The Changing Borders and Borderlands of Syria in a Time of Conflict (2011-2016)

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In 2011, the Syrian revolution broke out within the confines of national borders. Demonstrators raised the flag of the pre-Baathist era—i.e., the three-star flag of the 1946 independence—while chanting slogans for a united Syria: *wahed, wahed, wahed, as-sha'ab as-souri wahed* ("one, one, one, the Syrian people is one"). Messages of national solidarity were central to the 2011 uprising. Slogans that supported the regions, cities or neighborhoods subjected to harsh repression were relayed by video throughout the country.[1] Alternatively, demonstrators brandished reproductions of the clock located in the eponymous square of Homs (Clock Square) in homage to the bravery of Homsiots, whose city was then labeled the 'capital of the revolution.' As demonstrations spread across the country, protesters invented a national space composed of words, chants and images, in response to the regime's repression strategy based on the fragmentation of the uprising.[2]

This insistence on framing the uprising in national terms also reflected a sense of common destiny, which was rooted in a shared territory whose defining features—cities, villages, and local specificities—formed a unified picture of how Syrians saw themselves and their country at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Seven decades after the independence of a state 'invented' by the post-First World War settlements, it seemed that the Syrian national construction, which had taken place within borders originally imposed by external actors, was *de facto* acknowledged, and, furthermore, that it constituted the framework within which Syrians had come to define themselves.

This is further corroborated by the fact that the decades-long, controversial talks over the delineation[3] of part of Syria's borders were not at stake in the revolutionary movement of 2011. On the contrary, it seems as if the debate

around the borders of the country was not only put aside back in 2011, but that it was settled in the course of the national uprising. It is striking that there has been no open questioning of national borders ever since, and this from any corner of Syrian society—not even (at least so far) on the part of the PYD (*Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat*, or Democratic Union Party, the main Kurdish party in Syria),[4] which *de facto* administrates a large portion of the Kurdish majority districts in northern Syria (known as *Rojava*). There is neither claim nor appetite among the different national and subnational political and military actors—not to mention the regional or international ones—for a dramatic redefinition of the post-First World War territorial settlements.

Thus, contrary to many media commentaries on the conflict, the Syrian uprising and the subsequent conflict have not been about territorial claims. Nor have they aimed to transform the colonial and post-colonial order of the Middle East. In 2011, the borders of Syria were *de facto* pacified and, with the important exception of the border with Israel, were accepted as the legitimate boundaries of the Syrian state.[5]

This, however, does not contradict the fact that the unfolding of the Syrian uprising has had deep transformative effects on the borders of the country. Indeed, since 2012, Syria has been increasingly trapped in the spiral of an internal armed conflict into which the Assad regime has thrown all the might of its military power, security apparatus, and external alliances.[6] Although Syrian borders have never been at stake in the revolution, their nature, functions, and management have significantly evolved since the uprising first broke out. In 2016, these borders no longer delineate a coherent territory under the control of a unique and somehow cohesive actor: the state. The ongoing territorial and political fragmentation of the country into territories controlled by different armed parties—the Assad regime, the different armed groups and coalitions of the opposition, the PYD, or the self-proclaimed Islamic State (*Daesh*)—has given rise to multiple forms of control over the Syrian border that reflect the outcome of the armed confrontation.

In 2016, the border is still relevant locally, nationally and internationally. Yet from one segment of the border to another, these three levels of relevance are no longer necessarily aligned with each other. In addition, different (formal or informal) border regimes prevail in different sections of the border. Finally, the territorial control exerted by the Islamic State group on the eastern areas of the country and across to the western provinces of Iraq has had the effect of weakening the *status quo* around borders—if not officially, at least *de facto*. In the regional psyche, this 'blurring' of the border also carries symbolic echoes of a borderless *umma* (the community of believers)[7] and the remains of the pan-Arab dream.

This article aims at a better understanding of the changing nature of borders in warring Syria. The argument is developed as follows: the construction of the Syrian borders since the independence is first discussed; the next three sections then analyse their transformation from the outer boundaries of a state that exercises its sovereignty over its territory and delivers state functions and public goods to its citizens to a spatial envelope in which competing internal legitimacies—and perhaps even alternative forms of sovereignty—operate. The fifth section explores how the ongoing transformation of the border also impacts the ways in which Syria's neighbors manage their common border with the country, leading to asymmetric politics of the border. The sixth section retrace the emergence of new borderlands in the process of the war: Territories that were once peripheral and marginal within their own states are now (in 2016) part of the nexus of internal military strife, an object of competition for control, but also sites of massive demographic transformation and intense transborder legal and mostly illegal—albeit asymmetric—activity. The last section dwells upon the consequences this process entails: the nature of the Syrian borders as an interface with and within the international order is being transformed.

1. Constructing the Syrian State: From 'Hard' to 'Soft' Borders

This section goes back to the construction of Syria's national borders in the 20th century. It reflects on the fact that the process of establishing 'hard'

demarcations was however accompanied by their partial 'blurring'.

The borders of Syria were first delineated in the decade following the First World War. They were modified only once afterwards, in 1939, when the Hatay province (*liwa iskanderun* in Arabic) was given to Turkey by France, which was then acting as the mandatory power in Syria—a situation *de facto* recognized by Syrian nationalists at independence in 1946. While official maps have continued to represent the lost province as part of Syria until today,[8] the maps of the opposition Syrian National Coalition (SNC) now depict Hatay as belonging to Turkey.[9]

Notwithstanding the diversity of situations prevailing in the five dyads formed along Syria's borders (with Israel, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Turkey), the latter were, until 2011, relatively stable and calm. Along the Syria/Israel dyad, stability owed to a large extent to the military arrangements that followed the occupation (in 1967) and subsequent annexation (in 1981) of the Syrian Golan Heights by Israel—a situation never recognized by Syria,[10] for which the return of the Golan was a linchpin of its foreign as well as internal policy. UN troops (UNDOF) managed the confrontation line locally along a buffer zone, which led to a paradoxically peaceful front between two archenemies officially at war.

Emma Lundgren recalls that when Syria became independent in 1946, it "started out as a recently created state, poorly integrated territorially and in terms of population, with borders that had no correspondence to pre-war realities".[11] The "consolidation of the territorial state" was therefore a priority of the next decades. From the Baathist revolution (1963) onwards, this consolidation was carried out through the construction of a centralized state, based on an administrative, political, and security territorial hierarchy. The country was crisscrossed with a tightly knit network of roads, and large projects of regional development were launched, especially with the aim of developing Syria's peripheral regions. Relying on socialist-type recipes, these projects sought to accelerate the economic and political insertion of the country's territorial and

social margins into the Baathist state. The 'Euphrates Project' in the Jezireh, in the northeast of Syria, was emblematic of this approach: It comprised the construction of large dams with massive irrigation of the land, the development of state farms, population settlement policies, etc.

