

Anarcha-Feminism and Sustainable Development Goals: Case of Kurdish Women Protection Unit (YPJ)

M. Hafizh Nabiyyin¹

Department of International Relations, Universitas Potensi Utama, Medan, Indonesia

hafizhnabiyyin@proton.me

ABSTRACT

The emergence of the pseudo-state Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) or better known as Rojava in 2014 became an alarm for the emergence of a new form of political entity that transcends the form of the Westphalian nation-state. The democratic confederalism system is seen as very close to the thought of anarchism which rejects all forms of hierarchy including the nation-state system and upholds equality between human beings. YPJ is a women's armed forces unit in Rojava that adheres to the idea of Jineology –an idea of gender equality from Abdullah Ocalan which is also integrated into the democratic confederacies system. The magnitude of the role of YPJ in the process of Rojava's resistance to the nation-state and capitalism made the writer interested in analyzing YPJ resistance using the Anarcha-Feminism theory to determine the effect of the theory on YPJ resistance. Anarcha-Feminism was chosen because it can be a synthesis between class struggle, women's liberation, and the deconstruction of the nation-state political system. This research will also review and describe the role of women in post-conflict development in Rojava, particularly regarding their involvement in the economy, education, social, military, and public decision-making through the perspective of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords: *Anarcha-Feminism; Rojava; Sustainable Development Goals; YPJ; Abdullah Ocalan*

BACKGROUND

Women's Protection Unit or YPJ (*Yekîneyên Parastina Jin*) is a unit of ethnic Kurdish armed forces in the Rojava area. Rojava or Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria itself is an autonomous region that is predominantly inhabited by ethnic Kurds in Northern Syria. The establishment of this region has been officially declared since January 2014 by adhering to the ideology of the Democratic Confederalism which was inspired by the thought of Abdullah Ocalan by revolution means. The revolution that succeeded in deconstructing the social, cultural, political, and economic order in the northern Syria region was inseparable from the long history of oppression experienced by the Kurdish ethnicity.

Ethnic Kurds itself is the largest ethnic without a country. Since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1919 and the agreement of the Skyes-Picot agreement, the Kurds was spread in four modern nations, namely Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. In those countries, the Kurds received discriminatory treatment from each government, ranging from the ban on the use of language, not recognized as citizens, prohibiting cultural celebrations, and so forth. Not only that, but the ethnic Kurds are also victims of the cultural imperialism of Arabization and Islamization carried out by countries around it (Sharif, 2018). Throughout history, the Kurds has recorded various armed rebellions. Kurdistan Workers Party or PKK (*Party Karkerên Kurdistan*) in Turkey and Kurdistan Democratic Party or KDP in Iraq are the two largest Kurdish Ethnic Liberation Movement organizations.

The KDP movement has succeeded in producing results with the recognition of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) as an autonomous region of the ethnic Kurdish after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003. Conversely, the PKK armed resistance movement has been recorded since 1984 and has led to up to 40000 fatalities in his battle against Turkish Authority (BBC News, 2019). The PKK movement, led by charismatic figure Abdullah Ocalan, was originally a Marxist-Leninist ideology that aims to form an independent Kurdistan state. However, since the early 2000s, the ideology of this movement has been transformed into Democratic Confederalism. This ideology is much influenced by the thought of Murray Bookchin's ecological anarchism. PKK itself has a very close ideological relationship with PYD, the party that dominates politics in Rojava.

One unique of the Kurdish ethnic liberation movement is the role of women in it. This is because women have a huge role in the matriarchal culture which was originally owned by the Kurdish ethnic group. Seeing the history of the original cultural ethnic Kurds, women are highly respected and have a huge social role. This was then eroded by the patriarchal culture that was carried in line with the arabization and Islamization carried out on the ethnic population of Kurdish. The Rojava resistance that occurred in the second decade of the 21st century seemed to remind the original cultures of the Kurdish ethnic ethnicity that contradicted patriarchal culture in the surrounding countries. This is also very contrasting with the patriarchal culture that is inherent in understanding the Islamic Fundamentalist Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). In understanding ISIS, women are seen as second-class citizens who are only a complement for male supremacy. For example, women may not have political positions, must close the entire body except the eyes, become victims of sexual slavery, killed, raped, and others.

