the PYD, the Iraqi President and the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Jalal Talabani, brought the Syrian government, the PKK and the Iranian government together to have some sort of deal when the 2011 Syrian civil war broke out (Savelsberg and Tejel, 2013). As part of that, the PKK's Iranian branch, PJAK, stopped acting against Iran, which was also the same period that the PKK militias from Turkey and Iraq and weapons from Iran came Syria to contribute PYD's, grow (Ibid). This was quite beneficial point for the Assad regime, as it would not have to deal with the Syrian Kurds, especially with the PYD, while struggling with the Syrian opposition (Ibid) and would keep the opposition divided (Balanche, 2018). Consequently, during the first few years of the Syrian civil war, the PYD and the PKK used the northern Syria to recruit new members and train them for the PKK's fight in Turkey against the Turkish state (Savelsberg and Tejel, 2013).

The "PYD's alleged cooperation with the Assad regime" frame also indicates the Turkish government's changing foreign policy in Syria while countering the PYD's "regional role model frame" through its negative characterisation. Briefly, when the AKP government held the power in 2002, Syria was the central country in its new foreign policy towards the Middle East, which aimed at developing political, economic and social relationships with the neighbouring countries (Demirtas, 2013). Accordingly, the AKP government developed political, economic and security relations with the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad by perceiving Syria as a door to the Arab world (Taspinar, 2012). Bashar Assad was also the first Syrian leader visiting Ankara in 2004, which brought the personalisation of the Turkish foreign policy towards Syria as a result of a developed friendship between the Prime Minister at the time, Erdogan, and the Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad (Philips, 2018). They also holidayed together as a sign of the friendship and good relationship between two countries, which stopped the diplomatic isolation of the Syrian president (Ibid). Accordingly, the water disputes on the Euphrates River was solved through an agreement in 2008 (Philips, 2018) and visa-free trade agreement was signed by the Turkish and Syrian government officials in 2009 (Demirtas, 2013).

When the 2011 Syrian civil war broke out, Erdogan kept his dialogue with Assad by suggesting political and socio-economic reforms in Syria (Taspinar, 2012) and urging Assad for a general

election with expectation that he could win (Philips, 2018). While Erdogan was ensuring the US for not worrying about Assad, Turkish government officials thought that Assad was not an evil, but the people surrounded him (Ibid). Erdogan also trusted his personal relationship with Assad by thinking that it was over Assad's other relations with other regional leaders (Ibid). However, Assad was unwilling to listen to them (B5, 2018) and was buying some time by implying that he followed some of Erdogan's suggestions regarding stopping the violence against the Syrians (Philips, 2018). At the same time, Erdogan would not wish to be perceived by the Arab world as a leader supporting a dictator against the Syrians (Taspinar, 2012). Amongst the ongoing violence and Erdogan's feeling of personal betrayal by Assad (Philips, 2018; Taspinar, 2012), the Turkish government changed its Syria policy and its policy towards the Assad regime in the summer of 2011. Erdogan began calling the President Assad as a dictator and Turkish government officials started using the name "Esed" instead of "Esad", which was also followed by the Turkish Language Institution since the summer of 2011 (Demirtas, 2013, p.118). Since then, Turkey began siding with the Syrian opposition²⁵ (Demirtas, 2013), the Syrian National Council, which was established in Istanbul in August 2011 and dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood (Philips, 2018). Its armed wing, the FSA was also formed in Turkey in the summer of 2011 (Ibid).

After this new Turkish policy, as stated by experts, Federici (2015), Gunter (2014) and Savelsberg and Tejel (2013), the Assad regime played the PKK card against Turkey as in the old days by allowing the dominance of PYD and establishment of its model of governance near the Turkish border. In this way, the regime could have prevented the Syrian Kurds from joining the protests against the government (Allsopp, 2015). The regime could have controlled northern Syria indirectly by focusing on more central areas (Allsopp, 2017), like Aleppo which was under the threat of the Turkish and Qatari-backed Syrian military opposition (Philips, 2018) since the start of Aleppo battle (Kusilek, 2019). Experts, such as Michael Gunter (2014), also

²⁵ This does not mean that the Turkish government must interfere in the domestic relations of another state. At this time, the Western countries had been standing against the Assad regime due to its violent responses to the protests of the Syrian people or the regime's atrocities against its own people through airstrikes or barrel bombs. Therefore, according to the Western countries, including the US, the Assad regime lost its legitimacy and it would fall soon (Brown, 2018; Yacoubian, 2017). Depending on the new Syria policy of the Turkish government, which also perceived the Assad regime as a delegitimised structure, Turkish government officials began emphasising a delegitimate and reputed terrorist organisation, the PYD due to the PKK, and its alleged cooperation with a delegitimate Assad regime in order to undermine the PYD's legitimacy and the legitimacy of its model of governance in the eyes of the targeted countries, the US/UK.

underlined that the Syrian authorities allowed the PYD co-chair Salih Muslim to return to Syria following the outbreak of civil war in April 2011 from the PKK camp. Muslim returned with approximately 1.000 PKK members, who established the PYD's military wing, the YPG, later in Syria (Federici, 2015).

As explained in chapter 1 on the ideology of Kurdish political movement, the PYD was established by the Syrian remnants of the PKK in 2003 (Allsopp, 2015). Therefore, as addressed in the previous section, Turkish government officials argued that the PYD was a terrorist organisation like the PKK. Accordingly, following the establishment of the PYD's model of governance in July 2012 following the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces with the start of Aleppo battle, the Turkish government began blaming the PYD, an alleged terrorist organisation, for cooperating with the Assad regime (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2012) to undermine the legitimacy of the PYD's model of governance and its "regional role model" frame (B14, 2018; B7, 2018). This Turkish strategy could be explained through the Assad regime's decreasing legitimacy in the eyes of the Western countries since the outbreak of the 2011 Syrian civil war (Brown, 2018; Yacoubian, 2017) and the US State officials' position towards the PYD with an understanding that the PYD had relationship with the Assad regime (B4, 2018; B5, 2018; Rubin, 2014), at least until the rise of ISIS. It is a compatible strategy with the negative characterisation attempts, since blaming opponents/others as the main reasons for problems are used for this purpose (Gray, 2003). According to the Turkish government, the primary causal agent for the problems in Syria, particularly for the Syrian civil war was the Assad regime (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2013a; 2012d; Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2012a). Therefore, referring to the PYD in the context of cooperating with an internationally delegitimised regime (Philips, 2018) could have undermined the PYD's legitimacy and its "regional role model" normative frame.

In this process, Turkish government officials presented this counter-frame in different ways. The first way was to draw attention to the PYD gains from the chaotic situation in Syria, especially from the Assad regime, following the establishment of this model of governance. For example, Foreign Minister at the time, Davutoglu (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2012d) emphasised that the PYD had obtained support from the regime in Afrin and Kobane in this chaotic situation. The second way was to use the PYD opponents, especially the explanations given by the Kurdish National Council (KNC), to justify/strengthen this frame. President of the

KNC at the time, Ismail Hemme (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2012c), underlined that the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria was the game played by the Assad regime against Turkey and the Syrian Arab communities. According to Hemme (Ibid), the Syrian government forces did not entirely leave the region and maintained their patrols close to the Kurdish units. These explanations were also backed by the experts (Barfi, 2016; Federici, 2015; Gunter, 2014) and anonymous participants (B1, 2018; B5, 2018; A8, 2017; A9, 2017), which were also used by the Turkish government. Hemme (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2012c) also argued that the Assad regime wanted to give a message to Turkey and the Syrian Arab communities. The message was that once the Assad regime left, the Kurds were ready to fill the power vacuum in the region since they wish to separate from Syria. It would mean a PKK threat to Turkey as its neighbour and the partition of Syria for Syrians (Ibid). There was also a belief emphasised by the groups opposed to the PYD that the PYD had prevented the anti-regime demonstrations in the Kurdish areas within the early stages of the civil war (Allsopp, 2017; Federici, 2015; A10, 2018). These were used as supporting points for this Turkish counter-frame.

The third way was to refer to the PYD's relations with the Assad regime in the context of atrocities committed by the regime against the Syrians while warning the groups sustaining relationship with Bashar Al-Assad. In early 2013, during the Davos Meetings, Foreign Minister at the time, Davutoglu (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2013a), described the atrocities of the Assad regime against civilians in Syria and criticised the silence of the international community. Then, he warned the groups in Syria, particularly the PYD, to put a distance between itself and the regime by blaming the PYD for acting in coordination with the brutal regime. The fourth way was to conceptualise this counter-frame in the context of Turkey's Syria policy. In the early stages of the 2011 civil war, with Qatar and Saudi Arabia, the Turkish government sided with the Syrian opposition, especially with the members of the Muslim Brotherhood, and attempted to form a united Syrian opposition against the Assad regime (Philips, 2018). During the formation of the Syrian National Council (SNC) and the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, Turkey played an active role (Philips, 2018) and also wanted to bring the Syrian Kurds, including the PYD (Muslim quoted in Al-Monitor, 2018), together under the official Syrian opposition. This was also compatible with the policies of the US/UK governments in this period (Philips, 2018). However, the PYD followed a different path

by calling itself a third party (Gunter, 2014; A10, 2018) and sustained its relations with the regime (Rubin, 2014).

In this regard, as discussed in the previous chapter on the normative PYD framing, the PYD declared a unilateral autonomous administration in northern Syria in the summer of 2013. Since then, it had been preparing for the 2014 UN Geneva II peace negotiations through the “regional role model” frame. However, the PYD was not invited to these negotiations. The Syrian Kurds, the KNC, were represented amongst the members of the official Syrian opposition during these negotiations. While assessing the peace negotiations, Foreign Minister at the time, Davutoglu (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014c), argued that the PYD’s autonomy declaration would not affect the future of Syria, since the Syrian Kurds were amongst the Syrian opposition to discuss a solution to the country. The PYD was excluded from the negotiations due to its cooperation with the Assad regime (Ibid). This exclusion indicates that the alleged cooperation counter-frame was influential in undermining the legitimacy of the PYD in this period. The explanations of other Syrian Kurdish parties were also used to strengthen this Turkish argument. For instance, the spokesperson of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria, Nuri Brimo (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014d), argued that 11 parties under the Kurdish National Assembly of Syria had worked with the Syrian opposition. But the PYD worked with the Assad regime by not allowing other parties to operate in northern Syria (Ibid). Likewise, Turkish government officials emphasised this alleged cooperation as a reason for the rise of ISIS in Syria. For instance, Foreign Minister at the time, Davutoglu (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014e), argued that the PYD was responsible for the atrocities of ISIS during the Kobane siege and paid the price of disharmony by not joining the FSA but siding with the Assad regime, which provided a ground for the rise of ISIS in Syria (Ibid).

The final way was to link this alleged cooperation with terrorist attacks in Turkey. For example, there was a terror attack in Ankara in October 2015. Following that, President Erdogan (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015n) argued that the PKK, the PYD, ISIS and the Assad regime and the Syrian intelligence planned this terror attack and he accused them as organisers. These attempts can be interpreted as the ones through which the Turkish government sought to prevent the invitation of the PYD to the UN Geneva III peace negotiations in January 2016, but mainly the rising concerns of the Turkish government due to the YPG’s territorial gains in some Arab majority areas by using the fight against ISIS with the support of the US-led global coalition

(Kusilek, 2019; Balanche, 2018). The PYD was not invited to these negotiations due to the opposition of the Turkish government, although they worked with the countries, which formed the global coalition to fight ISIS. Linking this alleged cooperation with terrorist attacks continued after the 2016 UN Geneva III peace negotiations. There was another terrorist attack in Ankara on 18 February 2016. Afterwards, Turkish government officials argued that the YPG and the Assad regime collaborated to organise this attack (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016i) since the Turkish authorities captured a militia from the YPG, who was from northern Syria and was responsible for this attack (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016g).

To sum up, the Turkish government followed five ways to present the alleged cooperation counter-frame. It drew attention to the PYD gains from the regime, used the explanations of the PYD opponents to justify/strengthen this counter-frame, emphasised the alleged cooperation while describing the Assad regime's atrocities against Syrians. The Turkish government also conceptualised this counter-frame in the context of Turkey's Syria policy. It linked this counter-frame with terrorist attacks in Turkey by arguing that the PYD and Assad regime were organisers of them. In the early stages of the civil war, the Assad regime was internationally de-legitimised and thought that it would fall soon (Yacoubian, 2017). Therefore, blaming the PYD (a reputed terrorist organisation) for working with an internationally de-legitimised regime could have been logical strategy to undermine the PYD and its normative frames. It was also related to the responsibility of lobbyists as frame producers who had to know the expectations of their targeted audiences as well as what type of frames could meet these expectations (Desrosiers, 2012; Baumgartner, 2007).

However, starting from the summer of 2013, the West faced a dilemma on two accounts. First, in the case of the fall/overthrow of the Assad regime, which group would fill the power vacuum in Syria, whether the untrustworthy Syrian opposition or the Islamist military groups (Brown, 2018)? Second, the West was torn on whether to focus on overthrowing the Assad regime or the existence of the armed extremist groups in Syria (Ibid). The lack of Western response to the regime's utilisation of the chemical weapons in summer 2013, the 2015 Russian intervention in Syria (Philips, 2018), but mainly the rise of ISIS in the ongoing process of Aleppo battle and the US-led global coalition's alliance with the YPG to fight ISIS in Syria since the ISIS siege on Kobane seem to have overshadowed the Turkish government's the PYD's alleged cooperation with the regime counter-frame and its position against the regime as the main

priority became the PYD-YPG (B14, 2018). After the YPG becoming the ground partner to the US-led global coalition to fight ISIS in Syria, the PYD articulated the defence of human values against ISIS frame by referring to the ideological differences between the PYD and ISIS as well as the more secular principles of the PYD's model of governance (Dalay, 2018). To counter the "defence of human values against ISIS" frame, to challenge the US and the European countries with their own principles and to prevent their support to the YPG, the Turkish government created the PYD's alleged ethnic cleansing counter-frame.

"The PYD's Alleged Ethnic Cleansing" Frame

In addition to "the PYD is a terrorist organisation" and its "alleged cooperation with the Assad regime", Turkish government officials from summer 2015 onwards deployed a new frame to de-legitimise the PYD, that of ethnic cleansing. This frame refers to the PYD actions against Arabs and Turkmen in northern Syria while fighting ISIS. Following the YPG's alliance with the US-led global coalition to fight ISIS in Syria since Kobane, the YPG militias commenced conducting ground operations against ISIS in northern Syria in 2015 and captured Tal Abyad from ISIS (Balanche, 2018) and Hasakah from weak local regime forces (Philips, 2018). During these operations, people, especially from Tal Abyad fled as refugees to Turkey (Kanat and Ustun, 2015). The capture of Tal Abyad led the PYD to link its Kobane canton with the Qamishli one alongside the Turkish border (Kusilek, 2019) and raised the Turkish government's concerns as the homogenisation of this territory by forcefully displacing the Arabs and Turkmen as a broader strategy of the PKK to have an autonomous zone through its Syrian affiliate, the PYD (Kanat and Ustun, 2015). Turkish government officials framed these happenings as "ethnic cleansing" and used to deploy the PYD's alleged ethnic cleansing counter-frame.

As explained in chapter 3 on the normative PYD framing section, the PYD argued that its governance would be a role model as a Western-style democracy in Syria and the Middle East, since it was inclusive and providing a chance to other minority groups to coexist peacefully. Particularly the peaceful coexistence with other minorities and the equality of men and women principles of this model were presented as the component themes of the defence of human values against ISIS frame. By describing the YPG's action against Arabs and Turkmen as ethnic cleansing through forceful displacements, it seems that the Turkish government sought to counter the PYD's "regional role model" and "defence of human values against ISIS" frames

as well as the normative stances of the countries backing the YPG. It appears that the Turkish government tried to refute the PYD argument of peaceful coexistence with other minorities by accentuating that the PYD did not respect minorities; instead, it forcefully displaced people (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016m; 2016w; Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016u). Ethnic cleansing is a serious crime like genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, which could mobilise the international community (Bellamy and Dunne, 2016) or could urge countries to take a moral stance against the PYD-YPG. Therefore, by accusing the PYD of committing ethnic cleansing, the Turkish government attempted to address why the international community, for this research, the US/UK, should not support the PYD's model of governance and the YPG's fight against ISIS in Syria. This strategy reflects the nature of characterisation framing through accusing opponents/others as the main reason for a problem (Gray, 2003). It is also compatible with the responsibilities of frame producers, who must consider what type of frames might work to influence the targeted audiences (Desrosiers, 2012).

In this characterisation process, the Turkish government presented the alleged ethnic cleansing counter-frame in three ways. First, in their speeches, declarations or press conferences, Turkish government officials framed the PYD actions as attempts to create a state-like entity by changing demography in northern Syria through forceful displacements to connect its Afrin, Kobane and Jazirah cantons (Tuna quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015c; Arinc quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015f). In so doing, government officials also argued that the PYD-YPG had a strategic alliance with ISIS, since both committed ethnic cleansing against people of the region (Arinc quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015f). Second, through the pro-government news agency website, the Anadolu Agency (AA), the Turkish government referred to the explanations of Turkish experts, the Syrian opposition officials and local administrators in northern Syria regarding the PYD actions in the region. For instance, a Turkish expert, Mehmet Sahin (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015e), shared his experience with some district leaders of the PYD cantons argued that the PYD had threatened them. These leaders underlined that if the non-Kurdish people had not accepted the PYD rule and its project to connect Afrin, Kobane and Hasakah, they would have been sent with trucks to other regions (Ibid). According to the land commander of the Syrian opposition forces, Abu Mustafa (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015g), the PYD worked with the opposition fighters to liberate Tal Abyad from ISIS. Then, it started a "witch-hunt" and displaced the opposition fighters from their lands (Ibid). The explanations of the member of Tell Abyad Assembly, Ahmed el-Hac Salih (quoted in Anadolu Agency,

2015h), were also published, who argued that the PYD had threatened local Turkmens and led them to evacuate their villages. Otherwise, coordinates of the Turkmen houses and schools would be shared with the global coalition to be bombed, which was used to subjugate Turkmens (Ibid).

Finally, Turkish government officials referred to the reports of human rights organisations to emphasise the YPG's actions in the region and to conceptualise these actions as human rights abuses against moral values. For example, Amnesty International and the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) released reports in September and October 2015. These reports draw attention to the YPG's human rights abuses in the region by accusing it using the fight against ISIS to control the Arab villages through forcefully displacing the local Arabs (Federici, 2015). The Turkish government utilised these reports for the ethnic cleansing counter-frame to challenge the PYD and the US (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016c). For instance, the "regional role model" and "defence of human values against ISIS" frames instrumentally utilised some norms (Koinova, 2011) to appeal the US values such as democracy, pluralism and human rights (Smith, 1999) and its foreign policy discourses. Mainly, the "defence of human values against ISIS" frame tried to present the YPG Kurds as freedom fighters and defenders of moral or more secular values against ISIS barbarism (Dalay, 2018). By referring to the claimed human rights abuses of the YPG, and framing them as ethnic cleansing, the Turkish government strove to challenge and refute the PYD arguments, defending human or moral values, especially the argument of peaceful coexistence with other minorities. The Turkish government also attempted to confront the US through its values or foreign policy discourses, human rights and the war on terror since Turkey had been urging the US to designate the PYD and the YPG as terrorist organisations.

It seems that the Turkish government attempted to demonstrate its stance with moral values against any type of terrorism and that urged the Western countries, particularly the US, to take a moral stance against the human right abuses of the reputed terrorist organisations, the PYD-YPG. Accordingly, Prime Minister at the time, Davutoglu (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016d), underscored the PYD atrocities as "ethnic cleansing" and "war crimes" by referring to the reports of human rights organisations. Then, he urged the US to take a position against the YPG, which committed war crimes in northern Syria and stop the US supplying weapons to them by listening to its NATO ally, Turkey (Ibid). Davutoglu (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016f) also

framed the actions of the YPG, the Assad regime and Russia as crimes against humanity through violation of the international law and emphasised that Turkey stood against these types of crimes. In the fall of 2016, the Turkish Ambassador to the UN, Mehmet Ferden Carikci (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016v), demanded a UN investigation for the YPG atrocities in northern Syria by calling them ethnic cleansing.

To conclude, Turkish government officials framed the YPG's actions as preparations for a state-like entity in northern Syria. They also referred to the explanations of some Turkish experts, the Syrian opposition officials and local administrators of northern Syria regarding the PYD actions and reports of human right organisations, which argued that the YPG had committed human rights abuses. Turkish government officials also accused the PYD of committing ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity through the forceful displacement of Arabs and Turkmens in the region to delegitimise the PYD and the YPG, refute the "defence of human values against ISIS" frame and, in particular, the PYD's peaceful coexistence with other minorities argument. The Turkish government also strove to challenge the US and its support to the YPG by using the US rhetoric, advocacy of human rights and the war on terror. Genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity are serious matters, which could mobilise people or countries at the international plethora. It appears that referring to these normative points, the Turkish government tried to mobilise the international community to take a stance against the PYD's model of governance, its arguments regarding democracy and human rights, but more importantly against the YPG, which helped the PYD to legitimise its model of governance through its fight against ISIS (Federici, 2015). This lobbying strategy was also important to appeal norms such as human values or foreign policy discourse, the war on terror, to urge the US/UK for taking a stance against the PYD and the YPG. Whether this counter-frame challenged the legitimacy of the PYD, its model of governance and normative frames, as well as stances of the US/UK towards the PYD-YPG will be discussed in chapter 5 on these countries' responsiveness towards the normative PYD frames. However, demonstrating the interaction between the Turkish government's negative characterisation frames and the normative PYD frames through a dynamic framing process is significant to understand the role of this interaction in explaining framing success in the ethnic lobbying. The Turkish counter-framing process also included the deployment of other counter-frames against the strategic PYD frames, which have been conceptualised as a counter-framing process.

4.2.2 The Counter-framing Process against the Strategic PYD Framing

The counter-framing process conceptualises efforts of the Turkish government against the strategic PYD frames to analyse dynamic framing process through the interaction between frames and counter-frames in ethnic lobbying. As explained in chapter 3 on the strategic PYD framing, following the rise of ISIS in 2014 the Obama administration sought a ground partner to fight ISIS in Iraq and Syria (Paasche and Gunter, 2016). Particularly since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, the PYD's military wing, the YPG, developed relationships with the US-led global coalition (Thornton, 2015) and interacted with the US Special Forces (B1, 2018) in the context of fighting ISIS in Syria. The PYD leadership attempted to utilise this opportunity not only for legitimising its model of governance within lobbying in the US and the European countries (Paasche and Gunter, 2016; Federici, 2015) but also for gaining territories through capturing strategic towns such as Manbij and Al-Bab from ISIS (Muslim quoted in ANF, 2016b; Abdurrahman, 2016). Through the counter-framing process, the Turkish government addressed why the US/UK should stop working with the YPG in the fight against ISIS. The PYD appealed the US foreign policy discourse, "war on terror" and aligned its policy objective of defeating ISIS to protect its gains with the US/UK policies of degrading and defeating ISIS in the Middle East. Accordingly, the PYD articulated "the protection of Europe/West" and "only effective force against ISIS" frames to achieve its short-term goals, having weapons/ammunition, gaining visibility; and the long-term one, obtaining support for its model of governance. Especially after gaining visibility through the YPG's relative success against ISIS (Federici, 2015), the PYD deployed a political solution for Syria frame to influence the discussions for the political future of Syria as a consequence of their military contribution to the fight against ISIS. This section analyses counter-framing efforts of the Turkish government through the "most effective ally", "securing NATO and the European countries", and "no solution without Turkey" counter-frames against the PYD frames.

"The Most Effective Ally" Counter-Frame

The most effective ally against ISIS counter-frame attempts to present Turkey's war against ISIS by underlining what Turkey achieved, since the Americans thought that Turkey was not effective enough because of its belated actions against ISIS (B9, 2018; B13, 2018; B17, 2018). It also aimed at countering the PYD's "only effective force against ISIS" frame. This counter-frame was developed in two periods. The first period lasts from the rise of ISIS in 2014 to the 2016 Turkish Euphrates Shield Operation. During this period, the YPG's alliance with the US-

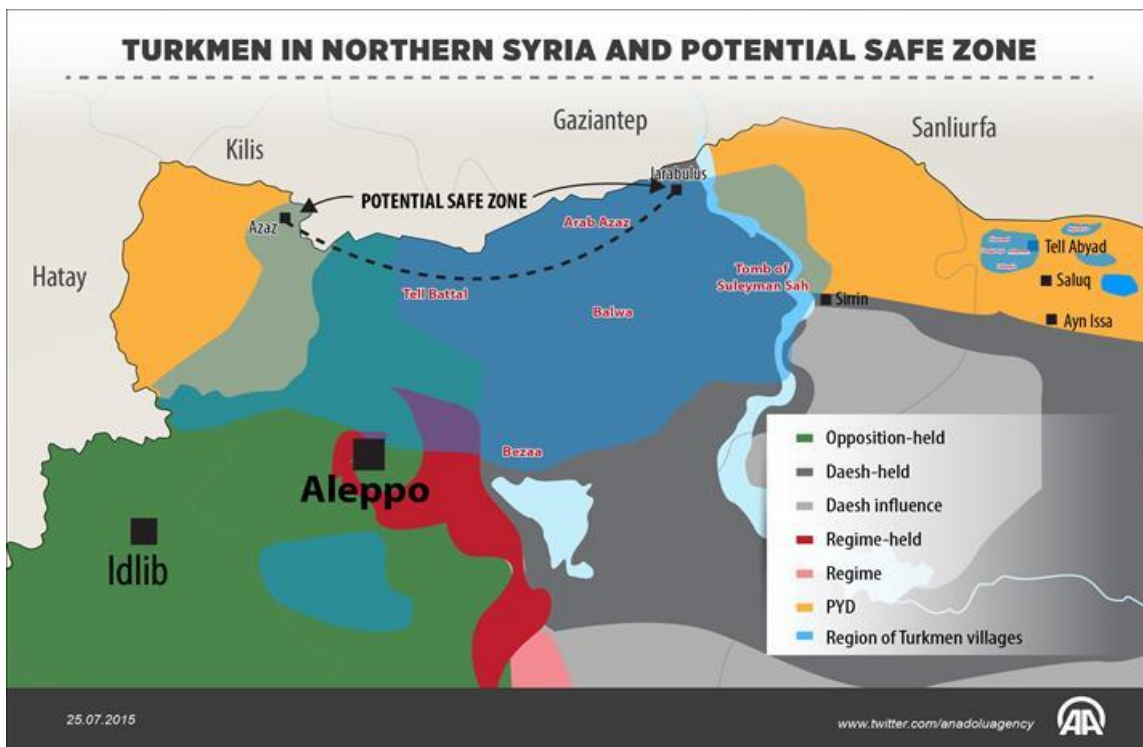
led coalition to fight ISIS since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane (Kusilek, 2019), ISIS' terror attack in Suruc in summer 2015 (Kanat and Ustun, 2015), and the 2015 Russian intervention in Syria (Philips, 2018) affected the Turkish government policy against ISIS and development of this counter-frame. Although the Turkish government supported the Syrian oppositional groups against the Assad regime since the start of Aleppo battle, it avoided any direct military intervention in Syria until the Euphrates Shield Operation, which targeted the PYD-YPG and ISIS instead of the regime (Philips, 2018). Therefore, in this period, Turkish government officials attempted to provide alternative options to fight ISIS in Syria in place of the YPG and prove the Turkish effectiveness against ISIS without military intervention in Syria.

These efforts included some alternative options depending on the ongoing developments. First, Turkish government officials preferred the FSA as a main force to fight ISIS in Syria (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014j; 2014i; Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014h; B14, 2018). This was mainly relevant to the US unwillingness to military intervention for fighting ISIS and pushing the local forces to do the fight (Philips, 2018). As part of this policy, the US wanted the Kurds of the region to have a united stance against ISIS to fight this threat (Kardas and Yesiltas, 2018). Particularly during the ISIS siege on Kobane, the US provided air support to the YPG in Syria (Thornton, 2015) and there was an expectation from Turkey to help the Kurds in Kobane (B17, 2018). Instead of direct involvement, the Turkish government allowed the FSA to aid Kobane as an alternative solution (Kanat and Ustun, 2015) and there were negotiations between the US and Turkish governments regarding KRG Peshmerga's help for the Kurds in Kobane (Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014h). As result of these negotiations, the Turkish government allowed some KRG militias to use the Turkish territory for crossing into Kobane and helping the YPG in the fight against ISIS (Thornton, 2015). Consistently, after the YPG's military alliance with the US-led global coalition, to exclude the YPG from this fight and decrease its visibility, the Turkish government argued that the FSA should be supported against ISIS in Syria (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015k; Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015a). According to the Turkish government, the PYD-YPG's primary purpose was not to fight ISIS but to establish a state (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015a) or control more territory (Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015b) by instrumentally using the fight against ISIS. This purpose would be a threat to the national security of Turkey and territorial integrity of Syria.

