IMAGINING AND INVENTING SYRIA: ALAWITES AS FRONTIER CASE OF GENESIS OF THE NATION IN THE ARABIC WORLD

Kyrchanoff M.W.

Maksym W. Kyrchanoff, Voronezh State University, Voronezh Russia, 394000, Pushkinskaia 16
E-mail: maksymkyrchanoff@gmail.com

The author analyses transformations of the Alawite community in the contexts of the development of nationalism and its main political derivatives, including the "nation" and the "nation-state". This article represents a revisionist attempt to transplant Western principles and methods of Nationalism Studies into Oriental non-European contexts. The author, on the one hand, uses the approaches proposed for the analysis of the genesis of capitalism and fascism and, on the other hand, he transplants them into Oriental political contexts. The author presumes that the Western theoretical approaches to Nationalism Studies are applicable to the analysis of Alawite history. It is presumed that the Alawites in contrast to other Syrian Arabs came closer to the understanding of themselves as the imagined community and invented tradition. The Alawites became a political nation in spite of themselves. The objective historical preconditions for the transformation of this community in a nation were absent or were minimal. The external negative factors, including the non-recognition of Alawites by other Muslims, stimulated social and economic transformations, accelerated the modernisation of this community, inspired its consolidation and assisted to the development of the authoritarian political regime of the al-Assad's dynasty. The Alawites actualized intellectual tactics and strategies that allowed them to "remember" the nation in contrast to other Syrian Arabs who preferred to "forget" the nation because the values and principles of the Ummah had universal significance and were more attractive to them.

Keywords: Syria, Alawites, nation, nation-state, nationalism, imagined communities, the invention of traditions

As I was on my way from Paris to Antioch I entered in my journal a sentence in French whose translation was: "Am I resurrecting a nation or am I creating phantoms… Am I to be a prophet or an artist?"
Zaki al-Arsuzi (Watenpaugh, 1996)

Formulation of the problem. The concepts of "nationalism", "nation" and "nation-state" became the central political definitions from the end of the 18th century that radically and decisively influenced the processes of social, economic and cultural developments of Western countries, defined the main vectors and trajectories of changes and transformations of political institutions and forms of statehood. These definitions became central in the political dictionaries of the West and penetrated into the political languages of the Orient in the 20th century. European colonialism as a form of political and economic domination of the West was the first stimulus for the modernisation of non-Western in general and Oriental

societies in particular. Non-European political elites chose modernisation, which was a Western political invented tradition; they transplanted Western and European political, social and economic institutions, norms and relationships into numerous heterogeneous Oriental contexts. Nationalism, nation and nation-state were within those invented traditions that the West could propose to the Orient and non-Western elites demonstrated the stable political will in their attempts to accept them when local non-European political, social and economic institutions, norms and relationships also actualized their stability and ability to resist Western values. The attempts to transplant Western political experience could have a formal and decorative character only in these numerous situations of the forced contacts and coexistence of Orient and Occident. Therefore, the destinies of the nation as a Western concept and attempts to imagine and invent new nations for the new states of the Oriental world were extremely diverse and contradictious.

What is this article about? The author will try to analyse several regional tactics, practices and strategies of the imagination and invention of nations in the Arab states. The author believes that the two strategies had universal nature. On the one hand, Arab intellectuals could be inspired by Western political and social experience. They sought to use European political tactics and strategies and transplant them into local Arab heterogeneous contexts. On the other hand, the political experience of some countries demonstrates the unwillingness to accept Western forms and methods of political imagination and the absence of positive and successful results in the attempts of local elites to transplant non-Arab institutions into Arab contexts and traditional political spaces. This article is an attempt to analyse the problems of political coexistence and various forms of communication between minorities and majorities. Modern political science focuses on the analysis of minority issues in the context of their politicisation, activation and uprisings in authoritarian regimes or heterogeneous societies and states. The author of the article, in difference to his historiographic predecessors, will try to answer the question: what are results of the power of minorities in Syria as one of the classic cases of dynamically changing and modernising postcolonial societies? The author believes that the first strategy can be defined as the "invention" or "imagination" of a nation or the collective attempts of intellectuals to recall the nation as a universal form of political organisation of society and the state. The author defines the second strategy as an inevitable alternative to the first one and believes that it was an attempt to forget about the nation.

Historiography. The problems of the history of nationalism and nations in the non-Western contexts are among the debatable in contemporary Russian Oriental studies. Attempts of radical transplantation of the Western theoretical and methodological tools and apparatus are marginal in the contemporary Russian Oriental studies. Unfortunately, the number of Russian works in the history and current tendencies and trends in the Oriental nationalisms is extremely scarce. The contradictious use of these theoretical approaches for studies of Oriental

nationalisms became the result of the fact that this method was originally actively and widely used for the analysis of Western nationalisms. The political history of the 19th and 20th centuries and the era of colonialism as a European domination in non-Western spaces, on the one hand, confirmed Western intellectuals in their collective political and civic belief and faith that nationalism is the product of Western or European histories exclusively. On the other hand, the founding fathers of modern Nationalism Studies, including Ernest Gellner (Gellner, 1983) and Benedict Anderson (Anderson, 1983), were Orientalists. Ernest Gellner is known as the author of books on Islam (Gellner, 1983), and Benedict Anderson studied political, social and cultural processes in Indonesia (Anderson, 1983).

The classics of the Nationalism Studies stated and emphasised repeatedly that Oriental nationalisms were older than the Western ones, but the number of works on Western, European and American nationalisms is so great that it automatically formed the reputations the nation and nationalisms as Western phenomena. Russian Orientalists believe that the transplantation of the methodological and theoretical principles of Western Nationalism Studies can be possible and useful for studies of political and intellectual histories of Oriental nationalisms and nations. Vitalii Naumkin (Naumkin, 2014), one of the leading Russian Orientalists and former director of the Institute of Oriental Studies, uses the definitions of "nationalism" and "nation-state" for analysis of the political processes in the contemporary Arab world. Russian Orientalist Vasilii Kuznetsov and his Palestinian colleague Walid Salem (Kuznetsov, Salem, 2016) also actively use concepts and definitions from the academic discourse of Nationalism Studies, including "state-nation", "nationalism", and "nation" for analysis of the political situation in the Arab world. Vasilii Kuznetsov and Walid Salem fell into the methodological trap in their attempts to transplant Western concepts of nationalism into Oriental contexts inevitably: if historians of European and American nationalisms collectively compromise that nationalism imagines and invents the nation and provides them with independent states, Russian Orientalists perceive the category of "state" as primary and believe that the nation and nationalism are secondary ones. Other Russian Orientalists try to use Western theoretical approaches in their texts focused on the histories of non-European nationalisms, including the Kurdish (Vertiaev, Ivanov, 2015) and Indonesian (Kirchanov, 2009).