Nevertheless, under the rule of Bashar al-Assad in the 2000s, regional development projects were abandoned, state farms were privatized, and private investment was encouraged.[12] More generally, this shift away from policies of territorial and social redistribution led to greater polarization in favor of the metropolitan cores of the country. The retreat of the state was strongly felt in the peripheral regions, whose agricultural populations faced several episodes of drought in the 2000s. During that period, the Jezireh in particular experienced massive out-migration, as a large proportion of its population settled in the Hauran region in the south or in the peripheries of Syria's main cities. In Syria's peripheries, the withdrawal of the state from the territorial margins allowed for a resumption of various transborder, family or tribal interaction[13] of crossborder trade and business relations, as well as of informal networks of smuggling or criminal activities. The Syrian occupation of Lebanon until 2005 or the internal conflict in Iraq that followed the US-led invasion of the country in 2003 amplified these latter activities—e.g., the traffic of weapons across the Lebanon-Syrian border or the circulation of fighters such as those who joined the counter-insurgency in Iraq, via Syria's eastern border, in the second half of the 2000s.

This 'blurring of the borders'[14] was also the result of top-down processes institutionalized by state-to-state agreements. The latter encouraged crossborder activity at a time when most countries of the Middle East were implementing policies of economic liberalization and trade insertion, which, in turn, favored the development of new transnational circulations and networks across the region.[15] In 2004, Syria signed a free trade agreement with Turkey (implemented from January 2007) that included a provision on free visas for citizens of both countries. This unleashed unprecedented crossborder flows of people, trade and tourism, following decades of cold relations between the two states.[16] With the 2005 launch of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) that

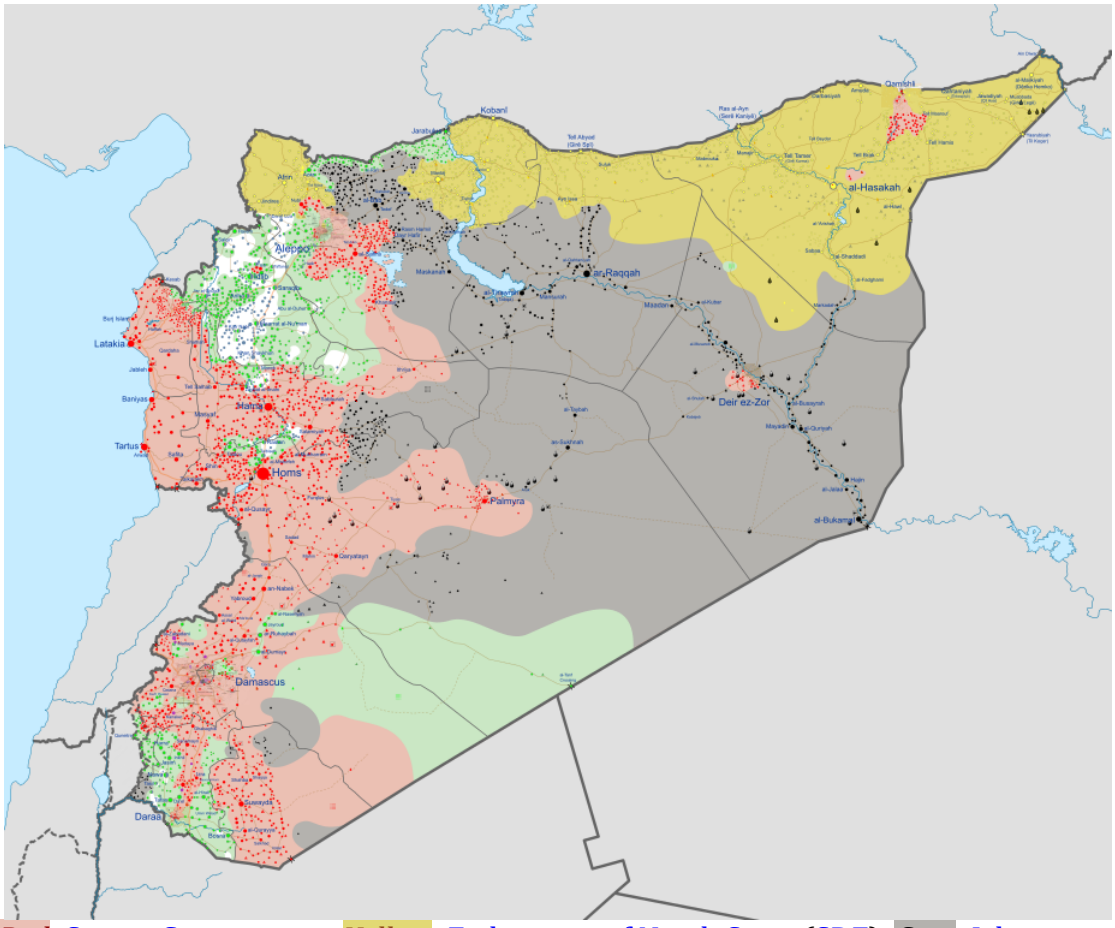
joined together Arab League member states, Syria's position was redefined as a major route and transport hub in an emerging regional trade space.

This 'softening' of Syria's borders, which followed their decades-long 'hardening' for the purpose of national construction, was felt across the country's four active dyads—the one with Israel remaining an exception. Syria's relations with its neighbors changed rapidly: Trade and the circulation of people resumed over the Turkish and Iraqi borders; the demarcation of the Syria/Jordan border was agreed upon in 2004; and refugees from Iraq (up to one and a half million), but also more temporarily from Lebanon during the summer 2006 war, took shelter in Syria. As for Lebanon, the withdrawal of Syrian troops in 2005 opened the way for a potential normalization between the two countries,[17] after twenty-nine years of occupation that had, *de facto*, led to Syria's unilateral blurring of the border. As an occupying force, Syria had taken advantage of its presence in Lebanon to perform economic transactions that were otherwise impossible to carry out at home (e.g., private banking until 2004), but also to reinforce trade and economic ties between the two countries. Moreover, transnational family bonds, as well as Lebanon's role as a labor market for Syrian workers,[18] facilitated close transborder relations between the two countries. The border was also extremely porous for all sorts of illegal or informal traffics that were to a large extent controlled or authorized by the Syrian security apparatus. The withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon did not revert this dynamic: After 2005, the blurring of the border continued due to the incapacity or the unwillingness of the successive Lebanese governments to establish tight control upon it. Spatially, this unbalanced relation translated into the development of a commercial and banking center—serving mostly Syria—along the road between the Lebanese border point of Masnaa and the conurbation of Jdita-Shtaura in the Bekaa Valley.[19] This asymmetric transborder space had no equivalent elsewhere on the Syrian border until the opening of the Syria/Turkey border. The latter prompted the development of new crossborder dynamics, based on formal and informal economic exchanges and accompanied by new practices of mobility (e.g., business relations, family visits, tourism or student exchanges).