Secondly, it appears that the Turkish government used the Incirlik airbase as a bargaining tool and another option for Turkey's contribution to the fight against ISIS during its negotiations with the US officials (B9, 2018). However, ISIS' terror attack in Suruc in summer 2015 affected Turkey's ISIS policy and Turkey joined the US-led global coalition by opening the Incirlik airbase and other bases in Diyarbakir and Malatya (Kanat and Ustun, 2015). Consequently, Turkey was ready to work with the global coalition as long as the YPG was excluded from operations against ISIS, which was underlined while announcing the government's decision to open the airbase to the global coalition. The Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Tanju Bilgic (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015i) emphasised that the airstrikes should not be supporting or protecting the PYD-YPG. Foreign Minister at the time, Cavusoglu (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016e), also underlined Turkey's enthusiasm to support the countries fighting against ISIS. According to him, Turkey did not only provide access to the Incirlik airbase but also opened its airports to these countries for fighting ISIS (Ibid). In this period, Turkey had no intention to intervene in Syria alone, except shelling the PYD territories from the Turkish side of the Syrian border (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016f) due to the YPG-led SDF's operations in the Arab majority areas in northern Syria, which would help PYD to link its Jazira and Kobane cantons throughout the Turkish border (Balanche, 2018).

As solution to the PYD-YPG and ISIS threats, Turkish government officials also insisted on the US-Turkish ISIS-free zone in Syria during their negotiations with the US officials as part of Turkey's no-fly zone and safe zone ideas (Kanat and Ustun, 2015). According to the Turkish proposal, the ISIS-free zone would be serving as a training base for the FSA to fight ISIS and the Assad regime and would be in the middle of the PYD cantons to prevent their connection (Gunter, 2015). To justify this plan, the Turkish government also utilised the PYD's alleged ethnic cleansing against Turkmens in northern Syria. Therefore, the Turkish state news agency, Anadolu Agency, referred to the explanations of the chairman, Abdurrahman Mustafa, (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015g) and a member of the Syrian Turkmen Assembly, Ekrem Dede (quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015h). They both underlined that Turkmens needed protection against the YPG actions in the region. However, this plan could not work because of the US unwillingness to intervene in Syria and the 2015 Russian intervention in Syria to support the regime against ISIS and non-ISIS rebel groups (Philips, 2018).

Map 4.1: A Proposed Turkish Safe Zone Area in northern Syria²⁶



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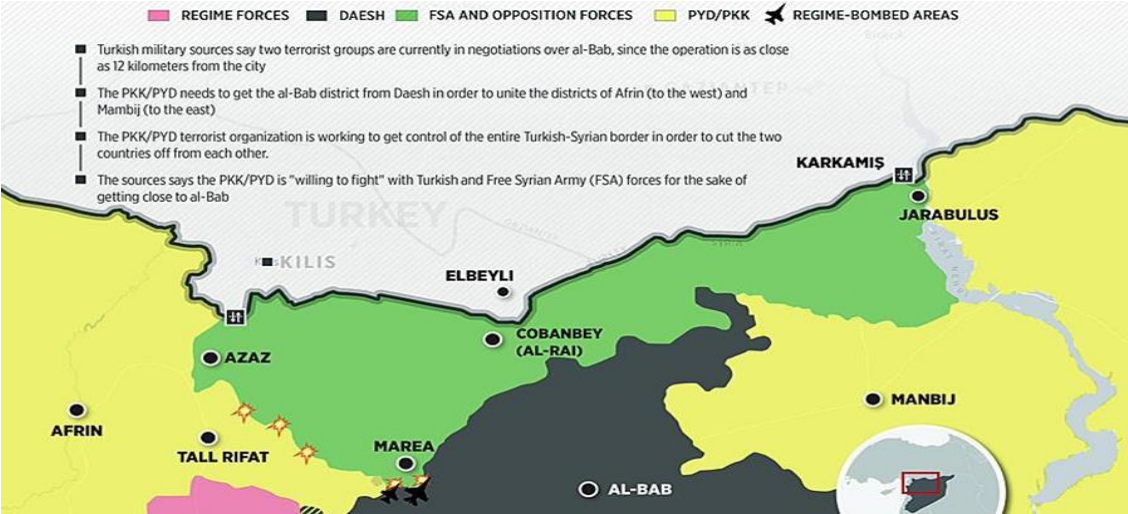
In addition to the Turkish disappointment regarding the US alliance with the YPG (Kanat and Ustun, 2015), the 2015 Russian intervention in Syria and the impossibility of the regime due to the existence of Russia urged the Turkish government to make changes on its Syria policy and led a rapprochement²⁷ between Turkey and Russia in 2016 (Philips, 2018). These points impacted the second period of the formulation of this counter-frame, which started with the 2016 Euphrates Shield Operation. The operation was the first concrete Turkish action against ISIS in Syria. Beforehand, with the airstrikes of the US-led global coalition, the YPG-led SDF expanded its territories into Arab majority areas such as Manbij and Jarabulus (Kusilek, 2019). According to the PYD, Manbij was the secret capital and important stronghold as a training base of ISIS members (Muslim quoted in ANF, 2016b). Likewise, it was a strategic town for the PYD's peaceful coexistence with other minorities argument due to its demographical structure (Ibid). Manbij was also a strategic town for Turkey because of its location. Therefore,

²⁶ Source: Anadolu Agency Website, [Accessed: 23 July 2020] Available from: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/safe-zone-crucial-for-turkmen-in-syria/22804>

²⁷ Turkey-Russia relations collapsed in the fall of 2015 following Turkey's shutdown of a Russian jet with a claimed violation of Turkish airspace. The Russian intervention in Syria in 2015 strengthened the regime and its allies' position against the opposition and its allies for negotiating Syria's political future (Philips, 2018). Depending on that and Turkey's changing priority, the PYD-YPG after Kobane in Syria, led Turkey to apologize for the incident and approach Russia for Syria's political future in 2016 (Ibid).

whomever controlled the line between Jarabulus and Manbij, would be controlling the territory on the West of the Euphrates River from its north to south. Earlier in 2016, the YPG took the control of Tal Rifaat, the town close to Afrin, by using the opportunity of the Russian-backed regime forces' offensive against the rebels in the north to take some parts of the Aleppo Governorate back (Philips, 2018). Following Tal Rifaat and Manbij, the SDF captured Al Bab, another strategic town to approach Raqqa (Abdulrahim, 2016). For Turkish government, it meant that the PYD would be geographically connecting its Afrin, Kobane and Jazira cantons and controlling the territory throughout the Turkish border (Plakoudas, 2016). The Turkish army crossed into Syria on 24 August 2016 to prevent this and create a safe zone by backing the FSA and Turkmen forces (Philips, 2018). It was called the Euphrates Shield Operation (Kalin quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016o). The opposition forces backed by Turkey took control of Dabiq, al-Bab and Jarabulus (Stein, 2017). However, they could not go further to take Manbij in order not to attack the US forces and mainly the Russian-backed regime forces since Russia played a significant role by not taking action against this Turkish operation despite the fact that it controlled the airspace of Western Syria (Philips, 2018).

Map 4.2: The Euphrates Shield Operation in August 2016²⁸



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According to the Turkish government, Turkey conducted this operation against all terrorist threats, including ISIS and the YPG (Kalin quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016o). Since then, they argued that Turkey was the most effective ally against ISIS. In their speeches and joint press conferences with their counterparts, they described Turkey's effectiveness through these

²⁸ Source: Anadolu Agency Website, [Accessed: 14 October 2020] Available from: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/daesh-pkk-pyd-collusion-targets-op-euphrates-shield/674351>

following points. Turkey joined the global coalition against ISIS and increased its border security to prevent the flow of foreign fighters by arresting many ISIS members or extraditing the suspected ones to their countries (Kalin quoted in Anadolu Agency 2016n). It conducted ground operations in Syria and Iraq to kill ISIS members and its ideology (Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016y; 2016z). These were the main reasons why Turkey was the most effective ally and why the metropolitan cities such as Istanbul and Ankara (Kalin quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016n) as well as its President, Erdogan, (Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016z) became main ISIS targets.

According to Turkish officials, by conducting a ground operation in Syria, Turkey did not only prove its effectiveness against ISIS but also took the argument that the YPG had been the only effective force against ISIS (Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016r). This also indicates that through this counter-frame, the Turkish government attempted to challenge the PYD's "only effective force against ISIS" frame. Analysing counter-frames are significant to explain their interaction with frames and the role of this interaction in the responsiveness of the targeted countries towards the PYD frames. It seems that the Turkish government also conceptualised its operation as a fight against all terror groups, including ISIS, the PKK-PYD-YPG by aligning this fight with the US policy against ISIS, which came later than the expected time according to the US participants (B3; 2018; B17, 2018; A11, 2018). In addition to its primary purposes, the process after the military operation urged the Turkish government to deploy another counter-frame.

“Securing NATO and the European Countries” Counter-Frame

Securing NATO and the European countries counter-frame indicates the efforts of the Turkish government at justifying the Euphrates Shield Operation and countering the PYD's "protection of Europe/West" frame. Through the Euphrates Shield Operation, the Turkish government aimed at clearing the Turkish border from all terrorist groups, including the YPG and ISIS (Kalin quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016o; Isik quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016z2), especially to push the YPG militias from the West of the Euphrates River while fighting ISIS (Yildirim quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016s; Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016p). These explanations indicated that Turkey's main priority was to prevent the PYD from connecting its cantons geographically throughout the Turkish border by expelling the YPG from there. It seems that the Turkish government used its fight against ISIS to justify its operation against the

PYD-YPG and reduce the potential pressure on the country at the international plethora. Consequently, the securing the NATO and European countries against ISIS frame was articulated. Additionally, through the protection of Europe/West against ISIS frame, the PYD presented Kurds as the main solution to ISIS problem by strategically aligning their lands and people's protection from ISIS with the protection of the European/Western countries. In this way, the PYD sought to address why the YPG deserved the military support, and the PYD's model of governance deserved the political support of these countries (B14, 2018). In this regard, securing the NATO and European countries counter-frames was deployed to counter the PYD's protection of Europe/West frame and challenge these countries to led them stop their support to the YPG.

In the formulation process of this frame, Turkish government officials made some changes in its scope, particularly by extending the results of Turkish actions as solutions to different geographies. For instance, when the Euphrates Shield Operation started, officials emphasised that it was conducted to secure the Turkish borders against all terrorist groups (YPG and ISIS) (Kalin quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016n; Isik quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016z2). Then, this Turkish purpose and the counter-frame changed step by step. The operation was described, first, as a necessity for the Turkish national security against ISIS by linking the Turkish security with the security of the EU and the world (Celik quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016q). Then, the border security of the NATO and European countries was emphasised together by clearing Turkey's borders from ISIS (Celik quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016x). Accordingly, Turkish government officials presented the presence of the PKK and ISIS as threats to Turkey and NATO (Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016z). They described Turkey as a barrier between Europe and the world in its fight against terrorism (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016z1). If Turkey had lost this fight, Europe and the world would have been covered by "fire and blood" (Ibid). Therefore, Turkey expected NATO and the European countries' support to its fight against all terrorist groups.

To sum up, Turkish government officials linked Turkey's fight against all terrorist groups and its national security with security of the NATO and the European countries, the same as the PYD leadership, which connected its lands and people's protection from ISIS with the protection of Europe/West. It appears that, in this way, as a NATO country and an EU applicant, the Turkish government attempted to achieve these points following points. First, to justify

Turkey's ground operation in Syria by presenting it as a fight against ISIS and other terrorist organisations like the PKK, the PYD and the YPG. Second, they tried to refute the perception that Turkey was not effective ally against ISIS by arguing that Turkey was an effective NATO ally, which had secured NATO and the European countries from ISIS. Third, they interacted with the PYD's "protection of Europe/West frame". In this regard, the geographical scope of this frame extended from Turkey's border security to security of the NATO or the European countries and the world by focusing on Turkey's actions against terrorist groups.

"No Solution without Turkey" Counter-Frame

The "no solution without Turkey" counter-frame indicates two things. First, it summarises the Turkish government's Syria policy since the summer 2011 during the civil war and the progressive changes in that following the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane and the 2015 Russian intervention in Syria within the ongoing process of Aleppo battle. Second, it also counters the PYD's "political solution for Syria" frame. This counter-frame reflects two crucial messages of the Turkish government to the international community. The first was about Turkey's political stance to prevent its exclusion from the process of finding a political solution in Syria. Turkish government officials emphasised two points for this message. First, they drew attention to the heavy burden of the Syrian civil war on Turkey because of the refugee crisis (Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015d) and the border security issues (Arinc quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2013b; Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2013d) as a neighbouring country. According to officials, no other countries affected by the Syrian civil war the same as Turkey (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016f).

The second point was the emphasis on Turkey's Syria policy. From the summer 2011 to summer 2016, the Turkish government argued that the Assad regime should step aside (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2013a; 2012d; Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2012a) and developed close relations with the Syrian opposition. Accordingly, with Qatar and Saudi Arabia, Turkey played a significant role in the formation of the political opposition bodies, the Syrian National Council (Demirtas, 2013) and the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (Philips, 2018) and the military opposition, the FSA (Philips, 2018; Demirtas, 2013) with a purpose of a united opposition against the regime (Gunter, 2015). Turkey also backed the Syrian rebels in northern Syria in their Aleppo battle against the regime until its Syrian policy progressively had other priorities following the US-YPG alliance against

ISIS in Syria since Kobane and mainly after the 2015 Russian intervention in Syria to back the Assad regime against ISIS and non-ISIS rebels and the 2016 Euphrates Shield Operation (Philips, 2018). Turkish government officials preferred the FSA to fight ISIS in Syria and Turkish military forces backed the FSA during the Turkish Euphrates Shield Operation (A9, 2017). Turkey changed its priorities in Syria with the 2016 Euphrates Shield Operation and the Turkish-Russian rapprochement ended the Aleppo battle between the Turkish-backed opposition and the Russian and Iranian-backed regime forces through the Russian-Turkish brokered deal in December 2016 (Philips, 2018). However, trusting this Turkish influence on the Syrian opposition, Turkish government officials think that Turkey had a right to say for the future of Syria and could not be excluded from this process (A9, 2017).

The second message was for the PYD and countries trying to include the PYD to the negotiations regarding the political future of Syria. The Turkish government persistently demonstrated that it would not tolerate the PYD gains in north and eastern Syria and the presence of the PYD representatives at the negotiations for the political future of Syria as seen during the 2014 UN Geneva II negotiations and during the Vienna Process and Riyadh Conferences in 2015 before the 2016 UN Geneva III negotiations and at the Geneva III negotiations (Philips, 2018). Therefore, Turkish government officials tried to block the PYD gains, to counter its political solution for Syria frame and exclude the PYD from these negotiations by describing the PYD as identical to the PKK. Accordingly, Turkey's "no solution without Turkey" counter-frame interacts with the PYD's "a political solution for Syria" frame. Therefore, it is a framing competition whether the PYD governance would be a model for Syria (Muslim quoted in ANF, 2016a) or a security threat to Turkey (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2013c; Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2012b) or a threat to the territorial integrity of Syria (Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015b; Yildirim quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016t).

Turkish government officials also emphasised that they were not against the Syrian Kurds and their rights (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2013c; Kalin quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016b) and that they requested Assad to grant citizenship to the Syrian Kurds while having a good relationship before the 2011 civil war (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2013c). Instead, the Turkish government was against the attempts of the PYD to be an independent oppositional group to represent the Syrian Kurds at the peace negotiations. Turkish official

asserted that a reputed terrorist group, the PYD, cannot represent the Syrian Kurds or the oppositional body by siding with the Assad regime (Kalin quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016b; Kurtulmus quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016a). Although the PYD was not invited to the negotiations due to opposition of the Turkish government, the Syrian Kurds, through Abdel Hakim Bashar of the KNC were represented by the official Syrian opposition at the 2016 UN Geneva III negotiations.

Analysing “no solution without Turkey” counter-frame against the “political solution for Syria” frame of the PYD mainly explains the counter-framing efforts of the Turkish government against the PYD. At the same time, this counter-frame indicates the interaction of the Turkish government with the international community, especially with the US and Russia by giving a message that Turkey would not tolerate the PYD territory or solution including the PYD in the political future of Syria. This is significant for examining counter-lobbying efforts of Turkish government officials through counter-framing as a dynamic process, which explains the creation and presentation process of counter-frames by analysing their characteristics, and the developments affecting their characteristics. Characteristics of frames are essential factors to explain framing success (Ketelaars, 2016), for this research, the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD frames. This research demonstrates that the interaction between frames and counter-frames could affect the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the frames when both sides targets the same audiences by considering these countries’ policy objectives in Syria as their expectations (Desrosiers, 2012). As a new contribution to the ethnic lobbying in the US/UK, this type of analysis is significant to show the interaction between a Turkish counter-frame and a PYD frame for lobbying as well as the impacts of the ongoing developments in the concentrated period on the creation and presentation of frames and counter-frames as dynamic framing process.

4.3 Conclusion

The chapter explored the questions of; how the Turkish government counter-framed against the PYD framing, and what type of counter-frames they employed. It argued that the Turkish government primarily drew on characterisation frames, particularly the negative characterisation ones (Kaufman et al, 2013; Gray, 2003). Turkish government officials also created and presented other counter-frames to address why the US and the UK should not support the PYD’s model of governance and the YPG’s fight against ISIS in Syria. The counter-

framing efforts of Turkish government officials were conceptualised as negative characterisation and counter-framing processes through the creation and presentation of negative characterisation frames and other counter-frames as well as their interaction with the normative and strategic PYD frames.

The negative characterisation process analysed the creation and presentation of, “the PYD is a terrorist organisation”, “the PYD’s alleged cooperation with the Assad regime” and “the PYD’s alleged ethnic cleansing” frames. It also discussed their interaction with the normative PYD frames, the “regional role model” and “defence of human values”, respectively. These counter-frames addressed the PYD’s ideological links with the PKK, to label the PYD as a terrorist organisation like the PKK. These frames emphasised the alleged cooperation between the PYD (a reputed terrorist organisation) and the Assad regime (an internationally de-legitimised regime). The frames also presented the YPG actions against Arabs and Turkmens as ethnic cleansing. The counter-framing process discussed the creation and presentation of the “most effective ally against ISIS”, “securing NATO and the European countries”, and “no solution without Turkey” counter-frames. It considered their interaction with the PYD’s “only effective force against ISIS”, “protection of Europe/West” and “a political solution for Syria” strategic frames. These counter-frames are not entirely independent of the negative characterisation frames. Still, they mainly focus on the Turkish government’s actions against ISIS and other terrorist groups as well as its policy stance towards the political future of Syria. The chapter demonstrates that through negative characterisation and counter-framing against the PYD framing, Turkish government officials attempted to address why the US/UK should not support the PYD’s model of governance politically and the YPG’s fight against ISIS militarily in Syria. Through these attempts, the Turkish government sometimes challenged the US by using its own values or foreign policy discourses like human rights and the war on terror to urge it to stop supporting the YPG. Other times, Turkish government officials tried to align Turkish policy objectives with those of the US/UK (fight ISIS) as seen during the 2016 Euphrates Shield Operation.

By focusing on the counter-lobbying efforts of the current Turkish government through a specific strategy, counter-framing and analysing counter-framing as a dynamic process via the creation and presentation of counter-frames and their interaction with the PYD frames, this chapter makes three contributions to the related research fields. In fact, this is the first scholarly

analysis of the lobbying efforts of a Turkish government in the UK being independent from the Turkish governments' lobbying efforts in the European Countries, especially in the UK for Turkey's EU membership. It shows the Turkish government's efforts to block the lobbying efforts of the PYD leadership, which managed to gain access to the UK since 2012 to sell its model of governance, through a specific counter-lobbying strategy, counter-framing for a government lobbying. Second, the chapter contributes to the existing literature on Turkish lobbying in the US (Zarifian, 2018; Ambrosio, 2002c) by discussing the counter-framing efforts and policies of the AKP government against the PYD framing. It is also another first scholarly analysis of the counter-lobbying of the Turkish government in the US, which applies the counter-framing strategy and analyses the utilisation of counter-frames for lobbying through their interaction with the PYD frames. Finally, the chapter contributes to the literature on framing in ethnic lobbying (Koinova, 2013, 2011; Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002), particularly to the framing policies of ethnic lobbies (Ambrosio, 2002b) by analysing the counter-framing policies of the Turkish government not only as a lobbying strategy (Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002) but also as a process of characterisation and counter-framing (Gray, 2003; Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005). Accordingly, the chapter demonstrates the utilisation of a specific counter-lobbying strategy by Turkish government officials, counter-framing. It explains the Turkish counter-frames' utilisation and their interaction with the PYD frames to assess their potential challenge against the PYD frames in terms of the responsiveness of the targeted countries.

Counter-framing as a dynamic process also indicates how a domestic PYD issue in Syria became a regional issue for Turkey following the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in 2012 with the start of Aleppo Battle due the PYD's ideological links with the PKK. Likewise, it demonstrates how Turkey's security concerns regarding the PYD in Syria due to its ideological links with the PKK in Turkey became a counter-lobbying matter for a Turkish government in the US/UK. The chapter also indicates how the US-led global coalition's support for the PYD-YPG in the fight against ISIS detrimentally affected the Turkish government's relations with its NATO allies, especially with the Obama administration of the US after the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane due to Turkey's security concerns regarding the PYD-YPG and the PKK (Parlar Dal, 2016). The counter-framing process reveals that the ongoing developments in the Syrian civil war affected the characteristics of the Turkish government counter-frames and especially its relationship with the US government. Then, the PYD-PKK

issue became a matter for the Turkish government lobbying in these countries. Characteristics of frames are significant points to explain the frames' capacity to influence the targeted audiences (Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005) while discussing the responsiveness of the targeted audiences towards frames as framing success. This chapter, therefore, prepares the ground for assessing the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD frames. It considers and analyses the Turkish government counter-frames' preventive impact on these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames as the PYD and Turkish government targeted the same countries.

Chapter 5 The Success of Normative Frames

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have analysed the dynamic framing and counter-framing processes of the PYD and the Turkish government in the context of ethnic lobbying, respectively. Chapter 3 has focused on the characteristics of the PYD frames, their creation and presentation. Chapter 4, in turn, has examined the Turkish government's response to the PYD framing through analysing the characteristics of counter-frames, their creation, presentation as well as interaction with the PYD frames. Chapters 5 and 6 shift the focus from the dynamic framing processes to the success of the PYD frames by discussing the responsiveness of the US/UK towards them. They also examine the Turkish government counter-frames' potential challenges to the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD frames. Particularly, this chapter concentrates on the success of the normative PYD frames, the "regional role model" and the "defence of human values against ISIS" through their interaction with the Turkish government's the "PYD is a terrorist organisation", "PYD's alleged cooperation with the Assad regime" and "PYD's alleged ethnic cleansing" counter-frames. Accordingly, the next chapter will analyse the success of the strategic PYD frames, the "protection of Europe/West", the "only effective force against ISIS" and "a political solution for Syria".

The thesis analyses the success of normative and strategic PYD frames separately due to the conceptualisation of framing processes of the PYD as normative and strategic ones. As addressed in chapter 3 on the normative framing process, the PYD instrumentally utilises liberal norms such as democracy, human rights and moral values to receive political support from the US/UK for its model of governance. Especially, it appeals to the US foreign policy objective and foreign policy discourse; the democracy promotion in the Middle East (Gunter, 2014) until the rise of ISIS through the "regional role model" frame. After the emergence of ISIS in 2014, the PYD created the "defence of human values against ISIS" frame by underscoring the ideological differences between the Kurds and ISIS. It also presented the YPG militias as freedom fighters, which stood with the internationally recognised moral values and Western values (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998) or more secular values (Dalay, 2018) against ISIS. Additionally, the PYD used the rise of ISIS for its strategic framing. Mainly, it utilised the US foreign policy discourse, the "war on terror" (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005), by describing

the YPG's fight against Islamist groups as a "war against common enemies" and aligning its policy objective of fighting ISIS with the US/UK's objectives of degrading and defeating ISIS in the Middle East after the rise of ISIS in 2014 within the ongoing process of the Aleppo battle. These framing processes addressed why the US/UK should support the PYD's model of governance and the YPG's fight against ISIS in Syria. Although the success of normative and strategic frames will be examined separately in chapters 5 and 6, the findings of these chapters will be discussed together with more details in the conclusions chapter.

This chapter examines the success of normative the "regional role model" and the "defence of human values against ISIS" frames in the context of ethnic lobbying. It seeks to answer the questions of (1) How responsive the US/UK foreign policy elites and the wider media towards the normative PYD framing and normative PYD frames? (2) To what extent the Turkish government counter-framing challenged the normative PYD framing and the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the normative PYD frames. (3) What could explain the responsiveness of the US and the UK towards the normative PYD frames and the Turkish government characterisation frames by considering the US/UK's policy stances and objectives in Syria (4) Where policy stances and objectives of the PYD and the Turkish government overlapped and conflicted with those of the US/UK governments in Syria and (5) To what extent the overlapping and conflicting policy stances and objectives between frame producers (PYD representatives and Turkish government officials) and the targeted countries (the US/UK governments) affected the responsiveness of these countries towards the normative PYD frames and Turkish negative characterisation frames.

The existing literature on the framing in ethnic lobbying within the US/UK perceives framing as one of the strategies for successful ethnic lobbying as a facilitator (Herner-Kovács, 2013; Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002) or a moderate way of the diaspora mobilisation for the sovereignty of homelands (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011). Studies in this literature investigate successful lobbying process or a process of diaspora mobilisation, instead of the framing process. Analysing framing as a dynamic process, which is a new approach and novel contribution to the literature on ethnic lobbying in the US/UK, does not only provide an understanding of the characteristics of frames and counter-frames, their creation, presentation and interaction. It also gives hints regarding the policies of the targeted countries about the framed issue and potential changes in these policies depending on developments in the

concentrated period as well as their impact on frames and counter-frames. This thesis seeks to contribute to the literature on framing process in ethnic lobbying (Ambrosio, 2002b) by analysing the processes of framing and counter-framing through social movement framing and counter-framing approaches (Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005; Benford and Snow, 2000). In so doing, it attempts to assess framing success via the responsiveness of the US/UK towards frames and counter-frames (Koinova, 2011).

A small number of studies have referred (Scott and Osman, 2002) or used the concept of responsiveness (Koinova, 2011) in the context of ethnic lobbying in the US. Scott and Osman's study (2002) implicitly referred to the concept of responsiveness by investigating the responsiveness of the African American diaspora elites towards the different issues in Africa. However, their aim was to explain the mobilisation behaviour of the African American community to lobby for urging the US to change its foreign policy towards the Apartheid regime in South Africa by discussing the resonance of the communality of the circumstances for the Africans in the US and South Africa. As such, Scott and Osman (2002) investigated the responsiveness of lobbyists or diaspora elites and their reactions towards the different issues in the homeland as the first step for lobbying. Koinova (2011) has shifted the focus from the lobbying elites to the political elites by analysing the attitudes of US policymakers towards lobbying efforts of ethnic groups or diasporic communities in the US.

This chapter, on the other hand, examines the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the normative PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames, respectively. In other words, the chapter differs from the abovementioned study by examining the responsiveness of the targeted countries towards the arguments of lobbying elites by analysing these arguments in the dynamic framing process. It also adds the responsiveness of the mainstream newspapers in these countries to the concept of responsiveness as another targeted component in ethnic lobbying. The chapter argues that without considering policy stances, and particularly policy objectives of the US/UK in Syria, these countries' responsiveness towards the normative PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames could not be merely explained through their characteristics, creation, presentation and interaction. Especially, when the policy objectives of the PYD in Syria overlapped with those of the US/UK governments, the framing efforts and strategies of the PYD seemed to have been effective, and the targeted audiences were more responsive towards the normative PYD frames. Similarly, when the policy objectives of the

Turkish government in Syria overlapped with those of the US/UK governments, the Turkish government counter-frames, to a certain extent, challenged these countries' responsiveness towards the normative PYD frames. In this regard, analysing the framing as a dynamic process did not only explain the characteristics, creation and presentation of the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames, and their interaction. It also provided an understanding of the policy stances and objectives of the US/UK in Syria and their impact on these countries' responsiveness towards frames and counter-frames.

Ethnic lobbies do not only target governments or policymakers but also the broader public by striving to influence public opinion through their messages (Honey and Vanberbush, 1999). They try to shape debates in the academic and policymaking communities through think-tanks or media (Zarifian, 2018; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007). It indicates the importance of analysing responsiveness of policymakers and media towards the lobbying efforts of ethnic groups. Therefore, this chapter details the responsiveness as the responsiveness of policymakers and mainstream newspapers in the US/UK. It applies the following methods to assess these countries' responsiveness towards the normative PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames. Interviews with the policymakers were conducted (Brown, 2013), and parliamentary transcripts and mainstream newspapers of these countries were analysed (Kornprobst, 2019; Vanberbush, 2009; Ambrosio, 2002b; Shain, 1994). The thesis approached the US/UK's responsiveness towards frames and counter-frames in two ways; as the responsiveness of policymakers (including parliamentary transcripts) and mainstream newspapers of these countries. It applies the factors related to the credibility of framing and the factors applicable to the targeted audiences while explaining the responsiveness of policymakers and media (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005; Benford and Snow, 2000). The factors concerning to the credibility of the PYD framing are frame consistency and frame producers' perceived credibility (Benford and Snow, 2000). *Frame consistency* addresses the compatibility between the articulated values and ideas of the PYD and its actions (Ibid). The inconsistency, in this case, occurs in two ways, as appearance and perception-based inconsistencies (Ibid), which affected the credibility of the PYD framing. The *appearance-based inconsistency* explains the contradiction between values and ideologies of the PYD and its frames (Ibid). The *perception-based inconsistency*, on the other hand, addresses the contradiction between the arguments and actions of the PYD (Ibid). The *credibility of frame producers* considers the status or trustworthiness of the PYD representatives and Turkish

government officials as well as the ongoing developments in the concentrated period while discussing these countries' responsiveness towards frames and counter-frames.