In addition to matriarchal cultural factors, the role of women in Rojava resistance is also driven by the ideology of democratic confederalism which was initiated by Ocalan. In essence, democratic confederacies are based on the principle of protection to ecological and gender equality. This is then manifested into various ways, including

the military. Rojava has a unit of armed forces that is fully filled by women, namely YPJ which stands autonomously from the main armed forces unit, namely YPG.

YPJ was recorded to have a very significant role in the 2014 Kobani Siege incident, where most of the Kurdish region was surrounded and attacked by ISIS troops. YPJ also gained a lot of sympathy from the international world, especially Western countries that saw YPJ as a concrete proof of the achievement of gender equality in the Rojava region. Even according to Kurdish Project, the percentage of women's involvement in the military in Rojava is ranked first in the world, which is as much as 40 percent (The Kurdish Project, N.A). This far outperformed the percentage of western democratic states such as the United States which only touched the 14 percent (Sharif, 2018).

Previously, Tajzan Sharif in his thesis titled *YPJ is breaking the religious shackles in the middle East 2018* has examined the formation and resistance of YPJ when viewed from the perspective of postcolonial feminism. In his research, he concluded that the Islamization carried out against Kurds made them must struggle to maintain their identity, and the violence shown by ISIS in recent years reminded them of their original history and culture. Kurds itself has a cultural identity originating from Zoroastrianism, which is a religion that is very focused on women's rights and equality. This then made many women in Rojava decide to fight the culture of Islamism and return to their original culture.

In author's opinion, the argument of postcolonial feminism that the true resistance carried out by YPJ was motivated by the factor of Islamic and Arabic patriarchal cultural imperialism gave a well explanation. However, the perspective of postcolonial feminism proposed by Sharif in his research is still limited and has not been able to answer the significance and urgency that encourages non-Kurd's women who are not bound by culture and history of whatever the Kurds to join in fighting with YPJ, both from the West, Arabic, as well as other countries. Sharif research has also not touched on more constructive aspects in Rojava's resistance, such as its related to the global development agenda.

Therefore, this research will try to see the Rojava Revolution and YPJ formation in anarcha-feminism perspective. This research will also use the concept of sustainable development goals as part of the global development agenda. The theory of anarcha-feminism aims to provide a description and picture of the causes and implementation of the resistance of Rojava if judging from the theory. Meanwhile, the concept of sustainable development goals will be used to see the utilization that an anti-status quo ideology such as anarcha-feminism does not always conflict and coexist with global development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Anarcha-feminism theory

Anarcha-feminism is a theory that combines the theory of anarchism and feminism. Anarchism is a theory that has the goal to create total democracy, which is a condition where everyone has direct voting rights to issues that impact their lives and do not depend on representative government. Therefore, the state, hierarchy, and class must be destroyed and then replaced by the council and local community unions (Revolutionary Anarcha-Feminist Group, 2012). In other words, anarchism rejects the representative democracy model that is widely adopted by modern nations and demands the application of direct democracy models.

Meanwhile, feminism emphasizes that women are vulnerable groups in the world, both in terms of material and value systems that are more beneficial for men than women (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013). In its activism, feminist groups demanded the elimination of patriarchal culture that showed male dominance to women such as subordination, marginalization, stigmatization, double burden, domestication, and others to achieve gender equality. Gender itself is a social construction that determines and regulates the relationship between men and women. Gender is a nature that is "attached" to men or women who are constructed socially and culturally through various ways, such as the process of socialization and internalizing cultural values. The purpose of gender is equal political rights and economic rights between men and women (Tippe & Subagyo, 2016).

Therefore, anarcha-feminism sees that all patriarchal experiences are related to the class, where the class is also distinguished based on gender (Revolutionary Anarcha-Feminist Group, 2012). The most important relationship between feminism and anarchism is a shared recognition of the need to change the structure of the strength and social relations of the hierarchy and domination (Hewitt, 2007). Anarchism and feminism radical fundamentally and in-depth anti-hierarchy and anti-authoritarian. Both of them operate through social organizations based on voluntary volunteerism that are bottom up, carried out by small collective organizations that do small things but have an impact rather than big things like political parties.

Both also encourage change. Anarcha-feminism analysis shows the root of interconnection between misogynists, imperialism, militarism, and then confirms the revolutionary process as a comprehensive and multidimensional process. Domination is the source, focus, and reasons for all hierarchy, both positions, classes, families, countries, and gender (Shulman, 2007) (Hewitt, 2007). One of the anarcha-feminist theorists whose thoughts will be elaborated in this paper are Emma Goldman. Emma has a vision to create a world where everyone is free from tyranny, capitalism, patriarchy, church, and country (Shulman, 2007).

