



To Reproduce the Syrian National Coalition Standards and Implementation Mechanisms





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Introduction

The Syrian National Coalition, which was established at the end of 2013, is considered the main political representative of the Syrian opposition in the negotiations for a political solution, and in any settlement inside or outside the United Nations. Accordingly, the Coalition must be competent enough for the political entitlements in durable or interim scenarios for resolving the Syrian issue.

The Coalition suffered from various political tensions stemmed from different trends. Some of them were internal differences between its blocs and members, and others are external with the rest of the Syrian opposition's movements, forces and figures. The performance and the role of the Coalition were also affected by the general negative impression that spoiled its reputation, as one of the effects of the regional and international changes during the previous years, which witnessed the Coalition's inability to achieve any tangible impact of the political track on the Syrian issue.

Activists or experts often talk about the need to reconsider the structure of the Coalition; With the aim of achieving political coherence and effectiveness and finding or strengthening the necessary representation and legitimacy in the Syrian issue. Away from those who attack the Coalition and those calling for the creation of a new body without taking into account the regional and international situation, the Coalition actually needs reform plans that start from looking at its blocs and members, the internal system and the political vision, all the way to its performance and role in the general political scene.

Therefore, this analytical study assumes to start with reproducing the Coalition in a correct and balanced manner, depending on its goals and the role it plays in the Syrian issue. Then; after reproducing it, the process of reform will be easy to be resumed, such as amending the internal system and work mechanisms.

Meanwhile, the assessment and reform steps must be built on correct standards and methodology, taking into account internal and external factors, including the relationship with opposition allies, ensuring common interests, and taking into consideration risks at every stage.

This study comes after carrying out workshops and interviews with politicians and experts from inside and outside the Coalition. After that, the ideas, evaluation and proposals were discussed by a research team, with the aim of developing practical measures that could help influencers and decision-makers in strengthening the power of the Syrian opposition and its role in the upcoming political entitlements.

Methodology:

The study relies on evaluating the parts of the current situation using a descriptive methodology, with objectively studying the existing inputs. Then measurable indicators were used to determine the degrees of achievement of the evaluation requirements adopted by this study. Based on the findings, internal reform measures in the Coalition blocs and its members are proposed, which the study calls as "reproducing the Coalition", which will be in reviewing the validity the structural blocs of the Coalition, their sizes and the selection of their representatives. Also, reproducing the Coalition will be through replacement processes and the necessary involvement of new forces and people.

Five key requirements for evaluation are put forward in this study:

- **Competence:** The members should have appropriate personal and academic qualifications necessary to practice political work.
- **Representation:** It is the members' representation of the political and societal forces at the level that guarantees their actual participation in the Coalition as well as the diversity of the members and their coverage of the societal, political, ethnic and age groups of the Syrian opposition, and the representation of youth and women.
- **Effectiveness:** To attend the Coalition meetings, taking part in its activities in addition to taking the initiative and to interact within the Syrian political affairs.
- **Capacity to influence:** Having the power of persuasion to persuade all the official and popular circles of the Coalition's role, goals, and decisions, including having good ongoing relevant connections
- **Loyalty:** To affiliate with the general national project of the Syrian opposition, which is shared with the opposition's regional and international allies, and the foundations of that commitment to democracy, pluralism, and civil state, guaranteeing freedoms, confronting tyranny, and the unity of Syria.

As for evaluating the blocs and components, the reproduction process depends on examining how much the members of the bloc meet the evaluation requirements, and before that on the bloc's influence and its activeness as a political force in the Syrian issue.

First: The results of the current reality evaluation

In this issue, it is not possible to completely separate between looking at the 17 blocs that make up the Coalition and the extent to which they represent the Syrian political forces, and between members of the Coalition and the extent to which evaluation requirements are achieved in their positive form; because part of the evaluation of the current blocs was based on the situation of the members within these blocs, and thus the study draws the following conclusions:

a. Conclusions for blocs in the Coalition

Some of the current Coalition blocs are influential among the political forces that make up the Syrian opposition. Via their own representatives or reference, they have the type and size of representation and influence those are politically appropriate. This was often accompanied by a positive evaluation of the representatives of these blocs based on the previous evaluation requirements, while the evaluation process results in the need to intervene in some other blocks are as follows:

• Independent religious figures and ties:

It is necessary for religious establishments to be represented with an appropriate institutional way and not within the bloc of independents or within specific ties, especially since one of the most important umbrella institutions of the Syrian opposition is the Syrian Islamic Council.

Therefore, in the reproduction process, it is proposed for the Islamic Council to have an official representation within the Coalition, so that all the components of the Council and its members have the official representation that the Council internally provides, and consequently, the representatives take the Council as a direct reference.