The chapter also considers the factors applicable to the targeted audiences in explaining the responsiveness of policymakers. They are the centrality, experiential commensurability and narrative fidelity (Benford and Snow, 2000). *Centrality* analyses “*how essential the beliefs, values, and ideas*” in the PYD framing to the US/UK policymakers (Ibid). *Experiential commensurability* focuses on the PYD frames' compatibility with the personal or daily life of policymakers by considering their familiarity with the framed issue. It also seeks whether framing is too abstract or distant from their daily experiences. The *narrative fidelity* alludes to the PYD frames' congruence with the political or ideological environment of the US/UK policymakers. Problems regarding the characteristics of frames and the framing strategies, which could affect the responsiveness of the targeted audiences, are also considered to assess the responsiveness of the US/UK towards frames (Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005). The *problem of misalignment* refers to finding correct audiences for the PYD framing. The *problem of scope* is more technical, which focuses on whether the PYD created specific, narrowed frames or more general, broader frames and its impact on the responsiveness of policymakers and newspapers towards the PYD frames. The *problem of exhaustion* is a problem of overusing successful frames since they could become familiar to targeted audiences or being taken-for-granted. The *problem of relevance* investigates the compatibility of the PYD frames with the political or ideological environment of the US/UK. Finally, the chapter explains the responsiveness of parliamentary transcripts and mainstream newspapers of the US/UK towards the normative PYD frames through Kornprobst's (2019) thematic congruence. Therefore, it identifies the component themes of frames and themes in these documents. Then, it matches the overlapping and conflicting themes in the PYD frames and in these documents by considering the US/UK's policy stances and objectives in Syria. The chapter will discuss the success of normative PYD frames and their interaction with the Turkish government characterisation frames by considering the US/UK policy stances and objectives in Syria.

5.2 “A Regional Role Model” Frame

The responsiveness of the US/UK towards the “regional role model” frame can be explained through their policy stances towards the Kurdish question in Syria in accordance with their stances towards the political future of Syria as well as their policy objectives in the Syrian civil

war. As discussed in chapter 1 on the ideology of the Kurdish political movement and its international relations, the official US policy stance towards Kurds prioritised the territorial integrity of the Kurdish-populated countries (Gunter, 2011). Although the US/UK had no well-defined Kurdish policies in Syria since the outbreak of the 2011 civil war (B10, 2018; B14, 2018; A11, 2018; A8, 2017), their official policy stances were similar, protecting the territorial integrity of the country (Gunter, 2014; A9, 2017) and having a united Syria at the end (B1, 2018). In the early stages of the civil war, there was an expectation in the Western countries that the Assad regime would fall soon (Brown, 2018; Yacoubian, 2017). The US policy objectives from the outbreak of the civil war in March 2011 until the rise of ISIS in 2014, therefore, were to demand the stand-down of the Assad regime (Philips, 2018) and to support the Syrian opposition (A9, 2017; B7, 2018) to accelerate the falling process of the regime without direct external intervention (B1, 2018). The UK had the same policy objectives as the US (A9, 2017; A11, 2018). Additionally, the UK and France took a lead in the UN to take action against the Assad regime, but these efforts were blocked by Russia and China (Philips, 2018). Since then, the US/UK backed the idea of forming a united/inclusive Syrian opposition against the Assad regime to prepare for a transition in the post-Assad period (Ibid).

These policy stances, and particularly policy objectives, help explain the responsiveness of the parliamentary transcripts in the UK²⁹ and mainstream newspapers in the US/UK towards the Syrian Kurds and the PYD's "regional role model" frame. For example, from March 2011 to the end of 2012 during the debates in the UK parliament, 13 out of 41 parliamentary transcripts related to the Syrian conflict (approximately 32 %) underscored that the Syrian Kurds should join the Syrian opposition like other ethnic and religious minorities of the country to form a united opposition against the Assad regime. Accordingly, the mainstream newspapers in these countries questioned whether the Syrian Kurds would be part of the Syrian opposition. For instance, from March 2011 to the establishment of the PYD governance in July 2012, 18 out of 38 pieces in the newspapers (approximately 48 %) investigated the position of the Syrian Kurds regarding the Syrian opposition and the Assad regime.

²⁹ Although the parliamentary transcripts in US Congress referred to the atrocities and human rights abuses of the Assad regime against Syrians as well as sanctions against the regime, they never referred to the Syrian Kurds until the rise of ISIS, especially until the ISIS siege on Kobane in September 2014.

The outbreak of the 2011 civil war was perceived as a historical opportunity by the PYD to practise the PKK leader Ocalan's Democratic Confederalism model as a model of governance in Syria (Muslim quoted in KurdWatch, 2011). Unlike other oppositional groups in the country and the Western countries which described the Assad regime as the main responsible agent for the problems in Syria, the PYD emphasised that it had focused on the issue of an oppressive authoritarian system in the country in the early stages of the civil war (Ibid). It did not demand the fall of the Assad regime and began preparing the Kurdish society for the post-Assad Syria through its model of governance (Ibid). In so doing, the PYD had some relations with the Assad regime in this period (Rubin, 2014; B3, 2018). Following the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 with start of Aleppo battle to focus on more central areas (Gunter, 2014) like Aleppo (Allsopp and Wilgenburg, 2019), the PYD became a dominant party in the region (Savelsberg and Tejel, 2013).

Mainstream newspapers in the US/UK had been following the developments regarding the Syrian Kurds since the start of the Aleppo battle in July 2012. More broadly, there were 183 pieces written in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Guardian*, the *Independent*, the *Times/Sunday Times*, The *Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph* regarding the Syrian Kurds from March 2011 to 31 August 2014, before the ISIS siege on Kobane. Only 4 out of 183 pieces (approximately 2.5 %) referred to the details of the PYD's model of governance. Joe Parkinson's (2012) article in the *Wall Street Journal*, for instance, focused on daily life, economy, politics, local/municipal services under the control of the PYD in general. But mainly, Parkinson (2012) was interested in the opportunity of teaching the Kurdish language as an official one in this part of Syria, which was outlawed before the civil war. Morris (2013a) in the *Washington Post* and Parkinson and Albayrak (2013) in the *Wall Street Journal* reported the state-building process of the PYD by referring to political steps such as formalising the self-governance, writing a new constitution, holding elections for local councils and constructing a parliament. Only an opinion piece of Michael Rubin in the *Wall Street Journal*, in February 2014, discussed the possibility of the PYD's model of governance as an alternative "federal model" in Syria. Rubin (2014) emphasised that the US should consider this model since it included the participation of Kurds, Arabs, and Christians and allowed these people to express their opinions through other languages next to the Kurdish one. None of other pieces referred to the PYD's model of governance as a potential role model either for Syria or the Middle East. All these pieces underscored the participation of other minorities in the

decision-making process and linguistic freedom for minorities as the component themes of the “regional role model” frame (Kornprobst, 2019).

After the emergence of ISIS in 2014 within the ongoing process of the Aleppo battle, policy objectives of the US/UK shifted from the overthrow of the Assad regime to counterterrorism in Syria against ISIS (B1, 2018; B7, 2018; A11, 2018, A8, 2017). It was the period when the US/UK began prioritising ISIS and following the policies of degrading and defeating ISIS in Iraq and Syria, which overlapped with the PYD’s fighting ISIS threat in Kurdish territories of northern Syria. Notably, the US commenced seeking a ground partner to fight ISIS in Syria, while it was working with the Kurdish Peshmerga forces and Iraqi army in Iraq (Paasche and Gunter, 2016). In this regard, the first interaction between the US military officials and the YPG took place during the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane. Then, this interaction turned out to be an interest-based military alliance against ISIS in Syria. It was the turning point in terms of these countries’ responsiveness towards the PYD. Pie charts 5.1 and 5.2 indicate the coverage of the Syrian Kurds by the mainstream newspapers in the US/UK respectively from the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, March 2011, to 20th January 2017, the last day of the Obama administration. The charts demonstrate the mainstream newspapers’ approach to the Syrian Kurds within the pieces regarding the Syrian civil war. Their approach was categorised into two periods; before the ISIS siege on Kobane in September 2014 (from March 2011 to 31st August 2014) and after the siege (from 1st September 2014 to 20th January 2017, the last day of the Obama administration) to show that their responsiveness was dependent on the Kurds’ position regarding ISIS in Syria. The coverage of the Syrian Kurds refers to the PYD, the YPG and the SDF in this period.

Chart 5.1 The Syrian Kurds in the Mainstream Newspapers of the US³⁰

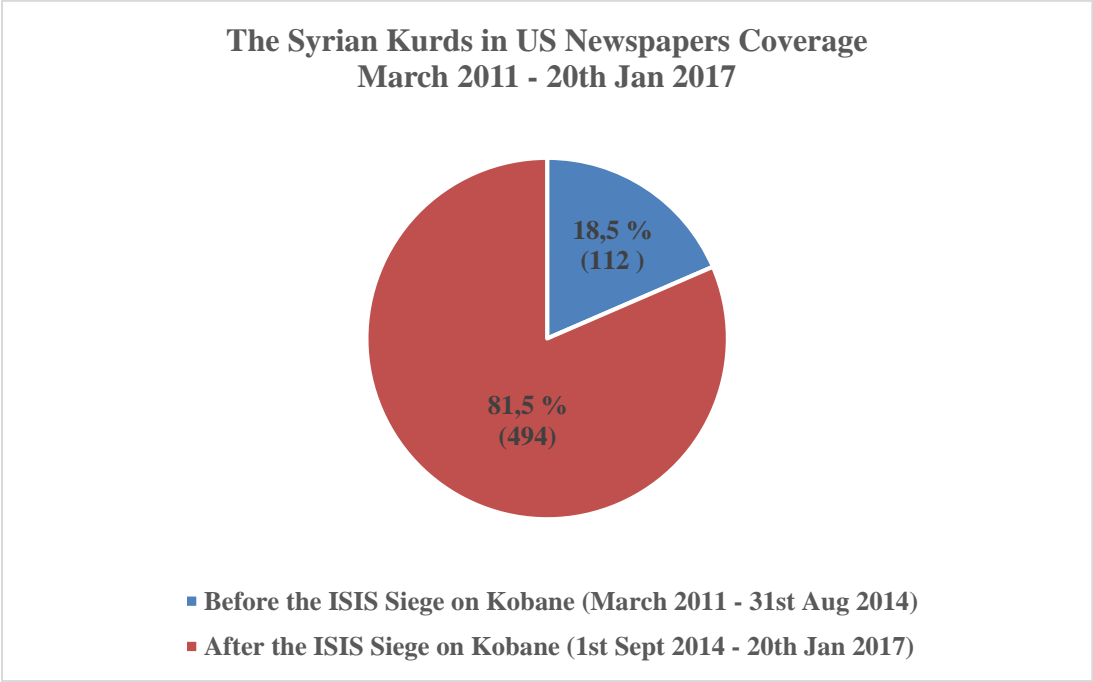
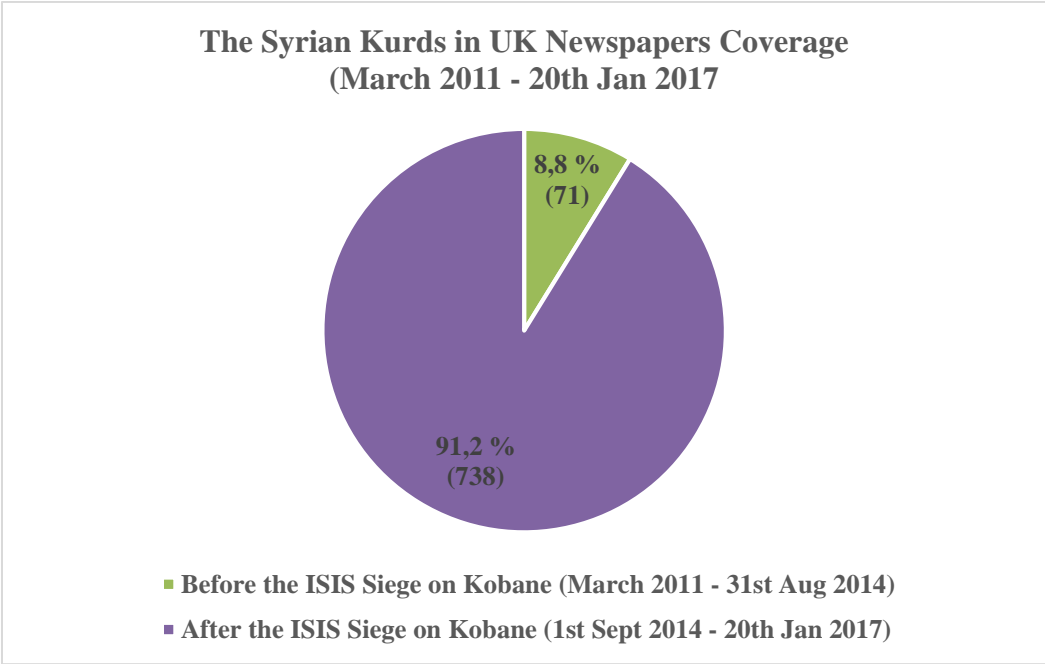


Chart 5.2 The Syrian Kurds in the Mainstream Newspapers of the UK³¹



Before the ISIS siege on Kobane (from March 2011 to 31 August 2014), 18.5 % of pieces (112 out of 606 news articles, opinion pieces, and editorials regarding the Syrian civil war, Syrian

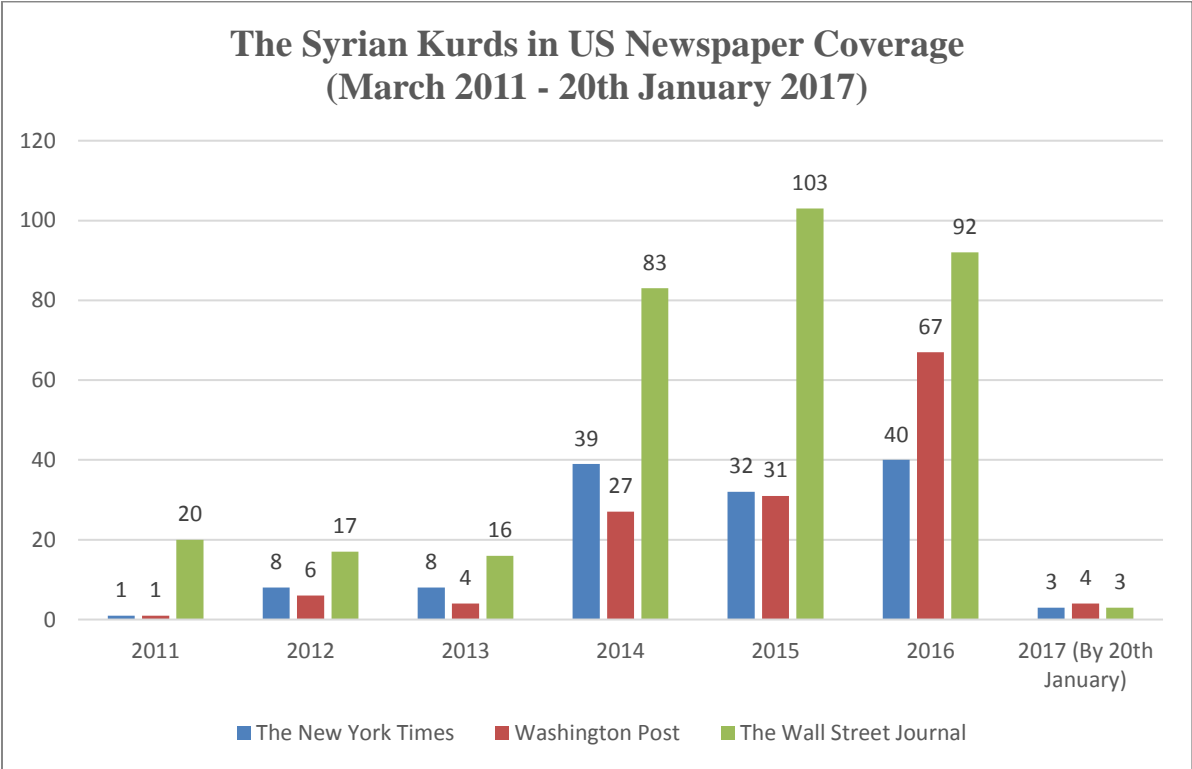
³⁰ The US newspapers refer to the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

³¹ The UK Newspapers refer to the *Independent*, the *Guardian*, *The Times/Sunday Times*, *The Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph*.

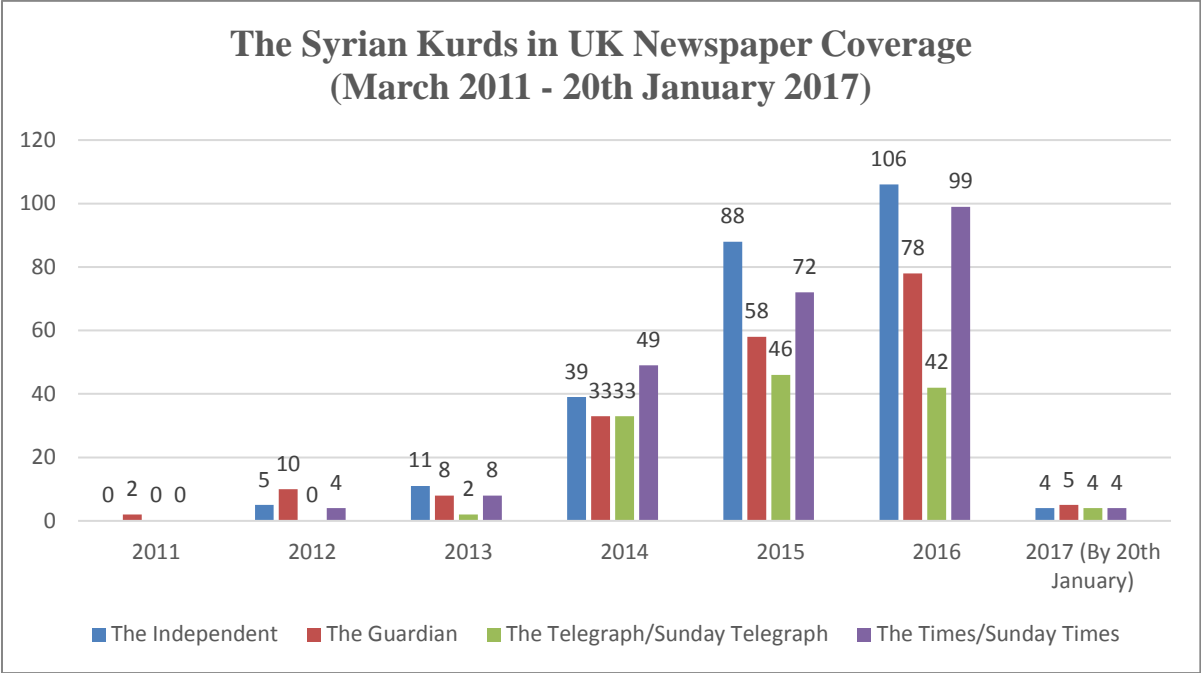
Kurds and Turkey) in the US newspapers, and 8.8 % of pieces (71 out of 809 news articles, opinion pieces, and editorials regarding the Syrian civil war, Syrian Kurds and Turkey) in the UK newspapers referred to the Syrian Kurds. Following the ISIS siege on Kobane, especially after the military alliance between the US-led global coalition and the YPG against ISIS (from 1st September to 20th January 2017), the coverage of the Syrian Kurds increased from 18.5 % to 81.5% in the US newspapers and from 8.8 % to 91.2 % in the UK newspapers.

The Graphs 5.1 and 5.2 below also show trends in the US/UK newspapers regarding the references to the Syrian Kurds, respectively. According to these trends, the mainstream newspapers in the US/UK began paying attention to the Syrian Kurds since the beginning of the ISIS siege on Kobane in September 2014, notably following the US search for a ground partner to fight ISIS in Syria.

Graph 5.1 The Syrian Kurds in US Newspaper Coverage

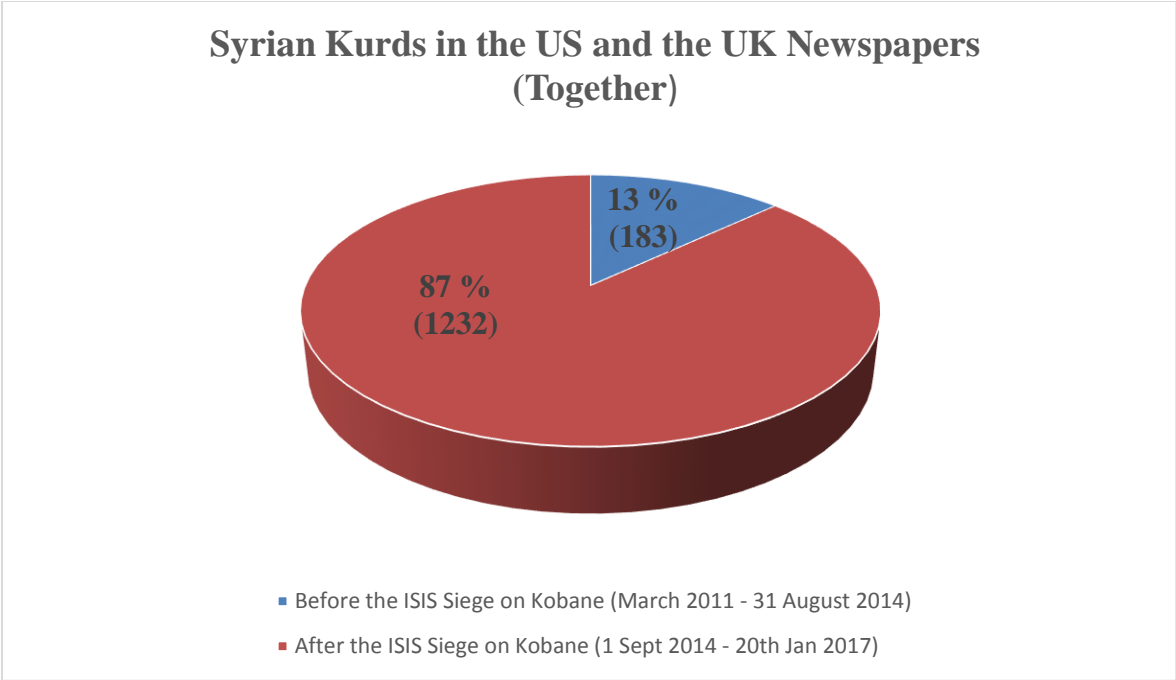


Graph 5.2 The Syrian Kurds in UK Newspaper Coverage



As seen below, in general, there were 1415 pieces (news articles, opinion pieces, and editorials) in the newspapers regarding the Syrian Kurds since the beginning of the 2011 civil war. 183 out of 1415 (13 %) followed developments regarding the Syrian Kurds before the ISIS siege on Kobane and the rest, 1232 out of 1415, (87 %) after it.

Chart 5.3 The Syrian Kurds in the US and the UK Newspapers



As will be addressed in the further section, only Owen Jones' (2015) piece in the *Guardian*, one out of 738 pieces (0.14 %) in the UK newspapers regarding the Syrian civil war and Kurds, emphasised that the socialist and anarchist model of the PYD could be an inspiration for people who "crave freedom" while discussing why the revolutionary Kurdish fight against ISIS deserves Western support. Likewise, only five out of 606 pieces regarding the Syrian civil war (0.85 %) in the US newspapers during the UN 2016 Geneva III peace negotiations suggested that the PYD's model of governance could be a model for Syria. However, the PYD was not invited to these negotiations. Although the policy objectives of the US/UK overlapped with the PYD in Syria after the rise of ISIS and these newspapers' coverage of the Syrian Kurds increased after the YPG's alliance with the global coalition since Kobane, there was not a noticeable increase in these countries' responsiveness towards the "regional role model" frame.

It seems that while creating and presenting the regional role model frame for lobbying, the PYD representatives considered the factors applicable to the targeted audiences. For instance, the "regional role model" frame was presented as a Western-style democracy and a model for the Middle East by accentuating its fundamental principles as components of this frame, grassroots-participation in the decision-making process, equality of men and women, peaceful coexistence with other minorities and linguistic rights for people. One could argue that these principles might be perceived as essential values or ideas (Benford and Snow, 2000) by the policymakers and the mainstream newspapers in the US/UK as Western countries, which, in general, defend similar values. This frame was primarily compatible with the democracy promotion policy of the US in the Middle East (Koinova, 2011; B1, 2018). This type of framing was not too abstract or distant from the targeted audiences' daily experiences since they were familiar with the presented values or ideas through this frame (Benford and Snow, 2000). It is possible to underline that this frame was also congruent with the political environment (Ibid) in the US/UK as representatives of liberal democracies. These countries have also been seeking for secular groups to work in Syria (Dalay, 2018)

Notably, the existing literature on ethnic lobbying in the US demonstrated that when ethnic lobbies advocated pluralism, democracy and human rights or, at least, utilised these values for lobbying; they managed to influence US policymakers (Herner-Kovacs, 2013; Shain, 1999; 1994) and the US public (Vanderbush, 2009). As Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) pointed out, these values can be accepted as internationally recognised Western values by others, which can

be used by ethnic lobbies to challenge the US with its own values and rhetoric. Especially, a conflict-generated Lebanese lobby indicated this point. The lobby adopted moderate claims to advocate the state sovereignty of Lebanon in the US (Koinova, 2011). It instrumentally utilised liberalism as a value accepted by the international community by linking it with the sovereignty of Lebanon. According to the lobbying elites, when Lebanon became a sovereign country, it would be a democracy, which was also compatible with the US policy of democracy promotion in the Middle East (Ibid). Lebanese lobby could not receive US support for its cause. However, strategic utilisation of liberalism by linking the policy objective of the lobby with the US one in the Middle East increased the responsiveness of US policymakers towards lobbying elites since a conflict-generated lobby performed a moderate action and perceived moderate. It appears that the PYD followed the same strategy for framing its model of governance in the US/UK. The existing literature on ethnic lobbying in the US indicated that the US administrations, government officials and policymakers could be highly responsive to ethnic lobbies if their policies were favourable to the US policy objectives (Vanderbush, 2009; Kirk, 2008; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007; Honey and Vanderbush, 1999; Garrett, 1978).

Additionally, it seems that the PYD appealed to correct audiences through its framing (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). The US/UK were leading countries during the UN Geneva peace negotiations. They followed the policy of the territorial integrity of Syria (B17, 2018) or a united Syria (B1, 2018), and argued that Syrians would decide the political future of their country (A4, 2017; A6, 2017). It appears that US officials avoided direct meetings with the PYD representatives and preferred backchannel meetings in the European countries until the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane (Allsopp and Wilgenburg, 2019; B1, 2018). However, following the military interaction between the YPG and US Special Forces during the ISIS siege on Kobane, the military bureaucracy of the US became the primary target of the PYD frames and for their transmission (B1, 2018; B6; 2018). UK officials also had occasional contacts with the PYD representatives either in the European capitals or in the capitals of the countries within the Middle East (A6, 2017). Additionally, the PYD representatives visited the UK think-tanks such as Chatham House (Muslim quoted in Chatham House, 2014) or the UK universities (A10, 2018) and developed networking with some Lords and MPs through the foreign affairs committee member of the PYD and its London Representative, Alan Semo (A10, 2018). These Lords and MPs hosted and legitimised the debates in the UK parliament since 2013 by inviting the PYD representatives to explain the happenings in Syria from the Kurdish perspective. In

this way, the PYD managed to transmit its frames to the UK policymakers and its policymaking community (A10, 2018).