The concept of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Sustainable Development Objectives (SDGs) is an ambitious sustainable development plan signed by world leaders in a meeting in New York in 2015. This plan has 17 objectives and 169 targets that must be achieved in 2030. The SDGs concept is not only pursuing economic growth, but also emphasizes inclusive and sustainable growth by coordinating economic, social, and environmental development (Shi, Han, Yang, & Gao, 2019). In the opening of the United Nations General Assembly (UN) A/Res/70/1 entitled "*Transforming Our World-The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*", one of the SDGs goals is to realize human rights protection for all people and want to achieve gender equality as well as empowering all women. "They seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls" (United Nations, 2015).

This is elaborated in Goal 5 and Goal 16 of the SDGs. Goal 5 of TPB is "to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls which can be understood as achieving gender equality and empowering all women." Meanwhile, the goal of 16 is "to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels". Although not directly mentioned gender equality, but one of the targets of this goal, which is 16.7 support the implementation of inclusive and participatory decision making: "to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels."

METHOD

This research is descriptive-qualitative research. Moleong defines qualitative research as research that intends to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions and others, holistically, and by means of descriptions in the form of words and language, in a particular context (Nurdin & Hartarti, 2019). scientifically and by utilizing various scientific methods. Meanwhile, descriptive research describes what is obtained from field data or explains research results with pictures or words (Usman & Akbar, 2019).

Data collection techniques are carried out by means of literature study with secondary data. The author collects various literature that is relevant to the research topic to be used as a reference material in writing. The forms of literature collected and analyzed in the form of books, electronic books, electronic scientific articles, research reports, online news, and other credible and relevant sources to answer the formulation of the above problems.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

History of YPJ

The relationship between the Kurds and the Syrian government tends to fluctuate. During the reign of Hafez al-Assad, the Syrian government once supported the PKK resistance in Turkey. The Syrian government gave permits for the establishment of a headquarters, training ground and protection for Abdullah Ocalan who was in confrontation with the Turkish government. This is inseparable from the opposing positions of Syria and Turkey in the geopolitics of the Cold War period. In fact, most Kurds currently living in northern Syria are mostly refugees who have fled from conflict areas in southeastern Turkey.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the Kurds in Syria also experience various discriminations, just like the Kurds in other countries. Some examples of discrimination experienced by the Kurds are not being able to claim nationality, not being recognized as citizens, being prohibited from using the Kurdish language and restrictions on freedom of expression (Pavičić-Ivelja, 2017). This fact later made Ocalan's idea of resistance acceptable to the Syrian Kurds.

In 2013, the Democratic Union Party or PYD (*Partiya Yekîtiya Demokratî*) was founded in Syria as a PKK affiliate organization which also has a democratic confederalism ideology. The weakening of the power of the Bashar al-Assad regime due to the Arab Spring events which was then followed by the emergence of ISIS provided an opportunity for the Kurds who inhabit the northern Syrian region to free themselves from the Syrian central government. Until finally, in early 2014 it was declared the establishment of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) or Rojava which consisted of three cantons, namely Kobani, Jazira, and Afrin. The events of Rojava's emergence were heavily influenced by the theories of democratic confederalism and Jineology initiated by Ocalan. Therefore, the Syrian Kurds eventually established a radical democratic political system characterized by pluralism, self-sufficient economy, and stateless democracy. Ocalan's ideas about women's empowerment and the rejection of the nation-state also quickly developed.

After the establishment of Rojava, PYD became the largest political party in the region (Sharif, 2018). PYD has two military wings, namely the People's Protection Unit (YPG) and the Women's Protection Unit (YPJ). The difference between the two is that the YPG is a military unit whose membership is a mixture of men and women. Meanwhile, YPJ's membership is entirely female. Even so, the two military units have a very good relationship and often work together. YPJ was founded in 2012 with the aim of fighting the Syrian government and protecting Kurdish land and people. As the conflict escalated in Syria, YPJ also faced Turkey and other militia groups such as the al-Nusra Front, ISIS and the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

Cited by Sharif (2018), YPJ Commander, Nesrin Abdullah, stated that YPJ's three main goals were: (1) Uniting women worldwide; (2) Building a new army culture; and (3) Building a free, democratic and ecological society, so as to increase social equality. As previously mentioned, these goals are very identical to the ideology of democratic confederalism in which gender equality is one of the main pillars. Ocalan himself in his political manifesto in a book entitled *Liberating Life: Women's Revolution* introduced the term "Jineology" or science of women as an instrument to achieve gender equality and women's liberation.