Russian political analysts Kirill Vertiaev and Stanislav Ivanov, analysing the historical and political phenomenon of Kurdish nationalism, actively use the theoretical principles that form the classical methods and practices of the Western historiography of nationalism. Maksym Kyrchanoff tries to deconstruct the Soviet collective historiographical representations about the history of South-East Asia and analyse regional nations and nationalisms as the invented traditions and the imagined communities. These authors form a minority in the Russian community of Orientalists, where the use of concepts and theories from the Western political science is not welcomed. Some Russian authors of the older generation try to resist

the politologisation of Oriental studies and its integration into Western intellectual canons. Actually, some Russian authors, on the one hand, perceive the internationalisation of the methodological apparatus as the unavoidable evil. On the other hand, they perceive new trends in the developments of Oriental studies as a departure from the orthodox purity of the positivist historiography and the blurring of the classical canons of Oriental histories writing.

Preliminary orientations. The author will analyse the features and directions of the nation's imagination and the invention of traditions in Syria. The author, on the one hand, presumes that Syria is within the classic cases that illustrate how political postcolonial elites tried to transplant Western social and economic institutions for modernisation of local structures and relationships. On the other hand, the processes of national imagination and invention in Syria can be analysed in the contexts of attempts to remember and forget the nation simultaneously. Historically Syrian society developed in heterogeneous religious and linguistic contexts: the Arab Sunnis neighboured with Christian Arabs, the Alawites and Kurds. The political elites who controlled the power after Syria appeared as an independent state on political maps tried to consolidate local communities and transform them into a Syrian political nation. This task was extremely difficult because the Alawite minority formed the group that controlled the political spaces in the country where the Sunnis constituted the demographic majority of the population. The trajectories and directions of developments of various social and religious groups the hypothetically existed Syrians actualized different strategies of transformations of political commons in the nation. The author presumes that the Alawites became a potential political nation with the necessary additional cultural and religious attributes and characteristics when the Syrian Kurds felt their involvement in the Kurdish nation in general with its significant political protest potential. The rest of Syrian Arabs, the Sunnis, could not consolidate into the nation because they did not have common social and religious identity with the Alawite minority who controlled political power in the country.

Theoretical backgrounds. Western theories of nations and nationalisms have universal significance for the studies of nationalism in Syria, but some analysts, including Florence Gaub and Patryk Pawlak (Gaub, Pawlak, 2013), are too sceptical in perspectives of their transplantation in Syrian historical contexts. Western theoretical approaches provide scholars with a number of methods that can explain the processes of the invention and imagination of nations in different regions of the world because the intellectual tactics, practices and strategies of the national building have much in common in different countries. The definitions of nations as imagined communities and political units, proposed by Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner in the first half of the 1980s gained universal methodological significance. The scope of their application is not limited by modern histories of Western states only. Czech historian Miroslav Hroch (Hroch,

1986; Hroch, 2000) proposed three phases in the development of nationalism and nations:

Phase A. Activists strive to lay the foundation for a national identity. They research the cultural, linguistic, social and sometimes historical attributes of a non-dominant group in order to raise awareness of the common traits, but they do this without pressing specifically national demands to remedy deficits.

Phase B. A new range of activists emerged, who sought to win over as many of their ethnic group as possible to the project of creating a future nation.

Phase C. The majority of the population forms a mass movement. In this phase, a full social movement comes into being and movement branches into conservative clerical, liberal and democratic wings, each with its own program.

The history of Syria in the 20th century provides historians with several examples of political activity that illustrate three stages in the development of nationalisms and the nations, Miroslav Hroch wrote about. The Syrian case of the development of the nation differs from the European one because the processes of nations building in Europe lasted from several decades to several centuries when the modern history of Syria as the post-colonial country is characterised by the accelerated dynamics of political and social changes and transformations. If the phases A, B and C in the history of European nationalisms could be consistent in the chronological perspective, romantic ethnographic nationalism, attempts to imagine national history and invent new political traditions, the development of the idea of an ethnic and political nation, a mass political movement developed simultaneously in Syria.

The colonial historical heritage and colonial political experience, the attempts of French intellectuals to change radically the map of Syria and invent new political landscapes provide historians of nationalism with the wide range of opportunities to analyze histories of Syrian nationalism and Syrian nation as heterogeneous histories of the invention of political traditions and the imagination of national identities, because local intellectuals and nationalists were the inspirers of political, cultural and social changes and transformations. The author believes that the use of Western theoretical approaches for the studies of Syrian nationalism is quite acceptable and applicable, but this academic tactic is fraught with a schematisation of political and historical processes of development of nationalism and nation in Syria. Therefore, the author states that the use of moderate revisionism can be useful and productive when we discuss on attempts of Syrian intellectuals to instrumentalise the idea of the nation and the political values of nationalism.

Revisionist intellectual stimuli and incentives. The moderate academic revisionism and attempts to abandon the orthodox explanations of processes of national building in the Arabic world can be useful and productive especially when we analyse the situations of the nation and nationalism in Syria. Many Western intellectuals recognise the fundamental importance and meaning of revisionism for

the progress of historical knowledge and the transformations of our collective representations about the past. James McPherson, the President of the American Historical Association, stated in 2003 that "revision is the lifeblood of historical scholarship. History is a continuing dialogue between the present and the past. Interpretations of the past are subject to change in response to new evidence, new questions asked of the evidence, new perspectives gained by the passage of time. There is no single, eternal, and immutable 'truth' about past events and their meaning. The unending quest of historians for understanding the past – that is, 'revisionism' – is what makes history vital and meaningful" (McPherson, 2003).

The author of the article presumes that attempts to study the situations of nations and nationalisms in Syria, on the one hand, belong to the number of the revisionist ones because the categories of the nation and nationalism are the heroes of the Western historical process traditionally when historical and modern presence of the nation in the countries of the Arab world became the cause for numerous academic and political discussions and debates. On the other hand, attempts to write modern Syrian history in categories of nations and nationalisms are revisionist because this understanding of Syrian history stimulates a radical revision of early collective perceptions of political, social and cultural processes. The history of Syria written in a constructivist or modernist paradigm provides traditional social and political groups and commons with radically new meanings and senses. The Syrian Alawites (Salm, 2016) will be the first victim of the revisionist attempts to imagine and invent the history of Syria in a constructivist way. If we assume that Alawites are closer than other groups of Syria come to their imagination and invention as a political nation, then we will write their early history in another system of methodological coordinates and we will abandon the stereotypes of normativist historiography and traditional perception of Alawites as the religious minority.