Although the PYD managed to address correct audiences and follow correct strategies, there were some reasons for these countries' lack of responsiveness towards the "regional role model frame". First, there was a credibility issue of the PYD framing due to the appearance-based and perception-based inconsistencies, and the perceived credibility of the PYD representatives. The appearance-based inconsistency occurred because of the contradiction between the political ideology of the PYD and values that the "regional role model" frame included (Benford and Snow, 2000). The PYD advocated the PKK leader Ocalan's ideology and its model of governance in Syria (Muslim quoted in KurdWatch, 2011). The PKK used to defend Leninist-Stalinist, state-centred socialist and anarchist far-left ideology (Ocalan, 2011b; Gunter, 2014). Ocalan replaced this ideology with a radical democracy (Yarkin, 2015) or democracy without state (Ocalan, 2011a). Although the PYD called this model as a social democracy (PYD's Party Program, 2013), it presented this model of governance as a "Western-style democracy" by emphasising the PYD's ideological principles. These were opposite ideologies to the Western countries during the Cold War (Charountaki, 2011). This ideological inconsistency adversely affected the credibility of the PYD framing as generally underlined by the US/UK participants:

"There is no such thing as democratic autonomy in Kurdish ruled areas of Syria. The PYD is a Leninist, authoritarian party that governs very heavy-handed top-down fashion and it does not tolerate political pluralism. There is an active effort to sell this idea in the US what they know will appeal to the American officials." (B6, 2018)

"I think this is very optimistic and hard to implement. It is certainly not what has happened in Iraqi Kurdistan. They [the Syrian Kurds/PYD] are idealistic, left-wing socialists, who would like to have their local government." (A4, 2017)

The perception-based inconsistency happened due to the contradiction between the PYD framing and its actions (Benford and Snow, 2000). In other words, the PYD argued a democracy, but it had controversial actions against democracy. Therefore, the US/UK participants underlined that the PYD was not a democratic organisation due to its actions against people:

"That makes absolutely no sense. First, there is no democracy and autonomy. The PYD discusses a lot of things, which do not make any sense. There is not a democracy. There is an authoritarian

group. People do not understand it. Talk to Syrians. They will tell you what the PYD is.” (B5, 2018)

“The PYD is nowhere as democratic and wonderful as it claims to be as many people who support them claim that the PYD is. The PYD has assassinated the Kurdish opponents in Rojava. They deny it. But they have been doing that for years. So, it is an encouraging claim. It is a beautiful democracy, and everybody has equal rights. It is not just true.” (B3, 2018)

“I do not think that they practise what they preached. We all believe that there is a gap between what they [PYD] say and what they [PYD] do.” (A11, 2018)

The credibility of the PYD framing also affected its representatives’ credibility, even after the YPG’s military alliance with the global coalition against ISIS. As will be discussed in the “defence of human values against ISIS” section, it seems that the PYD representatives presented themselves as freedom fighters and defenders of internationally recognised values against ISIS terrorism as secular group to deal with such a credibility issue (Dalay, 2018). These attempts, to some extent, increased the responsiveness of the US/UK towards this PYD frame. However, this strategy did not solve the issue of PYD representatives’ perceived credibility due to the PYD’s ideological links to the PKK and their actions in practice (A11, 2018; A7, 2017; B7, 2018).

The PYD also made some changes in the scope of this frame, which were based on the perceived political opportunities and changing political environment in Syria by considering the potential expectations of the US/UK from the civil war (Desrosiers, 2012; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). Initially, the PYD’s model of governance was framed as a solution to the Kurdish question in northern Syria (Muslim quoted in KurdWatch, 2011). Since the fall of 2012, the PYD presented this model as a solution to Syria (Abdullah, 2012; Muslim, 2013c; Ehmed, 2013a), and then, to the Middle East (Muslim, 2013g; 2013i) by extending its geographical scope and preparing for the UN Geneva II and III peace negotiations regarding the political future of Syria. These changes seem to have adversely affected the responsiveness of the US/UK towards this frame. The frame became a broader one, which argued that it would be a model for the entire Middle East. In general, this extended frame was not found realistic by the US/UK participants (A3, 2017; A4, 2017; A11, 2018; B7, 2018; B8, 2018).

The responsiveness of the US/UK towards the “regional role model” frame was relatively low. As addressed above, the PYD administration began grabbing the attention since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane. Then, since the liberation of Kobane from ISIS journalists, as well as policymakers from the US (B1, 2018) and the UK (A2, 2017) visited the PYD-controlled region to see how the PYD’s model of governance functions and discuss strategies to fight ISIS. The PYD used this opportunity to disseminate its frames (B1, 2018). The PYD representatives also managed to access the policymaking community of the US by using the YPG’s fight against ISIS, which possibly increased the transmission of their frames. The PYD’s attempts to lobby and create networking in the UK seemed to have provided some results after the liberation of Kobane. For instance, Lord Hylton was the first person, who visited the PYD-controlled region in Syria; and then, lobbied for the PYD’s model of governance in the UK parliament. He referred to the component themes of this governance (key principles) (Kornprobst, 2019), the equality of men and women, peaceful coexistence with other minorities as “common citizenship with Assyrians, Arabs and other small minorities” (Hansard HL Deb., 28 May 2015). Lord Hylton’s lobbying efforts were supported by other people such as Lord Alton of Liverpool (Hansard HL Deb., 24 June 2015) and former SNP MP Natalie McGarry (Hansard HC Deb., 13 July 2016; Hansard HC Deb., 2 December 2015). Natalie McGarry also visited the PYD-controlled region and hosted some events in the UK parliament by inviting the PYD co-chair Salih Muslim. These people repeated the PYD argument that its model of governance should be seen as a role model for Syria and the entire region by referring to peaceful coexistence as “equal citizenship” amongst other groups and “women’s role in the society”. In so doing, first, they underlined the YPG’s achievements against ISIS, then, asked for the recognition of this model of governance by the UK government either as a solution to Syria or the Middle East. Natalie McGarry also demanded the PYD’s invitation to the UN Geneva III peace negotiations from the UK government (Hansard HC Deb., 13 July 2016).

However, there was a consensus in the UK parliament regarding the political future of Syria. Reactions of other policymakers such as The Earl of Courtown was that the Syrian Kurds should be part of the official Syrian opposition to discuss a broader solution for the future of Syria instead of following different paths (Hansard HL Deb., 9 February 2016). Although these people appreciated the YPG’s fight against ISIS (Ibid), their approach was parallel to the official policy stance of the UK in Syria, the territorial integrity of the country. It seems that the policy stances of these countries regarding the territorial integrity of Syria affected their

responsiveness towards the “regional role model” frame. These countries also considered the relationship with their NATO ally, Turkey, while assessing this PYD frame and the Turkish government counter-frames against this frame. It is also essential to explain what extent the Turkish government counter-frames’ interaction with the “regional role model frame” managed to challenge the US/UK’s responsiveness towards this frame in the concentrated period.

5.3 The Turkish Government Counter-frames vs “Regional Role Model” Frame

Since July 2012, the Turkish government countered the “regional role model” frame by targeting the legitimacy of the PYD and its model of governance. In so doing, Turkish government officials created and presented the “PYD is a terrorist organisation” and the “PYD’s alleged cooperation with the Assad regime” counter-frames. The “PYD is a terrorist organisation” frame tried to address why the US/UK should regard the PYD-YPG as terrorist organisations like the PKK. It underlined the organic links between them and emphasised the detrimental results of the PKK-influenced and the PYD-controlled region in Syria in terms of the territorial integrity of the country and Turkish national security. The “PYD’s alleged cooperation with the Assad regime” blamed the PYD, as a reputed terrorist organisation, for working with the internationally delegitimised Assad regime (B14, 2018). These counter-frames’ potential challenges to the US/UK’s responsiveness towards the “regional role model” frame could be explained through these countries’ policy stances and objectives in Syria. In other words, when policy objectives of the Turkish government overlapped with the goals of the US/UK governments in Syria, these counter-frames, to a certain extent, managed to challenge the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD frame.

The Turkish government described the Assad regime as a main responsible agent for the problems in Syria since November 2011 (Philips, 2018). Therefore, Turkish government officials developed close relationship with the Syrian opposition and argued that President Assad should step aside (Davutoglu, 2013a, 2012; Erdogan, 2012a). Accordingly, the Turkish government contributed the attempts to form a united opposition through the bodies, SNC, SOC and FSA (Philips, 2018; Demirtas, 2013) by hosting their meetings in the country (Gunter, 2015). This policy objective of the Turkish government was compatible with those of the US/UK until the rise of ISIS in 2014. According to the US/UK and the Turkish governments, President Assad should be overthrown. For this purpose, a united and inclusive Syrian

opposition, which would be including the Syrian Kurds, should be formed (Muslim quoted in Al-Monitor, 2018). Accordingly, in the early stages of the civil war, from March 2011 to the end of 2012, 19 out of 83 (23 %) parliamentary transcripts in the US/UK referred to Turkey's leading role in Syria. The policymakers appreciated Turkey's attempts to form a united opposition against the Assad regime in their debates.

It was also similar in the mainstream newspapers of these countries. Before the ISIS siege on Kobane (from March 2011 to 31 August 2014), 14 % of pieces (25 out of 183 news articles, opinion pieces, and editorials regarding the Syrian civil war, the Syrian Kurds and Turkey) in the US/UK newspapers approached the PYD through Turkey's Kurdish concerns. These pieces emphasised the PYD's links with the PKK. They referred to the PYD-YPG as "*PKK's Syrian affiliates*", "*PKK's Syrian cousins*", "*PKK's close ally*", "*a sister group of the PKK*" and "*a paramilitary affiliate of the PKK*". The newspapers also underscored the PKK's long-term conflict with the Turkish state and the US and the European countries' designation of the PKK as a terrorist organisation while discussing the PYD-YPG. Additionally, they provided quotes of Turkish government officials, who had called the PYD as a "terrorist" organisation.

Similarly, 20 % of pieces (35 out of 183 news articles, opinion pieces, and editorials) in the US/UK newspapers underlined the PYD's close relations or cooperation with the Assad regime in this period. In so doing, pieces discussed the PYD's pragmatic relationship with the Assad regime by emphasising the Hafez Assad regime's historical relations and support to the PKK. They also underscored the PYD dominance and the establishment of its model of governance in northern Syria because of the Syrian government forces' withdrawal. The consensus in these pieces was that the Assad regime left the control to the PYD in the region, which could imply a tacit agreement between them. According to these pieces, the Assad regime wanted to control the Kurdish areas, keep the Syrian Kurds out of protests, focus on central Syria due to the start of Aleppo battle in July 2012 and use the PKK against the Turkish government since it backed the Syrian opposition. The newspapers also applied opinions of Kurdish experts such as Jordi Tejel, the EU diplomats to strengthen their position regarding the PYD's alleged cooperation with the Assad regime. These pieces included the quotes/explanation of Turkish government officials, members of the official Syrian opposition and opponents of the PYD. As discussed in the previous section, the only opinion piece of Michael Rubin in the Wall Street Journal, which assessed the possibility of the PYD's model of governance as an alternative "federal model",

also underlined the PYD's links to the PKK and Turkey's concerns regarding the PYD due to the PKK. According to Rubin (2014), the PYD's close relations and cooperation with the Assad regime prevented the US State Department officials from inviting the PYD to the 2014 UN Geneva II peace negotiations in addition to the opposition of the Turkish government.

It appears that until the ISIS siege on Kobane in September 2014, the Turkish government counter-frames, to a certain extent, challenged the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD and its "regional role model" frame. However, changing policy objectives in Syria from Assad first to ISIS first adversely affected the Turkish government counter-frames' challenge against the PYD frames in general. The military interaction between the YPG and the US during the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane (B1, 2018), then, the YPG's military alliance with the US-led global coalition to fight ISIS, the Turkish government's priority, the Assad regime first (Federici, 2015; Gunter, 2015) and the 2015 Russian intervention in Syria (B6, 2018) were main factors decreasing the Turkish counter-frames' impact on the US/UK's responsiveness towards the PYD-YPG and the "regional role model frame. Almost all the US/UK participants did not approve the Turkish government's argument that the PYD-YPG and the PKK were identical. Although they took the Turkish government's position against the PYD seriously and emphasised the PYD's ideological links to the PKK and Turkish concerns, they separated the PYD from the PKK. It seems that the YPG's alliance with the US-led global coalition to fight ISIS in Syria affected their viewpoints (B10, 2018; B11, 2018). It might be because of the timing of interviews since they were conducted between 2017 and 2018 after the YPG's military alliance with the global coalition already took place. As underlined by some participants, the US/UK governments' relations with Turkey as a NATO ally and Turkey's strategic importance and its role in the migration crisis³² affected these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD demands, even after the military alliance between the YPG and the global coalition against ISIS. It appears that when it comes to the PYD's political goals in Syria and its political demands, the US/UK always considered Turkey and its arguments against the PYD:

³² Migration crisis refers to Turkey position towards the Syrian refugees. Turkey hosts many Syrians since the beginning of civil war, and it had a deal with the EU to obtain funding for taking care of the Syrian refugees. According to the UN Refugee Agency, there were 3.6 million Syrian refugees in Turkey and \$ 436.1 million required for them until 31st December 2018 (This was date which was the end of collecting interview data for this research). For more details: United Nations Refugee Agency: Operational Update 2018 Highlights: Turkey. [Online]. [Accessed: 8 March 2019] Available from: <https://www.unhcr.org/tr/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2019/02/UNHCR-Turkey-Operational-Highlights-2018-Final.pdf>

“There were really deep concerns, particularly at the State Department, about Turkey’s attitude if you build a relationship with the PYD/YPG. Turkey was negotiating with the PYD at this time when their relationship takes shape. But the US knows that there are deep Turkish concerns. Turkey regards them as having intimate ties with the PKK. So, the State Department was very concerned about that. There was that level of concern, which led them not want to make any guarantees and not to build any big relations or, a political relationship with these Kurdish organisations – primarily the PYD, but eventually the YPG.” (B1, 2018)

“I think Turkey’s position is different with the UK. The UK and EU view the PKK as a terrorist organisation, as does the US Congress. The UK is more cautious than the US in backing the PYD because of the PKK factor. If the UK or France individually, not as part of the EU policy, actively sponsor the PYD, Turkey would feel more comfortable in causing a serious rupture with the UK relationship over that. I think this might deter the UK from actively sponsoring the PYD. The UK might be more worried about the consequence of the relationship, especially given Turkey’s vital position concerning the migrant crisis.” (A9, 2017)

Some US participants emphasised that “PYD’s alleged cooperation with the Assad regime counter-frame was outdated (B7, 2018). The US/UK participants also underlined that their governments had stopped advocating the policy of “Assad must go” (B14, 2018; B7, 2018; B6, 2018; A4, 2017; A3, 2017; A2, 2017) and focused on degrading and defeating ISIS (B1, 2018; A11, 2018, A9, 2017; A8, 2017). These explanations indicated that the Turkish government policy objectives conflicted with the goals of the US/UK governments in Syria since the rise of ISIS. The YPG’s alliance with the US against ISIS in Syria since the ISIS siege on Kobane and the 2015 Russian intervention in Syria decreased the influence of “PYD’s alleged cooperation with the Assad regime” counter-frame on the responsive of the US/UK towards the PYD and its “regional role model” frame:

“I think that this claim was only credible, or it had some meaning in 2014 when the US was committed to a post-Assad or a Syria without Assad. Militarily, now, it makes no sense since Assad has essentially won. There is no way he is leaving power through force. So, the idea is that the Kurds have been bad as they are not sufficiently against Assad. It has no resonance anymore sadly.” (B14, 2018)

“This was a more effective claim before September 2015 when the possibility of imagining a political projector for Syria without Assad was open. After 2015, as the Russian intervention began to be felt, I think this claim carried less and less weight.” (B6, 2018)

As will be addressed in the success of strategic frames chapter, chapter 6, following these policy changes and the military alliance between the YPG and the US-led global coalition, mainstream newspapers in the US/UK began calling the YPG as the “most effective force and reliable partner” to the US in the fight against ISIS in Syria. They also paid more attention to the PYD’s model of governance, even if they had not perceived it as a model for Syria or the Middle East. These points indicated that the changing policy priorities of these countries were the essential factors (Koinova, 2011; Haney and Vanderbush, 1999; Garrett, 1978) for their responsiveness towards the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames’ influence on their responsiveness towards the PYD frames. In accordance with these countries’ changing policy objectives in Syria following the rise of ISIS in 2014, especially since the beginning of the ISIS siege on Kobane, the PYD created and presented the “defence of human values against ISIS” normative frame to receive military support for the YPG as well as political support for its model of governance. The next section will discuss the responsiveness of the US/UK towards this frame.

5.4 “Defence of Human Values against ISIS” Frame

The responsiveness of the US/UK towards the “defence of human values against ISIS” frame was relatively higher than their responsiveness towards the “regional role model frame”. It can be explained through the overlapping policy objectives of the US/UK governments and the PYD against ISIS in Syria, and the YPG’s military alliance with the US-led global coalition since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane. Accordingly, the overlapping policy objectives between the PYD and the US/UK governments seemed to have made the PYD’s framing efforts and strategies effective. The PYD created the “defence of human values against ISIS” frame during the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, then used it for lobbying to demonstrate why the US/UK should support its model of governance and the YPG’s fight against ISIS in Syria.

While presenting this frame, the PYD representatives utilised four methods. First, they linked the YPG’s fight against ISIS³³ with the defence of human values. Second, they argued that the PYD’s model of governance had represented the Western values through its component themes (principles); grassroots participation, equality of men and women (gender equality), peaceful coexistence with other minorities and linguistics rights for people, which are more secular ones

³³ As discussed in the chapter 3 on the normative framing process of the PYD, its fight against ISIS is mainly based on the Ocalanist self-defence mechanism against the perceived enemies of the Kurds.

(Dalay, 2018). Therefore, ISIS targeted the Kurds. According to the PYD, especially the gender equality in the Kurdish society irritated ISIS (Muslim quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2016; 2015; Abdullah quoted in ANF, 2014e). Third, the PYD added key themes to the “defence of human values against ISIS” frame. Its representatives emphasised the atrocities of ISIS against humanity, especially against the ethnic/religious minorities in the Middle East such as Yazidis. They also described the destruction of churches and historical, cultural and religious heritage of Christianity in the Middle East by ISIS as attacks against the Western civilisation. Then, the YPG militias were conceptualised as freedom fighters against ISIS, who had been fighting to protect such values (Muslim quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2015; quoted in Al-Monitor, 2014). Finally, they argued that the foreign or Western participants in the YPG, who travelled to fight ISIS alongside Kurds, had been an indication for the defence of human values (Muslim quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2015; in ANF, 2014b).

Characteristically, this type of framing was not abstract or too distant from the daily experiences of the US/UK policymakers as they were familiar with the ISIS issue (Ketelaars, 2016). Since June 2014, ISIS became one of the central security threats across the world and the main priority for the US/UK governments in Syria (B1, 2018; A11, 2018, A9, 2017; A8, 2017). This frame was also compatible with the political environment of the US/UK (Benford and Snow, 2000). The PYD argued the representation of the Western values through the principles of its model of governance, grassroots participation, equality of men and women, peaceful coexistence with other minorities and linguistic rights for people. On the other hand, ISIS had been destroying the Western or Christian historical, cultural and religious heritages in the Middle East and had been disrespecting the ethnic/religious minorities such as Yazidis. Therefore, defending these values against ISIS could be perceived as a correct stance by the targeted audiences (Benford and Snow, 2000) since some of those values were central ones in their countries (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). Additionally, it was the right frame at the right time, which addressed the correct audiences with a proper strategy by emphasising the fight against ISIS terrorism (Corrigall-Brown, 2005).

The PYD’s overlapping policy objectives with those of the US/UK governments against ISIS in Syria and the aforementioned framing strategies seemed to have increased these countries’ responsiveness towards the “defence of human values against ISIS” frame. It can be seen through the coverage of the parliamentary transcripts, mainstream newspapers and the

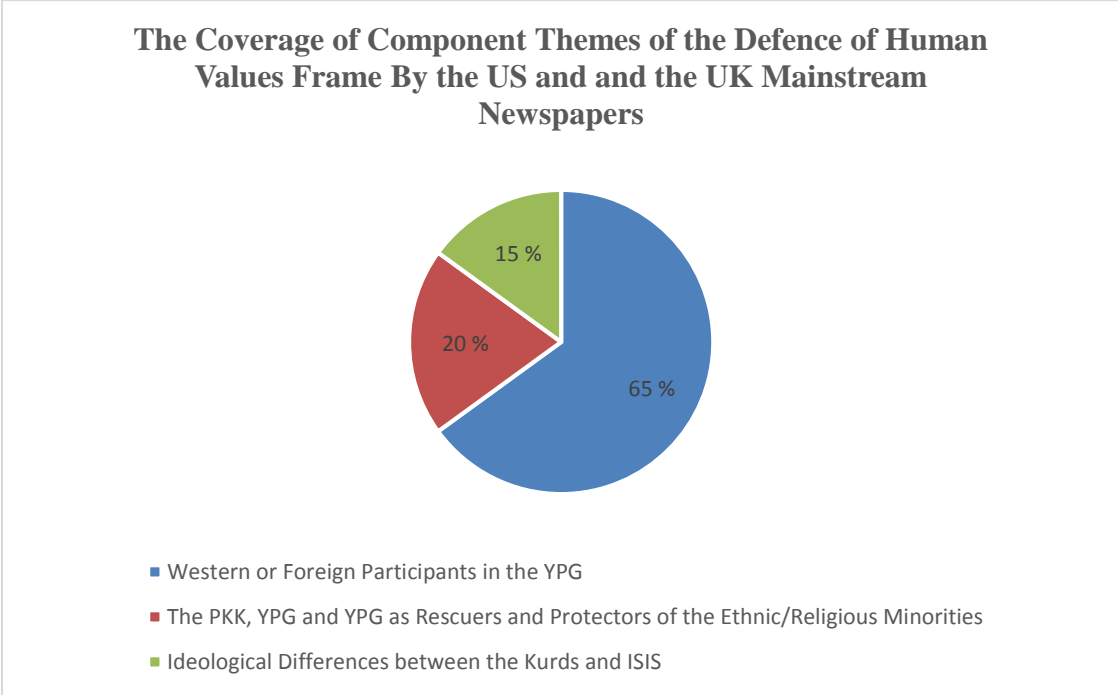
responsiveness of the US/UK participants compared to the “regional role model” frame. For instance, the two-components of this frame were the atrocities of ISIS against humanity, especially against ethnic/religious minorities such as Yazidis and the destruction of the Western or the Christian heritages in the Middle East. This frame also presented the YPG-YPJ militias as protectors of ethnic/religious minorities and Western values by fighting ISIS. Accordingly, from June 2014³⁴ to 20th January 2017, 489 references out of 1263 (38.75 %) in the parliamentary transcripts of the US/UK focused on the atrocities of ISIS. Policymakers in US Congress discussed these atrocities and addressed them as the persecution of ethnic/religious minorities, executions, beheadings, crucifixions, kidnapping women and girls, especially the Yazidis women as sex slaves, extreme violence, slaughter, intimidation, abduction of the foreign journalists and aid workers, burying women and children alive, attacking schools and hospitals. The policymakers also called the atrocities of ISIS against the Yazidis as “genocide of religious minorities”, “crimes against Christians and other minorities”.

Additionally, burning and bombing the churches, monasteries and religious sites/areas including Jonah’s tomb, looting the homes and properties of the Christians, destroying the Western and Christian heritage such as the antique city of Palmyra in Syria were other discussion topics. The policymakers described ISIS terror attacks in France and Belgium as attacks against the Western civilisation or values such as “free speech”, “free expression”, “religious freedom”, “democracy”, “freedom” and “liberty”. They discussed solutions to prevent the destruction of the Western and Christian heritage by ISIS or their utilisation as an income for ISIS. These were congruent themes with the component themes of the “defence of human values against ISIS” frame (Kornprobst, 2019). As underlined by A10 (2018), the PYD was a very-organised party compared to its opponents in Syria and had skilful people who could speak English fluently due to its links with the PKK. These people could lobby for the PYD, and they could easily follow the debates in US Congress and the UK parliament regarding ISIS and Kurds. In this way, the PYD could be conscious of themes in these debates and could update its frames and framing strategies by considering what type of frames could work in these countries (Desrosiers, 2012).

³⁴ The period when ISIS captured Mosul in northern Iraq from the Kurdish KRG administration.

The responsiveness of mainstream newspapers in the US/UK towards the “defence of human values against ISIS” frame was relatively higher than their responsiveness towards the “regional role model” frame. From 1st August 2014 to 20th January 2017, 98 out of 1415 pieces (approximately 7 %) such as news articles, opinion pieces and editorials in the newspapers regarding the Syrian civil war and Kurds referred to the component themes of this normative frame. The pie chart 5.4 below indicates the coverage of each component themes of this frame by the US/UK newspapers.

Chart 5.4 Themes of the "Defence of Human Values against ISIS" Frame in the Newspapers



14 out of 98 pieces (approximately 15 %) regarding the Syrian civil war and the Syrian Kurds referred to the ideological differences between the Kurds and ISIS by underscoring the Kurds as secular people having more like a Western lifestyle. 20 out of 98 pieces (approximately 20 %) presented the PKK and the YPG-YPJ militias as rescuers and protectors of the Christian minorities in Iraq and Syria against ISIS. 64 out of 98 pieces (approximately 65 %) drew attention to the Western or foreign participants in the YPG, including a famous Hollywood star, Michael Enright. These pieces discussed the potential ramification against these participants when they returned to their countries by differing from the PYD’s framing strategy. Additionally, British TV Channel, the Channel 4, broadcasted a documentary called “Frontline Fighting: The Brits Battling Isis”, in September 2015. The UK newspapers announced the

showing time in advance³⁵. The documentary presented the YPG's fight against ISIS and investigated the reasons for the British participants in the YPG. The British participants argued that they mainly wished to stand against the ISIS threat in solidarity with the Kurds by describing ISIS as an international threat (Raeside, 2015). This type of solidarity also underlined by almost all the US/UK participants, who disagreed with the PYD and its ideology. Some argued that standing against everything, which ISIS defends, could be called as the defence of human values:

“ISIS is a brutal organisation. It has committed horrendous human rights violations. So, fighting against ISIS automatically entails fighting for some human values.” (B7, 2018)

“Anything ISIS stands on in anti-thesis to the human values, human rights and freedom of religion. I do not know what motives the Kurds. But the result of their fight is worth-considering.” (A12, 2018)

There was also a noticeable increase in the responsiveness of mainstream newspapers in the US/UK towards the component theme of the “regional role model” frame, the equality of men and women (gender equality). Particularly, the newspapers were more interested in the role of women in the Kurdish society and military units when this theme was presented in the context of the “defence of human values against ISIS” (Kornprobst, 2019). For instance, 27 out of 1232 (2.2 % of pieces) news articles, opinion pieces and editorials from September 2014 to 20th January 2017 focused on the role of Kurdish women in the PYD's model of governance, especially their role in the fight against ISIS through the YPJ militias. These pieces emphasised their help to rescue and protect Yazidis/other Christian minorities from ISIS in northern Iraq and Syria. Notably, Owen Jones' (2015) piece in the Guardian in March 2015³⁶, discussed why the West should support the revolutionary Kurdish fight against ISIS. He emphasised the role of women in the Kurdish society of northern Syria and the fight against ISIS as characteristics of leftist, socialist and anarchist ideology. This was a significant increase in the coverage of this theme by newspapers since they did not refer to this theme when it was presented in the context of the “regional role model” frame before the rise of ISIS.

³⁵ The TV section of the following newspapers announced the broadcasting time in advance: The Independent, 12 September 2015, The Britons who fight alongside the Kurds against 'evil' Isis; The Sunday Telegraph, 13 September 2015, TV choice; Television Wednesday 16 September; The Daily Telegraph, 16 September 2015, What to watch.

³⁶ This was the piece published on 10th March 2015, after the end of ISIS siege on Kobane and the liberation of Kobane from ISIS.

The US/UK participants also underlined themes such as, secularism, pluralism, common citizenship, representative/inclusive governance, freedom of religion and respect for the minorities (peaceful coexistence with other minorities) and gender equality in the Kurdish society due to the role of Kurdish women as the human values argued by the PYD representatives (Kornprobst, 2019). These themes were not referred to when the participants' opinions regarding the "regional role model frame" had been asked. A US participant also shared his observations regarding the role of women under the PYD's model of governance and how he was impressed:

"It was also interesting how much power women had. I thought that this was an extremely forward-thinking way of doing things. Of course, under ISIS, women had no power and no saying. [...] You had these women in powerful positions within the civilian councils. They knew what they were doing and how to stature the men listen to them. I think that was one of the greatest accomplishments. You have these women that were respected. They have a voice and are running things. It is hard to see that elsewhere. So, it was eye-opening." (B12, 2018)

It appears that the overlapping policy objectives between the US/UK governments and the PYD against ISIS in Syria increased these countries' responsiveness towards the "defence of human values against ISIS" frame and made the PYD's framing strategies more effective compared to the "regional role model" frame. The parliamentary transcripts, newspapers and participants in these countries, then began referring to the components of the regional role model frame such as the coexistence with other minorities, and mainly to the equality of men and women (gender equality), who did not refer to it before the rise of ISIS. As Snow and Corrigan-Brown (2005) underlined, terrorism is a central issue in the US due to the 9/11 terror attack. Accordingly, frame producers, who consider this concern in their framing for the US audiences, they are more likely to increase the responsiveness of the policymakers or public towards their frames and they could reach out more people. Therefore, by using the ISIS threat and the YPG's military alliance with the US-led global coalition, the PYD representatives managed to access the policymaking community of the US since the end of Kobane siege in 2015. It is also essential to assess the potential challenge of the Turkish government's counter-framing against this relatively successful frame.