Ocalan sees women as the main moral and political component in society and has an important role in reflecting on freedom, equality and democratization. He saw that to overcome all social problems a women's liberation movement that supports freedom, equality and democracy is needed. Movement based on Jineology (Ocalan, *Liberating Life: Women's Revolution*, 2013). Before being implemented in Rojava, Ocalan's ideas had already been implemented by the PKK. The PKK not only provides opportunities for Turkish Kurdish women to make important contributions in the military field to destroy gender stereotypes and roles, but he also describes women as warriors, soldiers, and protectors; roles that have been traditionally and culturally associated with men and masculinity (Duzgun, 2014).

YPJ Resistance on Anarcha-Feminism Perspective

One of the biggest and most popular resistances from YPJ since its emergence in 2012 was when this military unit faced ISIS guerrillas in the Siege of Kobane event in 2014. At that time, ISIS was experiencing a winning trend from the battles they carried out and wanted to control Kobani which was mostly inhabited by the Kurds. As a military unit, YPJ succeeded in defeating ISIS troops and protecting the Kurdish region and people from attacks by the terrorist group.

Arin Mirkan, a YPJ leader, is remembered as a martyr in this incident. Mirkan decides to detonate a suicide bomb targeting ISIS militias in order to protect the area and people of Kobani. Although other YPJ leaders emphasized that the military unit rejected the suicide bombing method, what Mirkan did was seen as an act of protection and self-defense rather than an attack. Mirkan was then seen as one of the female figures who succeeded in inspiring other Kurdish people to get directly involved in the resistance.

Apart from ISIS, this military unit is also involved in fighting with Turkish troops and their backed 'moderate' militia group or the Free Syrian Army (FSA). Since 2016, Turkey and the FSA have been recorded as launching attacks on the Rojava region several times. Two of them and the biggest ones are Operation Olive Branch in 2018 and Operation Peace Spring in 2019. In these various battles, YPJ and YPG have been at the forefront of Rojava's defense. The interesting thing is, in these various battle's women from all over the world joined, including women from Western countries such

as Anna Campbell, Kimberley Taylor, and Hanna Bohman who came from England and Canada.

Meral Duzgun elaborated on the political and ideological motivations that prompted YPJ's resistance. He explains the idea of democratic confederalism. Abdullah Ocalan rejects nationalism and the structure of the nation-state which are considered as one of the causes of oppression of women. This is very relevant to the condition of Kurdish women who receive double discrimination from a patriarchal state because of their minority ethnic identity and subordinated gender identity. This has encouraged many women in YPJ to prove that women can also be equal to men on the battlefield. In order to achieve gender equality and eliminate patriarchal gender constructions, they ultimately decide to take the extreme step by taking up arms as a means of protecting themselves, society, and their political and ideological beliefs.

Two of the most interesting concepts from Ocalan's democratic confederalism ideology are women's liberation and stateless democracy. In looking at women's liberation, Ocalan stated that the degree of freedom and equality of women with men determines freedom and equality in other fields. For a democratic nation, women's freedom is very important, just as women's freedom also marks a free society (Ocalan, *Liberating Life: Women's Revolution*, 2013). Meanwhile, in looking at the political system, Ocalan sees the existence of the nation-state as closely related to the hegemony of global capitalism which is also the reason for the creation of hierarchies between men and women. Ocalan mentions that without 'violent organizations' such as the nation-state, the laws of capitalist profit accumulation cannot operate and industrialism cannot survive (Ocalan, *Democratic Nation*, 2017)

Ocalan then offers the concept of democratic confederalism as an alternative to the nation-state. Democratic Confederalism is very open to diversity, multiculturalism, anti-monopolism, ecological and feminism. This concept is also based on meeting the fundamental needs of society and community agreement. Many studies that mention Ocalan's offer are heavily influenced by Murray Bookchin's *Ecological Anarchism* theory. Meanwhile, another research by Sharif explains the link between Postcolonial Feminism theory and Ocalan's thought. This paper aims to analyze Rojava's resistance to Anarcha-Feminism theory.