2. Territorial Fragmentation, State Transformation, and Competing Legitimacies

Against this background, this section explores the transformations of the territorial authority in the Syrian conflict. Since 2012, the spatial continuity of Syria has been indeed turned into a mosaic of territories that vary according to: The nature of political control, the governance arrangement, the state of security, the level of destruction, the degree of access to resources, the situation of internally displaced people, etc. Syria is now divided into four main areas, each run by a different political entity (Figure 1): The regime-held area (region of Damascus, coastal area, Damascus-Aleppo axis, western part of Aleppo); the *Daesh*-controlled area in the east of the country along the Euphrates river, an area that is not fully contiguous and that shrank since *Daesh's* withdrawal from the Turkish border in September 2016; the relatively autonomous three discontinuous small regions in the north along the Turkish border administrated by the PYD; and the different zones run by various groups and coalitions of the armed opposition that characteristically have no territorial continuity with each other.

Figure 1 : Map of Military Control in Syria (as per 4 september 2016).



Red: Syrian Government, *Yellow*: Federation of North Syria (SDF), *Grey*: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, *White*: Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, *Green*: Syrian Opposition.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syrian_civil_war (consulted on 5 september 2016).

The limits of these territories are defined by more or less militarily active frontlines that function as 'internal borders'. The capacity of people or goods to cross the latter is rendered difficult not only by the military situation, but also by the overall disruption in mobility. The latter results from the destruction of the urban and transportation infrastructure and from the risks for personal security that come with the crossing of demarcation lines. In addition, the sieges imposed on certain civilian neighborhoods—most of them enforced by the forces of the regime or by its allies[20]—make it impossible to circulate in these areas.

This territorial fragmentation has given rise to local trajectories of differentiation. The Syrian state increasingly operates as a residual state, both

because it has lost its sovereignty over the areas held by the armed opposition, but also because it now delivers limited functions and public services and goods, even in the areas that remain under its control. In the zones held by the different armed opposition groups, including the Al-Nusra Front (renamed "Fateh Al-Sham" in July 2016 in order to differentiate itself from the jihadist group al-Qaida to which it was associated), experiments in alternative local administration have been conducted[21]—for instance, in the eastern part of the city of Aleppo.[22] A large portion of these local structures of governance began as grassroots initiatives aimed at filling the vacuum left by the retreat of the Syrian state. More crucially, in order to gather popular support and claim legitimacy, the groups controlling these areas needed to deliver over the years a minimum level of public services (provision of basic services, production and distribution of food, health infrastructure, primary education, channeling of aid, etc.), as well as to provide government-like functions such as protection (police forces), justice (courts), and state governance (passing laws, raising taxes, licensing investments,[23] etc.).[24] Similarly, from the spring 2013 onwards, *Daesh* in Syria based its strategy of territorial expansion on the elimination of all opposition groups and the deployment of terror. However, it also sought to establish its exclusive authority based on territorial control (multiplication of check-points) but also on the delivery of proto-state provisions: Organization of food supplies, delivery of basic services, schooling (new curriculum), establishment of courts, raising of taxes etc.

Consequently, at least three different institutions are competing for legitimacy in Syria in 2016: The Assad regime, which is still running the central administration; *Daesh*; and the self-proclaimed (in November 2013) PYD-led administration of *Rojava* in the three northern districts populated by a majority or an important community of Syrian Kurds. To these should be added the numerous local authorities in charge of administering the areas held by armed opposition groups all around the country. Some of them are supported by the Syrian Interim Government,[25] which has been trying to set up Ministries for different purposes, from aid delivery to education and health provision.

Consequently, in 2016, Syria is a country in which different school curricula are being taught, three currencies are being used (Syrian pound, American dollar, Turkish lira), different models of governance are being pursued, local economies are being reorganized, etc.

Nevertheless, there are no clear-cut lines in Syria in 2016. From a military and security standpoint, the situation obviously varies enormously from one place to another. Moreover, the frontlines have sometimes shifted very rapidly, especially since the launch of the Russian intervention in the fall of 2015. In fact, the conflict does not limit itself to the frontlines, but massively disturbs life everywhere. The constant bombing of opposition-held areas by the artillery and air forces of the regime (as well as by Russian airplanes) makes any kind of stable or normal life difficult, if not impossible, within these zones—not to mention efficient, alternative administrations. The war is also being felt in the territories under the control of the regime, if only because of the presence of millions of forcibly displaced persons from all regions of Syria. More tellingly, perhaps, there is an overlapping of different types of governance, as some state infrastructures still operate across the national territory. For instance, civil servants continue to receive their salaries and pensions, even if they live in opposition- or *Daesh*-controlled regions, so long as they do not belong to opposition structures and can access regime-held areas to collect their wages. Enemies or competitors also make *ad hoc* arrangements to ensure the continuity of basic services, such as the provision of electricity via the national grid,[26] or the in- and out- transportation of goods and resources over the multiple demarcation lines that crisscross the country.

In this context, it can be rightly argued that, given its incapacity to exert control over the entire territory and over the external border, the Assad regime (with the support of its allies) is giving military priority to the internal borders that have emerged from the dynamics of the conflict.[27] But it would be too hasty to conclude from the current, volatile territorial fragmentation that Syria is about to break into pieces. Indeed, over the years, fragmentation has given rise to

increasingly differentiated local trajectories. Yet the objective of the various opposition groups—with the exception of *Daesh*—[28]is not to create a rump state in the zones they control, but to topple the Assad regime, as well as to establish a new power basis for the exercise of sovereignty within the borders of Syria. The same is true of the regime: On June 7, 2016, Bashar al-Assad declared in front of the Syrian Parliament that he would "liberate every inch of our territory," in congruence with the strategy of retaking that was launched in 2013 and that intensified with the direct involvement of the Russian air force starting in October 2015. Thus, while the current Syrian mosaic may lead to state decomposition in the future, at the time of writing it still reflects a situation of armed conflict rather than the prefiguration of new political entities. In this sense, the 'battle of Damascus' is still to come, if it ever takes place at all. And national borders remain the envelope within which the fight for Syria unfolds.

3. Controlling the Border: A Strategic Asset in the War

To the extent that Syria's external border is transformed by the practices of war, its control—or the control of segments of it—holds high military, material and symbolic relevance for those claiming authority and legitimacy over the territory of the Syrian conflict. However, for the different parties of the conflict, the dynamics of controlling the border are also to a large extent informed by the position of the neighboring states in the conflict, as summed up in Figure 2. This will be explored in this section.