5.5 The Turkish Government Counter-frame vs “Defence of Human Values against ISIS” Frame

Turkish government officials created “the PYD’s alleged ethnic cleansing” counter-frame to delegitimise the PYD’s “defence of human values against ISIS” and “regional role model” frames. The “regional role model” and “defence of human values” frames argued that the PYD’s model of governance had represented the Western values and had defended these values against ISIS terrorism. Especially, the PYD used the peaceful coexistence with other minorities as a central theme of its normative framing. In the summer of 2015, the YPG conducted ground operations against ISIS with the air support of the global coalition in the cities of northern Syria. During these operations, people, especially from Tal Abyad fled as refugees to Turkey (Kanat and Ustun, 2015) by arguing that the PYD had displaced them forcefully through the YPG. Then, Turkish government framed these happenings as “ethnic cleansing” by referring to “war crimes” and “crimes against humanity” (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016d; 2016f; Tuna quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2015c). They presented the YPG’s actions as a preparation for a state-like entity through the explanations of some Turkish experts, the Syrian opposition officials and local administrators of northern Syria. They also used the reports of human right organisations such as Amnesty International and the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) to strengthen this counter-frame. These reports argued that the YPG had committed human rights abuses in northern Syria. The Turkish government also demanded a UN investigation for these abuses (Carikci quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016v). It seems that this Turkish counter-frame was used to delegitimise the PYD-YPG by trying to refute the peaceful coexistence with other minorities component of the “defence of human values against ISIS” and the “regional role model” frames. According to Turkish government officials, the PYD had not respected minorities. Instead, it had forcefully displaced people, who disagreed with the PYD (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016m; 2016w; Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016u). It appears that the Turkish government urged the US to take a moral stance against the YPG, a reputed terrorist organisation, and to challenge the US due to its support to the YPG in the fight against ISIS by using its rhetoric, the advocacy of human rights and the war on terror.

Genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity are serious matters, which could mobilise people or countries at the international plethora (Bellamy and Dunne, 2016). However, the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the “PYD’s alleged ethnic cleansing”

counter-frame was relatively lower than their responsiveness towards the “PYD is a terrorist organisation” and the “PYD’s alleged cooperation with the Assad regime” counter-frames. It could be explained through the Turkish government’s conflicting policy objectives with the US/UK governments following the rise of ISIS in 2014. While the US/UK governments prioritised ISIS as the main threat in Syria (B1, 2018; A11, 2018, A9, 2017; A8, 2017) in the early stage of its rise, the Turkish government kept prioritising the Assad regime as the main problem and perceived the PYD-YPG more existential threat than ISIS in Syria (Philips, 2018; B14, 2018). Accordingly, there was an understanding amongst the participants, especially amongst the US ones³⁷, that Turkey did not take adequate responsibility in fighting ISIS in Syria by prioritising the PYD-YPG since the ISIS siege on Kobane (B3, 2018; B9, 2018; B10, 2018; B11, 2018; B17, 2018, A11 2018). This understanding adversely affected the credibility of Turkish government officials (B6, 2018; B17, 2018), which brings the concept of the perceived credibility of frame producers. Participants seemed to have considered the “PYD’s alleged ethnic cleansing” counter-frame as a result of the stereotype of the Turkish government against the PYD-YPG due to the PKK. It seems that while assessing the Turkish government’s counter-frame against the PYD, they considered the essential role of the YPG for the US and the global coalition in the fight against ISIS. One also underlined the possibility of incidents while fighting against such brutalism with an emphasis on reading the reports of human rights organisations:

“I looked at those reports of the time. I did not believe that. It is in the middle of the war. ISIS is incredibly brutal. If you are lack of soldiers without the tanks, airpower and everything else that like regular armies and you think that somebody in the village might be ISIS, you probably going to kick them out as you do not have other options for protecting yourself. I am sure there were some incidents. But I never saw or heard a credible report of the policy of ethnic cleansing at all. It does not make sense to me.” (B10, 2018)

Ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity arguments of the Turkish government and the reports of human rights organisations regarding the alleged human rights abuses of the PYD were serious accusations. However, the parliamentary transcripts and mainstream newspapers in the US/UK were not responsive towards the “PYD’s alleged ethnic cleansing” counter-frame. There was a limited amount of references to this theme in the newspapers. For example, from June 2015³⁸ to 20th January 2017, there were 1367 pieces in

³⁷ There was also similar understanding in the pieces of the US/UK newspapers including the news articles, opinion pieces and editorials.

³⁸ It was the period when the PYD conducted operations against ISIS in northern Syria.

these newspapers regarding the Syrian civil war, the Syrian Kurds and Turkey. Only 30 news articles out of 1367 (2.5 %) pieces referred to the Turkish government's allegations of "ethnic cleansing" regarding the PYD-YPG. Only a few pieces in the UK newspapers referred to the accusations of Amnesty International against the YPG while addressing the British, American, Canadian or Australian participants in the YPG as an issue to be dealt with but not as an argument of the Turkish government. Likewise, there were 861 pieces in the parliamentary transcripts of the US/UK regarding the Syrian civil war, the Middle East and Turkey from June 2015 to 20th January 2017³⁹. However, none referred to this counter-frame. Only the British MP, Robert Jenrick, warned the British people either participating in or preparing to join the YPG to consider the accusations of Amnesty International against the YPG by underlining his lack of knowledge regarding such allegations. These explanations indicate that the Turkish government's "PYD's alleged ethnic cleansing" counter-frame could not adequately influence or challenge the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD's "defence of human values against ISIS" normative frame. The overlapping policy objectives between the US/UK governments and the PYD against ISIS, the YPG's military alliance with the US-led global coalition to defeat ISIS in Syria and the conflicting goals between the US/UK governments and the Turkish government since Kobane seem primary reasons for such a result. Although the Turkish government took actions against ISIS later, the first impression of the targeted audiences was that Turkey had been late to act and could have done much more starting from the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

5.6 Conclusion

The chapter argued that the US/UK's responsiveness towards the normative PYD frames and the challenges of the Turkish government characterisation frames to their responsiveness cannot be merely explained through frames and counter-frames' creation, presentation and interaction. These countries' policy stances regarding the political future of Syria and policy objectives in Syria have to be taken into consideration. Especially when the policy objectives of the PYD concerning ISIS in Syria overlapped with those of the US/UK governments, the framing efforts and strategies of the PYD representatives seemed to have been effective, and the targeted audiences were more responsive towards the normative PYD frames. Accordingly, these countries were more responsive to the "defence of human values against ISIS" frame than the "regional role model" frame although these frames presented the same component themes such

³⁹ 703 pieces in the US and 158 pieces in the UK parliamentary transcripts.

as grassroots participation, equality of men and women (gender equality), peaceful coexistence with other minorities and linguistic rights for people. In this regard, the emergence of ISIS in 2014 as the main policy priority of the US/UK governments increased their responsiveness towards the PYD's "defence of human values against ISIS" frame as seen in the parliamentary transcripts, mainstream newspapers and answers of participants. As will be addressed in the next chapter, creating new frames by prioritising ISIS threat and arguing alternative solutions to this problem facilitated the PYD representatives' access to the policymaking community and process of the US after the liberation of Kobane in 2015. Similarly, when policy stances and, particularly policy objectives of the Turkish government in Syria overlapped with those of the US/UK governments before the rise of ISIS, the Turkish government counter-frames, the "PYD is a terrorist organisation" and the "PYD's alleged cooperation with the Assad regime", to a certain extent, challenged the normative PYD frames and affected these countries' responsiveness towards them. When these objectives conflicted after the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, the Turkish government counter-frame, the "PYD's alleged ethnic cleansing" could not challenge the responsiveness of these countries towards the "defence of human values against ISIS" frame even though Turkish government officials had serious arguments against the PYD-YPG such as "ethnic cleansing" "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity".

By analysing the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the normative PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames' potential challenge for their responsiveness, this chapter contributed to the literature on the framing in ethnic lobbying (Herner-Kovács, 2013; Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002). The current literature on the framing in ethnic lobbying in the US/UK mainly focus on the success of ethnic lobbying. More specifically, these studies approach framing as one of the methods for successful ethnic lobbying and a facilitator (Herner-Kovács, 2013; Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002) or a moderate way for the mobilisation of lobby for the sovereignty of homelands (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011). In these studies, the process of successful lobbying campaigns and a process of mobilisation take precedence over the framing process. Chapters 3 and 4 did not only conceptualise framing as a lobbying method but also analysed it as a process in the context of ethnic lobbying. This chapter prioritised the framing success in the period between March 2011 and 20th January 2017 instead of lobby success in the context of ethnic lobbying. It has explained the success of normative framing through the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the normative PYD frames by considering the challenges of the Turkish government counter-frames against the PYD frames via their

interaction during the focused period. In so doing, the chapter has borrowed the concepts of frame resonance, the factors regarding the credibility of framing and factors applicable to the target of mobilisation (Ketelaars, 2016; Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005; Benford and Snow, 2000) and reconceptualised them to explain the responsiveness of the targeted countries towards frames in ethnic lobbying.

There are few studies focusing on the concept of responsiveness in the context of ethnic lobbying in the US. Scott and Osman's (2002) study, for instance, implicitly investigated the responsiveness of the African American lobbying elites, the responsiveness of lobbyists, towards different issues of their homeland to mobilise their community for lobbying. Lobby's responsiveness towards these issues was shaped by the commonality of circumstances in the daily life of African Americans in the US and people of South Africa due to the discrimination against the black people. Therefore, the lobby was more responsive to the issues regarding the Apartheid regime in South Africa compared the same issues in Rwanda (Scott and Osman, 2002). Koinova (2011) has shifted the focus from the lobbying elites to the political elites by analysing the responsiveness of the US policymakers towards the lobbying efforts of the Lebanese and Albanian lobbies in the US.

This chapter has brought a new perspective to ethnic lobbying literature by focusing on the responsiveness of the targeted countries (Koinova, 2011), the US/UK, towards the normative PYD frames and by detailing these countries' responsiveness as the responsiveness of policymakers (Brown, 2013; Koinova, 2011) and mainstream newspapers (Kornprobst, 2019). In so doing, it did not only focus on the responsiveness towards the normative frames but also considered the challenges of characterisation frames against the normative frames and their potential impact on this responsiveness. The chapter has also discussed the potential influence of the policy stances of the US/UK regarding the political future of Syria and their policy objectives in Syria as the expectations of targeted audiences (Desrosiers, 2012), which are important points for assessing the framing success in this case. The next chapter will focus on the success of the strategic PYD frames.

Chapter 6 The Success of Strategic Frames

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter, chapter 5, discussed the success of normative PYD frames, the “regional role model” and “defence of human values against ISIS” through the responsiveness of the US/UK towards them. Chapter 5 also investigated the Turkish government counter-frames’ challenges to these countries’ responsiveness towards the normative PYD frames. This chapter examines the success of strategic PYD frames, the “protection of Europe/West”, the “only effective force against ISIS” and “a political solution for Syria”. It also seeks to answer these questions. (1) How responsive the US/UK foreign policy elites and wider media towards the strategic PYD frame? (2) To what extent that the Turkish government counter-framing managed to challenge strategic PYD framing and the responsiveness of these countries towards the strategic PYD frames (3) What could explain these countries’ responsiveness towards the strategic PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames by considering their policy stances and objectives in Syria? (4) Where policy stances and objectives of the PYD and the Turkish government overlapped and conflicted with those of the US/UK governments in Syria. (5) To what extent the overlapping and conflicting policy stances and objectives between frame producers (PYD representatives and Turkish government officials) and the targeted countries (the US/UK governments) affected these countries’ responsiveness towards the strategic PYD frames and Turkish counter-frames.

As underlined in the previous chapter, this thesis seeks to contribute to the literature on the framing process in ethnic lobbying (Ambrosio, 2002b) within the US/UK by analysing the processes of framing through social movement approach (Bendord and Snow, 2000; Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005) and counter-framing (Benford and Snow, 2000). In so doing, it also focuses on framing success via the responsiveness of the US/UK towards frames and counter-frames (Koinova, 2011). There are a few studies either implicitly (Scott and Osman, 2002) or explicitly (Koinva, 2011) analysed the concept of responsiveness in the context of ethnic lobbying in the US. Scott and Osman (2002), for instance, implicitly referred to the concept of responsiveness since they investigated the reactions of the African American lobbying elites towards the different issues in Africa. However, their aim was to explain the mobilisation behaviour of the African Americans to lobby for urging the US to change its foreign policy towards the Apartheid regime in South Africa by discussing the resonance of the communality

of the circumstances for the Africans in the US and South Africa. As such, Scott and Osman (2002) investigated the responsiveness of lobbying elites and their reactions towards the different issues in the homeland as the first step for lobbying. Koinova (2011) has changed the focus from the lobbying elites to the political elites and has analysed the attitudes of US policymakers towards lobbying efforts of the Lebanese and Albanians in the US through the concept of responsiveness.

This chapter, on the other hand, analyses the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the strategic PYD frames. In other words, this analysis is based on the targeted countries' responsiveness towards the arguments of lobbyists instead of the responsiveness of the lobbying elites. It also adds the responsiveness of the mainstream newspapers in these countries to the concept of responsiveness as another targeted component of ethnic lobbying (Haney and Vanderbush, 1999). The chapter argues that without considering policy objectives of the US/UK in Syria, these countries' responsiveness towards strategic PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames' challenges to their responsiveness could not be merely explained through the frames/counter-frames' characteristics, creation, presentation and interaction. Especially when the policy objectives of the PYD regarding ISIS in Syria overlapped with those of the US/UK governments, the framing efforts and strategies of the PYD became effective. Consequently, the targeted audiences were more responsive to the strategic PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames could not challenge these countries' responsiveness towards them.

As emphasised in the previous chapter, ethnic lobbies attempt to reach out governments, policymakers and the broader public in the targeted countries by trying to influence public opinion through their messages (Honey and Vanberbush, 1999). They also strive to shape debates in the academic and policymaking communities through think-tanks or media (Zarifian, 2018; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007). Therefore, this chapter also details the responsiveness as the responsiveness of the policymakers and mainstream newspapers in the US/UK. It searches for the responsiveness of policymakers through the interviews (Brown, 2013) and parliamentary transcripts (Kornprobst, 2019; Vanderbush, 2009; Ambrosio, 2002b; Shain, 1994). For the responsiveness of mainstream newspapers (Kornprobst, 2019; Ambrosio, 2002b; Shain, 1994), the chapter analyses the coverage of frames and counter-frames by identifying the matching themes of frames/counter-frames and newspapers (Kornprobst, 2019). This chapter also applies the factors related to the credibility of framing and elements applicable to

the targeted audiences while explaining the responsiveness of policymakers and mainstream newspapers (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005; Benford and Snow, 2000). Likewise, problems concerning to the characteristics of frames and framing strategies, which could affect the targeted audiences' responsiveness, are considered to assess strategic frames' success through the targeted countries' responsiveness towards them (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). The chapter will discuss the success of strategic PYD frames and their interaction with the Turkish government counter-frames by considering the US/UK's policy stances and objectives in Syria.

6.2 “Protection of Europe/West” Frame

US officials always prioritise the US national interests in their foreign policymaking process (Garrett, 1978). Similarly, the US governments can be responsive to ethnic lobbies and tend to support ethnic lobbies when the policies provided by them are favourable for the US governments or their national interests (Honey and Vanderbush, 1999; Garrett, 1978). Accordingly, as a common strategy, lobbying groups align their policy objectives with those of the US and appeal the US foreign policy discourses to increase the US governments' responsiveness towards their campaigns. For instance, the Armenian and Indian lobbies (Ambrosio, 2002b; Kirk, 2008) and the Iraqi exiled community (Vanderbush, 2009) built their lobbying campaigns on the alignment of their homelands' objectives with those of US. They appealed the US foreign policy discourses like “America and the world must stand up to aggression” (Ambrosio, 2002b: p.31) and “war on terror” (Vanderbush, 2009; Kirk, 2008) to stop the US aid to Azerbaijan, have a nuclear deal agreement with US and urge the Bush administration to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein, respectively. These lobbies were, to a certain extent, successful at their campaigns in terms of achieving their purposes. It appears that the PYD followed the same path in a different way through utilising strategic frames or strategically framing the issue for lobbying the US/UK.

The PYD had been using the “protection of Europe/West” frame for lobbying since the beginning of 2014 (Muslim quoted in Carnegie Endowment, 2014b). Through this frame, first, the PYD described the Islamist military groups in 2013; and then, ISIS in 2014, as the primary causal agents for the problems in Syria and as common enemies of the Kurds and Western countries. Afterwards, it presented the Kurdish fight against ISIS as a solution to this problem, which would protect the Kurds, other ethnic/religious minorities and the European/Western countries against this threat. By aligning the protection of Kurds and ethnic/religious minorities

with the security of the European/Western countries, the PYD attempted to demonstrate why the YPG's fight against ISIS and the PYD's model of governance in Syria deserved these countries' military and political support (B14, 2018). The US/UK, however, became more responsive to this frame after the capture of Mosul by ISIS in June 2014 and following the ISIS siege on Kobane in September 2014. It appears that the overlapping policy objectives between the PYD and the US/UK governments against ISIS in Syria made the PYD's framing strategies more effective. Additionally, the overlapping interests seemed to have solved the credibility issue of the PYD representatives, although the PYD's links with the PKK did not disappear and the PKK were not excluded from the list of terrorist organisations in these countries.

Characteristically, this type of framing was not abstract or too distant from the daily life of policymakers and mainstream newspapers in the US/UK (Ketelaars, 2016; Benford and Snow, 2000) since ISIS became the central terrorist threat in these countries (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). Mainly, the capture of Mosul by ISIS in June 2014 (Rhodes, 2018; Gunter, 2015), its crimes against humanity, particularly the beheadings of the American journalists, James Foley and Steven Sotloff, (A11, 2018) and atrocities against the Yazidis in the summer of 2014 (Natalie, 2015; Gunter, 2015) contributed to this situation. Additionally, ISIS terror attacks in the Western capitals such as Paris and Brussels or Istanbul, and across the world through its Western jihadists/foreign fighters were main discussion points for the policymakers in these countries (A11, 2018; A8, 2017; B16, 2018). The mainstream newspapers in the US/UK also contributed to making ISIS a significant threat to the policymakers and public in these countries by presenting ISIS' atrocities and terror attacks across the world through news articles, editorials and opinion pieces. Some US policymakers, for example, Rep. Louie Gohmert, announced the capture of Mosul by ISIS through a news article in the Congress (US. House of Representatives, 2014, p.5316). Likewise, Rep. Frank Wolf shared pieces and statistics from the CNN and the Washington Post to show that vast majority of the Americans (approximately 90 %) had perceived ISIS as a "serious" threat to the US (US. House of Representatives, 2014, p.73000). So, describing ISIS as a primary threat and common enemy of the Kurds and West, and presenting the Kurds as a solution to prevent the spread of ISIS terror from Syria to Europe/West was a logical strategy, which could have worked in these countries. As underlined by some US participants, this strategy worked as it was not too distant and was not abstract framing:

“That was a very effective message as the ISIS’ terror attacks spread into Turkey and Europe.”
(B1, 2018)

“I think we should recognise that the YPG has done a great job of fighting ISIS on the ground. It is something that the Americans and the whole international coalition are quite thankful for them. ISIL is not just a local threat in Syria. They have been able to carry out attacks in Paris and other European cities.” (B16, 2018)

This frame was also congruent with the political environment in these countries. Since ISIS was perceived as a serious terrorist threat, it is possible to underline that the PYD presented the right frame at the right time (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). This strategy increased the targeted audiences’ responsiveness towards the “protection of Europe/West” frame. Additionally, the PYD leadership used two key themes while creating and presenting the “protection of Europe/West” frame. They were the strategic location of Syria for the stability of Europe/West (Muslim quoted in Chatham House, 2014; Muslim quoted in Kurdishquestion.com, 2016) and the existence of foreign fighters, who came from the European/Western countries to fight for ISIS (Muslim quoted in Chatham House, 2014). Consequently, by fighting ISIS, the YPG had been stabilising Europe/West and had been preventing the Western jihadists’ return to their homelands, which would increase the radicalism and terror attacks in these countries (Ibid). A few US participants perceived this frame as a stability argument by referring to the stability of Syria and the Middle East (B1, 2018).

But in general, this frame was thematically congruent with the parliamentary transcripts in the US/UK (Kornprobst, 2019). For example, from June 2014⁴⁰ to the 20th January 2017, 476 out of 1263 (approximately 38 %) parliamentary transcripts in the US/UK regarding the Syrian civil war and ISIS referred to the following themes; the travel of American/British fighters to Iraq/Syria for joining ISIS; in the case of their return to homelands, the further issues such as radicalisation; blocking the American citizens’ passports travelled to join the jihadists groups in Iraq and Syria; bringing more scrutiny on these people; the revision of the US VISA Waiver Program for some Western/European countries due to the Western/European passport holders amongst the jihadists travelling Syria, preventing these people’s return to the US/UK. The policymakers also focused on individual radicalisation through social media, ISIS’ online recruitments and its terror attacks in Europe and across the world. Especially, after the

⁴⁰ The time period when ISIS captured Mosul, the second biggest city of Iraq.

November 2015 Paris terror attack, the infiltration of ISIS members into the Syrian refugees to cross Europe/West and organise terror attacks became main themes in these references. Compared to the parliamentary transcripts, only 19 out of 1415 (approximately 1.5 %) pieces, the news articles, opinion pieces, and editorials regarding the Syrian civil war, the Syrian Kurds and Turkey in the mainstream newspapers included similar themes⁴¹ (Kornprobst, 2019). In general, themes in these pieces were compatible with the component theme of the PYD's "protection of Europe/West" frame.

It seems that strategies above and the characteristic of the "protection of Europe/West" frame overcame the problem of relevance since it was compatible with the political environment in the US/UK and touched upon a central issue in these countries (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). It also appears that the PYD addressed the correct audiences, the policymaking communities in the US/UK with a right frame at the right time (Ibid) since the US/UK governments' main priority in Syria was ISIS since the summer of 2014 (B1, 2018; B7, 2018; A11, 2018, A8, 2017). It also ended up with a military alliance between the YPG and the US-led global coalition against ISIS in Syria. This was not a taken-for-granted frame for the targeted audiences (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). Although, the PYD had been emphasising the Kurdish fight against the Islamist military groups in Syria since the summer of 2013, the "protection of Europe/West" frame was created in the early 2014 (Muslim quoted in Carnegie Endowment, 2014b). Then, it addressed Western audiences since May 2014 (Muslim quoted in Chatham House, 2014), a few months before the rise and visibility of ISIS in Iraq/Syria. Following the seriousness of ISIS threat and the YPG's increased visibility due to its alliance with the global coalition, this frame worked like a new frame.

The PYD also made two changes in this frame's scope. First, it extended the frame's content from the protection of Kurds to other ethnic/religious minorities against the Islamist groups in Syria within the summer of 2013 (Muslim quoted in Rudaw.net, 2013). Secondly, the PYD extended this frame's geographic scope from the protection of Kurds and other ethnic/religious

⁴¹ As addressed in chapter 2 within the method section, the coverage of the component themes of this frame by the mainstream newspapers in the US/UK, especially the one regarding the Western/foreign fighters of ISIS could have increased if the "foreign fighters" "Western foreign fighters" and "ISIS" had been used as key words for searching in the newspapers. However, the Western or foreign fighters were beyond this research's scope. The "Syrian Kurds", "Turkey and Syrian Kurds", "PYD", "YPG" and "SDF" were used as keywords for this search since it had not focused on the foreign or Western participants in ISIS.

minorities in northern Syria to the protection of Europe/West against ISIS (Muslim quoted in Chatham House, 2014; Semo quoted in Centre for Turkish Studies, 2014). In this way, the PYD appeared to have overcome the problem of scope, which could affect the targeted audiences' responsiveness towards a frame (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). The interview data also indicated that such an extension increased the US/UK policymakers' responsiveness towards the "protection of Europe/West" frame even though the PYD's main aim was underlined as the protection of Kurds:

"That is a good one. I think a lot of people in the West would agree with that. Because the Kurds defeated ISIS in Syria, and they closed the border. They sealed off the border that ISIS was using to smuggle the fighters out to Europe. So, they deserve credit for that." (B5, 2018)

"It makes excellent propaganda. It wins friends in the West. Otherwise, the West might not particularly care about the Syrian conflict or the Kurdish role in that conflict" (B7, 2018)

"They are certainly protecting themselves. They have been at the forefront of that fight. They have been one of the most effective fighting forces. Therefore, I believe that part of the statement is accurate. To protect Europe, that is probably something that they have realised or find a receptive audience in the West. I think this is their strategic interest" (A8, 2017)

Numerous US/UK participants⁴² also pointed out the PYD's hidden aim in this strategic frame, to find a support or gain approval from the European/Western countries for its model of governance in addition to receiving military support in the fight against ISIS. These explanations also indicate that the YPG's increasing visibility due to its perceived success against ISIS increased the responsiveness of policymakers as the interviews were conducted between 2017 and 2018, three to four years after the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane and YPG's fight against ISIS since then as a ground partner to the US-led global coalition. This point will be discussed with more details in the section, the "only effective force against ISIS" frame. To conclude, the overlapping policy objectives between the US/UK governments and the PYD against ISIS in Syria since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane led these countries to become more responsive to the "protection of Europe/West" frame. It also increased the effectiveness of the PYD's framing strategies and dealt with the PYD representatives' credibility issue due to the PYD's links to the PKK. The Turkish government, on the other hand, created and presented the "Securing NATO and the European Countries" counter-frame to challenge the responsiveness

⁴² A4 (2017), B4 (2018), B9 (2018), and B14 (2018) were just some other participants who pointed out the PYD's hidden aim to obtain political support for its model of governance in Syria.

of the US/UK towards the “protection of Europe/West” frame. To what extent this strategy worked will be discussed in the next section.

6.3 “Securing NATO and the European Countries” Counter-frame vs “Protection of Europe/West” Frame

The Turkish government tried to achieve its two purposes through the “Securing NATO and the European countries” counter-frame. The first was to justify the 2016 Euphrates Shield Operation in Syria. The second was to counter the PYD’s “protection of Europe/West” frame. According to the Turkish government officials, the Euphrates Shield Operation aimed at clearing the Turkish borders from all terrorist groups, including ISIS and the YPG (Kalin quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016o; Isik quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016z2) and mainly pushing the YPG militias from the West of the Euphrates River while fighting ISIS (Yildirim quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016s; Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016p). In this way, the Turkish government prioritised preventing the PYD from connecting its Afrin, Kobane and Jazira cantonal administrations geographically and expelling the YPG from the Turkish border. It appears that the Euphrates Shield Operation against ISIS was used to reduce the international community’s pressure on the country since the operation targeted the PYD-YPG in addition to ISIS. As discussed in the previous section, the PYD presented the Kurdish fight as a solution to ISIS problem by strategically aligning the protection of their lands or people against ISIS with the security of the European/Western countries. In this regard, “Securing NATO and the European countries” counter-frame was deployed to confront the PYD and challenge the states, which had supported the YPG against ISIS in Syria. However, this Turkish government counter-frame could not challenge the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the “protection of Europe/West” frame. The main reason can be explained through the conflicting policy objectives between the US/UK governments and the Turkish government in Syria since the rise of ISIS in 2014, particularly since the beginning of the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane.

Briefly, the US/UK governments followed the policy of the Assad must stand down by backing the Syrian opposition without direct external intervention in the early stages of the civil war (A9, 2017; A11, 2018; B1, 2018; B7, 2018). These countries advocated the idea of forming a united/inclusive Syrian opposition against the Assad regime, which would be preparing for the transition period in the post-Assad Syria (Philips, 2018). It was also the policy objective of the Turkish government. Since the early stages of the Syrian civil war, Turkish government

officials described the Assad regime as the primary responsible agent for the crisis in Syria and developed close relations with the Syrian opposition by arguing that President Assad should step aside (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2013a, 2012d; Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2012a). The Turkish government played a significant role in the formation of the political and military opposition bodies, the Syrian National Council and the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces and the FSA (Philips, 2018; Demirtas, 2013). After the emergence of ISIS in 2014, policy objectives of the US/UK shifted from the overthrow of the Assad regime (Assad first) to counterterrorism in Syria against ISIS (B1, 2018; B7, 2018; A11, 2018, A8, 2017). However, the Turkish government kept arguing that the Assad regime was the primary responsible agent for the rise of ISIS in Syria in the early stages. Therefore, the overthrow of President Assad should be the main priority to deal with the ISIS crisis (Gunter, 2015; Federici, 2015).