Anarcha-Feminism is a synthesis between the theories of Anarchism and Feminism. Anarchism is a theory that has the goal of creating total democracy, namely a condition where everyone has a direct voice on issues that affect their lives and does not depend on representative government (Revolutionary Anarcha-Feminist Group, 2012). Meanwhile Feminism emphasizes that women are a vulnerable group in the world, both in material terms and in a value system that benefits men more than women (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013). Therefore, Anarcha-Feminism sees that resistance to class and gender hierarchies are two inseparable parts. Anarchism cannot

be achieved without Feminism. Conversely, Feminism also would not exist without Anarchism.

One of the leading theorists of Anarcha-Feminism is Emma Goldman. In her book *My Disillusionment in Russia*, Goldman criticizes the centralized political system model of the Bolshevik state which according to her is based on coercion. This then leads to violence, oppression, and terrorism. According to Goldman, the revolution should be accompanied by mass plans for post-revolutionary reconstruction. However, this was not the case for the Soviets during the Red Revolution, thus failing to counteract the dictatorial ambitions of the Bolsheviks. As a result, the revolutionary process then turns out to be simply a "transfer of wealth from one group of individuals to another" (Carroll, 2007).

Today, a similar centralized political system can be found in the nation-states surrounding Rojava, starting from Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran. The long experience of oppression experienced by the Kurds can be seen as a logical consequence of the application of a centralized political ideology that encourages the creation of homogenization in a pluralistic society. Just as the proletariat rebelled against the Soviets, the Iraqi Kurds also fought against the authorities. As a result, after the 1991 resistance they gained autonomy rights and after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime officially established the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) with a centralized government system similar to a nation-state. Like what Goldman mentioned regarding indications of a "transfer of wealth from one group to another" in the Red Revolution, Saeed (2020) also explained that there were many corrupt and partisan practices in the KRI. A vast clientelistic network that costs a lot of money from selling natural resources from the region. As a result, public infrastructure and social services at KRI are getting worse. On average, the KRI area only gets 6 hours of electricity from the government, roads are in poor condition, problems with water and sewage disposal, as well as increasing poverty and unemployment (Saeed, 2020). The post-revolutionary reconstruction experienced by the Iraqi Kurds has become a lesson for the Syrian Kurds not to depend on a centralized government system. This is clearly seen from the use of the ideology of democratic confederalism which has a bottom-up political system and direct democracy as part of public policy making.

According to Goldman, the big mission of the revolution is the transvaluation of values. The term refers to Nietzsche's concept of the process of overcoming decadent and corrupt ethical principles that in power. Goldman argues that transvaluation is not only related to social values, but also human values which are the basis for all social values. Therefore, the revolution must be driven by the revolutionary consciousness of the masses. Without this awareness, there will be no revolution. Instead, with it, the revolution cannot be stopped (Carroll, 2007). This is in line with the theory of Anarchism which recognizes the power of ideas to change material conditions and the

importance of consciousness in shaping life circumstances. Therefore, revolution must be carried out both in the minds and in society (Hewitt, 2007).

As previously mentioned, Duzgun's dissertation shows that the joining of women into the YPJ military forces was driven by ideological factors. Many of the YPJ members interviewed were influenced by Ocalan's book *Liberating Life: Women's Revolution* and *Democratic Nation*. Ocalan's thoughts on state oppression, women's liberation, direct democracy, freedom, and gender equality as outlined in the two books have been internalized in the minds of these women. This then raises awareness and becomes fuel in their enthusiasm to fight against the hierarchical and patriarchal status quo.

In addition, women in Rojava also opened Jineology Institutes and Women's Centers as a means of educating women about the concept of democratic nation. There is also the Jineology Department at Qamishlo University in Northern Syria. In these institutions, Rojava women built a movement and replaced the previous education system with a new education system that was in accordance with the cultural diversity of northern Syria. This education and internalization of understanding then became a strong capital for women in Rojava to carry out and maintain the revolution.

Goldman stated that the goal of all social change revolutions is to create the sanctity of human life, human dignity, and the right of every human being to be free and prosperous. She argues that there is an inherent tendency of the state to concentrate, narrow and monopolize all social activities. This is contrary to the nature of the revolution which wants to continue to develop, expand and disseminate itself. In other words, the state is static while revolution is dynamic. Therefore, the social revolution must be carried out with a total social, economic, and industrial reorganization. Goldman's anti-statist thinking can also be seen from her criticism of the women's movement demanding suffrage. According to Goldman, obtaining voting rights will not change the political system, instead it will strengthen it (Hewitt, 2007).