Figure 2 : Dynamics of the Border

Syria	Neighbouring state (or Subnational entity)	Dynamics of the Border
Various opposition-groups, the regime forces, the PYD, Daesh (until September 2016)	Ally or Tolerant	Forms of co-management Porosity Vital access to external ressources
Various opposition-groups, the regime forces, the PYD, Daesh (until September 2016)	Ennemy	Official closure Tight control No vital access to ressources / prioritization of the 'internal' borders

Borders are strategic assets for all parties to the conflict. First, controlling the border allows for the regulation of inward and outward crossborder flows whose volume, nature, and direction have massively changed throughout the years.[29] Securing access to the border therefore, provides the groups in control with important political and material leverage in Syria over the territories they dominate and over the adjacent areas. Second, the sustainability of warfare is highly dependent on the parties' access to crossing points, as the resources they need—armament, financial resources, fighters, exports markets (including for smuggled goods or oil)—lie behind the borderline. When the neighboring country is an ally, or at least tolerant to the party in control of a segment of the shared border, it becomes a place where rear bases can be safely established, where wounded fighters can be treated, where new recruits can be trained, etc. The strategic importance of controlling border crossings explains the instability of some segments of the border area, such as the eastern portion of the Syria/Turkey border. Informal border checkpoints have multiplied over the years and they are highly disputed, especially among PYD, *Daesh*, and FSA-related forces.[30]

For opposition groups, access to two borders is especially vital: The border with southeastern Turkey, where outposts of groups and coalitions that control territories in the north of the country openly take shelter; the border with Jordan, where the rear bases of the FSA (the Free Syrian Army) are tolerated by the Kingdom. Cutting the enemy's access to the border is therefore strategic. For

instance, in the summer of 2016, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)[31] fought the battle of Manbij—a northern city located close to the turkish border and occupied by *Daesh* since 2013—with the aim of liberating the city, but also of disrupting one of *Daesh*'s main routes along which foreign fighters travelled from Turkey to Raqqa or other Daesh territories. Other example, some of the Asad regime's biggest operations in the war were the retaking of the city of al-Qosayr in June 2013 and the battle of Qalamûn[32] in the winter of 2013-2014, thanks to which the regime gained control of the Lebanese border. The success of these operations resulted in the opposition-held areas of Damascus (in the eastern and western *Ghûtta*) being cut off from their supply routes originating in Lebanon.

But access to the border is equally vital to the regime. In this respect, the battle of Qalamûn was also launched to secure spatial continuity between regime-held areas and Lebanon, and hence to retain access to political and military resources and allies in the country, in particular the Hezbollah. It also guaranteed access to the economic center, Beirut, and to the ports of Beirut and Tripoli, through which some of the goods that were either banned or under the strict control of the international regime of trade sanctions applied to Syria could be imported or exported and then traded illegally to and from Syria. In any case, the combination of the lack of interest to fight for borders neighboring foes states, and the steady political, military[33] and territorial erosion of the Syrian state—which started before the conflict but was accelerated by it—might explain why the strategy of the regime has consisted in securing Syria's internal borders rather that in regaining—at least at the time of writing—control over its external ones.

4. The Border as Envelope of a (Weakened) State at War: Towards Multiple "Border Regimes"?

The diversity of forms of control over the Syrian border reflects the current territorial fragmentation of the country, which is the outcome of armed confrontation (Figure 1). Thus, in 2016, the Syrian border no longer delineates a

territory under the control of a unique and cohesive actor: The state. This section explores how it can be viewed as a spatial envelope in which competing legitimacies—and perhaps even alternative forms of sovereignty—operate.

As a consequence, in the Syrian conflict, the border represents two things at once. On the one hand, it remains the internationally recognized line that defines an inside and an outside, infers different juridical orders, and establishes a clear distinction between territories at war (Syria) and territories at peace (neighboring countries)—even though the conflict sometimes spills over into the borderlands of Syria's neighbors.[34] This dimension of the border, set in international law, is of course essential to the regulation of different forms of cross-border circulation, including the channeling of humanitarian aid into the country. It is obviously crucial for Syrians seeking shelter abroad: Crossing the border not only provides physical security, but also dramatically transforms Syrians' personal legal status from citizens to 'guests' (for most of them) in neighboring countries, or to asylum-seekers and refugees elsewhere.

On the other hand, one of the most striking mutations of the Syrian border regime is the state's loss of monopoly over border control. As documented in Figure 3, on the Syrian side the border is indeed longitudinally divided into a succession of segments that are controlled by either the armed forces of the regime, one of the armed opposition groups, the YPG[35], or *Daesh*.

Figure 3 : Border Management: The Control of Syria's Crossing Points in 2016

	Neighboring Country	Legality	Status	Crossing in Syria	Country	Control in Syria	Control in Neighboring Country
1	Iraq/KRG	official	closed	al Yarubiyah	Rabia	PYD	KRG
2	Iraq	official	officially closed, de facto open	Boukamal	al Qaim	Da'esh (since mid-2014)	Dae'sh
3	Iraq	official	closed	al Tanf	al Waleed	FSA and affiliated groups (since March 2016, previouly Daesh since 2014)	Iraqi Government
4	Iraq/KRG	unofficial	restricted	Simalka	Faysh Khabur	PYD	KRG
5	Iraq/KRG	unofficial	restricted	Sahela	Sahela	PYD	KRG
6	Jordan	official	closed	Nasib	Jabir	FSA (2015)	JAF and JC
7	Jordan	official	closed	Daraa	ar Ramtha	FSA (2013)	JAF and JC
8	Jordan	unofficials	restricted	Tower 22, Rukban, Tall Chaab, Badiya (not exhaustive)		FSA/Nationalists Islamists	Jordan Armed Forces
9	Lebanon	official	open	Shaykh Jabir/Tartous	Aarida	Syrian Government	LC and LA
10	Lebanon	official	open	Judaydat Yabus	Masna'a	Syrian Government	LC and LA
11	Lebanon	official	open	Daboussiyeh	Aboudiyeh	Syrian Government	LC and LA
12	Lebanon		open	Tal Kalakh	al Amani	Syrian Government	
13	Lebanon	official	open	Joussieh	al Qa'a	Syrian Government	LC and LA
14	Turkey	official	closed	Kasab	Yayladagi	Syrian government	TC
15	Turkey	unofficial	closed	Samira	Kizilçat	FSA and affiliated groups	TAF
16	Turkey	unofficial	closed	Yunesiya	Topraktutan	FSA and affiliated groups	TAF
17	Turkey	unofficial	restricted	Ayn al Bayda	Asagipulluyazi	Nationalist Islamists	TAF and TRC
18	Turkey	unofficial	restricted	Kherbet al Joz	Güveççi	Nationalist Islamists	TAF and TRC
19	Turkey	official	closed	Darkoush	Sanli	Front al-Nusra/Fateh Al-Cham	TAF and TRC
20	Turkey	official	closed	Friendship Bridge	Dostluk Köprüsü	Nationalist Islamists	TAF and TRC
21	Turkey	official	open	Bab al Hawa	Cilvegözü	Nationalist Islamists	TAF and TRC
22	Turkey	official	restricted	Atmeh	Bükülmez	Nationalist Islamists	TAF and TRC
23	Turkey	official	closed	Maydan Akbis	Islahye	PYD	TAF
24	Turkey	official	open	Bab al Salam	Öncüpınar	Nationalist Islamists	TC and TRC
25	Turkey	official	closed	ar Ra'-ee	Çobanbey	Daesh / Syrian opposition groups and Turkey since September 2016	TC and TRC
26	Turkey	official	closed	Jarabulus	Kargamis RR Yard	Daesh / Syrian opposition groups and Turkey since September 2016	TC and TRC
27	Turkey	official	restricted	Ayn al Arab	Mursitpinar	PYD	TAF and TRC
28	Turkey	official	closed	Tall al Abyad	Akçakale	FSA and affiliated groups + PYD	TAF and TRC
29	Turkey	official	closed	Ras al Ayn	Ceylanpinar	PYD	TAF and TRC
30	Turkey	official	closed	Darbasiyeh	Senyurt	PYD	TAF and TRC
31	Turkey	official	closed	Qamishly	Nusaybin	Syrian government	TAF and TRC
32	Turkey	official	closed	Ayn Diwar	Çavusköy	PYD	TAF