Accordingly, the second disagreement, especially between the Obama administration and the Turkish government, was the method to fight ISIS in Syria. The US government was unwilling to intervene in Syria to fight ISIS with its own troops (A9, 2017; B1, 2018; B11, 2018) and wanted the local forces to do the fight (Philips, 2018). Instead, particularly the US, had sought a ground partner to defeat ISIS in Syria (Paasche and Gunter, 2016; B1, 2018; B11, 2018). Consequently, it interacted with the YPG during the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane (Thornton, 2015; B1, 2018). Then, this interaction turned out to be a military alliance between the US and the YPG since the Pentagon preferred to work with the YPG militias in the fight against ISIS (B1, 2018 B6, 2018; B11, 2018). However, Turkish government officials perceived this policy unacceptable due to the YPG's links to the PKK and suggested alternative options such as the FSA to fight ISIS in Syria (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014j; 2014i; Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014h; 2014k; B14, 2018). This was the second conflicting policy objective between the US and Turkey. According to US officials (Gunter, 2015; Federici, 2015) and US participants, Turkey prioritised the PYD-YPG after the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane instead of ISIS:

“We first see that the Islamist armed groups used by Turkey to target the Assad regime and as a counterweight to the Kurds before 2014, 2015. After that period, we see very explicitly that the Turkish priorities in Syria changed. So, opposition to the PYD becomes its first issue, and the opposition to the ISIS perhaps is the secondary one.” (B6, 2018)

“We have, very least, acknowledged the truth, the links between the PKK-PYD-YPG. So, there is no question really upon that, despite some people in the US military are denial on these facts. However, the Turkish state does not have the same emotional resonance for the Americans. These are quite distanced headlines for us and so never the same resonance as the Al Qaeda or ISIS things. The ISIS is much closer to the American historical memory. So, I am sympathetic to this Turkish struggle. I am sure a lot of people, certainly people are working the Turkish politics, are sympathetic too. It was never going to meet to win out over the fear of ISIS, which would be more immediate than the PKK. The PKK is certainly threat to Turkey. But it is certainly not a threat to the US.” (B14, 2018)

The Turkish government was unwilling to conduct a ground operation in Syria by the summer of 2016. Until the Euphrates Shield Operation in August 2016, Turkish government officials discredited the YPG and insisted on the FSA as a ground force to fight ISIS in Syria (A11, 2018; B3, 2018; B6, 2018). It seems that the FSA was not perceived as an effective option by the US/UK participants. Turkish government officials began arguing that ISIS was a terrorist organisation like the PKK-PYD-YPG since 2014. However, according to participants, the Turkish actions against ISIS was taken later than the expected time:

“I think there was a lot of anger on the US side about two things. The length of time it took Turkey to grant access to Incirlik for the anti-ISIS operations. It was like five or six months of negotiations before they provided access. Then, the Turkish border policy...” (B1, 2018)

“I often felt that the Turks were a bit disingenuous. They turned a blind eye to the problem of ISIS for a long time. Yes, they got serious about it. But it was a bit late. The Americans wanted people on the ground, and they constantly asked the Turks about the ground force. Then, they turned to the Kurds. I think they would argue and are partly justified arguing that the Turks were too slow.” (A11, 2018)

Three significant conclusions can be inferred from these points. First, the YPG’s military alliance with the US-led global coalition against ISIS in Syria positively affected the credibility of it as an “*effective force and reliable partner*” which increased the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD’s “protection of Europe/West” frame. Consequently, the efforts of Turkish government officials to challenge these countries’ responsiveness towards the “protection of Europe/West” frame through “Securing NATO and the European Countries” did not work as planned. Second, Turkey’s unwillingness to intervene in Syria to fight ISIS until the summer 2016 seems to have adversely affected the credibility of the Turkish government counter-framing although it included the Turkish actions against ISIS (B10, 2018; B17, 2018; A11, 2018).

Finally, the disagreement between the Obama administration and the Turkish government regarding the ground forces to fight ISIS in Syria, whether the FSA or the YPG, deteriorated the relationship between these countries and urged them to follow different policies. Turkey began working with Russia in Syria (B3, 2018; B6, 2018; B7, 2018) and President Erdogan changed his rhetoric against the US due to the YPG crisis. President harshly criticised the US for supporting a reputed terrorist organisation, the YPG, against another terrorist organisation, ISIS (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014g; 2014i). According to US participants, these changes affected the credibility of the Turkish government and, especially the credibility of the Turkish President in the US (B1, 2018; B2, 2018; B3, 2018, B4, 2018, B12, 2018). It brought an issue, the perceived credibility of frame producers (Benford and Snow, 2000), which is a crucial one to explain the responsiveness of the targeted audiences towards framing (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005), in this case, lobbying efforts through counter-framing. Additionally, there was a consensus amongst people in the policymaking communities in the US/UK that Turkey had been moving from democracy to autocracy under President Erdogan (A2, 2017; A9, 2017; B1, 2018, B7, 2018, B10, 2018). It appears that such a perception also indirectly as well as adversely affected the Turkish government counter-frames' transmission and their challenge against the strategic PYD frames in the eyes of the targeted audience since the counter-frames were created and presented by Turkish government officials⁴³. Turkey eventually conducted a ground operation against ISIS and the PYD-YPG in the summer 2016 and created the "Securing NATO and the European countries" counter-frame. Some US participants underlined that this counter-frame could not affect the responsiveness of these countries towards the PYD-YPG and the strategic PYD frames (B3, 2018). Accordingly, Turkey conducted such an operation for its own interests instead of the interest of the NATO or the European countries (Ibid).

Parliamentary transcripts and mainstream newspapers in the US/UK were not also responsive to this Turkish counter-frame since there was no reference to this frame either separately or while assessing the PYD and the YPG in these pieces⁴⁴. Instead, the mainstream newspapers in

⁴³ These points will be considered while assessing the responsiveness of the US/UK towards another Turkish government counter-frame, the "Most Effective Ally against ISIS" and its impacts on these countries' responsiveness towards the "Only effective force against ISIS" frame in the upcoming sections.

⁴⁴ There were 1186 pieces in the US (998 pieces) and the UK (188 pieces) parliamentary transcripts regarding the Middle East, Syria, ISIS and Kurds from the beginning of the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane (1st September 2014) to 20th January 2020). Likewise, there were 1284 pieces in the mainstream newspapers of the US (524 pieces) and the UK (760 pieces) about the Syrian civil war, Syrian Kurds and Turkey during the same period.

the US/UK and the parliamentary transcripts in the UK focused on Turkey's lack of willingness to fight ISIS or lack of security measures against ISIS as the Turkish government prioritised the overthrow of the Assad regime, and then, the PYD-YPG because of the PKK. The general understanding was that Turkey turned a blind eye to the Western/foreign fighters who travelled through Turkey to join ISIS (Gunter, 2015) while the PYD effectively used the theme, the Western/foreign fighters of ISIS to present its argument. These explanations and the case also demonstrate that the credibility of framing and frame producers were dependent on the targeted countries' policy objectives due to the existence of ISIS as a serious terror threat. When the PYD presented the "protection of Europe/West" frame as a solution to ISIS problem to reach out more audiences and obtain military support, the PYD representatives gained credibility. Then, the PYD representatives' credibility issue became less significant because of the PYD overlapping policy objectives with the US/UK. Meanwhile, the reliability of Turkish government officials became more problematic due to the conflicting policy objectives between the US/UK governments and the Turkish government after the rise of ISIS (Gunter, 2015; Federici, 2015). Starting from the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, the PYD presented "only effective force against ISIS" frame by conceptualising the YPG's fight against ISIS for lobbying. The next section will discuss the US/UK's responsiveness to this strategic frame.

6.4 "Only Effective Force against ISIS" Frame

The "only effective force against ISIS" frame was created to legitimise the PYD's model of governance by using the YPG's increased credibility in the West due to its relative success against ISIS (Federici, 2015). It was the consequence of the YPG's interaction with the US Special Forces and military personnel as well as its military alliance with the US-led global coalition against ISIS since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane. The PYD used these points to conceptualise the Kurdish effectiveness against a common enemy, ISIS, and obtain political support of the US/UK for its model of governance as a result of the YPG's contribution to fight against ISIS in Syria. In other words, the PYD framed the YPG's effectiveness as a secular group's fight against the Islamist or jihadist ideology to legitimise its model of governance in the West (Dalay, 2018) and gain political support of Western countries during the negotiations for the political future of Syria (B14, 2018; Paasche and Gunter, 2016; Federici, 2015). While presenting the "only effective force against ISIS" frame, the PYD accentuated the role of airstrikes conducted by the global coalition (Muslim quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2015; in Al-Monitor, 2014; Semo quoted in Centre for Turkish Studies, 2014). Additionally, the Kurdish effectiveness was presented as an outstanding achievement against a brutal organisation

through limited resources and weapons. In so doing, the PYD compared the performances and achievements of the YPG-YPJ militias with the alleged failure of other nation-state armies, such as the Iraqi and Syrian ones (Muslim quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2015).

Compared to other strategic and normative PYD frames, the US/UK were more responsive to the “only effective force against ISIS” frame. Mainstream newspapers in the US/UK, for instance, began paying attention to the PKK and the YPG since August 2014 due to their assistance for rescuing Yazidis from ISIS. Mainly from the ISIS siege on Kobane in September 2014 to 20th January 2017, 408 out of 1415 (approximately 29 %) pieces as news articles, opinion pieces, and editorials regarding the Syrian civil war, the Syrian Kurds and Turkey in the newspapers referred to the YPG as the “most effective force and reliable partner” to the US by emphasising the role of US airstrikes. Therefore, there was a thematic congruence between this frame and themes in the US/UK newspapers (Kornprobst, 2019).

Table 6.1 Adjectives for Describing the Syrian Kurds (the YPG) in the US/UK Newspapers

Description of the Syrian Kurds (YPG) By the US/UK Newspapers (March 2011 – 20th January 2017)	
Period	Adjectives
March 2011 – 31 st August 2014	<i>“PKK’s Syrian affiliates”, “PKK’s Syrian cousins”, “PKK’s close ally”, “a sister group of the PKK”, “a paramilitary affiliate of the PKK”</i>
1 st September 2014 – October 2015 (Until the formation of the SDF)	<i>“most effective ground force”, “the most reliable allies for the American military in Syria”, “main partners in combating the Islamic State in Syria”, “some of the most successful forces in combating the Islamic State there”, “America’s most reliable ally in fighting the Islamic State”, “most capable forces”, “highly effective adversary” against ISIS, “Washington’s most effective proxy”, “a key partner for the US-led alliance”, “the most effective ground force fighting Isis on Syrian soil”</i>
October 2015 – 20 th January 2017 (After the formation of the SDF)	<i>“the most effective ground force”, “America’s most effective ally”, “the best boots on the ground”, “most effective fighters”, “most effective allies”</i>

Table 6.1 above indicates the adjectives describing the YPG from March 2011 to 20th January 2017 in three periods within the mainstream newspapers of the US/UK. From March 2011 to 31st August 2014 (until the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane), the mainstream newspapers underlined the YPG's links with the PKK and approached the PYD-YPG through Turkey's concerns. It was the period when the goals of the US/UK governments and the PYD were conflicting in Syria. In this period, these countries' objectives overlapped with those of the Turkish government in Syria which was the formation of a united opposition against the Assad regime. However, starting from the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane until the foundation of the SDF in October 2015, newspapers described the YPG as the *"most effective force and reliable partner"* to the US in Syria. The SDF was the combination of the local Arab forces, and the YPG militias, led by the YPG to fight ISIS in Syria (Barfi, 2016). Even after the SDF, from October 2015 to 20th January 2017, the newspapers kept describing these forces as *"the most effective ground force"*, *"America's most effective ally"*, *"the best boots on the ground"*, *"most effective fighters"*, *"most effective allies"* by accentuating that Turkey regards them as terrorists. Additionally, newspapers presented territorial gains of the YPG-led SDF against ISIS and the visits of the US military officials and the US Special Envoy for the global coalition in fighting ISIS to the SDF-controlled region for discussing the details of ongoing operations against ISIS. Newspapers also showed the YPG badges worn by the US Special Forces, which had caused a serious issue between the Obama administration and the Turkish government. This could also show the responsiveness of US/UK newspapers towards the YPG and the YPG-led SDF. Finally, the newspapers equated the YPG and the YPG-led SDF with Turkey as American allies clashing each other during the 2016 Turkish Euphrates Shield Operation. This equation also demonstrates how responsive these newspapers to the effectiveness of the YPG and this strategic PYD frame when the policy objectives required.

Parliamentary transcripts in the US/UK were also responsive to this frame as a Kurdish fight against ISIS. From the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane to 20th January 2017, 285 out of 1186 parliamentary transcripts in these countries concerning to Syria, the Middle East, Syrian conflict and ISIS (approximately 24 % of pieces) referred to the Kurdish fight against ISIS and their effectiveness. While US policymakers mainly focused on arming the Iraqi KRG Peshmerga against ISIS, except for a few references to the YPG, UK policymakers discussed the effectiveness of the KRG Peshmerga, the YPG and the SDF in fighting ISIS and the potential

UK support to these groups to strengthen their fight. During the early stages of the ISIS siege on Kobane in September 2014, Lord Hylton in the UK House of Lords and Rep. Chris Van Hollen in US Congress had been seeking support for the YPG. Lord Hylton⁴⁵ argued that the UK government should have armed the Syrian Kurds without considering the legal procedures due to their affiliation to the PKK (Hansard HL Deb., 26 September 2014). Representative Chris Van Hollen defended that the Syrian Kurds were the only group had been sincerely fighting ISIS since its rise in Syria. Therefore, instead of arming or training the Sunni Syrian opposition fighters, the US should have provided material support to the Syrian Kurds to fight ISIS in Syria (US. Senate, 2014, pp.1464-65).

The responsiveness of parliamentary transcripts and mainstream newspapers in the US/UK towards the “only effective force against ISIS” frame can be explained by three reasons. As discussed in the previous sections, the first was the overlapping policy objectives between the US/UK governments and the PYD against ISIS in Syria (A11, 2018; B1, 2018; B7, 2018). The YPG militias’ performances in the fight against ISIS took motivation from the PKK leader Ocalan’s self-defence mechanism against the perceived enemies of the Kurds (Ocalan, 2016; 2011a) to protect its model of governance and its gains from the Syrian civil war. However, the PYD used this fight as a strategic tool for framing in lobbying and obtaining political support from the US/UK in addition to military one (B14, 2018). The US had sought ground partners to fight ISIS in Syria, such as the Turkish army (B3, 2018; B10, 2018; B11, 2018) or the Kurds of the region (Kardas and Yesiltas, 2018) instead of a direct military intervention. Turkey was unwilling to intervene in Syria and suggested the FSA as an alternative option to fight ISIS (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014j; 2014i; Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014h; 2014k). According to US participants, the ineffectiveness of the FSA and unwillingness of the Turkish government forced the US officials to work with the YPG since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane:

“The YPG has been incredibly valuable, effective and committed. This frame is absolutely true. So, it is the most reliable partner to the US. That is why the US supports them. The US gave them support only after desperately trying to get another group. They trained the Turkish-backed Syrian rebels for a while. It did not work.” (B10, 2018)

⁴⁵ As discussed in chapter 5, Lord Hylton was part of the PYD networking with some other Lords in the UK parliament (A10, 2018) and was the advocate for the PYD arguments in the UK Parliament with Natalie McGarry, the former Scottish Nationalist Party MP.

“The US works with what it finds. I think the US stumbled into this relationship with the PYD and the YPG. It was partly sympathy for the Kurds. More importantly, it was concerned about ISIS being on the march through Syria as well as Turkey’s refusal to go in. Those three elements brought us into Kobane. Once we were there, our military discovered ‘Oh! We can work well with the YPG’. That is reality. All the rest is commentary. We found a partner on the ground to fight ISIS. The YPG, of course, was happy to fight wherever we asked them, including in non-Kurdish Raqqa and other Arab towns. I assume that it is because they wanted to tighten their relationship with the US.” (B11, 2018)

The second reason for these countries’ responsiveness to this frame was the YPG’s increased credibility in the policymaking communities within the US/UK due to its relative success against ISIS in Syria (Federici, 2015). Particularly, the YPG’s perceived credibility in the US following its interaction with the Pentagon and CENTCOM officials as well as US Special Forces appeared to have increased the responsiveness of the US policymaking community towards this strategic frame. This interaction also positively affected the empirical reliability of the “only effective force against ISIS” frame and dealt with the issue of the PYD’s perceived credibility because of its ideological links to the PKK. This interaction assisted the PYD to convey its frames to the US administration and people or institutions contributing to the policymaking in the US (B1, 2018). The US participants provided their opinions regarding this strategic frame by referring to their conversations with the military bureaucracy of the US:

“The YPG proved itself to be extremely capable. I think that talking to CENTCOM people, talking to Pentagon and military officials, they have been impressed with the YPG’s effectiveness and with the relationship the US Special Forces and the air controllers have been able to build up these guys.” (B1, 2018)

“I think that there is a real appreciation in the US for the role of the Syrian Kurds [YPG] in defeating ISIS. Especially at the Pentagon, there was a real appreciation for the Kurds as fighters.” (B6, 2018)

“That was the Kurds’ argument with America. That was also America’s argument with the Kurds. I mean America sold the Kurds to the American public through this argument, and it was true.” (B8, 2018)

Finally, the factors above led the PYD’s framing strategies to be more effective and dealt with problems regarding the responsiveness of the targeted audiences towards frames. First, it was not an abstract or too distant frame from the targeted audiences (Benford and Snow, 2000) since ISIS was a significant security threat to the US/UK (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). The

frame presented the Kurds as effective forces, which managed to stop ISIS with the help of the US-led coalition (Muslim quoted in Kurdish Progress, 2015). As discussed above, its compatibility with the real situation in Syria was also approved by the US military bureaucracy, which reduced the abstractness of this frame (Benford and Snow, 2000). Second, as discussed in the previous section, the written media in the US/UK contributed to the visibility of ISIS by emphasising ISIS as an existential threat and referring to its atrocities against humanity. Therefore, this frame was quite congruent with the political environment in these countries (Ibid).

Accordingly, the PYD appealed to the correct audiences (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005) by presenting the Kurds as effective people and freedom fighters against ISIS brutality with their limited resources, as the policymaking communities in the US/UK needed ground partners to defeat ISIS in Syria. Since the YPG's effectiveness against ISIS was the credible point until 2015, this frame was not perceived as a taken-for-granted frame by the targeted audiences. Instead, it was the new and correct frame by the fall of 2015. However, the formation of the SDF (B5, 2018), the 2015 Russian intervention in Syria (A9, 2017) and other factors, contribution to the fight against ISIS such as the Syrian government forces with the Russian air support (A12, 2018), the Iraqi government army with the Iranian Shia militias' support (A2, 2017; A4, 2017) as well as Turkish military and Turkish-backed Syrian opposition's operation in 2016 (A9, 2017) affected the responsiveness of participants towards this frame. Since then, the US/UK participants emphasised that the Kurds had not been only effective force, but one of the most effective ones (A2, 2017; A4, 2017; A12, 2018; B5, 2018; B9, 2018). This point also indicates the dynamic nature of framing and responsiveness of the targeted audiences towards frames in the context of such a dynamism. As part of the nature of dynamic framing, the Turkish government attempted to challenge the "only effective force against ISIS" frame through the "most effective ally against ISIS" counter-frame.

6.5 "Most Effective Ally against ISIS" vs "Only Effective Force against ISIS"

The Turkish government attempted to show Turkey's achievements in the fight against ISIS and counter the PYD's "only effective force against ISIS" frame through the "most effective ally against ISIS" counter-frame. This counter-frame was developed in two periods. In the first one, which started from the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane and lasted until the 2016 Euphrates Shield Operation, Turkish government officials avoided any direct intervention in Syria and

suggested alternative options to the US officials in place of the YPG. These options included the FSA as alternative forces to fight ISIS in Syria (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014j; 2014i; Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014h; 2014k; B14, 2018), forming an ISIS-free zone in northern Syria as part of the safe zone and no-fly zone argument to train the FSA against ISIS (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014f), and discussing the possibility of opening the Incirlik airbase to the global coalition (Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2014g). In this way, Turkish government officials tried to demonstrate that Turkey can be an effective partner to the West in fighting ISIS.

In the second period, after the 2016 Euphrates Shield Operation, Turkish government officials presented Turkey's effectiveness by emphasising its actions against ISIS. According to these officials, Turkey joined the global coalition to fight ISIS (Kalin quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016n) and increased its border security to prevent the flow of foreign fighters by arresting many ISIS members or extraditing the suspected ones to their home countries (Kalin quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016n; Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016y). It conducted ground operations in Syria and Iraq to kill ISIS members and its ideology (Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016y; 2016z). Turkish government officials also argued that these were the main reasons why Turkey was the most effective ally in the fight against ISIS and the metropolitan cities such as Istanbul and Ankara (Kalin quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016n; Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016p) as well as its President, Erdogan, (Cavusoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2016z) became main ISIS targets.

Although Turkish government officials addressed the same audiences as the PYD, the "most effective ally against ISIS" counter-frame could not challenge the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the "only effective force against ISIS" frame as expected. Similarly, the US/UK were not responsive to this counter-frame compared to their responsiveness to the PYD's "only effective force against ISIS" frame. The overlapping and conflicting policy objectives between the frame producers (Turkish government officials) and the targeted audiences (the US/UK) were the main reasons for this result. Accordingly, it seems that the high level of responsiveness of the US/UK towards the PYD's "only effective force against ISIS" frame, which was presented as the most effective force and reliable partner in these countries, was a significant point for Turkish government officials to deal with. Additionally, the attitude of the US military bureaucracy towards the YPG increased the reliability on the Kurds and affected the YPG's

perception positively in the US and the Western countries (B1, 2018; B5, 2018; B6, 2018; B8, 2018; B16, 2018; A11, 2018). As explained in the section of the “Securing NATO and the European countries” counter-frame, the Turkish government officials’ credibility issue due to the conflicting goals between the US/UK governments and the Turkish one (B17, 2018) caused a serious problem. Therefore, this counter-frame could not challenge the responsiveness of these countries towards the “only effective force against ISIS” frame. Although Turkey took some actions against ISIS, including a ground operation in Syria in the summer 2016, they were perceived as late actions by the targeted audiences since they believed that the Turkish government had prioritised the Assad regime, and then, the PYD-YPG instead of ISIS (A11, 2018; B1, 2018; B3, 2018; B6, 2018; B14, 2018; B17, 2018).

Accordingly, compared the references to the “only effective force against ISIS” frame in the parliamentary transcripts (24 %, 285 out of 1186 pieces concerning to Syria, the Middle East, Syrian conflict and ISIS) and mainstream newspapers (29 %, 408 out of 1415 news articles, opinion pieces, and editorials regarding the Syrian conflict and ISIS) in the US/UK, there was no reference to this Turkish counter-frame in these sources. In general, since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, newspaper pieces and parliamentary debates focused on Turkey’s unwillingness to take more responsibility in the fight against ISIS by expecting a military operation from the Turkish army in Syria (US. House of Representatives, 2014, p.7395). These sources emphasised the necessity of increasing the Turkish border security to prevent the flow of foreign fighters through cooperating and sharing intelligence with the Western countries (Hansard HC Deb., 20 January 2015; Hansard HC Deb., 19 June 2014; Hansard HL Deb., 17 June 2014).

Mainly, newspapers tried to urge the Turkish government to provide equipment to the YPG militias or, at least, allow the crossings of the PKK militias into Kobane to help the YPG (Sherlock, 2014). They underlined that Turkey should join the US-led global coalition and open the Incirlik airbase and other airspaces of country to the coalition (Sly, 2014). Newspapers also focused on the reasons why Turkey was reluctant to take more responsibility in the fight against ISIS in Syria during the ISIS siege on Kobane. The general assessment was that Turkey had different priorities such as the overthrow of the Assad regime, forming a safe zone and preventing the gains of the PYD-YPG due to their affiliations to the PKK. Accordingly, Turkey perceived the YPG as a more existential threat than ISIS as helping the YPG in Kobane would

mean strengthening the existence of the PKK in northern Syria (Paasche and Gunter, 2016; Gunter, 2015; Federici, 2015). Although the negotiations for the Incirlik airbase, other airspaces of Turkey and the Turkish proposal for an ISIS-free zone occupied the agenda on parliamentary debates and newspapers until the 2016 Euphrates Shield Operation, policymakers and newspaper pieces questioned Turkey's effectiveness against ISIS. They emphasised the effectiveness of the Kurdish forces and the YPG. Despite the fact that the 2016 Euphrates Shield Operation was perceived as Turkey's positive action against ISIS, both policymakers and newspapers began questioning the Turkish dilemma, whether fighting ISIS or the YPG. Newspapers assessed the Turkish operation not only against ISIS but also against the YPG to prevent the PYD's advance on the Turkish border as well as its attempts to connect the cantonal administrations in northern Syria by forming a Turkish safe zone (Senqupta, 2016; Wintour, 2016).

Turkish government officials emphasised that Turkey could be an effective partner to the West while developing this frame in the first period. After the 2016 Euphrates Shield Operation, they advocated that Turkey had been the most effective ally against ISIS. This change in the scope of the frame seemed to have adversely affected the responsiveness of the targeted audiences and could not challenge the PYD's "only effective force against ISIS" frame. These countries and participants could have been more responsive to the previous version of this counter-frame:

"I think the word "can" is what I would focus. Turkey can be a tremendous ally and asset to the US. It has not always chosen to be. I have been critical of the Turkish government's foreign policy, which can help to do a lot of good. But it has not always done so. So, I agree with the statement exactly, which is 'Turkey can be a more effective partner to the US/West'. If you changed it and said, "Turkey is the most effective ally", I would disagree with that." (B9, 2018)

"That could be true because Turkey has a massive, huge army and an air force. But it never used them against ISIS until the Operation Euphrates Shield in August 2016. Turks could have defeated ISIS on their own. The US would have never supported the PYD, and the PYD would not have been all over the border with Turkey had Turkey done all these things. But Turkey did not want to do it." (B5, 2018)

To conclude, conflicting objectives of the US/UK and Turkey in Syria since the rise of ISIS in 2014 and during the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane were the main reasons for these countries' lack of responsiveness towards this Turkish counter-frame and its lack of challenge against the PYD's "only effective force against ISIS" frame. The PYD's overlapping goals with those of

the US/UK against ISIS was another obstacle for this Turkish counter-frame. The YPG's increased credibility in these countries due to its cooperation with the US-led global coalition and its relative success against ISIS in Syria were other factors, which prevented the potential challenge of the "most effective ally against ISIS" counter-frame against the "only effective force against ISIS" frame of the PYD. As the PYD presented the Kurds as effective forces against ISIS and it was approved by the US military bureaucracy, this Turkish counter-frame also could not challenge the US/UK's responsiveness towards the PYD's "only effective force against ISIS" frame despite the existence of the PYD's credibility issue because of its links to the PKK. This analysis indicates one more time that the policy objectives of the targeted countries were the essential factors for their responsiveness towards frames and counter-frames. Due to this essential factor, the targeted audiences could ignore the frame producers' credibility issue (B6, 2018). By appealing this essential factor, frame producers can gain credibility, and their framing strategies could be effective.

6.6 "A Political Solution for Syria" Frame

The YPG's perceived military success against ISIS opened new windows to the PYD, and the PYD representatives gained access to the policymaking communities in the US since 2015 (B6, 2018), which seemed unlikely in the beginning of 2014 (Muslim quote in Carnegie Endowment, 2014b). By trusting military support that the YPG received from the countries in the global coalition, the PYD deployed "a political solution for Syria" strategic frame. Its model of governance was presented as the best and practical solution for entire Syria due to its principles, grassroots participation, equality of men and women (gender equality), peaceful coexistence with other minorities and linguistic rights for people (Muslim quoted in ANF, 2016a). It was also a preparation of the PYD for the 2016 UN Geneva III negotiations to present this model as a solution, at least, for the political future of Syria. It was not only the PYD lobbyists, who argued that this model would be a solution for Syria. The Syrian Democratic Council (MSD) representatives, who worked with the PYD in the north and eastern Syria, lobbied with the same argument (Ehmed quoted in Kurdishquestion.com, 2016a). The PYD was not invited to the 2016 UN Geneva III negotiations due to the opposition of the Turkish government. Following this decision, the PYD representatives accentuated that their party was the only conscious, planned and programmed one for a solution in Syria. In March 2016, the PYD proclaimed a federal administration in north and eastern Syria (Plakoudas, 2016). From then on, it presented its model of governance as the only solution for Syria, which provided a tangible solution for Syria (Muslim quoted in ANF, 2016c; in Kurdish Progress, 2016).

The US/UK were relatively less responsive to “a political solution for Syria” strategic frame compared to their responsiveness towards other strategic frames. For instance, 5 out of 606 news articles, opinion pieces and editorials (approximately 0.8 % of pieces) regarding the Syrian conflict in the US newspapers⁴⁶ during the UN 2016 Geneva III peace negotiations suggested that the PYD’s model of governance could be a model for Syria. There was no reference to this frame or its components in the parliamentary transcripts of the US. Exceptionally, the former UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, emphasised the UK policy in Syria as the territorial integrity of the country (Hansard HC Deb., 26 November 2015). Lord Earl Howe also underlined that the Syrian Kurds (PYD) should be part of the negotiations for the political future of Syria with a condition of respecting the territorial integrity of the country (Hansard HL Deb., 8 December 2015). As the previous sections addressed, the US/UK policy objectives against ISIS in Syria overlapped with those of the PYD. Similarly, the debates concerning the political future of Syria were based on the possibility of federalism, and the PYD’s model of governance seemed to have been compatible with these debates. As the responsibility of frame producers/lobbyists (Desrosiers, 2012; Baumgartner, 2007), the PYD representatives were aware of the expectations of their targeted audiences and they addressed these audiences by considering debates in these countries regarding the future of Syria. So, what could explain such a lack of responsiveness towards “a political solution for Syria” frame?