Based on the explanation above, Goldman argues that revolution should completely reorganize the oppressive social order into an order that guarantees everyone's right to be free and prosperous. The Kurds in Syria, under the authoritarian regime of al-Assad (Hafez and Bashar) experienced cultural repression and various forms of cultural genocide, including policies of Arabization and criminalization of expressions of identity, culture, language, and the interests of the people Kurdish (Guddim, 2021). Furthermore, Satna Ghobi in his thesis explained that since becoming independent in 1946, the Syrian government has confiscated land, property, and identity paper from 200 thousand Kurds and made them forced workers. The Syrian government also banned Kurdish customs and language, arrested many leaders, and prevented Kurdish political organizing by increasing police presence in Kurdish-

majority areas. During Assad's leadership also Kurds were prohibited from having passports, social security, obtaining education, and the state took over all profits derived from production and the economy in Rojava (Ghotbi, 2016).

The various oppressions carried out by the Syrian government against the Kurds in Syria were later changed by Rojava. The application of the ideology of democratic confederalism deconstructs all these oppressive and discriminatory structures by applying the pillars of multiculturalism, collective economy, and direct democracy. As well as the two main principles of respecting gender equality and protecting the ecology. The application of these principles guarantees the rights of everyone to live freely and equally, regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender, or social class. This makes the Rojava revolution comprehensive because it touches various aspects of life and is not stuck in the transfer of power from one group to another. Unlike the system previously implemented by the Syrian government, through democratic confederalism theoretically no party will feel discriminated against, repressed, or oppressed by the authorities or other groups in society including women.

Goldman also gives a feminist dimension to anarchism and a libertarian dimension to the concept of women's emancipation. She saw that power in both hierarchy and domination extended beyond economic structures and social institutions. The oppression of women is separate from economic and political oppression. Women, because of the patriarchal family institution and puritan morality, receive double oppression, as women and as citizens, workers, and poor people. She saw the state with its laws and the church with its morality as agents of oppression against women.

The Syrian Kurdish women in Rojava feels the same way. Apart from receiving oppression because of their ethnic identity, they are also victims of patriarchal laws aimed at them. In her interview with the United Nations, a member of the Syrian Women Advisory Board, Nubuhar Mustefa, said that a patriarchal mentality has been ingrained in Middle Eastern society. This patriarchal mentality rejects women's participation in various public affairs, be it economics, politics, or government, as well as other decision-making matters. Meanwhile, Jendara Alsawish, a 34-year-old Kurdish woman from Aleppo, in her interview with *Reuters*, said that women in Syria tend to be freer compared to other countries. However, they still cannot participate in political life. If they want to leave the house, women in Syria must also be accompanied by their husbands or brothers (Argentieri, 2016).

The multiple discriminations experienced by women were then completely overhauled in the political system in Rojava. As will be elaborated in the next section of this research, women in Rojava have succeeded in obtaining freedom and equality in all sectors of life, from the economic, educational, social, political, legal, to the defense-security sector which was previously synonymous with masculinity. This destroys what Goldman calls the 'double oppression' of women. In the context of

combat, women should not only be seen as victims but also as active agents. This will create a transformation in the role of women in society after the war is over (Begikhani, Hamelink, & Weiss, 2018). Therefore, YPJ's resistance can also be seen as an effort to change the role of women in post-conflict social reconstruction and development in Rojava.

Impact of YPJ Resistance on Rojava Development

The theory of Anarcha-Feminism has also significantly influenced post-conflict reconstruction in Rojava. Goldman said that revolution alone is not enough, it must be continued and expanded by developing social and economic reconstruction. In the process of social and economic reconstruction, it is very important to involve community participation (Carroll, 2007).

Ruken Isik, in her article entitled *Kurdish Struggle for Democracy and Gender Equality in Syria*, wrote that the Rojava revolution made a fundamental change to the role of women in society. Before Rojava was established, the Syrian government implemented a system in which women did not have a big role or even at all in the economic, education, defense and social organization sectors (Isik, 2019). The Rojava Revolution succeeded in deconstructing the old system by presenting the role of women in various sectors where they had never been involved before. In other words, the Rojava Revolution made women the subject of development in the region.

The role of women in development in Rojava will also be very interesting to see through the lens of sustainable development. Sustainable development itself is a fundamental strategy that becomes a reference in the social and economic transformation of the world. Currently, the concept of sustainable development that is being implemented by the world community is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which have a total of 17 goals and 169 targets. The essence of SDGs is that in achieving hunger reduction and supporting economic development, people must not sacrifice environmental damage (Shi, Han, Yang, & Gao, 2019). This section tries to show that YPJ's emergence and role in Rojava has made a real contribution to the achievement of SDGs, particularly Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 16 on peace and justice. This research will show the role of women in the fields of economy, education, politics, law, and defense and security in Rojava.

