Shaping Minority Representation and Interests in Turbulent States:  
The Case of the Druze in Syria  
Assem Abi Ali

Abstract

This research examines minority politics from group-level, national-level, and international-level of analysis during conflict and ethnic struggles, and it takes the Druze minority in Syria and Lebanon as a case study. The central question that this research aims to answer is what are the structural factors that shape the representation and interests of the Druze minority in Syria amid the raging sectarian and ethnic conflict. Group-level variables such as religion, culture, identity, society and class divisions, and national-level variables such as inter-group relations, political system, electoral system, and alliance formation strategies, in addition to international-level variables such as geopolitical features, foreign sponsorship, regional politics, and internationalization, all are analyzed in this research. These variables are assessed and investigated in order to find the factors that shaped the minority’s representation and guaranteed its interests within the political system of the state, and at the time of regional turbulences and political upheavals. An ethnographic approach is used to conduct a comparative analysis to test those variables on the Druze minority in Syria prior the “Great Arab Revolution” in 1925 and till the current Syrian conflict, and compare it with the Druze experience in Lebanon during the same time frame. This research emphasizes on the link between the three levels of analysis in shaping minority representation and guaranteeing their interests in deteriorated and conflict-dominated political systems.

Keywords: Middle East, Druze, Syrian conflict, Minority representation, Minority interest, Ethnic conflict, Conflict resolution.

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Christof Hartmann and Prof. Dr. Sami Baroudi