• Founding blocs from the National Council:

Members of the National Council were the main nucleus in the formation of the Coalition in addition to other groups representing the Syrian opposition. Previously, the National Council bloc was called the basic or the founding bloc, but later the National Council's members turned to be directly in the Coalition institutional blocs, or within the bloc of the independents with their experience and relationships. The aforementioned process is exactly meant when mentioning to the reproduction approach as a means of achieving more stability; so that the members of the Coalition are parts of political blocs, which in turn represent either forces or groups or they are within the bloc of independents that will be mentioned later in this study.

- **The Revolutionary Movement:**

The expansion of the Coalition with representatives of the peaceful revolutionary movement was very important, but later this movement became limited with the change of field conditions and without an organizational structure, which made it one of the blocs most mentioned by critics as a sample of the state of the Coalition's disengagement from reality. At the same time, the members of this bloc have significant contributions and a key role within other blocs or political entities in which they are working in. Depending on their own experiences and relationships, they are an essential part of the Independents bloc.

- **Independent Kurdish Association (SBKR)**

The Association joined the Coalition during the expansion of 2020. Despite the Association's good influence, especially in Afrin and its good political and social relations at the internal and external levels, its representation is low as it is limited to only one representative. Accordingly, a proposal has been made to raise the bloc's representation to be two representatives, while maintaining the fair proportion of Kurds in the Coalition in comparison to the number of the Syrian Kurds.

- **Local Councils:**

The Syrian opposition adheres to the representation of local councils even for areas controlled by the regime, especially areas whose IDPs form gatherings in the opposition-held areas. Such an act is really important and necessary at the political level. But, however, some representatives of local councils in the Coalition are completely disconnected with the existing and elected local councils in the opposition areas; Thus, they lack representation and therefore a significant portion of influence despite their varying effectiveness. However, in the process of reproduction, it is necessary to adjust the situation of this bloc in order its reference to be connected to the local councils on the ground, and the members of the bloc are named or elected by the local councils with organizational mechanisms that all local councils in opposition areas agree on. This greatly affects the legitimacy of the representation of the Coalition.

- **Clans**

The representation of clans as social components in the Coalition has political significance and it is important in media as well. However, the representatives of this bloc have to be influential actors, and they have great influence in their clans or tribes at the level of Syria. Therefore, the Council of Tribes and Clans must be directed to select representatives for it in the Coalition with political experience, and to be notable and influential in the main major clans and tribes in Syria, so they should not be merely normal members of the Council of Tribes and Clans.



- **Military Factions bloc**

Although it is the only bloc in which the representative aspect has been addressed more than once, it is a bloc that has weak influence in the Coalition and also has weak political influence within the factions and in the opposition-held areas; Because part of its members do not have competence, effectiveness or influence, which are among the evaluation requirements, and thus the situation of the members within their bloc has had an impact on the evaluation of the bloc within the Coalition. It is proposed that the entire representatives of this bloc be re-selected from the actual leaders of the factions, taking into account political efficiency and effectiveness.

- **Independents:**

The number of independent members in the Coalition is 18, which is the largest bloc in terms of number, and there are no clear criteria for selecting its members. Some were chosen based on their access and political influence, others were chosen to adjust the representation of religious and national minorities, or to represent a political movement or group; Thus, not all members of this bloc are actually independent ones, and some of them have political affiliation with parties or movements inside or outside the Coalition. This, in fact, raises an internal problem between the blocs with the size of representation, and it is proposed that the independent member in this bloc does not belong to any political organization, and It has high efficiency, influence and effectiveness, such as former diplomats, businessmen, researchers and prominent media professionals.

The Syrian National Coalition's Components



Independents



Independents

18 members

Military Bloc

15 members

Kurdish National Council

11 members



Syrian local councils

9 members

Syrian Turkmen Council

7 members

Council of Syrian Tribes and Clans

6 members

Independent Revolutionary Movement (Revolutionary Movement)

5 members



Muslim Brotherhood

3 members

The Syrian National Movement

2 members

(National Action) The National Action Movement for Syria

2 members

The Syrian National Future Movement (Future Movement)

2 members



The Free National Assembly of Workers in Syrian State Institutions

1 members

Association of Muslim Scholars

1 members

Independent Kurdish Association

1 members

The Syrian National Democratic Bloc (the founding national bloc)

1 members



Democratic Revolutionary Organization

1 members



Syriac Assyrian component

1 members

b. Recommendations for Membership

Competence, representation, effectiveness, the capacity to influence, and loyalty are the evaluation requirements that have been adopted in evaluating the Coalition members and in the process of reproducing it. The members should believe in the Coalition's goals and vision as an obligatory condition, so that the statements and positions of all members are consistent with positive interaction with the Syrian opposition and its institutions and components. More precisely, the next stages in reproducing the Coalition must contribute to the formulation of the comprehensive national project for the Syrian people, to which loyalty must take precedence over any other non-opposing or different loyalty, since the presence of another contradictory or different loyalty makes the member lose the necessary condition for membership in the Coalition.