TAF: Turkish Armed Forces
TC: Turkish Customs
TRC: Turkish Red Crescent
LC: Lebanese Customs
LA: Lebanese Army
JC: Jordanian Customs
JAF: Jordanian Armed Forces
The information compiled on this table is not exhaustive as per to the informal crossing points (numerous). Updated as per 06/09/2016.

Source for Turkey: The UN website Humanitarian response, as updated on **22 August 2016**. https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/turkey_syria_border_crossing_status_update_20160822_en.pdf (accessed 24 August 2016)

Sources for Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq/KRG: various media reports, UN organizations and NGOs reports.

In addition, these new non-state actors not only actively manage sections of the border, but also erect new crossing points—an act of local sovereignty that is not reflected in Syria's legal framework. This is accentuated on the Syrian/KRG section of the border, along the Tigris River, where the PYD on the Syrian side, and the increasingly autonomous KRG[36] on the other opened new crossing points. One of them is the crossing point of Simalka which connects Syria to the Iraqi Kurdistan in an area populated by Kurds. Since the 1990s, Simalka has functioned as an informal crossing point on the river, with small ferry services connecting the two shores. In 2013, it was turned into a proper border crossing with the construction of a bridge and customs posts on both sides. Thus, this non-official crossing point located on an international border has been *de facto* established two non-state/sub-national actors—even though neither of these groups was granted legal authority to do so—and it is managed based on informal agreements.

As a result, on the Syrian side, the legal status, regulatory functions, and practical management of the border differ from one segment of the border to another. Syria's former border regime—i.e. the organization of the border's regulatory functions, which were previously bound together and governed by national

regulations and international agreements—has been replaced by a multiplicity of new border set-ups, leading *de facto* to the production of multiple border regimes. Depending on who controls the border, new decisions are made as to *who* and *what* can get in and out of the country: People with a different 'status' (civilians, activists, jihadist fighters, opposition fighters, soldiers, traders etc.), money and other financial flows, armament, goods, humanitarian aid, etc. In a context of conflict, the formal and informal modes of regulation that govern the different types of cross border circulation on each segment of the border are therefore more unbundled, disaggregated and independent from one another than they were in the pre-2011 context. The combinations, overlaps, and competitions between these novel and diverse, multifaceted and volatile border regimes organize the actual dynamics of the border areas.

5. Asymmetric Politics of the Border

This section discusses the impacts of the transformations associated with the multiplication of different actors and different "border regimes" (i.e., official and "alternative" regimes) along the Syrian border in relation with neighboring states' management of their common border with Syria. For the border as the limit of state sovereignty now exists only on the neighbor's side—an asymmetry that has weakened the border's traditional role.

The policies of neighboring states for the management of their border with Syria are informed by three main sets of considerations: Their position in the politics of the conflict; their own security concerns and national security agenda, that include destabilization concerns; and their capacity to exert proper control over their own border, and hence to enforce efficient border policies.

Indeed, to a large extent, the positions of the neighboring states towards the different actors of the conflict influence the ways in which the common border is being managed. The latter varies according to whether states are supportive of the Assad regime (Iraq), supportive of (some) of the opposition groups (Turkey, KRG, although the latter is not a state), or officially neutral (Lebanon, Jordan)—

even though the state (Jordan) or some segments of it (the Lebanese Hezbollah) are effectively supporting one or several parties to the conflict. Jordan has sought to preserve its own security by maintaining official diplomatic ties with Damascus, and has authorized the entry of humanitarian aid into Syria as well as trade flows through its official checkpoints. However, it has also pragmatically organized the management of official and unofficial crossing points held by armed opposition groups that are mostly affiliated with the FSA in the south of Syria. Insofar as Jordan hosts FSA rear bases and military training camps supported by the USA, it tolerates both the crossborder circulation of activists and FSA fighters and the unofficial circulation, via the FSA-controlled border segment, of supplies and goods towards opposition groups. Meanwhile, it is well documented that Turkey offered a safe haven in the north for groups opposed to Assad. But Turkey also gave priority to internal politics when it turned a blind eye on the use of its border crossings by foreign jihadist fighters joining *Daesh* starting in 2014. It did so in order to weaken the Syrian Kurdish PYD that was fighting *Daesh* in Syria, as it feared its connections with the Kurdish movement in Turkey. The operation 'Euphrates Shield', launched by Turkey across the border of Syria on August, 24 2016, aimed in this regard at both dislodging *Daesh* from the Syrian border town of Jarablus—*Daesh's* last major redoubt on the 500-mile border—and at stopping the expansion of the PYD and the possible junction of the eastern and western *Rojava*-administrated entities along the border.

Unsurprisingly, the protracted conflict has raised increasing concerns regarding a potential spillover into Syria's neighboring states, but also regarding the destabilizing effects of the presence of large numbers of refugees among their national communities. Restrictions on the entrance and mobility of Syrians have been put in place everywhere. These have translated into a general hardening of the border through a wide array of *ad hoc* set-ups. For instance, Turkey has begun to implement new technologies of border control, including the building of a wall on some segments of the border. The country's official objective was to tackle illegal crossings and smuggling in mountainous areas that are difficult to

control, such as in the Hatay region (west). However, on 23 July, 2015, the Turkish government scaled up this approach on security grounds: It announced the construction of a modular security border (wall and ditch) along new segments of the border, including in the eastern regions. It did so in part under the pressure of its NATO allies, in order to cut *Daesh* from its networks in Turkey. Concerns were nonetheless raised in Kurdish spheres that the objective of this securitized wall was also to separate Kurds of Syria and Turkey from each other. Indeed, the 'hardening' of the border was initiated as the two-year ceasefire between the Turkish state and the PKK had just collapsed and as Turkey had re-started its offensive against the Kurdish party (in July 2015).