First, it seems that the US/UK had no well-defined Kurdish policy in Syria (A11, 2018; B1, 2018; B10, 2018). Their policy stances in Syria mainly prioritised the territorial integrity of the country (Hansard HL Deb., 8 December 2015; Hansard HC Deb., 26 November 2015; A4, 2017) and a united Syria at the end (B1, 2018, B17, 2018). Since this frame reflected the PYD’s political ambition, it appears that US/UK policymakers returned to their initial positions. Accordingly, the common understanding was that the Kurds should be part of the negotiations for the political future of Syria not independently but as part of the Syrian opposition by respecting the territorial integrity of the country. Second, the US/UK’s relationships with the Syrian Kurds, particularly with the YPG, were based on the matter of security and it was more militaristic than being political:

“The US does not have a policy towards the Syrian Kurds. It sees them as a tool to use against ISIS. The US withheld any political support and any non-military assistance. They withheld any

⁴⁶ It means that approximately 0.4 % of pieces (5 out of 1415 news articles, opinion pieces and editorials) in the US and the UK newspapers suggested that the PYD’s model of governance could be a model for Syria.

support for Kurdish aims, autonomy, federation or whatever it is. They have stayed completely out of the politics there.” (B10, 2018)

“I think both the US and the UK have faced a similar problem. They deem the YPG to be a preferential security partner or a local force that they can work. But they have not really known how to reconcile this issue with the political goals of Kurds. For example, there have not been extensive contacts between the PYD and the British government that I have seen from my understanding. The government has tried to build the military relationship between the YPG and anti-ISIS coalition. It is something that both the US and UK have had in common.” (A8, 2017)

Accordingly, the participants in general underlined that military support provided by the US to the YPG and by the US/UK to the YPG-led SDF to fight ISIS in Syria did not mean that these countries would support the PYD’s political ambitions in Syria and would provide political support to its model of governance (B1, 2018; B5, 2018; B9, 2018; B10, 2018; B14, 2018; A7, 2017). This indicates that the US/UK’s military relationships with the YPG or the YPG-led SDF could not bring political benefits or political support for the PYD’s model of governance yet. It also demonstrates that the PYD was not successful at transforming such a military support into a political one during the concentrated period, from 2011 to 20th January 2017.

Third, the PYD addressed the correct audiences and obtained access to the policymaking communities in the US since 2015. However, there was a problem of abstractness regarding this frame when it presented the Kurds as the only side providing a tangible solution for the future of Syria (Muslim quoted in ANF, 2016c; in Kurdish Progress, 2016). Most of the US/UK participants underlined that there were other groups such as the KNC and the Syrian opposition or other countries such as Russia providing alternative solutions for Syria, except for the PYD. Additionally, the PYD’s solution was not perceived as the practical one:

“I do not know if that is true. The KNC has a similar political solution. I do not think that they are the only ones. There are liberal Syrians, who also propose something like the Kurds. They are the only ones, which control the territory for making a credible request. But there are lots of other people and groups making similar things.” (B10, 2018)

“I do not think that it is accurate. Assad is providing a political solution for the future of Syria, and so is Russia.” (A3, 2017)

“No, they are not providing a practical political solution. The PYD is not democratic. It is anti-Sunni Arab. It does not have relationships with a lot of Sunni Arabs.” (B5, 2018)

“That is not true. Everybody has got a practical solution generally to make themselves supreme.”

(B8, 2018)

Finally, Turkey’s position towards the PYD due the PKK and these countries’ mutual relations with Turkey affected these countries’ responsiveness towards this frame as well as their political relationship with the PYD (A9, 2017; A11, 2018; B1, 2018). Accordingly, these countries seemed to have approached the PYD’s political demands by considering Turkey’s concerns, although there were conflicting objectives between these countries and Turkey in Syria after the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane. This point increases the importance of “No solution without Turkey” counter-frame.

6.7 “No Solution without Turkey” vs. “A Political Solution for Syria”

The “no solution without Turkey” counter-frame used to convey the Turkish government’s two essential messages to the international community and the PYD. They were Turkey’s political stance for Syria since the early stages of the 2011 Syrian civil war which had progressive changes following the 2015 Russian intervention in Syria and the exclusion of the PYD from the negotiations concerning the political future of Syria. For Turkey’s political stance in Syria, the Turkish government advocated the policy of the territorial integrity of the country. Accordingly, Turkish government officials emphasised the heavy burden of the Syrian civil war on Turkey because of the refugee crisis (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2013a) and the border security issues (Arinc quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2013b) as a neighbouring country of Syria. Additionally, Turkey played a significant role in the formation of the political and military opposition bodies, the Syrian National Council, the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces and the FSA (Philips, 2018; Demirtas, 2013) with a purpose of a united opposition against the regime (Gunter, 2015). Turkish government also argued that President Assad should step aside (Davutoglu quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2013a, 2012d; Erdogan quoted in Anadolu Agency, 2012a). Secondly, the Turkish government utilised this counter-frame to prevent the invitation and inclusion of the PYD and its representatives to the UN Geneva peace negotiations and other discussions regarding the political future of Syria. Turkish government officials demonstrated that they would not tolerate the PYD’s model of governance in north and eastern Syria and the presence of the PYD representatives at any negotiations regarding the political future of Syria. Consequently, the Turkish government kept describing the PYD as identical to the PKK to pressure the countries wanting to include the PYD in the solution process.

First, the parliamentary transcripts and mainstream newspapers in the US/UK did not refer directly to this Turkish counter-frame. However, this counter-frame was compatible with the policy stances of the USUK in Syria, which was the territorial integrity of the country or a united Syria at the end (Gunter, 2014; B1, 2018). Mainly, the speeches of the UK politicians such as David Cameron (Hansard HC Deb., 26 November 2015) or Earl Howe (Hansard HL Deb., 8 December 2015) drew attention to the territorial integrity of Syria and urged the Syrian Kurds (the PYD) to respect this policy to be part of the negotiations for the political future of Syria. Only 3.3 % of pieces (27 out of 829 news articles, opinion pieces, and editorials concerning the Syrian conflict) in the UK newspapers referred to Turkey's opposition to the invitation of the PYD to the 2016 UN Geneva III negotiations. The US/UK participants, on the other hand, were responsive to this counter-frame, to a certain extent, compared to their responsiveness towards other Turkish government counter-frames against the strategic PYD frames. It demonstrates that this Turkish counter-frame managed to challenge the responsiveness of these countries towards the PYD's "a political solution for Syria" frame. In general, the participants underlined that the US/UK governments did not want to sacrifice their relationship with Turkey (A9, 2017) by developing political relations with the PYD (B1, 2018; B10, 2018) or supporting its political will (A7, 2017). Therefore, these countries only developed military relationship with the YPG in the context of security (B10, 2018; B11, 2018; A9, 2018; A8, 2017).

Additionally, compared to the PYD's argument, a tangible and practical solution to the future of Syria, the participants emphasised that the "no solution without Turkey" counter-frame was less abstract or more realistic due to the role of Turkey in the Syrian civil war since the beginning:

"I think Turkey has made it clear that it has something to say about the Kurdish aspirations. The northern shelf of Syria is going to be something where Turkey has influence moving forward. There is no question about it." (B9, 2018)

"That is sort of a true argument. Only in so far, any solution that excludes Turkey is potentially unstable. Turkey can retaliate. Look what they did in Afrin⁴⁷. They can militarily retaliate if they want to. They can close borders. They can make life very difficult for Syria like they did in Iraq after the referendum. They closed the border to the Iraqi Kurds. They shut up air traffic. They wanted to make sure that the PKK did not create a new foothold in Syria." (B10, 2018)

⁴⁷ To prevent the emergence of geographically connected cantonal administrations in Afrin, Kobane and Jazira, the Turkish military forces conducted the Operation Olive Branch against the PYD-YPG in Afrin in early 2018.

“Turkey will certainly demand that it has a significant degree of influence over the northern Syria. It is not going to entirely give that up for strategic reasons. When it comes to the discussions over the future political status of northern Syria, the Kurds in particular, Turkey will have a strong say. It will clearly oppose any attempts to give significant autonomy to the Kurdish groups.” (A8, 2017)

This counter-frame indicated that the US/UK were more responsive to the strategic PYD frames, which described ISIS as the main problem and presented the Kurds or their methods as solutions to these problems. Therefore, the Turkish counter-frames, which countered these arguments, could not challenge these countries’ responsiveness towards the strategic PYD frames as expected. The overlapping policy objectives between the US/UK governments and the PYD against ISIS in Syria and conflicting goals between these countries and Turkey were main factors for this result. However, the “no solution without Turkey” counter-frame managed to challenge the responsiveness of the US/UK participants towards “a political solution for Syria” frame. Although, there was an issue of conflicting objectives in Syria, the overlapping policy stances between the US/UK and Turkey regarding the political future of Syria, a united Syria and its territorial integrity, seemed to have been the main reason for this frame’s challenge to “a political solution for Syria” frame.

6.8 Conclusion

The chapter argued that without considering the policy objectives of the US/UK in Syria, these countries’ responsiveness towards strategic PYD frames and the challenges of the Turkish government counter-frames may not be merely explained through the frames and counter-frames’ characteristics, creation, presentation and interaction. When the policy objectives of the PYD regarding ISIS in Syria overlapped with those of the US/UK governments, the PYD’s framing efforts and strategies became effective. Consequently, the targeted audiences were more responsive to the strategic PYD frames. The Turkish government counter-frames, therefore, could not challenge these countries’ responsiveness towards the strategic PYD frames. More specifically, the US/UK were more responsive to the “protection of Europe/West” and “only effective force against ISIS” frames than “a political solution for Syria” frame. The Turkish government counter-frames, the “Securing NATO and the European countries” and “the most effective ally against ISIS” could not challenge these countries’ responsiveness towards the “protection of Europe/West” and “only effective force against ISIS” frames. This could mainly be explained through the overlapping policy objectives of the US/UK

governments and the PYD against ISIS in Syria. However, the “no solution without Turkey” counter-frame, which targeted the PYD and its “a political solution for Syria” frame, to a certain extent, confronted the PYD’s regional role model frame and challenged these countries’ responsiveness towards the PYD’s model of governance and its invitation to the negotiations for the political future of Syria.

Like the previous one, this chapter has contributed to the literature on the framing in ethnic lobbying within the US (Hermer-Kovács, 2013; Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002) and the UK by analysing the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the strategic PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames’ potential challenge to their responsiveness. It has mainly explained the strategic framing success through the responsiveness of the US/UK towards the strategic PYD frames by considering the challenges of the Turkish government counter-frames against them as the interaction between frames and counter-frames during the period between March 2011 and 20th January 2017. In so doing, the chapter has also borrowed the concepts of frame resonance as the factors regarding the credibility of framing and factors applicable to the target of mobilisation (Ketelaars, 2016; Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005; Benford and Snow, 2000). These concepts have been reconceptualised to explain the responsiveness of the targeted countries towards the frames as a new perspective in the ethnic lobbying within the US/UK.

As underlined in the chapter 5, only Scott and Osman (2002) and Koinova (2011) discussed the concept of responsiveness in the context of ethnic lobbying in the US. Scott and Osman (2002) implicitly investigated the responsiveness of the African American lobbying elites towards different issues in their homeland to mobilise their community for lobbying. Lobbying elites were more responsive to the issues in South Africa because of the commonality of circumstances in daily lives of the African Americans in the US and people of South Africa due to the discrimination against the black people. Elites were less responsive to the problem in Rwanda compared to the one in South Africa since the problem was between black people. Koinova (2011) has changed the focus from the lobbying elites to the political elites by analysing the responsiveness of US policymakers towards the Lebanese and Albanian lobbies in the US. This chapter has brought a new perspective to these studies analysing the responsiveness of the targeted countries, the US/UK, towards the strategic PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames’ potential challenges against the strategic PYD frames. The chapter has also detailed the scope of responsiveness as the responsiveness of policymakers

(Brown, 2013) and mainstream newspapers (Kornprobst, 2019). In so doing, it did not only focus on the responsiveness towards the strategic frames. It has also considered the impact of counter-frames on this responsiveness as well as the policy stances and objectives of the US/UK in Syria within the concentrated period as the expectations of targeted audiences (Desrosiers, 2012). The next chapter will discuss the responses to the research questions and the contributions to the related research fields

Chapter 7 Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

The conclusion chapter has two aims. First, it provides responses to the main and secondary research questions by referring to the developed arguments in each chapter. Second, the chapter discusses the thesis' contribution to the related research fields, the existing literature on the Syrian Kurds or the Kurdish politics in Syria, the Turkish government lobbying in the US/UK, framing in the ethnic lobbying within the US/UK as well as the literature on framing in the social movements.

7.2 Responses to the Research Questions

This thesis has explored two types of research questions. The first type analysed how the PYD lobbied for its model of governance and the fight against ISIS by applying framing in the US/UK and the Turkish-government had counter-lobbied against the PYD lobbying through counter-framing. These questions focused on framing, not only as a lobbying strategy but also processes of the PYD framing and the Turkish government counter-framing. In so doing, they analysed the type of frames that the PYD and the Turkish government employed for their lobbying the US/UK in the period from March 2011 to 20th January 2017. These processes discussed the characteristics of frames and counter-frames through their creation and presentation as well as their interaction.

The framing process of the PYD has been conceptualised as normative and strategic processes following the favourable political opportunities of the 2011 Syrian civil war for the Syrian Kurds since March 2011. Briefly, the Kurdish political parties in Syria was declared illegal by the Syrian regime and acted as underground ones until the outbreak of the 2011 civil war (Allsopp, 2015). Following the civil war, there were three favourable political opportunities for the Syrian Kurds. The first was the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in March 2011 with the impact of Arab uprisings in the Middle East. The Assad regime seems to have changed its policy towards the Syrian Kurds by granting citizenship to the stateless Kurds and revising the decisions regarding the basic Kurdish rights to prevent their involvement in the protests against the regime (Allsopp, 2015). In this period, the PYD began preparing to practise Abdullah Ocalan's Democratic Confederalism model as a model of governance in northern Syria (Muslim

quoted in KurdWatch, 2011) and other Kurdish parties in Syria established the KNC (Allsopp, 2015). There were also new attempts in the Kurdish politics of Syria, under the moderation of the KRG President Masoud Barzani through which the PYD and the KNC representatives came together to have a united Kurdish policy in Syria (Allsopp and Wilgenburg, 2019; Allsopp, 2015). The second favourable opportunity was the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 with the start of Aleppo battle to focus on more central areas like Aleppo (Gunter, 2014). The Kurdish parties filled the authority, and security gaps in the region (Allsopp, 2013) and particularly, the PYD became a dominant party because of its armed forces (Savelsberg and Tejel, 2013). The PYD also used this opportunity to practise Abdullah Ocalan's model of governance (Allsopp, 2015) and lobby for political support of the European countries for this model. Finally, the rise of ISIS in 2014 was the last opportunity for the PYD. In the ongoing process of the Aleppo battle, the different Islamist military groups entered Syria to fight the Assad regime and control some territories over the Aleppo Governorate between 2011 and 2014 which led the rise of ISIS in 2014 (Kusilek, 2019). Instead of a direct military involvement to fight ISIS, US urged regional forces to do the fight (Philips, 2018) and the Obama administration sought a ground partner to fight ISIS in Syria (Paasche and Gunter, 2016). Starting from the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, the PYD's military wing, the YPG, developed relationships with the US Special Forces and the US-led global coalition for fighting ISIS (Thornton, 2015). The PYD used this relationship to gain territories through capturing strategic towns such as Manbij and Al-Bab from ISIS (Muslim quoted in ANF, 2016b; Abdurrahman, 2016) and to legitimise its model of governance and lobbying in the US and the European countries (Paasche and Gunter, 2016; Federici, 2015).

This thesis conceptualises these opportunities in the context of Benford and Snow's (2000;1992) social movement approach as starting points for the dynamic framing efforts of the PYD in the US/UK as normative and strategic framing processes. The normative and strategic framing processes take place at the same time and are not independent processes. However, the thesis conceptualises these processes separately to understand relative responsiveness of the US/UK towards these frames when they are presented as normative and strategic frames by considering the ongoing developments between March 2011 and 20th January 2017. The normative process addresses the lobbying efforts of the PYD by applying normative frames. It demonstrates how the PYD representatives sought to convince why the US/UK should support its model of governance by creating and presenting normative frames,

the “regional role model” and “defending human values against ISIS” depending on the developments in this period.

The framing process indicates the how the PYD had a chance to practise the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan’s model of governance in northern Syria (Muslim quoted in KurdWatch, 2011). The process also shows how the PYD leadership called their model of governance as social democracy or democratic socialism (PYD’s Party Program, 2013), being inspired by Murray Bookchin’s far-leftist, anarchist libertarian municipality (Allsopp, 2015; Gunter, 2014), but how they framed and presented this model of governance as a Western-style, liberal democracy due to its interaction with the US/UK by considering their expectations in Syria. In this framing process, the PYD framed this model as a blueprint or prototype for the Middle East and presented as a Western-style/liberal democracy by accentuating its main principles, the grass-roots participation, equality of men and women at the administrative and military units, peaceful coexistence with other minorities and linguistic rights for people. Findings indicate that following the start of the ISIS siege on Kobane in September 2014, “defending human values against ISIS” frame was created. This frame mainly refers to the ideological differences between the PYD and ISIS by underlining the moral stance of the PYD against ISIS. This frame presents the Kurdish YPG militias as a solution to ISIS problem. It also describes the PYD Kurds and their model of governance as defenders of internationally recognised moral values against ISIS brutality. This frame also refers to some key topics, which are dominant in the parliamentary transcripts and mainstream newspapers in the US/UK. These findings demonstrate that as an organisation having leftist or socialist ideology, the PYD, instrumentally utilised norms, liberal values such as democracy and human rights or the foreign policy discourses of the US, promoting democracy in the Middle East and war on terror, to appeal the US/UK. These are common strategies of the ethnic lobbying campaigns in the US, and to some extent in the UK applied by ethnic lobbies (Herner-Kovács, 2013; Vanderbush, 2009; Kirk, 2008; Shain, 1999), which attempted to make the regime changes in their homelands (Vanderbush, 2009; Shain, 1994) or sought sovereignty (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011) through the support of these countries. However, the thesis details these analyses by focusing on the utilisation of norms, values and foreign policy discourses for a normative framing through creating and presenting normative frames as a dynamic process in the context of ethnic lobbying.

The strategic framing process addresses the lobbying efforts of the PYD through applying strategic frames. It explains how the PYD representatives sought to convince why the US/UK could provide military support to the YPG's fight against ISIS in Syria and; as a result, political support to the PYD's model of governance due to the YPG's contribution to the fight against ISIS. The strategic framing process has been addressed through the creation and presentation of strategic frames, the "protection of Europe/West", "only effective force against ISIS" and "a political solution for Syria". The findings demonstrate that by articulating the protection of Europe/West frame, the PYD leadership aligned its policy objective of fighting ISIS threat to its gains with those of the US/UK in the Middle East. The PYD also appealed to the US foreign policy discourse, "war on terror", as an effective way of increasing the targeted audiences' responsiveness towards their frames in the US (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). The alignment of objectives and appealing to the "war on terror" discourse (Vanderbush, 2009; Kirk, 2008) are common strategies at the lobbying campaigns of ethnic lobbies in the US. By considering these points, the thesis has conceptualised such an alignment in the context of framing approach. It has also analysed how these strategies are applied to create and present specific frames for lobbying the US/UK by considering the impact of ongoing developments in the Syrian civil war between 2011 and 2017. It appears that this framing strategy provided some positive results to the PYD, especially after the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane depending on the PYD's risen visibility through the YPG's relative success against ISIS (Federici, 2015). Consequently, the Kurdish effectiveness against ISIS was utilised to legitimise and lobby for the PYD's model of governance through the "only effective force against ISIS" frame, which encouraged the PYD representatives to sell their model as a solution for Syria during the negotiations on the political future of the country.

These findings are significant due to the following reasons. First, they indicate that how the PYD utilised the political opportunities for presenting its nationalist project at the international plethora. By analysing these opportunities as a process, the findings demonstrate what type of strategies the PYD used to sell its leftist, socialist democracy and how the PYD presented this model as a Western-style, liberal democracy while interacting the US/UK by considering these countries' policies, priorities and expectations in Syria within the concentrated period. Second, the thesis focuses on the relatively new lobbying organisation, the PYD, and its external engagement efforts in the US/UK by lobbying through framing from outside these countries. The PYD had no access to the UK until the Syrian civil war, and to the US until the

end of Kobane siege in 2015. But the PYD representatives tried to use their only method, framing, by creating and presenting their frames and tried to engage with the policymakers and media in these countries externally from outside to grab their attention to the PYD's model of governance. Especially following the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, it seems that the PYD managed to achieve this purpose. It also managed to gain access to the policymaking communities of the US through the fight against ISIS. These findings could be example for other lobbies seeking to gain access to the policymaking communities in the US as well as to raise awareness regarding their nationalist projects.

As part of the first type of questions, the thesis has also analysed the counter-lobbying efforts of Turkish government officials through their counter-framing against the PYD framing in the US/UK. The existing debates on the Turkish lobbying in the US focus on the relative effectiveness of Turkey in general and its counter-lobbying efforts against the Armenian lobbies, which sought to convince the US authorities for the recognition of the genocide allegations (Zarifian, 2018; Ambroiso, 2002c). Their analyses are based on either the general counter-lobbying strategies of Turkey through the Turkish lobbying mechanisms and representatives of the Turkish government (Zarifian, 201) or Turkish lobbies' alliance formation with the powerful pro-Israeli lobbies and its contribution to the effectiveness of Turkish lobbying in the US (Ambrosio, 2002c). Since there is no research on the Turkish government lobbying in the UK, this thesis is the first scholarly analysis of the Turkish government lobbying in the UK, which concentrates on the counter-frames and counter-framing policies of the current Turkish government from March 2011 to 20th January 2017. The findings of this thesis are also important for the Turkish lobbying in the US (Zarifian, 2018; Ambroiso, 2002c) since it analyses the counter-framing as a specific counter-lobbying strategy for a government lobbying and its potential effectiveness. In so doing, the thesis did not only perceive counter-framing as a lobbying strategy, but also as a dynamic process. Analysis of counter-framing as a dynamic process helps identify framing policies of the Turkish government for the creation and presentation of counter-frames. It also demonstrates the impact of the ongoing developments in the Syrian civil war on the counter-frames' creation, presentation as well as their interaction with the PYD frames to challenge them (Snow and Benford, 2000).

The counter-framing policies of the Turkish government, therefore, have been explained as characterisation and counter-framing processes. Turkish government officials mainly used the

characterisation frames, which are applied to undermine the legitimacy of opponents or to raise doubts about their motivations (Kaufman et al., 2013). Government officials also created and presented other counter-frames to challenge the strategic PYD framing and convince the US/UK why they should not support the PYD's model of governance and the YPG's fight against ISIS in Syria. This analysis helps understand the characteristics of the Turkish government counter-frames by considering the relationship between characteristics of frames (Ketelaars, 2016) and their capacity to influence the targeted audiences (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). The characterisation process of the Turkish government has been analysed through the creation and presentation of negative characterisation frames, "the PYD is a terrorist organisation", "the PYD's alleged cooperation with the Assad regime", and "the PYD's alleged ethnic cleansing". This analysis has also demonstrated these counter-frames' interaction with the normative PYD frames, the "regional role model" and "defending human values against ISIS". In this process, Turkish government officials accentuated the PYD's ties to the PKK to label it as a terrorist organisation like the PKK. They emphasised the alleged relationship between a reputed terrorist organisation, the PYD, and the internationally de-legitimised Assad regime (Yacoubian, 2017). They also described the YPG actions against Arabs and Turkmens in northern Syria as ethnic cleansing. Such a description was based on Arabs and Turkmens' arguments that the PYD had attempted to make demographic changes in northern Syria by displacing these people forcefully from the region to create a state-like entity in the guise of fighting ISIS.

The counter-framing efforts of the Turkish government also includes the creation and presentation of counter-frames against the strategic PYD frames. The Turkish counter-frames are the "most effective ally against ISIS", "securing NATO and the European countries" and "no solution without Turkey". In the countering process, these frames interacted with the strategic PYD frames, the "only effective force against ISIS", "protection of Europe/West" and "a political solution for Syria", respectively. These counter-frames are not entirely independent from the negative characterisation frames. In other words, these counter-frames are based on the negative characterisation frames. However, the main difference is that they primarily focus on the Turkish government's actions against ISIS or other terrorist groups, its Syria policy as well as its policy stance towards the political future of Syria. As discussed in chapter 1 on the ideology of the Kurdish political movement, the PYD is the Syrian affiliate of the PKK (Gunter, 2014; Allsopp, 2015), and the PKK has been at war with the Turkish state since 1984 (Gunter,

2000). Even though there have been ceasefires between the Turkish state and the PKK from time to time, regardless of their political ideologies, Turkish governments have always perceived the PKK as a terrorist organisation and a national security threat to the country (Eccarius-Kelly and Musa, 2018; Gunter, 2014; 2000; Barkey and Fuller, 1998). In this regard, the existing AKP government's position towards the PYD has been shaped by its stance against the PKK (Eccarius-Kelly and Musa, 2018). Additionally, the YPG-led SDF's territorial gains in the Arab majority areas like Manbij with the airstrikes of the global coalition (Kusilek, 2019) urged Turkey to prioritise and counter the PYD-YPG threat in Syria (Philips, 2018).

Accordingly, the Turkish government's counter-framing against the PYD framing demonstrates the impact of the long-term hostility against an opponent on creating and presenting counter-frames to interact with the frames of opponent and challenge them in the context of a government lobbying. In addition to Turkey, the US and the EU countries designated the PKK as a terrorist organisation (Gunter, 2014), which includes the UK. These counter-framing processes also indicate that how a domestic Turkish national security concerns regarding the PYD in Syria due to its links with the PKK in Turkey could become a regional issue for Turkey following the outbreak of the 2011 Syrian civil war. It also shows how Turkey's the PYD-YPG and the PKK concerns became a counter-lobbying matter for a Turkish government in the US/UK. In this way, the thesis shows how the US-led global coalition's support for the PYD-YPG in the fight against ISIS adversely affected the Turkish government's relations with its NATO allies, especially with the Obama administration of the US after the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane due to Turkey's security concerns regarding the PYD-YPG and the PKK as well as different approaches of the US and Turkey towards the PYD-YPG (Parlar Dal, 2016). Thus, the PYD-PKK issue became a matter for the Turkish government lobbying in these countries and the Turkish government utilised counter-frames for a government lobbying. As will be addressed below, this analysis also helps understand characteristics of counter-frames (Ketelaars, 2016) and the expectations of the targeted audiences (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). Characteristics of frames or counter-frames are not only factors but the significant ones to explain the targeted audiences' responsiveness towards frames while discussing framing success (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005).

The second type of questions mainly analysed framing success by focusing on the PYD frames and considering the Turkish government counter-frames' interaction with the PYD frames to

challenge their potential success. Especially, research on framing in ethnic lobbying in the US investigates ethnic lobbying success and framing is acknowledged as a facilitator of a successful ethnic lobbying campaign (Herner-Kovacs, 2013; Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002). Although framing plays a role in bringing lobbying success in these studies, its role is vaguely addressed and is less clear. Only Ambrosio's (2002b) study has come close to focusing on the utilisation of frames for lobbying through the case of Armenian lobbying on the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict against Azerbaijan to stop the US foreign aid to this country. Yet this study has implicitly addressed the importance of the Armenian lobbyists in terms of frame producers' perceived credibility (Benford and Snow, 2000) due to their role of providing information and policy analyses to the US policymakers for a while. Additionally, this study has investigated another successful lobbying campaign through utilisation of frames. However, this analysis requires detailing to better explain the utilisation of frames for lobbying by especially examining their characteristics through their creation and presentation process. Therefore, this thesis details the utilisation of framing and seeks to understand the role of frames in ethnic lobbying within the concentrated period. It explains framing success by concentrating on the US/UK's responsiveness towards frames. This analysis considers the characteristics of frames and counter-frames (Ketelaars, 2016, Princen, 2011), the US/UK policy stances regarding the political future of Syria and their policy objectives in Syria from March 2011 to 20th January 2017 as the expectations of targeted audiences (Desrosiers, 2012).