The second requirement for all members is effectiveness, so that every member who is absent from regular and emergency meetings should be excluded, and this includes excluding members who are unable to participate because of their health situation, for example.

Three conditions remain: competence, representation, and the capacity to influence. At least, two of them must be met by each member of the Coalition.

c. Recommendations concerning blocs and members in the reproduction process

In the reproduction plan, the National Coalition needs to include the rest of the effective and influential political forces. Also, it needs to refresh its vitality through new members who are not exhausted in previous experiences i.e., there is no point in returning the resigned and formerly dismissed members. It is quite important that the new members to have efficiency, influence, broad representation as well as loyalty and effectiveness. Furthermore, the study suggests the production of blocs out of influential political forces and groups as follows:

- **Local Councils bloc**

A bloc consisting of 5 to 10 members who are elected from all members of the official local councils in the areas of the Syrian opposition, and they should meet the evaluation requirements. The members of the bloc can be changed based on the change of local councils, which should be time-framed uniformly across all councils, through the mechanism of election as an approved format in terms of change and choice.

- **Bloc of political bodies**

A bloc consisting of 5 members elected by members of the political bodies representing the governorates in the opposition areas from the existing or newly created bodies. The period of the members of the bloc should have a time frame, whereby the members of this bloc are re-elected every year or every two years according to unified and general representation mechanisms on which the political bodies in the opposition areas are based.

- **Bloc of Syndicates, Associations and Unions**

A bloc composed of 5 members, includes the heads of the Doctors Syndicate, Bar Association, Teachers Union as well as the heads of other unions in the opposition-held areas, provided that the union to be a general one, and that its head is chosen by the members of the union or the association. Also, the evaluation requirements should be available in such members. Finally, resuming the membership of the bloc's members in the Coalition should be related to the results of the union elections.

- **The Syrian Islamic Council bloc**

A bloc consisting of 3 members named by the Council itself, taking into account the positive evaluation requirements and the diversity that the Council contains, such as diversities in ethnic and ideological groups. The reference of this bloc is the Council as it is the one who determines the extension or replacement of its members.

- **The Syrian-American bloc**

A bloc consisting of 3 members of Syrian-American politicians who are active in political affairs, and meet the evaluation requirements. The members of the Coalition to choose the representatives of this bloc and vote on their membership provided that the member of this bloc is independent (not affiliated with any political, ethnic, or social organization), and that the membership of this bloc's members in the coalition is to be limited to one year only.

- **Syrian-European bloc**

A bloc consisting of 3 members of Syrian politicians who are active in Europe, and they are also active in political affairs, and they should meet the evaluation requirements. The members of the Coalition to choose the representatives of this bloc and vote on their membership provided that the member of this bloc is independent (not affiliated with any political, ethnic, or social organization), and that the membership of this bloc's members in the Coalition is to be limited to one year only.

- **The Block of Independents**

There are divergent views about the Coalition being a representative body; Thus, there is no place for independent members in it, or to be a real bloc that includes elites of independent researchers, research fellows in Syrian think tanks, prominent media workers in or outside media institutions, as well as investors and businessmen. The representation of women in the bloc of the independents shall be taken into account, just as other political blocs shall take into account the representation of women in an internal decision within each opposition Syrian political entity or institution.

In the bloc of independents, the evaluation requirements must be provided together positively, except for the requirement of representation; Where it is stipulated in this bloc that the members mustn't be affiliated with any political, ethnic, or social organization. The proportion of members of this bloc should not exceed 10% of the total number of Coalition members, which in turn should not be more than 150 and not less than 100 members of the public bodies. The members of the Coalition to choose the members of this bloc, provided that the membership of its members in the Coalition is limited to one year only, just as in the previous two blocs.

It is true that the two previous blocs (the Syrian-American and the Syrian-European) are special blocs, but in reality they are an extension of the independents in the Coalition, who do not represent political forces or ethnic entities, and thus they are a source of enrichment for the Coalition by virtue of their relations and their scientific and political competencies.

- **Blocs of political parties**

Representation should include all official Syrian political parties and groupings wishing to join the Coalition, provided that they are compatible with the determinants of forming political parties in terms of the organizational situation, the number of organizers, written and declared political identity, and the desire of these parties to join the Coalition. Moreover, such determinants should also apply to both the current parties within the Coalition and that are included in the expansion process. In this regard, each party should be represented by at least one and three representatives at most, according to the size of the party (the number of its declared affiliates). The representatives should meet the evaluation requirements positively.