What were the Alawites if we will try to invent its history in revisionist contexts? The author presumes that the concepts of the British historian Roger Griffin (Griffin, 2003; Griffin, 2008; Griffin, 2007; Griffin, 1991) and the American historian Richard Lachmann (Lachmann, 2003; Lachmann, 1987), proposed by them to explain the origins and genesis of fascism and capitalism, are applicable for studies of social, political and cultural transformations of the Alawites. Richard Lachmann, on the one hand, presumes that the genesis of capitalism and the victory of the Western capitalist relations and institutions was the result of a prolonged conflict of elites. Many representatives of political dominant classes, as Richard Lachmann believes, did not understand their historical mission. The historian insists that they can not be defined as the first capitalists because they did not know what capitalism was and in fact, they were capitalists in spite of themselves. Richard Lachmann's works are extremely controversial and as any other good books, they inspire more questions than providing readers with ready answers. Richard Lachmann analysed historical and

economic evolutions and transformations of English gentry which differed from the same social processes in Spain and Italy where economically active classes refused to receive surplus product and mutated from early capitalists into stable and conservative rentiers. Roger Griffin, on the other hand, insists that attempts to minimise the genesis of fascism by socio-economic or political factors only will be primitivisation and simplification of history. The political triumph of fascism, as Roger Griffin states, became the result of revolutionary and radical renewals, changes and transformations of old political doctrines and concepts. Formally, Richard Lachmann and Roger Griffin became known for their works focused on Western history, but their ideas as part of academic historical revisionism are universal and the author of this article presumes that they are applicable for analysis of nationalism and nation in the modern history of Syria.

Nationalism as civic religion and traditional faith. The modernist historiography of nationalism perceives and imagines nationalism as a secular political movement with vividly expressed ideological components in the program traditionally. The dominance of this narrative became a consequence of the fact that nationalism was imagined as a product of the Western in general or European-centric version of historical imagination in particular. Three centuries of Western history, beginning with bourgeois revolutions, became an era of the gradual erosion of religious values. Religion became an outsider in its competition with political and ideological doctrines. Historians of nationalism perceive this process as a modern revolt against traditional values, including religious ones. Nationalism in this situation was reputed to be a secular political religion and historians of nationalism preferred to ignore the facts of the intricate intertwining of the values of nationalism with traditional religious principles. The significant role of Catholicism in the history of Slovak or Croatian nationalism was imagined as a political mutation that inspired the radicalization of nationalists and the triumph of ethnic nationalism.

Historians of non-Western and non-European nationalisms provide scholars with numerous examples of actualization of religious factors and values. Religion in the Oriental societies became an important factor in social developments that actualized local identities and clearly distinguished them with the foreign cultures and political preferences of the colonisers. The religious history of the Alawites of Syria, despite the fact that their religious preferences were among victims of numerous speculations, insinuations and mythologisations, is a vivid example how religion can be transformed into one of the stimuli for the development of nationalistic imagination and the invention of new political traditions. The Alawites and other Muslims demonstrate different speeds of social, political and cultural changes and transformations: if Alawites represent radical Shiites who tend to nationalise their ideas, other Muslims prefer to preserve traditional values. Alawites and Sunnis live in different cultural and social epochs: if the Alawites, like the radical Puritans after the European Reformation, came closer to the

invention of the nation, the forms of the social and political organisation of the Sunnis continued to be traditional and practically unchanged. The forced Westernisation, inspired by authoritarian political regimes, was formal and superficial because attempts to deconstruct authoritarianism lead to a crisis of the state as a modern institution and its replacement by archaic communication practices automatically and inevitably. If ethnic, state and social solidarities are more important for the Alawites, their Sunni opponents prefer to preserve traditional religious values carefully. These social collective preferences of the Sunnis have much in common with archaic tribal social atavisms. The principles of political and national solidarity supplanted or weakened the generic and archaic forms of social communications among the Alawites, but traditional values continue to determine the main vectors and trajectories of the developments of the Sunnis.

Alawites and Sunnis of Syria: between the Scylla of primordialism and the Kharibdo of modernism. Syria in Russian Oriental studies belongs to a number of regions that constantly attract the attention of scholars engaged in studies of political, economic and social processes (Filonik, 2011; Dolgov, 2011). Modern historiography of the history, politics and religion of Syria provides intellectuals with two types of works. The constructivist or modernist historiography represents the first type of texts. Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson instigated and inspired the progress and rise of the constructivist approach in modern historiography. Edward Said and his concept of Orientalism and invention of Orient also influenced significantly the main trends in the development of constructivist historiography of modern Syrian history. The supporters of the constitutionalist historiography (Schiøtz Worren, 2007; Rousseau, 2014) analyse the history of Syria as an ideal imagined intellectual construct. The history of Syria ceases to be an ideal and logically integral narrative construction in this situation. The modernist and constructivist approaches actualize the dimensions of the imaginations and inventions of the Syrian history, which transform into several heterogeneous histories of various ethnic and religious groups as imagined communities with their invented political traditions.

Political institutions, including nationalism, the nation and traditions, are imagined as invented and artificial. French intellectuals or local Arab nationalists are imagined as the creators and founding fathers of these invented political traditions. The amorphous concept of "Arab nationalism" (Choueiri, 2000; Cleveland, 1994; Dawisha, 2003) became a generic construct for the most of the studies that belong to the constructivist paradigm (Schaebler, 2013). The primordial approach became an inevitable alternative to modernist attempts to reduce the history of Syria to the history of the 20th century. The supporters of primordial understandings of Syrian history insist that "Syria is not an artificial construct… the fact that the state was formed by outside influence does not mean that the concept of Syria as a nation-state was created ex nihilo… Syrian citizens

see themselves and their country as the historical successors of various political ancestors" (Gaub, 2016). The positions and influences of the supporters of primordialism are weak in comparison with the progress and expansion of constructivist and modernist approaches. Even Anthony Smith (Smith, 1991; Smith, 1999; Smith, 2003), the leading primordialist historian of nationalism whose intellectual influences and contributions are comparable with the achievements of the classics of modernism, was forced to admit that the modern historiography of nationalism is predominantly a constructivist and modernist (Smith, 1992).

The classical positivist historiography used primordialism as a universal intellectual tactic and a cultural strategy for Syrian history writing too actively. Modern postmodernist historiography of constructivism (Burr, 1995) imagines the history of Syria as an invented political construct. Historians and political analysts who are involved in Syrian studies prefer to use constructivist and primordial approaches in general and write the history of political, ethnic and religious groups and minorities as the history of the imagined communities in particular. The Syrian Alawites and Sunnis became victims of these intellectual speculations of contemporary historiographies which prefer to imagine them as modern invented constructs of social and political modernisations or ancient historical groups.

Five points or a brief program of revisionist Syrian history writing. Richard Lachmann's and Roger Griffin's ideas and assumptions are extremely promising in the contexts of their transplantation into Syrian historical contexts. The books of Richard Lachmann and Roger Griffin can be read in the Syrian system of historical and political coordinates. They are able to inspire a few questions. These questions are fallowing: Were the Alawites ready to become a nation historically? Was the transformation of the Alawites into a nation inevitable politically? Did local or Western political and cultural influences predetermine the transformations of Alawites into a nation? Which traditional Alawite institutions and relationships did mutate into a nation? Why did the Alawites, unlike their Sunni neighbours, continue political transformations and did not become a closed stable majority? The author will try to answer these questions in the subsequent sections of the article.