Women are actively involved in the economy in Rojava through various cooperatives established at the local level. For example, women's cooperatives produce hand-made and home-made products which are sold seasonally. These products are then sold in the market at low prices so that the demand for these products continues to be high. The cantons in Rojava generally have an economy based on agriculture and animal husbandry. Therefore, the opening of the cooperative can be a solution to overcome the problem of unemployment and encourage women's participation in the public sector. Cooperatives are also a form of organization and

economic development which is a symbol of resistance to the patriarchal and capitalist economy. The existing cooperatives are also engaged in various fields, ranging from textiles, catering, dairy, and agriculture (Azeez, 2017).

The role of women in the economy is in line with SDG Goal 5.a, which is to carry out reforms to give women equal rights to access and own economic resources, and regulate land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources in accordance with the national law. The fact that the cooperative system has succeeded in reducing female unemployment also supports the achievement of Goal 8.5 which promotes the attainment of sufficient employment for both men and women and equal pay for equal work.

This is because cooperatives are run through democratic practices with the principle of "one member, one vote" in which each member also gets equal benefits from cooperatives. This method is very different from the capitalist economic model where investors with the largest level of ownership have a higher voice and get more profits compared to other investors. In 2018, the first Women's Market was even opened in Derik, Rojava as a market where women can sell goods - their own home-made and hand-made items. This market is under the Women's Economic Board which is at the city level.

In the education sector, there is The Star Academy which is a place for learning as well as regeneration of women in Rojava regarding Jineology. According to Dorîñ Akîf, a instructor, Jineology sees women as the main actors in the economy. This refutes the notion of the capitalist system which sees the economy as the main responsibility of men (Biehl, 2015). Apart from that, The Star Academy also educates its female students about the political mechanisms of Rojava, such as women's parliaments, women's communes, general parliaments, general communes, and others. The learning method applied is also in the form of constructive discussion. Students of this academy come from various backgrounds, ranging from teenagers to the elderly, from university students to illiterate. The concept of inclusive education implemented in Rojava is in line with Goal 4.5 of TPB which wants to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access for every level of education.

Apart from that, regulations in Rojava also prohibit patriarchal practices. Rojava's constitution or "social contract", governing its some 4 million people enshrines women's rights and urges public institutions to work towards ending gender discrimination (Argentieri, 2016). Regulations in Rojava strictly prohibit the practice of polygamy, child marriage, forced marriage, payment of dowries, gender-based violence such as rape and domestic violence and legalize abortion (Guddim, 2021). This is in accordance with Goal 5.3 of TPB which reads "Eliminate all harmful practices such as early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation".

In the field of politics and law, there are Women's Shelter and *Mala Jinan* in Rojava. Women's Shelter is at the city level and allows women lawyers to advocate for women who are facing violence, both in the political, social and domestic spheres. While *Mala Jinan* or "Women's House" is at the commune level and functions as a place of mediation and resolution of problems or disputes. In this house women can also ask for help, including when they face violence. At each level of government, Rojava also uses a two-leader system consisting of a Chair and a Co-Chair, each of which must be occupied by one man and one woman (Omrani, 2015). Many non-Kurdish women, especially Arabs and Syriac Christian women have joined the ranks and the administration of Rojava (Dean, 2019).

Lava Selo's 2018 report entitled *Women's Rights in Rojava* shows how women play an important role in the political, defense and security sectors in Rojava. In the political field, women's participation in making public policies is guaranteed by the Charter of Social Contract which is the constitution of Rojava. Article 65 of this regulation guarantees at least 40% involvement of women in every public institution. Government levels in Rojava consist of several levels, ranging from communes, districts, cities, to cantons. In each commune, there are generally five to six committees, one of which is the Committees of Women. The task of this committee is to tackle patriarchal stereotypes in society that oppose women's rights. While the Executive Council, which is at the canton level consists of several committees that act as ministries, including the Women's Committee whose task is to regulate women's and family affairs. This committee has the power to make laws and has veto power over decisions concerning women's affairs made by other parts of the Executive Council (Selo, 2018).