The findings support Haney and Vanderbush (1999) and Garrett's (1978) premises. These experts emphasised that the US governments and government officials always prioritised the US national interests. Consequently, US government officials could be more responsive to ethnic lobbies so long as these groups' policies are favourable for the US policy objectives. The findings also expand these premises from the US to the UK governments and government officials. In this regard, when the policy objectives of the PYD in Syria concerning ISIS overlapped with those of the US/UK governments, the framing efforts and strategies of the PYD representatives seemed to have been quite effective. Consequently, these countries were more responsive to the PYD frames describing ISIS as a main problem and providing the PYD's solution to this problem. Accordingly, these countries were more responsive to the "defence of human values against ISIS" normative frame than the "regional role model" one although they presented common component themes such as grassroots participation, equality of men and women (gender equality), peaceful coexistence with other minorities and linguistic rights for

people. It appears that the emergence of ISIS as policy priorities of the US/UK governments in Syria increased policymakers' responsiveness towards the "defence of human values against ISIS" frame. Likewise, the parliamentary transcripts and mainstream newspapers had more reference to these component themes in the "defence of human values against ISIS" frame compared to their presentation through the "regional role model" frame. This can only be explained through the presentation of the "defence of human values against ISIS" frame as a counter-terrorism issue, which could increase the frames' capacity to influence the audiences in the US due to the 9/11 terror threat (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005). Additionally, the US/UK were more responsive to the strategic PYD frames than its normative ones. Specifically, these countries were more responsive to the frames, the "defence of human values against ISIS", "protection of Europe/West" and "only effective force against ISIS" than the "regional role model" and "a political solution for Syria" frames since these frames were presented as alternative set of solutions to ISIS issue.

In accordance with Honey and Vanderbush (1999) and Garrett's (1978) premises, the interaction between the PYD frames and the Turkish government counter-frames demonstrate following results. When the policy stances of the US/UK governments and the Turkish government one regarding the political future of Syria overlapped, the Turkish government counter-frames managed to challenge the PYD ones. In terms of policy objectives in Syria, when the policy objectives of the Turkish government and those of the US/UK overlapped on Syria without Assad before the rise of ISIS, the Turkish government counter-frames, "PYD is a terrorist organisation" and the "PYD's alleged cooperation with the Assad regime", to a certain extent, challenged these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD's regional role model frame. When these objectives in Syria conflicted after the rise of ISIS in 2014, especially after the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane, the Turkish government counter-frame, the "PYD's alleged ethnic cleansing" could not challenge these countries' responsiveness towards the "defence of human values against ISIS" frame. Although the Turkish government had serious arguments against the PYD-YPG such as "ethnic cleansing" "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity", they could not challenge the YPG's position and the PYD frames regarding ISIS.

As such, the findings detail the concept of responsiveness in the ethnic lobbying within the US/UK. Only Scott and Osman (2002) and Koinova (2011) have analysed the responsiveness in the ethnic lobbying within the US. Scott and Osman (2002) have concentrated on the

responsiveness of African American lobbying elites towards different issues in their homelands due to the communality of circumstances in the US and in their homelands to address the resonance of happenings in the homeland and host country. Koinova (2011), on the other hand, has altered the focus from lobbying elites to political elites by analysing the responsiveness of US policymakers towards lobbying efforts of the Lebanese and Albanians in the US. By building on these studies and developing a novel perspective, the findings detail the concept of responsiveness in ethnic lobbying in two ways. First, findings extend the scope of the concept of responsiveness by not only applying to ethnic lobbying in the US but also to the UK. Second, it adds the responsiveness of mainstream newspapers in the US/UK towards frames to the concept of responsiveness as another targeted component in ethnic lobbying (Honey and Vanderbush, 1999) to assess framing success. As such, it addresses the responsiveness as the responsiveness of policymakers and mainstream newspapers of the US/UK towards frames and their interaction with counter-frames. In so doing, the results seek to indicate the relationship between these countries' policy stances and objectives in Syria since the beginning of the 2011 Syrian civil war and their impact on these countries' responsiveness towards the PYD frames and the Turkish counter-frames.

Studies in ethnic lobbying and conflict framing indicate the importance of the credibility of framing and, particularly frame producers' perceived credibility (Benford and Snow, 2000) in explaining framing success for policymakers (Ambroiso, 2002b) and public (Matesan, 2012). The findings of this thesis demonstrate that the credibility of framing and frame producers are dependent on the targeted countries' policy objectives. While before the emergence of ISIS, the credibility of the PYD and its representatives were quite problematic due to PYD's links to the PKK. However, following the rise of ISIS as a serious terror threat, the credibility issue of PYD representatives became less significant because of the overlapping policy objectives, especially, between the US government, the military bureaucracy of the US and the PYD. When the PYD presented the "protection of Europe/West" frame as a solution to ISIS problem and emphasised the YPG's effectiveness against ISIS, its representatives gained some credibility and visibility (Federici, 2015). Meanwhile, the reliability of Turkish government officials became more problematic due to the conflicting policy objectives between the US/UK governments and the Turkish government after the rise of ISIS and mainly after the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane (Gunter, 2015; Federici, 2015).

Additionally, the findings demonstrate that creating new frames, the strategic ones, by describing ISIS as a main problem and presenting the Kurdish YPG militias as a solution to this problem, the PYD had some gains during this dynamic framing process. For instance, the PYD representatives managed to obtain access to the policymaking communities of the US following the liberation of Kobane from ISIS in 2015. They also increased their visibility in the UK. The PYD also succeeded in receiving military support such as weapons and ammunition for the YPG's fight against ISIS. They gained visibility, which had increased their legitimisation and lobbying efforts for the status of the north and eastern Syria and their model of governance, yet there is no official recognition to its status since the civil war is still going on in Syria. In this case, the Turkish government counter-frames, which targeted the YPG's fight against ISIS, require more comprehensive approach. In other words, participants underlined that Turkey could have been more effective partner in the fight against ISIS. Accordingly, there was an expectation that the Turkish government should have provided a convincing alternative solution to defeat ISIS in Syria in the case of excluding the YPG from this fight. It appears that undermining the YPG by emphasising its links with the PKK or merely producing counter-narratives against the PYD-YPG did not work as expected. Similarly, the Turkish government's actions against ISIS in Syria were perceived quite late. However, the Turkish government seemed to have achieved some gains through counter-framing. For example, it forced the US to establish the SDF by propagating that the US works with a reputed terrorist organisation, the YPG (Philips, 2018). It also prevented the invitation of the PYD or its representatives to the UN Geneva III peace negotiations regarding the political future of Syria (Ibid). In this way, the Turkish government prevented the official discussion of the PYD's model of governance as a potential alternative solution for the future of Syria at the UN Geneva peace negotiations. Additionally, the Turkish government urged the US/UK not to provide political/diplomatic support to the PYD's model of governance in the north and eastern Syria, which is still a matter of discussion.

7.3 Contributions to the Related Research Fields

This thesis analyses how the PYD framed its model of governance and the YPG's fight against ISIS for lobbying the US/UK. It also focuses on the counter-lobbying efforts of the Turkish government against the PYD framing through counter-framing. The framing and counter-framing efforts of the PYD and the Turkish government have been conceptualised as dynamic processes in the context of ethnic lobbying. The utilisation of frames and counter-frames for a

purpose of ethnic lobbying by lobbying sides are also analysed. Consequently, the thesis makes contributions to four research fields.

First, it contributes to the existing literature on the Syrian Kurds or Kurdish politics in Syria. The current literature on the Syrian Kurds accepts the outbreak of the 2011 civil war as a historical opportunity for the Syrian Kurds (Allsopp, 2015; 2013; Federici, 2015; Gunter, 2014) and the one which could change the Kurdish politics and the map of the Middle East on behalf of the Kurds (Allsopp, 2013). The thesis approaches the periodical developments since the outbreak of the 2011 Syrian civil war holistically and analyses them as a whole process through social movement framing approach (Benford and Snow, 2000). The existing literature periodically discusses/reviews the latest developments regarding the Syrian Kurds as recent pieces. The literature also refers to other political opportunities, especially for the PYD. These opportunities are the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 (Allsopp, 2017; 2013; Federici, 2015; Gunter, 2014; Savelsberg and Tejel, 2013) with the start of Aleppo battle (Kusilek, 2019) and the rise of ISIS in 2014 (Allsopp, 2017; Gunter, 2015; Federici, 2015) within the ongoing process of Aleppo battle (Kusilek, 2019). Those pieces discuss the Syrian Kurds' efforts to seize these opportunities in the context of the regional politics of the Middle East (Allsopp, 2017; Gunter, 2015; 2014; Federici, 2015), they analyse the rise of the PYD in the Kurdish politics of Syria after the civil war through its affiliated organisations and their mobilisation for practising the PYD's model of governance in Syria by considering the PYD's ideological links with the PKK (Kaya and Lowe, 2017; Paasche, 2015) and its relations with other regional (Kaya and Lowe, 2017; Paasche, 2015; Gunes and Lowe, 2015; Gunter, 2014) or international actors (Wilgenburg and Allsopp, 2019; Kardas and Yesiltas, 2018; Allsopp, 2017; Gunter, 2014). Additionally, the major publications regarding the Syrian Kurds concentrate on the Kurdish question in Syria through the combination of anthropological, historic, sociological and political perspectives (Tejel, 2009), the periodical developments in the context of the Syrian civil war and their impact on the regional and international politics of the Syrian Kurds (Gunter, 2014), the changes in the Kurdish politics and political parties due to the impact of the Syrian civil war (Allsopp, 2015) as well as the identity and representation in the context of the PYD's model of governance (Allsopp and Wilgenburg, 2019). All these publications discuss the PYD's efforts to seize these political opportunities in the context of the regional politics of the Middle East (Allsopp, 2017; Gunter, 2015; 2014; Federici, 2015).

The thesis differs from these major publications by developing a new perspective. It approaches those political opportunities to analyse the Syrian Kurds' external engagement in the US/UK for lobbying as a dynamic framing process through the creation and presentation (Kaufman et al, 2013) of the PYD frames in the context of the social movement framing approach, which is developed by Benford and Snow (2000; 1992). As a novel approach, the thesis conceptualises the utilisation of the three favourable opportunities, the outbreak of the 2011 Syrian civil war, the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 with the start of the Aleppo Battle and the rise of ISIS in 2014 within the ongoing process of Aleppo Battle, by the PYD to frame its model of governance and lobby the US/UK externally outside these countries, between March 2011 and 20th January 2017. The three critical and favourable political opportunities are conceptualised as starting points for the creation and presentation (Kaufman et al., 2013) of the PYD frames through which the PYD leadership articulated "alternative set of arrangements" (Benford and Snow, 2000; p.613) and provided alternative solutions (Snow and Benford, 1992) for the issues of Syria to lobby the US/UK externally. This is a novel contribution to the Kurdish politics in Syria through the analysis of the process of the PYD representatives' external engagement with the US/UK policymakers and media in these countries for two reasons. First, it demonstrates how the PYD gained a chance to practise the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan's Democratic Confederalism model following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, as a model of governance, first in northern Syria (Muslim quoted in KurdWatch, 2011), then in eastern Syria (Wilgenburg and Allsopp, 2019). Second, it illustrates how the PYD representatives called such a model of governance as a social democracy or democratic socialism (PYD's Party Program, 2013), being inspired by Murray Bookchin's far-leftist, anarchist, libertarian municipality (Allsopp, 2015; Gunter, 2014), but how they sought to sell it during their framing process for lobbying as a Western-style and liberal democracy following their interaction with the US/UK in Syria by considering these countries' policy objectives and expectations.

Second, the thesis contributes to the literature on the Turkish government lobbying in the US/UK through a counter-framing approach (Kaufman et al., 2013; Gray, 2003; Benford and Snow, 2000). The current literature on the Turkish government lobbying in the US concentrates on the counter-lobbying efforts of Turkey against the Armenian lobbies and their genocide allegations (Zarifian, 2018; Ambrosio, 2002c). These studies seek to explain the effectiveness of Turkish counter-lobbying strategies by analysing the general lobbying strategies of Turkey

through lobbying mechanisms and representatives of the Turkish government⁴⁸ in the US (Zarifian, 2018) or alliance formation strategy between Turkish lobbies and powerful pro-Israeli lobbies (Ambrosio, 2002c). This thesis develops a new perspective in the Turkish lobbying within the US. It focuses on the counter-lobbying efforts of the current Turkish government against the PYD framing through a specific lobbying strategy, counter-framing by examining how the Turkish government counter-framed against the PYD framing and what type of frames the government employed. The thesis also approaches the counter-framing not only as a lobbying strategy but also a dynamic process through the creation and presentation of counter-frames (Kaufman et al., 2013). Accordingly, the thesis analyses the counter-frames' characteristics (Ketelaars, 2016; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005), their interaction with the PYD frames and their utilisation for a government lobbying in the US.

Additionally, this is the first scholarly analysis of the lobbying efforts of a Turkish government through counter-framing approach in the UK being independent from the Turkish governments' lobbying efforts in the European Countries for Turkey's EU membership. This analysis indicates how the Turkish government tried to block the lobbying efforts of the PYD leadership, which managed to obtain access to the UK since 2012 to sell its model of governance through a specific counter-lobbying strategy, counter-framing for a government lobbying. The counter-framing efforts of the Turkish government are significant to show how a domestic PYD issue in Syria became a regional issue for Turkey following the withdrawal of the Syrian government forces from northern Syria in July 2012 with the start of Aleppo battle due to the PYD's ideological links with the PKK. In other words, it explains how Turkey's security concerns based on the PYD in Syria due to its links with the PKK in Turkey became a counter-lobbying matter for a Turkish government in the US/UK. This also addresses how the US-led global coalition's support for the PYD-YPG in the fight against ISIS deteriorated the Turkish government's relations with its NATO ally, the US, especially with the Obama administration, after the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane due to Turkey's security concerns regarding the PYD-YPG and the PKK (Parlar Dal, 2016). The dynamic counter-framing process also explains how the ongoing developments in the Syrian civil war affected the characteristics of the Turkish government counter-frames, and especially the Turkish government's relationship with the US government during the Obama administration. More significantly, the thesis indicates how the

⁴⁸ These strategies were diplomatic pressure on the executive branch and Congress through diplomatic visits, hiring lobbying firms or investing in public relations to influence the media and academia (Zarifian, 2018).

PYD-YPG and the PKK issue became a matter for a Turkish government lobbying in the US/UK after the 2011 Syrian civil war, particularly following the alliance between the YPG and the US-led global coalition since the 2014 ISIS siege on Kobane.

Third, the thesis contributes to the literature on framing in the ethnic lobbying within the US/UK through following ways. Empirically, it analyses the lobbying efforts of a relatively new lobbying organisation, the PYD, through framing its model of governance outside the US/UK as a new case. This is because the PYD and its representatives could not exist institutionally in the Washington D.C. until 2018. The PYD representatives had also no access to the policymaking communities of the US until the end of the Kobane siege in 2015. In the UK, the PYD had a representative and a member of foreign affairs committee since 2012. Theoretically, the thesis contributes to the literature on the ethnic lobbying in the US/UK. It applies the social movement framing approach (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005) in ethnic lobbying and analyses the PYD framing through the creation and presentation of frames (Kaufman et al., 2013) as a dynamic process. The current literature on the ethnic lobbying in the US/UK approaches framing as one of the methods applied by lobbyists and perceive it as a facilitator of successful ethnic lobbying (Herner-Kovács, 2013; Kirk, 2008; Reese and Ramirez, 2002) or a moderate strategy for lobbies' mobilisation (Koinova, 2014; 2013; 2011). Since they investigate what makes an ethnic lobbying successful and focus on the mobilisation of ethnic lobbies, these studies prioritise the analysis of successful lobbying process or the process of mobilisation over the framing process.

Only Ambrosio's (2002b) study has come close to focusing on the framing as a process by investigating the framing policies of the Armenian lobby in the US through its frames. Yet it requires detailing to better explain the utilisation of frames for lobbying. This can be done by analysing the characteristics of frames through social movement framing approach (Ketelaars, 2016; Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005; Benford and Snow, 2000). It requires focusing on the frames' creation and presentation as a dynamic process (Kaufman et al., 2013) and developments in the concentrated period, which could play a role in affecting the characteristics of frames during their creation and presentation. This analysis also provides hints concerning the objectives and expectations of the targeted audiences within the concentrated period (Snow and Corrigan-Brown, 2005; Swart, 1995). The thesis, therefore, details Ambrosio's (2002b) study by examining the utilisation of frames for lobbying (Princen, 2011) in the US/UK. It

conceptualises the utilisation of norms (Koinova, 2011), values (Herner-Kovacs, 2013; Shain, 1999; 1994) and foreign policy discourses (Vanderbush, 2009; Kirk, 2008; Ambrosio, 2002b; Shain, 1999; 1994) as normative and strategic framing processes. Through such conceptualisation, the thesis analyses the frames' characteristics (Ketelaars, 2016) and the relationship between the developments in the concentrated period and their impact on frames' characteristics (Swart, 1995). Characteristics of frames are significant to understand their capacity to influence the targeted audiences (Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2005). Thus, the thesis contributes to this body of literature by analysing framing not only as a lobbying strategy for the Syrian Kurdish lobbying but also a dynamic process and it refines the role of frames in ethnic lobbying.

The final contribution is to the literature on the social movement framing by explaining framing success through the concept of responsiveness. The responsiveness refers to the attitudes of policymakers of the targeted countries towards lobbying efforts of ethnic groups or diasporic communities (Koinova, 2011). In literature on the social movement framing, framing success is explained through the concept of resonance. The concept is coined by Snow and Benford (1988) to focus on the mobilisation capacity of frames amongst the targeted audiences which led them take part in the protests or movements' activities (Benford and Snow, 2000). The resonance is an underdeveloped concept in this literature in terms of what resonance means and what it exactly refers/describes (Opp, 2009). Additionally, the concepts of frame alignment can be used in place of the concept of resonance in the literature. While frame resonance discusses why some frames resonate with the targeted audiences and others are not (Benford and Snow, 2000), frame alignment focuses on when the arguments of social movements are acknowledged by individuals or bystanders who have not mobilised yet through focusing on social movement frames' alignment with these targets of mobilisation (Opp, 2009). There are attempts to differentiate frame resonance from frame alignment. For instance, Ketelaars (2016) approaches frame resonance as a frame attribute which focuses on the resonance of some frames more than others and interprets frame alignment as something can be attributed to the individuals and their alignment with some frames. However, this is still a complicated matter. To deal with such a problem, the thesis approaches framing success through the responsiveness of the targeted countries towards frames. It borrows the term responsiveness from the literature on ethnic lobbying (Koinova, 2011) and conceptualises the factors regarding the credibility of framing (*frame consistency*, *empirical credibility* and *frame producers' perceived credibility*) and

factors applicable to the targeted audiences (*centrality, experiential commensurability and narrative fidelity*) in the context of the concept of responsiveness. This is a novel approach, which provides alternative explanation to framing success in the social movement literature and helps explain framing success through responsiveness in the ethnic lobbying within the US/UK by focusing on the dynamic framing process.

Only Scott and Osman (2002) and Koinova (2011) have discussed the concept of responsiveness in the context of ethnic lobbying in the US. Scott and Osman's (2002) research implicitly referred to the concept of responsiveness. Their aim was to explain the mobilisation behaviour of the African Americans to lobby for urging the US to change its foreign policy towards the Apartheid regime in South Africa by discussing the resonance of the communality of the circumstances for the Africans in the US and Africa. They investigated the responsiveness of lobbyists and lobbyists' reactions towards the different issues in the homeland as the first step for lobbying. Koinova (2011) has changed the focus from the lobbying elites to the political elites and has analysed the attitudes of US policymakers as responsiveness towards lobbying efforts of the Lebanese and Albanians in the US. The thesis develops a new perspective by detailing the concept of responsiveness in two ways. First, it extends the utilisation of responsiveness in ethnic lobbying from the US to the UK. Second, it adds the responsiveness of the mainstream newspapers in the US/UK towards frames to the concept of responsiveness as another component in ethnic lobbying (Honey and Vanderbush, 1999) to assess framing success. The mainstream newspapers' responsiveness towards the PYD frames is explained through Kornprobst's (2019) thematic congruence, which checks the matching and diverging themes in the PYD frames and in these documents by considering the US/UK's policy stances and objectives in Syria. In so doing, the thesis indicates the relationship between these countries' policy stances and objectives in Syria and their impact on these countries' responsiveness towards frames.

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Appendix A

The List of Participants

The UK Participants	
A1	An MP at a UK Political Party as a former Foreign Policy Responsible Person for the Party
A2	A Member of All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), Friends of Syria
A3	A Member of All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), Turkey
A4	A Lord and Lords' Spokesperson for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on behalf of his political party in the UK
A5	An MP at a UK Political Party and A Member of All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), Friends of Syria
A6	An Officer at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) on the Middle East, Syria and Kurds
A7	An Officer at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) on the Middle East and Kurds
A8	An Expert at a UK think-tank on the Middle East and North Africa with a specific contribution to the research regarding the Syrian Civil War and its impact on neighbouring countries
A9	An Expert at a UK think-tank and at a UK University on the Middle East and Syria
A10	An expert on the Middle East, the Syrian and Iraqi Kurds
A 11	A Policy Analyst at a UK think-tank on the Middle East, international security, Turkey, Syria and Iraq
A12	A UK Politician at the House of Lords
The US Participants	
B1	A Policy Analyst at a US Think-tank
B2	A Former Military Personnel of US
B3	An Academics at a US University Expert on the Middle East and Kurds

B4	An Academics at a US University and Expert on the Middle East and Kurds
B5	A Policy Analyst at a US think-tank
B6	An Academics and policy analyst at a US think-tank
B7	A Policy Analyst at a US think-tank
B8	An Academics at a US University on the Middle East and Syria
B9	A Former Official at the US Department of Treasury
B10	A Journalist and Expert on the Kurds
B11	The former member of the US House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Affairs
B12	A US Military Advisor to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)
B13	An Expert and Policy Analysis at a US think-tank on the Middle East and North Africa political and security issues as well as counterterrorism
B14	An Expert at a US University and a former Foreign Service Officer at the US State Department
B15	An Expert and Policy Analysis at a US think-tank on the Middle East and particularly on Syria
B16	An Expert at a US think-tank and a former diplomat
B17	A former US Ambassador to Turkey

Appendix B

The Interview Questionnaire for the US Participants

1. How would you describe the nature of the Syrian conflict?
2. What are the United States' main interests vis-à-vis the Syrian conflict? How successful has the US been in protecting these interests?
3. How would you assess the role the Syrian Kurds in the conflict? (Particularly the PYD's role?)
4. How would you assess the role of the Syrian Kurds, particularly the PYD and YPG in the fight against Daesh/ISIS?
5. How would you assess the US stance regarding the Kurdish forces' (YPG) fight against Daesh/ISIS? When the US' first interaction with the YPG started and what brought the YPG to the US agenda as an alternative force?
6. What is the US stance in general regarding the Kurdish issue in Syria?
7. What sources do you follow/consult in order to obtain information on the Syrian conflict and the Kurds in Syria? (More specifically, the PYD and the YPG?)
 - a. What new sources - online and offline - do you consult?
 - b. Are there any organizations/individuals/government officials/agencies you follow on social media related to the Syrian conflict and the Syrian Kurds? (Particularly regarding the PYD and the YPG?)
 - c. Are you in regular contact with any Syrian/Kurdish/Turkish organizations on the ground in Syria or in the US and Europe?
 - d. As new group, what sort of ways or methods the Syrian Kurds, and especially the PYD use to reach out the US policymakers? Could you share with me any lobbying groups/organizations in the US who are lobbying for the Kurds, particularly for the PYD as much as you are aware depending on your personal observation?)
8. What political solutions and political models are you aware of regarding the future of Syria?
 - a. Where have you heard them from?
 - b. Have you heard any proposal which is brought forward by the Syrian/Kurdish/Turkish organizations both on the ground in Syria and in the US or Europe for the future of Syria?
 - c. Which political solution and political model do you think is most reasonable for the future of Syria? Why? Could you be more specific about that point?

9. Now, I will read you a number of claims made by Kurdish politicians. I would like your view on them respectively:
- a. *“The Kurdish democratic autonomy project will be a role model both for the future of Syria and the Middle East.”*
 - b. *“Kurds are fighting against Daesh/ISIS Not Only to Protect Themselves But Also to Protect Europe/West.”*
 - c. *“Kurds are fighting against Daesh/ISIS to Defend World’s Humanitarian Values.”*
(What are or might be these **“humanitarian values”** from your perspective?)
 - d. *“Kurds are the Only Effective Force in the fight against Daesh/ISIS in the Middle East.”* (Do you think that the Kurds/PYD-YPG are the most reliable partner to the US and the US-led international coalition in the fight against ISIS on the ground? Why or why not?)
 - e. *“Kurds are the only side who are providing a practical political solution for the future of Syria.”*
10. Now, I will read you a number of claims made by Turkish politicians. I would like your view on them respectively:
- a. *“The PYD is a terrorist organization the same as the PKK. Therefore, the Kurdish de facto autonomy in Northern Syria is a structure of terror/terrorist structure.”*
 - b. *“The PYD is not a suitable partner for a peace in Syria as it cooperates with the Assad regime.”*
 - c. *“The Assad regime should be ousted from the power as a first step for the solution for the Syrian conflict.”*
 - d. *“There should be a safe haven and no-fly zone on Syrian territory.”*
 - e. *“Turkey can be a more effective partner to the US/West in the fight against Daesh/ISIS.”*
 - f. *“There cannot be a solution in Syria that excludes Turkey.”*
11. From your perspective;
- a. Why do/do not the Kurdish claims resonate with the US policymakers?
 - b. Why do/do not the Kurdish claims resonate with the US public?
 - c. Why do/do not the Turkish claims resonate with the US policymakers?
 - d. Why do/do not the Turkish claims resonate with the US public?
12. Is there anything you would like to tell me about which I have not thought to ask you on the record or off the record? From which sources do you think I could get further information about that subject, any advice about sources?

13. Could you advise me other people to whom I might talk over that topic? (Specific names, organizations, politicians, researchers etc.)

Appendix C

The Interview Questionnaire for the UK Participants

1. How would you describe the nature of the Syrian conflict?
2. What are the United Kingdom's main interests vis-à-vis the Syrian conflict? How successful has the UK been in protecting these interests?
3. How would you assess the role the Syrian Kurds in the conflict? (Particularly the PYD's role?)
4. How would you assess the role of the Syrian Kurds, particularly the PYD and YPG in the fight against Daesh/ISIS?
5. How would you assess the UK stance regarding the Kurdish forces' (YPG) fight against Daesh/ISIS? What are the similarities and differences between the US and the UK approaches to the YPG?
6. What is the UK stance in general regarding the Kurdish issue in Syria?
7. What sources do you follow/consult in order to obtain information on the Syrian conflict and the Kurds in Syria? (More specifically, the PYD and the YPG?)
 - a. What new sources - online and offline - do you consult?
 - b. Are there any organizations/individuals/government officials/agencies you follow on social media related to the Syrian conflict and the Syrian Kurds? (Particularly regarding the PYD and the YPG?)
 - c. Are you in regular contact with any Syrian/Kurdish/Turkish organizations on the ground in Syria or in the US and Europe?
 - d. As new group, what sort of ways or methods the Syrian Kurds, and especially the PYD use to reach out the UK policymakers? Could you share with me any lobbying groups/organizations in the UK who are lobbying for the Kurds, particularly for the PYD as much as you are aware depending on your personal observation?)
8. What political solutions and political models are you aware of regarding the future of Syria?
 - a. Where have you heard them from?
 - b. Have you heard any proposal which is brought forward by the Syrian/Kurdish/Turkish organizations both on the ground in Syria and in the UK or Europe for the future of Syria?
 - c. Which political solution and political model do you think is most reasonable for the future of Syria? Why? Could you be more specific about that point?
9. Now, I will read you a number of claims made by Kurdish politicians. I would like your view on them respectively:

- a. *“The Kurdish democratic autonomy project will be a role model both for the future of Syria and the Middle East.”*
- b. *“Kurds are fighting against Daesh/ISIS Not Only to Protect Themselves But Also to Protect Europe/West.”*
- c. *“Kurds are fighting against Daesh/ISIS to Defend World’s Humanitarian Values.”*
(What are or might be these **“humanitarian values”** from your perspective?)
- d. *“Kurds are the Only Effective Force in the fight against Daesh/ISIS in the Middle East.”*
- e. *“Kurds are the only side who are providing a practical political solution for the future of Syria.”*

10. Now, I will read you a number of claims made by Turkish politicians. I would like your view on them respectively:

- a. *“The PYD is a terrorist organization the same as the PKK. Therefore, the Kurdish de facto autonomy in Northern Syria is a structure of terror/terrorist structure.”*
- b. *“The PYD is not a suitable partner for a peace in Syria as it cooperates with the Assad regime.”*
- c. *“The Assad regime should be ousted from the power as a first step for the solution for the Syrian conflict.”*
- d. *“There should be a safe haven and no-fly zone on Syrian territory.”*
- e. *“Turkey can be a more effective partner to the US/West in the fight against Daesh/ISIS.”*
- f. *“There cannot be a solution in Syria that excludes Turkey.”*

11. From your perspective;

- a. Why do/do not the Kurdish claims resonate with the UK policymakers?
- b. Why do/do not the Kurdish claims resonate with the UK public?
- c. Why do/do not the Turkish claims resonate with the UK policymakers?
- d. Why do/do not the Turkish claims resonate with the UK public?

12. Is there anything you would like to tell me about which I have not thought to ask you on the record or off the record? From which sources do you think I could get further information about that subject, any advice about sources?

13. Could you advise me other people to whom I might talk over that topic? (Specific names, organizations, politicians, researchers etc.)