Remember the nation: the invention and imagination of the community. The Alawites is the first case of national imagination and nationalistic invention of political traditions, the author will analyze in this article. Alawites (العلويون - al-'Alawiyūn) (Khaddour, 2015; Winter, 2016) or Nusayrites (النصيريون, Nuṣayriyūn) (Friedman, 2010; Nguyen-Phuong-Mai, 2015) have a very ambiguous and contradictory reputation in the contemporary Muslim world. The ethnogenesis and ethnic history of the Alawites is very controversial and became the basis for numerous non-academic and predominantly political manipulations, speculations and mythologisation. The representatives of various groups from the Hittites to the Arabs, from the Crusaders to the Armenians can be imagined and located among

the Alawite ancestors. The supporters of classical and radical Islam perceive Alawism extremely negatively and insist that the Alawites are not the true Muslims. Arthur Snell presumes that "the Alawis' low status and poverty was in part a reflection of their unorthodox religious views" (Snell, 2013).

The radical Muslims imagine the doctrines of the Alawites as an erroneous mixture of Christianity, Islam, Judaism and pagan relics of the early traditional religions. The author has no interest in Alawite history in the traditional positivist contexts, presuming that Alawism became an attempt to imagine and invent the nation, institutionalize it later in political forms and actualize political functions and dimensions of the community of believers. Jomana Qaddour presumes that "geographic separation and the subsequent economic disparity between the two communities, which began as early as the Ottoman period, ultimately led to the subjugation and marginalisation of the Alawites" (Qaddour, 2013). The Alawites tried to institutionalize their political territory and change its status in the 1920s when their leaders attempted to create Alawite state in territories which were under French control (Burke, 1973; Khoury, 1987; Khoury, 1981; Longrigg, 1958; Provence, 2005; Rabinovich, 1979; Winter, 1999). This political unit existed not too long and it was included in Syria in 1936. This experiment was one of the first attempts of non-Western politicians to transplant the principles of the coincidence of ethnic and political units in non-European and traditional realities of Oriental society. Actually French authorities played the role of formers of the colonized regional and politically unequal Arab space. The period between the early 1920s and the middle of the 1930s became a brief epoch of French political experiments in the constructivist style, when the French administration tried to separate spaces, allocate territories and imagine new political communities simultaneously.

French intellectuals and colonial officials actively tried to imagine the ethnic, religious and language map of the region and divide local groups and communities in their individual potential states. Therefore, Sanjak of Alexandretta, State of Aleppo, Alawite State, Greater Lebanon, State of Damascus, and Jabal-al-Druze State were failed states (Patel, 2015) and co-existed simultaneously in the territory of the French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon. The French politicians and Orientalists involved in the legitimation of the colonial experiment did not understand and did not imagine the possible directions and trajectories of the political, state and ethnic developments of the region, and therefore French policy until the middle of the 1930s allowed and contemplated simultaneous and parallel coexistence of several regionalized and particularistic forms of potential statehoods. The French authorities changed their positions in the 1930s because they rejected attempts to construct regionalized political forms and decided to imagine the macroregion of Syria with its further possible transformation into the state. Alawites were simultaneously outsiders and beneficiaries of this situation.

On the one hand, they could not create their own independent state in particular, but, on the other hand, they gained control over the territory of Syria in

general. Some Russian authors presume that "the gaining of independence by the Arab countries did not lead to the acquisition of full sovereignty" and therefore the political phenomenon of "sovereignty without sovereigns" (Kuznetsov, Salem, 2016; Kuznetsov, 2015) emerged. The history of the Alawites in Syria actualizes this formula: the Alawites changed, transformed and modernised dynamically in the second half of the 20th century, the traditional community became an imagined community, religious marginals formed their political nation, but the Alawites received Syria as an Arab state instead of their own Alawite nation-state. The Alawites before the beginning of the 20th century were a closed community that preferred to develop "inward", but the political processes of modernisation forced the leaders of the Alawites to change radically and decisively. While the Alawites as a community or group developed inward and did not attempt to institutionalise themselves in the political dimensions, they were among the invisible political communities and did not have the chance to become a nation. The invasion of the world represented by the French mandate forced the Alawites to become a more open group. Formally the Alawites were very poor until the 1970s and they also kept their reputation of the most closed trends in Islam, which stimulates the anti-Alawite speculations of other Muslims. The former unrecognised religious marginals and outsiders became sovereigns without sovereignty.

The transformation of the Alawites from the marginal group with a disputed and debatable religious and ethnic status into the political elites of Syria provided their intellectuals with a wide range of possibilities and opportunities to invent and imagine national identity. Hafez al-Assad (الأسد حافظ, Ḥāfiẓ al-'Asad), who gained power in Syria in 1970, became the founding father of the modern Alawite political nation and its identity. Hafez al-Assad was one of the first politicians who tried to build a system of the state politics that would accustom people to associate themselves with the state as the main object of their loyalty. The triumph of Hafez al-Assad changed the status of the Alawites radically and provided them with opportunities for social, political and economic progress. Arthur Snell presumes that the Alawite rule changed the social dynamics of this group of Syrian society because "the implications of a small, historically marginal and theologically unorthodox group holding the reins of power are clear: from the start they have had a strong incentive to shore up their power-base through inter-marriage, self-enrichment and repression of the majority" (Snell, 2013).

American military and political analysts Frederic C. Hof and Alex Simon presume that "Hafiz al-Assad's coup marked the completion of an Alawite political ascension that had been in the making since the days of the French mandate" (Hof, Simon, 2013). Aron Lund presumes that "the Alawite-dominated military regime of Hafez al-Assad, who took power in an internal coup in 1970, ruthlessly suppressed Sunni Islamism, which it considered an existential threat" (Lund, 2013). Economic dominations of the Alawites is one of the most remarkable features of al-Assad dynasty's political regime. Ivan Briscoe, Floor Janssen, and

Rosan Smits presume that "resentment over the clustering of economic opportunity in the hands of a well-connected elite, in which members of the Alawite minority are over-represented, fed into the first protests against the Assad regime, and has contributed to some of the most important fluxes of the conflict… Over four decades, the ruling family has carefully crafted an intricate crony-based patronage system, consisting of a number of (first informal, then formal) networks that monopolise large sectors of the economy, but above all has served to keep the Assad regime in place" (Briscoe, 2012).

Hafez al-Assad had a historic opportunity to consolidate Syria as a political nation of citizens because the country was extremely heterogeneous and regionalized. Russian historians presume that the Arab world did not perceive Western forms of modernisation when local elites started this process because "the idea of national genesis was not rooted too deep in the region... the formation of specific hybrid ideologies of nation building was the first consequence of this situation, formed in the contexts of integration of the states that proclaimed their independence into a world political system ... a lack of legitimacy of the states in the region became the second consequence of the incompleteness of nation formation, this factor accelerated the hybrid nature of the ideologies… the disparity of social order and public institutions became one more factor that prevented the development of the modern state" (Kuznetsov, Salem, 2016). Hafez al-Assad tried to synthesise the values of Arabian Syrian nationalism and the principles of Western political and social modernisations. The authoritarian political experiment of the Syrian leader became an attempt to answer one of the central questions in the Occidental-Oriental opposition, formulated by Russian Orientalist Vitalii Naumkin: "Are Islamic norms compatible with democratic values?" (Naumkin, 2014). Hafez al-Assad realized that the French experience of governing a country divided into territories with different cultural, ethnic and linguistic characteristics can not be effectively applied to Syria because French intellectuals and officials imagined Syria in European centered system of coordinates and integrated local features, including the absence of political nations and civil society, in their European collective political ideals.