In Jordan too, the government has progressively hardened its control over the inward movement of people since it first welcomed Syrian refugees as "guests." For instance, it has been conducting an informal selection of the refugees who are allowed into the country—a selection that excludes Syrian-Palestinians. In 2014, in the wake of the expansion of *Daesh* and the mounting security threats coming from Islamist-affiliated groups present in southern Syria (such as the then called al-Nusra Front), Jordan began to apply tighter security controls at its border. Lengthy security checks are now being applied, and official but also unofficial border crossings are currently closed—temporarily or permanently—to the circulation of people. For instance, the Kingdom closed the unofficial Rukban crossing in June 2016 following an attack against a military post in the buffer zone located close to the border.[37] These restrictions on border crossing have resulted in a backlog of Syrians awaiting to enter the Kingdom. Thus, on the Syrian side of the Rukban and Hadalat unofficial border points, the former desert is now scattered with makeshift camps.[38] The closure of border crossing points, along with tighter and lengthier controls, is also frequent at the Turkish border. Since the winter of 2015-2016, similar scenes of stranded civilians waiting to cross to safety have been seen on the Syrian side of the Turkish border, as the Assad-Russian operation for the retaking of eastern Aleppo and the Homs-Aleppo corridor (launched in the fall of 2015) has resulted in the flight and displacement of dozens of thousands of people. Israel reinforced its tight control over its shared border with Syria as it fortified its 90-kilometer long fence along

the ceasefire line between the occupied Golan and Syria. With the exception of sporadic fire into Syria across the buffer zone (targeting Hezbollah officials for instance), and the entry of Syrians as 'medical patients',[39] this border remained calm, although not pacified.[40]

Indeed, for Syria's neighbors, concerns over security are mixed with concerns over the capacity to accommodate large populations of refugees.[41] The governments of Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey have often used the threat of destabilization to criticize international donors for the insufficient levels of support they provide. In January 2015, for instance, Lebanon put in place a six-category visa system—tourist, business, student, transit, short stay, or medical visas—to control the entrance of Syrians into the country. Syrians who are already in Lebanon but are not registered with the UNHCR are also subjected to new regulations for the renewal of their residency permit. The difficulty to meet these new requirements has forced dozens, if not hundreds of thousands into illegal status.[42]

The third set of conditions that informs how neighboring states manage their borders with warring Syria is their actual capacity to exert proper control and sovereignty over their borders. In fact, this capacity is a function of their ability to exert control over their national territory in the first place. In this regard, Lebanon is a structurally weak state that controls neither its territory nor its borders. In the current context, Hezbollah—a subnational actor that has played an active role in the Syrian crisis, including through direct military intervention alongside the forces of the Assad regime—has extended its territorial outreach by controlling most of the Syria/Lebanon dyad from its stronghold in the Bekaa Valley. In a different vein, the claims of *Daesh* (which is not a Syrian group) to establish a transnational Caliphate over parts of Syria and Iraq may well connect with a Muslim imagination of the borderless *umma*. Yet it reflects first and foremost the agenda of an opportunistic group that seeks to appropriate territory-based resources, and hence to expand wherever state control is at its weakest—in the present case, over the Iraq/Syria borderlands. Even in Turkey,

where the state is undoubtedly more developed than in any of Syria's neighbors, the decades-long neglect of the southeastern regions in the country's development plans backfired when it came to applying efficient measures of control over the effectively porous border.[43]

Thus, the Syrian conflict has deeply transformed the border politics of neighboring states. Indeed, on the neighbors' side, the crisis is conducive to redefinitions of the regulatory functions of the border, with a strong emphasis on security set ups and restrictions on mobility. This process is more or less advanced depending on each state's capacity to exert sovereignty over its territory, which is globally weak; this weakness is rendered all the more visible by the Syrian conflict and the manifold and pressing security issues it poses. More generally, the conflict has transformed and weakened border politics among neighbors, in the sense that the manner in which borders were negotiated and managed in the past—i.e., a joint management between two internationally recognized and cohesive states—now obeys asymmetric logics, as sovereignty and territorial cohesiveness only exists on the side of the neighboring state.

6. Mutations of Syria's Borderlands

This section retrace the emergence of new borderlands in the process of the war: Territories that were once peripheral and marginal within their own states are now part of the nexus of internal military strife, an object of competition for control, but also sites of massive demographic transformation and intense transborder legal and mostly illegal—albeit asymmetric—activity. Indeed, prior to the conflict, the border constituted a separation rather than a hyphen in political relations among the states of the region. Moreover, borderlands represented marginal and less-developed areas in Syria as well as in neighboring states. While, on the local level, this peripheral position helped to sustain family or tribal crossborder ties as well as smuggler networks and other illegal activities (with the exception of the Syria/Israel border), there were no

crossborder transnational spaces *per se* in the region. However, in 2016, Syrian borderlands are being dramatically transformed by the conflict. In most cases, the latter has caused the level of interactions and circulations across the border to intensify. Locally, areas that were formerly disconnected have turned into increasingly interconnected relational spaces—albeit as the result of a booming economy of war and the forced displacement of millions of Syrians within and outside Syria, and notwithstanding the destructions and ruptures that have accompanied the conflict. Yet these new transnational spaces no longer ensure the historical, political, legal, or territorial longitudinal continuity of the border. On the contrary, they replicate its segmentation as they connect spaces on either side of a crossing point, in a spatial logic that is perpendicular to the border. As a result, the different types of crossborder flows of goods and people depend heavily on military successes and defeats, but also on the quality of the relationship between the authorities that manage either side of the border (See Figure 2). For instance, due to disagreements between the PYD and the KRG, the Simalka border crossing was closed between March and July 2016, leading to serious disruptions in the local economy and in the circulation of people in north-east Syria; it was reopened by the KRG in August 2016, but for trading flows only.

With the emergence of these spaces of transnational circulation, the position of previously marginal borderlands has thus changed in the general territorial and political economy of Syria, but also in that of its neighboring states. In Syria, the border is undoubtedly a vital resource for the war. It is also an asset that is being gradually privatized by the different actors of the conflict—including by the Assad regime—in the sense that its regulatory functions are increasingly shaped by the needs and politics of the groups in control, rather than by the objective to serve the collective good. In the borderlands of neighboring countries, the conflict has translated into the massive presence of refugees, the circulation of combatants and tradesmen, the relocation of Syrian economic activity (especially in Turkey), as well as the growing visibility of international humanitarian organizations and NGOs. The conflict has led to the disruption of former economic ties and networks, but also, on the local level, to the emergence of new

economies linked to the war and to the flows of refugees. Moreover, the partial to total closure of former terrestrial trade routes that previously went through Syria has favored the deployment of new ones, diverted *around* Syria: Terrestrial routes to the East linking Turkey to the Gulf and Iran through KRG and South Iraq; Maritime routes that connect south-eastern Turkish ports to Lebanon, Jordan (through Israel), Egypt, and the Gulf.[44] Consequently, borderlands have gained greater geographical depth—such as in Turkey, where the borderland alongside Syria can even be said to have expanded all the way to Istanbul, a city in which more than 400,000 Syrians are estimated to live in 2016.