Apart from the two committees, there is also the *Kongreya Star* or the Women's Association. This organization was founded in 2005 and aims to: (1) Solve the Kurdish issue through the Autonomous Administration Project, (2) Enable women to organize themselves independently within the project, (3) Achieve confederalism; and (4) Against all forms of inequality and consolidating the ideology of women's freedom in society. Star Congress has various committees, including the Economic Committee, the Political Committee, the Social Committee, the Diplomacy Committee, and the Training and Information Committee. This organization also has an important role in the process of regeneration of women who will become leaders in various Rojava institutions.

The number of women's political representation in Rojava is also very high. Hediya Yusuf, a 45-year-old woman was elected as the leader of the Constituent Assembly which has a total of 200 members and is tasked with drafting the Charter of Social Contract as the constitution of Rojava. The Legal Committee in the assembly which is responsible for drafting the Rojava constitution consists of 9 members filled by men and women equally. Article 16 of the constitution that has been passed then

guarantees an increase in women's representation of up to 50% in all institutions. Not only that, the Election Commission which oversees conducting general elections at each level also consists of 18 people consisting of men and women equally.

The high role of women in politics is in line with Goals 5.5, 5.c, 16.3, 16.6 and 16.7 of the SDGs. Goal 5.5 is to ensure full and effective participation and equal opportunity for leadership at all levels of public policymaking in politics, the economy and public life. The adoption of affirmative policies for women is also in line with Goal 5.c, namely adopting and strengthening policies and legislation to promote gender equality and women's empowerment at all levels. Goal 16.3 is to promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all. In addition, points 16.6 and 16.7 respectively encourage the establishment of effective, accountable, and transparent institutions and encourage responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

Meanwhile, in the defense-security sector, women also play a very important role in Rojava. According to a YPJ leader, Nesreen Abdullah, approximately 25% of the 60,000 troops who joined the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) were women from YPJ (Selo, 2018). In fact, according to the Kurdish Project, in 2015 the number of female armed forces in Rojava reached 44% which is the highest in the world, far surpassing the United States which is only 14% and Russia 10% (Sharif, 2018). YPJ itself was founded as a defense force that allows women to increase their strength to protect other women from attacks by the patriarchal system. Broadly speaking, women's involvement in security in Rojava itself is divided into three armed forces units, namely YPJ, YPG, and Asayish.

YPJ emphasizes resistance to patriarchal authoritarian regimes. This organization focuses more on self-defense approaches and fights for a free and democratic Syria to guarantee women's liberation. Meanwhile, the YPG is a unit whose troops consist of both men and women. Just like YPJ, YPG also fights for gender equality in society. The YPG describes the YPJ as a force protecting women in the western Kurdistan region. Meanwhile the Asayish troops are troops that have been acting as police and security forces in the Rojava region since 2013. Women who enter Asayish are also involved in various Asayish public activities, including being responsible for overseeing all issues and activities related to women such as sexual violence and rape. .

The high involvement of women in the defense and security sector is in line with Goal 5.1 of the TPB which reads "End all forms of discrimination against all women everywhere". So far, women have often received discriminatory treatment in this sector, because this sector is very closely related to masculinity.

CONCLUSION

The resistance of women in Rojava is caused by various factors, such as historical and ideological factors. It cannot be denied that Rojava's resistance was heavily influenced by the democratic confederalism thought introduced by Abdullah Ocalan. Even so, this event can also be traced from the perspective of Anarcha-Feminism. Anarcha-Feminism rejects all forms of hierarchy, including patriarchal cultures and centralized political systems such as the nation-state. According to this theory, revolution must depart from the understanding and awareness of the masses in deconstructing the existing social order to form a new social order that upholds freedom and equality. Anarchism and Feminism are interrelated and cannot be separated from one another.

This can be seen in the Rojava Revolution, where the parties involved agreed to refuse to form a top-down system of government like a nation-state, but to form a bottom-up system based on the ideology of democratic confederalism. The Rojava Revolution also produced a new social order that upheld gender equality in various aspects of life.

Then, judging from the concept of the Sustainable Development Goals, development in Rojava which upholds gender equality has succeeded in increasing the role of women in various sectors of life such as economic, social, educational, political, and defense-security. Rojava's success can be seen as a form of contribution in achieving Goals 4, 5, 8, and 16. This can prove that even though the theory of Anarcha-Feminism opposes the status quo and capitalistic patriarchal order that exists today, the implementation of this theory can still be achieved. aligned with the global development agenda.

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