The Alawites in the Ottoman Empire were a local marginal group and the unrecognised political and religious minority, their marginal status became one of the stimuli for the radical transformations after Syria became independent and Hafez al-Assad gained power. Alawite leaders realised that attempts to resist Western modernisation would be useless and they preferred to control and inspire these processes. Hafez al-Assad after he got political power received an extremely fragmented and heterogeneous country. It is logical to assume that the Syrian statehood developed as a dichotomy of a historical and modern state. The Arab Sunni majority represent a historical and archaic state rooted in traditional institutions. Alawites, who during the period of the French mandate, began to actively receive education, including military one, became actors of social and

economic changes (Haddad, 2012) and gradually formed the elites of the modern state with its political institutions. Some American Orientalists presume that French influence inspired political and social changes of Alawite community because "France adopted favourable policies toward Syrian minorities, granting Alawites political and legal autonomy from their erstwhile Sunni oppressors, along with low taxes and high government subsidies. They also gained disproportionate representation in the French-officered, locally recruited occupation military force, as France sought to divide Syrians along sectarian lines" (Hof, Simon, 2013).

Vasilii Kuznetsov presumes that "a traditional state that is preserved in rural areas and in the suburbs of urban agglomerations, where yesterday's villagers move, reproduce the traditional models of social relations" (Kuznetsov, Salem, 2016). Hafez al-Assad abandoned the ideological principles of pan-Arabism and tried to solve two strategic tasks: on the one hand, he sought to consolidate Syria as a political nation in particular and the state in general; on the other hand, he consolidated the Alawites, he belonged to, as the political community and the political nation. Hafez al-Assad provided the Alawites with opportunities to gain control over Syrian political and economic resources. Alawites during Hafez al-Assad's era, on the one hand, formed the basis of the political class and the ruling elites; they received the majority of positions in the army and special services, and partially took control of the national economy. On the other hand, Alawites, like any other community that was previously a victim of social and religious discrimination, suffered from complexes of unrealized political projects and ambitions. The policy of the forced modernisation in general, initiated by Hafez al-Assad, simultaneously facilitated and inspired the modernisation and consolidation of the Alawites as a political community in particular. The access to political, military and economic resources, the Alawites received since the 1970s, helped them in their attempts to transform the unrecognized and marginalised group into a political community with elements of the nation. The struggle of Hafez al-Assad against radical political Islam (Malashenko, 2001) as an opposition ideological stimulus also assisted to the civic, ethnic and religious consolidation of Alawites into the imagined community and nation with its political invented traditions.

Russian analysts Andrei Skriba and Dmitrii Novikov state that "the peoples of the Middle Eastern countries are not ready to full-fledged democratic society", but "transition and movement in this direction are uncontested" (Skriba, Novikov, 2016). The authoritarian political, social and cultural modernisations inspired by Hafez al-Assad and his political heirs, on the one hand, marked the end of the era of political failures and changed the political reputation of the Syrian Alawites radically who in previous years could not create their own independent statehood and entered them into the number of the imagined communities with developed political traditions, including cultural and social institutions of historical memory (Bolliger, 2011). On the other hand, the authoritarian political regime tried to change the identity of Syrian Arabs and turn them into a political Syrian nation.

This task would not be feasible if intellectuals did not try to consolidate society and provide it with common ideological values, including collective representations of the past and national history. Swedish expert Aron Lund presumes that "Syrian government has, since the late 1960s, been dominated by a small group of Alawite Arab military families from the Latakia and Tartous governorates, and their tribal, political and personal allies from among a somewhat wider range of sectarian and regional backgrounds" (Lund, 2012). The policy of radical and decisive modernization, inspired by Hafez al-Assad, had limited social and political bases and origins because it actualized the heterogeneous character of the Syrian statehood with its numerous regional and religious contradictions. Forced modernization changed the social appearance of the Alawite radically and turned them into an imagined community that could create and imagine its own invented political and economic traditions. These traditions became modern constructs, but the social groups that created them preferred to nationalise and modernize traditional and archaic values and relations. A new identity, including its economic, political and social dimensions, determined the main trajectories and directions for collective action of the Syrian Alawites. Despite these successes, the Alawites failed in their radical attempts to modernize the Syrian society.

Forget the nation or triumph of political archaism. The Sunnis of Syria form a numerical majority of the population and prefer to reproduce the traditional model that became one of the reasons for the rise of political disagreement with the fact that the representatives of the Alawite minority control political power. These circumstances actualized various assessments of the Syrian political regime in historiography (Zisser, 2006; Farouk-Ali, 2014; Salamandra, 2013). Latvian analyst Jānis Bērziņš, analysing the general trends of Syrian developments in the second half of the 20th century, presumes that "since its independence from France in 1946, Syria has passed through many periods of political instability. Increasing Arab nationalism fuelled many military coups until the Syrian Corrective Revolution in 1970 brought the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party and Hafez Al-Assad to power. The new regime was autocratic, one-party, and very totalitarian, meaning that any opposition was to be repressed. The President fully and directly controlled the military and security apparatus, which controlled the public administration including the Baath Party itself, the Council of Ministers, the People's Assembly (the Parliament), the judiciary, all trade unions, the media, and the economy. With Hafez Al Assad's death in 2000, his son Bashar Al-Assad took office as Syria's leader. Although in the beginning, his policies seemed to be progressive and more liberal, in some years became clear that the main features of the regime were to be unchanged" (Bērziņš, 2013).

The ideological loyalty of the Alawite community co-existed with the political passivity of the Sunni majority. The political regime that existed in Syria since 1970 was far from the ideals of freedom and the values of democracy, but the elites provided the community they belonged to with opportunities for

development, changes and progress. The institutionalisation of lack and even absence of freedom led to the most negative consequences. The Russian economist Andrei Illarionov presumes that "the lack of freedom forms an insurmountable barrier to economic growth, social development, human security, the country, the state... non-freedom is social regression and economic degradation. This is the disintegration of state institutions" (Illarionov, 2006). If the situation of lack of freedom inspired Alawite consolidation into an almost political nation, the lack of freedom of the Sunni majority inspired its radicalization and mental migration to Islamic radicalism. The current political crisis and the civil war in Syria became the consequences of the Arab spring inspired by the power of ethnoreligious minorities whose policies provoked riots and protests of the silent and invisible majority. The most Syrian Muslims, as Russian analysts Andrei Skriba and Dmitrii Novikov, presume, "are not yet objectively ready for democracy. This makes state institutions vulnerable to the urgent and necessary internal reforms including the fight against corruption, the reform of social and political life, when even authoritarian secular regimes are unable to keep the situation under control" (Skriba, Novikov, 2016). The attempts to modernise Syria as a society and change its state foundations, to turn the country from part of physical geography into a part of political geography were unsuccessful because the Sunnis that formed the majority of the rural population (Batatu, 1999) in territories that became Syria were mostly traditional and even archaic groups. The period of French domination was extremely short and the French colonial authorities failed in their attempts to change the situation radically. If the Alawites used the window of social and political opportunities that France opened for them, the Sunnis perceived European and Western winds with obvious rejection and irritation. Syria in the second half of the 20th century developed as a fragmented society, its segments had different political, religious and cultural preferences. Sunnis were dissatisfied with the prevalence of the Alawites in the political processes and preferred to imagine their own social alternatives, but the last ones became anti-modernist and anti-Western. Hafez al-Assad despite all his attempts was not too successful in the consolidation of Syria into a political nation. Hafez al-Assad's political desire and will to separate the country from the rest of the Arab world and intellectual attempts to imagine a unique Syrian identity and provide the nation, they believed in and dreamed about, with its unique political national traditions had the limited effect on social structures and political preferences of the population.