The importance taken by borderlands in the general dynamics of the Syrian conflict explains why in Jordan, Turkey and in Lebanon these former national margins are now more connected to the core, and currently receive more political attention and funding than ever before in their history. While neighboring states do not necessarily have the means, capacity or political will to support their weakened borderlands, the politics of these borderlands—or at least their security aspect—have undoubtedly gained a new prominence.

7. International Scrutiny

This new prominence is also an effect of international scrutiny over Syria's borders, to the analysis of which this section is dedicated. Indeed, given the nature and intensity of the conflict, international political and military mingling in Syrian affairs has been significant from all sides.

Direct foreign military intervention in favor of the Assad regime has been especially strong on the part of states such as Iran and Russia and of non-state actors such as the Lebanese Hezbollah or as Iraqi militias. Similarly, most *Daesh* fighters in Syria are known to be non-Syrians. External material and political support has also been provided to opposition groups, either by states that recognize the Syrian National Coalition and its affiliated armed groups (mainly the FSA), or by Qatar, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States in the form of private

donations to other, more Islamist-inspired armed groups. Since the fall of 2014, the US-led international coalition against *Daesh* has bombed the positions of the group in both Syria and Iraq. Finally, in the borderlands of Syria's neighboring states, the presence of local, regional and international humanitarian actors and projects is as inescapable as that of Syrian refugees. The UN-led humanitarian operation responding to the Syrian conflict is the biggest humanitarian deployment of the contemporary period, even as its levels of funding are deemed insufficient.

This international scrutiny—and direct intervention—has contributed to the simultaneous blurring and hardening of Syria's borders. The first aspect of this joint process can be seen, for instance, in the politics of crossborder humanitarian aid. Since 2011, a key debate in the UN-related aid community has indeed revolved around the question of whether crossborder aid could be delivered into Syria or not—i.e., whether aid could enter the country through border crossings not held by the regime. This issue became particularly acute as the Assad regime did not authorize the transit of aid to regions held by opposition groups through the territories under its control, and in particular through its ports. Entering Syria via a border point not controlled by the regime (along the Turkish or the Jordan borders) was problematic in that it contradicted the formal sovereignty and legitimacy that the regime of Damascus still had over its territory by virtue of international law—as testified by the fact that the Assad regime still holds the Syrian seat at the UN Assembly. In July 2014, however, the UN finally authorized the delivery of crossborder aid, leading to the *de facto* recognition of Syria's alternative border regimes and of the role played by new, subnational non-state actors in the management of the Syrian border.

The second aspect—the hardening of the borders—is concomitant. Neighboring states' politics of sealing their borders reflects the incapacity of the international community to come up with long-term solutions to the problem of Syrian refugees in neighboring countries. The securing of these states' borders also clearly speaks of concerns regarding a potential extension of the conflict—concerns that are shared by the international community, which has been

subjected to terrorist attacks on the part of *Daesh* since 2015, as much as by NATO (Turkey being a NATO member).

Conclusion: The future of Syria's Borders

With the conflict, a permanent *reshaping* of the politics of the border and of crossborder ties and interactions is at work, in Syria but also among its neighbors. It is the result of a complex process of *rebordering*—i.e., the mutation of border features—that results from various politics, representations, practices of the border involved in the conflict. As analysed in this article, many different actors from inside and outside Syria have played a role in this process, and this at the local level as much as at the national, regional and international ones: Groups in control of the different border segments, the Syrian state, neighboring states, refugees, traders and smugglers, international humanitarian agencies, international forces intervening in the conflict, etc.

Paradoxical features of the border emerge with this rebordering. The affirmation of more connected borderlands accompany the politics of hardening of the line. The clear demarcation the border imposes within the international legal order goes hand in hand with the fuzziness of its practices. The resilience of the border as the envelope of legitimacy (for all actors except *Daesh*) is not contradicted by the multiple regimes and forms of control that characterise it and that reflect the territorial and political fragmentation of the country. The Syrian example highlights in this regard the continuing importance of control over territory and borders (internal and external) for authority, legitimacy, and sovereignty—the holy trinity of the Westphalian conception of statehood—despite considerable transformation of the border's nature.

However, this article also indicates that the conflict operates as a process that renders the multiple functions of the borders more disaggregated. It highlights the disjunctions between 'the territorial borders that regulates the movement of people and goods and define areas of common jurisdiction' and 'the functional borders which define membership in legal framework'.[45] It shows that the multi-

dimensional functions of borders are not enshrined in 'the line' but spread over territories, legal frameworks, and practices. Finally, it shows that national external borders can survive extreme cases of fragmentation of the central authority, of competition over legitimacy, and of radical transformation of the nation such as the massive displacement of more than a half of the Syrian population inside and outside the country. If Syrian borders may well survive the conflict, all these elements however question the appropriateness of the Westphalian model of the State to capture these phenomena.

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[1] For instance: *nehna ma'ak la-l-mot ya* (name of the city): "we are with you until death (name of the city)". On the slogans and chants of the 2011 uprising, see François Burgat *and al*., 'La puissance politique des slogans de la révolution', in François Burgat *et al*., ed., *Pas de printemps pour la Syrie* (Paris: La Découverte, 2013) p. 185—195.

[2] Leïla Vignal, 2012, 'Syria: Anatomy of a Revolution', *Books and Ideas* (July 2012), http://www.booksandideas.net/Syria-Anatomy-of-a-Revolution (last accessed 13 June 2016).

[3] For instance, the Hatay region given in 1939 to Turkey by France (then acting as the mandatory power in Syria).

[4] Founded in 2003, the PYD is the Syrian branch of the Turkish PKK (the Partika Karkerên Kurdistan, or Kurdistan Worker's Party). The PKK was founded in 1978 to fight for Kurdish independence. With time this objective has mutated into calls for autonomy for Kurds within Turkey and the promotion of the rights of Kurds living in Turkey.

[5] This *de facto* acceptance is all the more significant since the demarcation of the Syrian-Jordanian border took place quite late (in the 2000s), and since the Lebanese-Syrian border has yet to be demarcated.

[6] Ziad Majed, *Syrie, la révolution orpheline* (Arles: Sindbad/Actes Sud, 2014).

[7] In this issue, see Mohamed-Ali Adraoui 'The Issue of Borders and Sovereignty in the Islamist and Jihadist Thought from the Early Years to the Present Times'

[8] Emma Lundgren Jörum, *Beyond Syria's borders, A History of Territorial Disputes in the Middle East* (London, New-York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), pp. 20—22.

[99] Emma Lundgren Jörum, 'Syria's 'Lost Province': The Hatay Question Returns', January 28, 2014, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54340 (accessed 14 September 2015)

[10] Nor by the international community. See United Nations Security Council Resolution 497 (1981).