Second: The Reproduction Plan and Its Mechanisms

Reproducing the Coalition cannot be passed by a decision in the Coalition itself, as some of the current blocs and their members - especially those who will be outside the Coalition in the reproducing process- will block any such decision, and thus there is no mechanism for reproduction except with the participation of blocs and members of the Coalition those who believe in the necessity of this radical change with regional and international efforts to help achieve this step.

The situation may be different, but in order to recall the mechanisms of change that occurred in the institutions of the Syrian opposition, it is possible to recall the method of reproducing the High Negotiations Committee (HNC) at the end of 2017, when a new body emerged with new mechanisms of action, structure and performance in the name of the Syrian Negotiation Commission (SNC), and the latter was a natural extension of the former.

At the same time, it is not possible to implement the same mechanism in reproducing the Coalition for a fundamental reason, which is that the required change in the Coalition presupposes the addition of a number of members who are outside it right now, and there is no mechanism for inviting them to attend a conference of the Coalition. Therefore, the method of reproducing the Coalition requires modifications that can be drawn up in interim steps as follows:

1. To adopt and support the reproducing plan by the allied countries and those who support the Syrian opposition and the Coalition.
2. The real blocs in the Coalition and the members who meet the positive evaluation requirements must adopt the necessity of reproducing, in the conviction that it is a need, and with the continuity and support of the allied countries that contribute to the gathering of an expanded and reliable nucleus of the members who are supposed to remain in the new structure of the Coalition to be a core from within the Coalition to support the institution's reproduction, changing its internal system, and developing its political performance.
3. That these real blocs and the positive members referred to as the core group within the Coalition work on expanding the blocs and members proposed in this study, and these initial expansions to extend until before the next presidential elections in mid-2022, and thus the number of Coalition members can increase from 86 to 150 ones.



4. The final stage of the Coalition's reproduction is for the core group within the bloc with the members added by expansion to lead the process of proposing serious and radical amendments to the Coalition's internal system, calling for a general conference and restructuring the Coalition, including organizing and implementing the rest of the reform process from replacement, removal and completion of the expansion, all the way to stabilize the bloc and hold new elections in mid-2022.

As such, the process of reproducing the Coalition requires effort from within and outside the Coalition, and support and facilitation from the allied countries, in the conviction that these members and these forces and entities must be within an effective institution and a cohesive body.

Besides, the Syrian opposition, on the initiative of the Coalition, and of forces and personalities outside it, and with the support of the allied countries, needs to re-evaluate and organize the various institutions and bodies inside it, as the process of reproducing the Coalition requires a collective contribution to solving the problems of the division of local councils and the multiplicity of political bodies in the opposition-controlled areas. The political role is to help the national army organize its ranks and to assist the Interim Government to carry out its organizing role for the work of unions and institutions in the liberated areas.

Analytical summary

Representing the Syrian opposition in an institution that states deal with and politically recognizes is one of the gains of the Syrian revolution. To keep this gain, it is essential to look forward reproducing the Coalition as the main representative of the Syrian opposition in the regional and international political scene, with its transformation into a coherent body capable of formulating the national project that guarantees positive influence on the path of political transition in the current and future circumstances.

It also ensures the alleviation of internal crises and the sharp polarization between the components of the Coalition, and between the Coalition and the opposition institutions and its elites.

At the level of the popular base, the political, cultural and societal elites, and at the level of regional and international allies, it presents new untapped faces, and these faces have efficiency and positive impact with the general opposition project in harmony with the interests of its allies.



The partial changes that the Coalition used to make were not fundamental, as their main goal was not to improve efficiency, as happened in changing the bloc of the former military factions and changing the bloc of clans. Such modifications did not affect the general form of the Coalition, while the study of the Coalition's reproduction assumes a radical change in the form and effectiveness of the blocs. It requires positive evaluation requirements in the remaining and the new members. This, in fact, ensures its effectiveness in changing the ineligibility of the Coalition as an institution representing the opposition for any political entitlements related to the future of Syria.

This study does not assume absolute flexibility and smoothness in the reproduction process. There are certainly obstacles, some of which are related to security and political fears of the size of this major change, especially among the regional and international forces supporting the Syrian opposition. Therefore, this study took into account the gradual implementation of this change; So that evaluation, monitoring, and the possibility of modification are present at every stage. This study also pays attention to the internal core and the accuracy in choosing additions, so that taking into account the evaluation requirements in their positive form to be one of the most important guarantees against such fears. The study assumes the matter of the resistance to change from the current members and blocs, and therefore it addresses the issue with the need for external adoption to the reproduction process and then to rely on the inner core and expansion procedures to address these obstacles.

Finally, the implementation of the Coalition's reproduction does not necessarily mean changes in the political balance regarding the Syrian issue, as it has become linked to a wide range of international complications, but the reform ensures that the allies of the Syrian opposition have a political partner capable of performing appropriately and having a wide influence in any upcoming issue on the Syrian issue.



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