This attempt was not very successful because Hafez al-Assad sought to combine modernist and traditionalist values, Western and Oriental political principles, the principles of nationalism and the dogmas of socialism. The policy of the forced social and political modernizations in Syria inspired two problems, the modern political regime and the Alawite clans that formed the nuclei of political elites met. The attempts of radical modernization provoked the tragedy of commons and actualized the situation of unequal access to political and economic

resources. The heterogeneous distribution of the population, the outstripping development of the Alawite regions, the slower speed of social and economic transformations, provoked the tragedy of anti-communes in the Sunni territories. Syrian Sunnis were the main participants of these social changes and their victims simultaneously. The confrontation of the Sunnis with the political regime inspired simultaneous and parallel marginalization and radicalization of the participants of the conflict, but the Sunnis were not victims of the Alawite government because "has always existed a rather significant bloc of Sunni Arab public support for the Assad family, without which it would have been unable to rule effectively" (Lund, 2012).

The ideological program and political platform of Hafez al-Assad and his ideological supporters were the collective attempts to transplant Western ideological values into Oriental political contexts. The imagined Syria was a part of the idealistic political and civil religion and faith that it was possible to modernise and consolidate the local Arabs into a Syrian political nation and transform landscapes with the domination of heterogeneous traditional relations, institutions and cultures radically. Hafez al-Assad's attempts to turn the Syrian Arabs into a political nation of Syria were doomed to failure because the ruling elites and most of their citizens belonged to different religious and political groups. Religious differences and contradictions attracted and inspired political ones inevitably because the Sunnis believed that the Alawites with their conflicting religious reputation usurped access to political resources and solely participated in the processes of political decisions making and taking. The political dominance of the Alawites, on the one hand, became an incentive for the radicalization of the Sunnis, but, on the other hand, the religious conflict in Syria inspired numerous social dilemmas of the Sunni majority. The radicalization of the Sunnis provided them with possibilities of the forced settlement of the Alawite problem. The forcible solution became extremely attractive for Sunni radicals, but they did not understand that it will have a short-term effect only.

The short-term goals of Islamic radicals are different to attempts of the moderate politicians to reach a political compromise that would benefit participants of the conflict in general. The passive nature of the Sunni majority inspired a free-rider problem because the Sunnis were full with negative collective sentiments about the al-Assad dynasty, but they used and consumed political, social and economic benefits, the Alawite regime generated and proposed for them. Alawite political elites in Syria forced the Syrian Sunnis to actualize their religious identity, their belongingness to the formally normal Ummah and their differences from the Alawites because the Sunnis refused to accept them as normal Muslims. Ayse Tekdal Fildis presume that "Arab nationalism, developed mainly by the Sunni Muslim community, was perceived as a threat by the French as well as by the Christians and the heterodox Muslim communities" (Tekdal Fildis, 2012). The religious identity of the Syrians as members of the greater Ummah proved to be

more successful and adaptive than the political identity of the Syrian nation. Syrian intellectuals attempted to imagine the Syrian nation and invent its political traditions and necessary attributes, including national history, historical memory, political symbols and rituals when the Islamic alternative seemed more attractive and universal because it provided believers with more understandable attributes of religious self-imagination. The values and principles of the Ummah became winners in the conflict with the principles of the nation and class as Western imagined political and social constructs.

The opponents of the al-Assad political dynasty do not propose an alternative project of the nation and the nation-state in the actual civil war conflict and confrontation with the Alawites and their allies because the Ummah in the classical sense is not a nation or even a community in the Western sense. If Syrian opposition consistently denies the legitimacy of Bashar al-Assad, Syrian President himself tries to prove his legitimacy and actualize historical, political and social continuities with his father's regime with the same persistence as his opponents criticise him. Therefore, the secular Alawite-dominated regime of Bashar al-Assad, on the one hand, plays the role of a universal alternative to radical Islamization because it "was careful to preserve its secular image" (Lund, 2012). On the other hand, the existing regime became the radical and decisive attempt to implement in practice the Western ideas of a political nation-state when its opponents reject this idea in general. The Ummah, as an alternative to political nationalism, ignores the state boundaries. The ideas of al-Assad clan's opponents became the collective attempts to forget about the nation and to replace the national modern political institutions with religious and archaic ones. The radicalization of the Syrian Sunnis was one of the consequences of the forced modernization of society, initiated by political elites in general and Alawites in particular. Modernization facilitated the institutionalisation of the idea of political identity. Therefore, Andrew Parasiliti, Kathleen Reedy, Becca Wasser suppose that "Syrian national identity is state-centered and surprisingly well developed historically, despite the country's postcolonial experience and authoritarian governance" (Parasiliti, Reedy, Wasser, 2017), but the Sunni majority could not take radical forms and practices of modernization. This political unwillingness inspired the archaization of social and political relations among the Sunnis who formed the basis of a radical Islamist protest in Syria.

Balkanization of imagined communities in Syria. The authoritarian political regime institutionalised by Hafez al-Assad was a successful attempt of national, political and social consolidations of Syria, but the undemocratic regime of the Syrian leader could not prevent the inevitable processes of political and social heterogeneity and territorial fragmentation that became local forms of balkanisation of political and economic spaces (Kaplan, 1993). Syrian nationalism in general and Alawite nationalism, in particular, became in Hafez al-Assad's Syria a relatively new form of identity that became a result of attempts of the elites to

separate the Syrian political project from the universalist canons of Pan-Arabism. Contemporary American analysts presume that Syrian Alawites reached the level of political consolidation that provides them with the wide range of opportunities to create their own statelet in the territories of "Alawite-dominated sectarian enclave" with "an Alawite majority population and a Mediterranean coastal administrative capital in either Latakia or Tartus" (Heras, 2013). The protracted military conflict in Syria and civil war actualize the problems of the future fate of the Syrian statehood as a political project. Some Russian analysts believe that it is possible to predict the disintegration of Syria as the united and centralised state: "significant outcome of the conflict in Syria could well be that country's disintegration. If the Assad regime falls, the Alawites will not want to remain under the rule of the current Sunni opposition coalition, especially their radical wing, the Muslim Brotherhood. To avoid genocide by them, the Alawites will probably relocate to the areas where large numbers already live along the Mediterranean coast and declare their own independent state. Thus, Syria is actually threatened with splitting into at least three parts – Sunnis, Alawites and Kurds. And its many Christians will hardly want to live under Sharia law administered by the Muslim Brotherhood. Therefore, the fall of Damascus, if it happens, will not end the fighting in Syria; rather, it will trigger Syria's disintegration through lengthy and bloody wars" (Orlov, 2013).