[11] Lundgrend Jörum, Beyond Syria's borders, p. 9

[12] Myriam Ababsa, 'Frontières de développement en Syrie : l'adaptation du projet Ba`thiste aux logiques tribales dans le front pionnier de la Jazîra', *a contrario*, 2005/2 (Vol. 3), pp. 11—25.

[13] Peter Harling and Alex Simon, 'Erosion and resilience of the Iraqi-Syrian border', EUI Working Papers, RSCASD 2015/61 (Florence: European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2015).

[14] Lundgren Jörum, Beyond Syria's borders, p. 103.

[15] Leïla Vignal (ed.), *The Transnational Middle East. Places, People, Borders* (Abingdon/New-York: Routledge, 2017).

[16] A shared Syria-Turkey Friendship Dam was also to be built in 2011 on the Orontes River that is cross border.

[17] The reestablishment of diplomatic relations was symbolized by the opening of embassies in 2008 (in Beirut) and 2009 (in Damascus).

[18] John Chalcraft, *The Invisible Cage: Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

[19] Karine Bennafla, 'Chtaura-Jdita, 'L'émergence d'une place bancaire et commerciale dans la Bekaa centrale (Liban),' in *Marchés, boutiques, souks et mall : formes sociales et spatiales de*

l'échange marchand en Méditerranée, Franck Mermier and Michel Péraldi M. (eds) (Paris: Editions de la Découverte, 2011).

[20] Depending on sources, the population affected by sieges in 2015 was estimated to range from 390,000 (UNOCHA) to nearly two millions (Doctors without Borders). See Leïla Vignal, 'Displacement in Syria: Spatial and Social Patterns of the Syrian Population in Times of Conflict,' *IJMES*, 2017.

[21] It is estimated that there were 800 local active councils in 2015 (Agnès Favier, 'Local governance dynamics in opposition-controlled areas in Syria', in *Inside Wars: Local Dynamics of Conflicts in Syria and Libya* (Florence: European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, Middle East Directions, 2016), pp. 6-15.

[22] Aleppo, where Dorronsoro, Adam Baczko and Arthur Quesnay saw the premises of a state back in 2013 (Gilles Dorronsoro, Adam Baczko, Arthur Quesnay, 'Vers un nouvel Etat Syrien? Les institutions du gouvernorat d'Alep' in Pas de printemps pour la Syrie, 2013).

[23] Jihad Yazigi, 'Syria's Implosion: Political and Economic Impacts', in Inside Wars: Local Dynamics of Conflicts in Syria and Libya, 2016, pp. 1-5.

[24] Agnès Favier, 'Local governance dynamics in opposition-controlled areas in Syria' 2016.

[25] The executive body of the Syrian National Coalition, recognized as representing the different Syrian opposition groups.

[26] For instance, in the dams and plants of Raqqa and Tabqa located in *Daesh*-controlled areas, electricity is produced by employees who are still paid by the regime. It is then sold by *Daesh* to the local population, but also to the regime itself (Adam Baczko, Gilles Doronsorro, G., Arthur Quesnay, *Syrie: Anatomie d'une guerre civile* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2016).

[27] Harling and Simon, Erosion and resilience of the Iraqi-Syrian border, p. 2.

[28] *Daesh*'s proclaimed objective is the establishment of a transnational Caliphate, and not a change of regime within the borders of Syria.

[29] Outward flows are mostly composed of refugees, wounded fighters, looted antiquities and, on the Syria/Turkey border, smuggled oil. Inward flows include combatants, weapons, cash, basic civilian commodities, humanitarian aid, military supplies, and also oil.

[30] For details, Benoît Montabone, 'The Wartime Emergence of a Transnational Region between Turkey and Syria (2008–2015)' in Leïla Vignal (ed.), *The Transnational Middle East. Places, People, Borders*, 2017.

[31] The SDF is a US-backed alliance of PYD and independent groups whose main declared objective is the destruction of *Daesh*.

[32] The Qalamûn is the mountainous range that separates Syria from Lebanon. For the regime, an objective of the battle was also to regain control of the corridor between Damascus and the Syrian coastal area, and hence to restore the continuity between its political center and a vital maritime border..

[33] In a speech pronounced in Damascus on 26 July 2015, Bashar al-Assad recognized that the human resources of the army were strained. This situation explains the regime's increasing dependence on its allies (mainly Iran, Russia and Hezbollah), as well as the intervention of Russia in 2015-2016.

[34] See, for instance, the graphics recapitulating the different attacks that have taken place in Turkey since June 2015, among which six attacks carried out by *Daesh*: http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/06/28/world/middleeast/turkey-terror-attacks-bombings.html

[35] YPG: People's Protection Units, the Kurdish armed militia of the PYD.

[36] In this issue ,Johanne Jueded, 'Contesting Borders in the Middle East ? Iraqi Kurdistan's De-Facto State Formation'

[37] Sources: 'Jordan Closes Border to Syrian Refugees After Suicide Car Bomb Kills 6,' June 21, 2016, *New York Times* (http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/22/world/middleeast/jordan-syria-attack.html). Human Rights Watch, 'Jordan: Syrians Blocked, Stranded in Desert', June 2, 2015 (https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/06/03/jordan-syrians-blocked-stranded-desert, accessed 23 May 2016).

[38] See, for instance, the situation at the Rukban crossing, as shown on the maps published by UNOSAT. Source : http://www.unitar.org/unosat/node/44/2421?utm_source=unosat-unitar&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=maps (last accessed 12 August 2016)

[39] http://www.fmreview.org/syria/plotner.html

[40] Crystal Plotner, 'If Israel accepted Syrian refugees and IDPs in the Golan Heights', Forced

Migration Review 47 (Oxford: September 2014), pp.32—34.

[41] In August 2016, the numbers of officially UNHCR-registered Syrian refugees are as follows: 656,000 in Jordan; 2,730,00 in Turkey; 1,034,00 in Lebanon; 250,000 in Iraq (mostly in the KRG). However, the total number of Syrians in those countries is higher, as all Syrians are not UNCHR-registered. Source: Syria Regional Refugee Response, http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php (last accessed 16 August 2016)

[42] Human Rights Watch Report, ''I Just Wanted to be Treated Like a Person': How Lebanon's Residency Rules Facilitate Abuse of Syrian Refugees', January 12, 2016, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/lebanon0116web.pdf (accessed 3 February 2016)

[43] Montabone, 'The Wartime Emergence of a Transnational Region between Turkey and Syria (2008–2015)', 2017.

[44] Montabone, 'The Wartime Emergence of a Transnational Region between Turkey and Syria (2008–2015)', 2017.

[45] Raffaella Del Sarto, 'Borderlands: The Middle East and North Africa as the EU's southern buffer zone', in Dimitar Bechev and Kalypso Nicolaidis, eds., *Mediterranean frontiers: Borders, conflicts and memory in a transnational world* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), pp. 149-167, quotation p.153.