Alawites, unlike Sunnis, came closer than other Muslims to the imagination of themselves as the nation in the Western sense of this political definition. Therefore, some Russian experts, on the one hand, suppose that "after four years of bloody civil war in Syria, severely affected by external interference, it appears that the regime in Damascus has begun to crack, despite the fact that the Syrian army has scored one victory after another on the field of battle. Yet there's no visible prospect of a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Moreover, there are signs of the actual collapse of the Syrian state, which can quickly be torn into a number of semi-independent entities. Should this happen the massacre of the Syrian people will only intensify. The grip of the government of Bashar al-Assad is weakening as Damascus becomes increasingly dependent on its allies from abroad, especially volunteers from Iran and Iraq. Traditionally the most effective support Syria has is from the Lebanese Shia organisation Hezbollah" (Lvov, 2015).

The several factors, including the hybrid nature of nationalist ideologies, the lack of state legitimacy, fragmented and heterogeneous societies, disparities of institutional development, multiplicities of state forms and institutions, structural contradictions predetermined the crisis of the Syrian model of the invention and imagination of the nation. On the other hand, some Western experts presume that the Syrian political crisis and civil war will inevitably lead to a radical territorial and state transformations of the Middle East in general (Shakdan, 2016) and Syria in particular. The Russian analyst Vladimir Mikheev believes that "fragmentation of the country along ethnic and sectarian lines leaves no other option but to

introduce a federal system of government and create three autonomous regions, which would remain part of a unified Syria" (Mikheev, 2016). The range of forecasts about the political fate of Syria includes "fragmentation and destruction of a state into smaller, often hostile regions" (Wagner, 2015), the appearance of "bite-sized semi-autonomous sectarian enclaves" (Heard, 2016) or "into sectarian mini-states" (Silverberg, 2013). English political commentator Andrei Ostal'skii state: "what will Alawites do themselves with Assad and his closest supporters after they got guarantees of their state and security… will they give him to the international tribunal, as the Serbs did with Milosevic? It is quite possibly. After all, their current rallying around the leader stems from the horrors of the civil war, from fear of the Sunni majority. This fear is fully justified because Assad waged a war of religious hostility, which is fraught with genocide. If the threat of destruction disappears, the needs to love the dictator and his vertical will disappear too" (Ostal'skii, 2016).

The possible consequences of the civil war in Syria are unclear and it is logical to assume that Syria will not be able to exist as a unified state in the future. The inevitable balkanization of the conflict will lead to the disintegration of Syria and the emergence of new political actors, but the collapse of the country, on the one hand, will stabilise the situation and let to avoid new victims. On the other hand, the disintegration of the Syrian political space will provide new states with hypothetical opportunities for developments and transformations in the nations and even nations-states. Alawites are already ready to become a nation, but an authoritarian political regime significantly limits the opportunities for consolidation and development of this group.

Path-dependence and the faith of nationalism in Syria. The rise and successes of radical Islamism in Syria among the Sunnis became a form of conscious archaization of political institutions and social and cultural relations they generate. The Syrians do not feel themselves a single nation. The Islamist uprising became a riot and protest of traditional believers against the values of political nationalism and the principles of the nation. The rejection of nationalism and the nation as its systemic and central derivative inspired the Islamists to abandon the state as a political institution. Syrian Sunnis and Alawites assumed similar social, political and economic positions in the end of the 19th century, but the events of the 20th century actualized various trends in the development of these groups. The backwardness and predominantly traditional character of the Arab population groups in Syria became a historical pattern and therefore the political progress of the Alawites was an exception.

The project of political and economic authoritarian modernization was too ambitious for Syria and its successful implementation was possible only by authoritarian methods. Bashar al-Assad's attempts to reform identified numerous social and economic problems acutely. Russian Orientalist Aleksandr Akimov presumes that "on the eve of the inevitable reduction of natural resources and the

growing contradictions between levels of economic and political developments in all Arab countries socio-political conflict was inevitable. The youth that numerically prevails in Arab society becomes its driving force. Unemployment, social injustice, overvalued social expectations lead to the marginalisation of large numbers of people. Their possible structuring and institutionalisation under national and (or) religious slogans lead to political instability and impede the achievement of sustainable economic development goals" (Akimov, 2012). The current political crisis in Syria and the civil war were the consequences of the fact that the various ethnic and religious groups that form the Syrian society in the 20th century chose different social, cultural and political strategies and developments. Sunnis and Alawites between the two world wars preferred to choose different formal and informal standards of development. Therefore, neither economic growth inspired by the neither authoritarian regime, nor attempts of the moderate democratisation improved political institutions and stimulated progress in the economy. The Sunnis and Alawites adopted various development standards which, on the one hand, determined political, social and economic progress or decay and regression.

The nation as a form of political organisation became a watershed in the various development standards adopted by the Sunnis and Alawites. The initial institutional choice of Syrian Sunnis was politically and historically erroneous. The period between the two world wars became the era of a gradual political divergence of the Sunnis and Alawites, which institutionalised the heterogeneous character of the Syrian society. Actual political processes in Syria became a retransmission of various trajectories of developments of the Sunnis and Alawites. Political institutions, including the development of nationalism and the nation or their absence, the weakness or latent character of modern values, predetermined the various trajectories and destinies of nationalism and the nation among the Syrian Arabs. Two different trajectories of the development of the Sunnis and Alawites became different social orders and the author of the article insists that the political evolution of the Alawites and Sunnis is not a consistent historical stage of development.

Forced modernization of Syria, inspired by al-Assad dynasty led to the formation of a mixed and heterogeneous society that combines the elements of a closed and open model in its developments. Since the 1970s, the Syrian political elites tried to create norms and laws for society, but they preferred to keep informal exceptions for themselves. Political institutions and organisations in Syria were created for the existing political regime, but unlike other cases of regional authoritarianism, Syrian institutions of Hafez al-Assad were able to survive in Syria of his political heir. Violence was the factor that actualized the closed model of the development of the Syrian society under the rule of the Alawites: if democracies are based on the joint control of violence by the state and society, Alawite violence became the political monopoly of the elites.

To the revisionist history of the nation and nationalism in Syria: the case of the Alawites. Historically, the Alawites were not ready to become a political nation and their religious leaders did not have such ambitious goals to transform the group, they belonged to, in the nation. The Alawites were not ready to become the nation in the Western sense because the ideas of the political nation and nation-state were unknown to them and were absent in their predominantly religious ideology until the 1920s. The Alawites did not seek radical social and political mutations in the nation, but the very logic of history forced the traditional and archaic groups of the Alawite to change and transform into more socially, politically and economically active and organised communities inexorably and inevitably. Social, economic and political institutions, relations, norms and traditions of the Arab Orient were very stable.

Conservative stability determined the main vectors and trajectories of the political and social history of the Alawites until the 20th century. Nothing foreshadowed social and political storms that radically changed political spaces and forced traditional groups to change and become participants and agents of the modernisation process. Western and local incentives influenced the Alawites simultaneously and determined the main vectors of their transformations. French colonialism and foreign colonial domination became the powerful external factors, but the negative regional political and social dynamics stimulated and inspired the Alawites in their attempts to change status. French colonialism did not try to destroy local economic institutions, relations and norms. France did not seek to change the identity of future Syrian Arabs radically. The factors of religious intolerance and the uncertain and controversial status of the Alawites in the Islamic world stimulated social, political and economic transformations more than the notorious French colonialism. The negative external political dynamics, the rejection and non-recognition of the Alawites by neighbouring Sunnis actualized the role and significance of the traditional institutions of the Alawites as a religious community. Sunnis do not perceive the Alawites as normal Muslims but preferred to insist that Alawite ideas were heretical errors and erroneous fabrications.

The external negation and rejection stimulated the politicisation of Alawite religious teachings and inspired the instrumentalisation of their doctrines that became political invented traditions. Alawites had all historical chances to remain an isolated and closed ethnic and religious group of the heterogeneous Arab world. The history of Islam provides historians with several examples how different groups regressed in spite the fact that some decades earlier they were active, but could not adapt to new economic, social, and political situations. The Sunni opponents and the consistent critics of the Alawites did not recognise them radically, decisively and consistently. Sunni opponents deprived the Alawite of choice; they stimulated and inspired their consolidation from an archaic traditional group into a political community, a political nation and a potential nation-state. The Alawites did not become part of the silent and almost invisible heterogeneous

passive majority because they retained their group identity, the features of their religious doctrine, and preferred to remain within the dynamically changing political communities which receive their real and symbolic surplus product in the form of political control and active participation in the processed of political decisions taking and making.

Preliminary conclusions. The political strategies of forced authoritarian and undemocratic modernisations of Syrian society became regional forms and attempt to modernise traditional Arabic state politically, socially and economically. The political elite of Syria preferred to modernise a heterogeneous ethnic and religious country, they controlled and ruled, in authoritarian way and style. The political, social and cultural history of Syria, written in a constructivist and modernist system of coordinates, is very promising for using of Western theories of nationalism. These approaches can be effective tools in attempts to explain the invention of Syria as a nation-state and the imagination of the Syrians as a political and ethnic nation simultaneously. Syria, on the one hand, is a classic example of the transformation of traditional communities into a modern state with elements of the nation-state in the contexts of an authoritarian model of development. On the other hand, Syria is also a classic illustration of the process of unsuccessful modernisation of an authoritarian regime, when political elites failed in their attempts to confront ideological threats of radical Islam effectively as a universal alternative to authoritarian modernisation and transplantation of Western institutions of the nation into social and cultural spaces where imagined religious commons with their invented traditions played the role of political communities.

Historically, the prerequisites and conditions for the transformation of traditional groups into political communities and nations existed in Syria, but the local Arab archaic institutions decisively assimilated and suppressed them. Alawite ethnic and religious minority became the main source for political elites and this factor had a significant impact on the main forms and vectors of modernisation. The political modernisation stimulated and inspired the transformations of traditional and partially archaic ethnic and religious structures into modern communities influenced on Alawites, Sunnis and Kurds differently. Ethnic and political consolidation of the Kurds became part of the general Kurdish social transformations of traditional groups into a nation. The attempts to transform the Arabs of Syria into the Syrian Arab political nation met numerous obstacles and barriers, including the dominance of traditional archaic institutions and relations that were more adaptive than formally Western norms and values, Syrian political elites were too ambitious to transplant into the country they ruled and governed. The contradictions of political and social developments of Syria actualized two strategies of national imagination and the invention of national political traditions.

The first strategy can be defined as "forgetting" or "ignoring the nation". The Sunni majority preferred to use this particular form of political socialisation because local Arab values and the principles of Sunnism proved to be more

adaptable and attractive to them than the political project proposed formally by the Syrian but in the fact Alawite elites. Demographically the Sunnis are more than Alawites, but this superiority facilitates heterogenisation and significantly slows down the processes of social, political and ethnic consolidations. The Alawites radically differ from the neighbouring Sunni religious and ethnic majority: their relatively small numbers and religious characteristics became the factors that positively influenced transformations into a political nation. It was easier for the Alawites to remember that they are a nation and a community in this political and intellectual situation because attempts to forget about a nation would inevitably lead to assimilation or radical physical destruction of them by their religious and political opponents. Syrian historical experience is a universal example how authoritarian modernisation and religious minorities try to transform archaic political institutions and relations radically, but these attempts can be unsuccessful because early institutions and relations that existed before the start of modernisation demonstrate more successful and adaptive potential. The civil war in Syria proved that the Alawites remembered the nation as a universal form of political existence when their opponents forgot about it as an artificial western invention, preferring the universal language of religiously motivated and legitimised violence.

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ВООБРАЖАЯ И ИЗОБРЕТАЯ СИРИЮ: АЛАВИТЫ КАК ФРОНТИРНЫЙ СЛУЧАЙ ВОЗНИКНОВЕНИЯ НАЦИИ В АРАБСКОМ МИРЕ

Кирчанов М.В.

Максим В. Кирчанов, Воронежский государственный университет, 394000, Россия, г. Воронеж, Пушкинская 16 Эл. почта: maksymkyrchanoff@gmail.com

Автор анализирует трансформации сообщества алавитов в контексте развития национализма и его основных политических производных, в том числе «нации» и «национального государства». Эта статья представляет собой попытку перенести западные принципы и методы исследований национализма в восточные и неевропейские контексты. Автор, с одной стороны, использует подходы, предложенные для анализа генезиса капитализма и фашизма, а с другой – трансплантирует их в восточные политические контексты. Автор предполагает, что западные теоретические подходы к изучению национализма применимы к анализу истории алавитов. Предполагается, что алавиты, в отличие от других сирийских арабов, приблизились к пониманию самих себя как воображаемого сообщества и изобрели свои политические традиции. Объективные исторические предпосылки для трансформации этого сообщества в нацию отсутствовали

или были минимальными. Внешние негативные факторы, в том числе непризнание алавитов другими мусульманами, стимулировали социальные и экономические преобразования, ускорили модернизацию этого сообщества, вдохновили его на консолидацию и способствовали развитию авторитарного политического режима в Сирии. Алавиты актуализировали интеллектуальные тактики и стратегии, которые позволили им «вспомнить» нацию в отличие от других сирийских арабов, которые предпочли «забыть» нацию, потому что ценности и принципы уммы имели большее значение и были более привлекательными для них.

Ключевые слова: Сирия, алавиты, нация, национальное государство, национализм, воображаемые сообщества, изобретение традиций

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