Sectarianism as a Modern Mobile Global Structure

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Abstract: *Using a case study of Arabs in Israel as a starting point, this article focuses on the phenomenon of communal and ethnic violence. Through a discussion of different theoretical perspectives on ethnic conflict in the context of the case study in Israel as well as conflicts around the world, the article suggests that there is often a confusion of symptoms and secondary factors with the core causes of ethnic conflicts and communal violence. The article discusses how western centric assumptions might have shaped theorizing on the issue of communal conflict, and proposes an alternative theory that views these conflicts as a modern global structure. Going beyond commonly used explanations such as economic, cultural, or instrumentalist factors, the article argues that the phenomenon is a deeply structural one that is linked to nationalism, the nation-state, and by extension to the European colonial outlook and to modernity. The colonialist perspective was built on the racist assumption that the answer for modern political problems is to be found in the nation-state and its structures of organizing, categorizing, including, and excluding groups. This structure that organizes contemporary life around the world informs the acts of racism and violence against those who are seen as not belonging to a particular nation or the group. Previously colonized groups are trapped within this structure that is not of their own making. Similarly the colonizers are also trapped in the mindset that informed, and still informs, their outlook on the organization of modern politics. In conclusion, the article that work in the field of communal violence needs to pay greater attention to this structural thesis, and move away from limited approaches that often confuse the causes with symptoms. This will help deepen our understanding of what is happening in contexts such as Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Rwanda, and India, where colonization lingers or decolonized states are still plagued by the structural ramifications of colonial legacies. This structural thesis can also help understand questions of race and citizenship, in relation to the politics of exclusion and violence, as they are shaped by the framework of citizenship rights in countries such as the U.S., France, or elsewhere. The article calls for a possible solution in countries that are still fighting the after-effects of colonization, by engaging in a dialogue on a possible future polity that could potentially avoid the pitfalls of the nation-state: its narrow-minded nationalism and the inequalities of restrictive citizenship rights.*

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1 Introduction

Warning against taking the hegemony of dominant discourses and paradigms at their face value, Ibn Khaldoun, the great Arab philosopher of the 14th century[1], proposed that a sound scholarly inquiry should avoid these pitfalls by using three tools: first, logical deduction based on analytic reasoning; second, field work in the location of inquiry and empirical research; and third, engagement with other scholarly works and sources that deal with the subject, while utilizing logical deduction at and in every step of the work as I will illustrate throughout the discussion here.

My primary research is on sectarian violence among Arabs-Palestinians in Israel. I draw on Ian Lustick's work (Lustick, 1980), which analyzes the policies of the Israeli state towards its Arab Palestinian citizens; Lustick describes these as a general policy of control—in other words, the state's policy of divide and rule. In my work, I extend this analysis of the Israeli state's mechanism of control of its Arab Palestinian citizens to include issues of internal sectarian violence. In addition, my research develops Lustick's descriptive analysis of the relationship between the state of Israel and its Palestinian Arab citizens by examining the causes of that relationship and what structure creates it.

Initially, my research dealt with Druze-Christian violence among Arab Palestinians in Galilee and, specifically, a case study of an attack by Druze on the village of Kafr Yassif in 1981, in which Kafr Yassif was the target of an attack by Druze mob many of which were dressed in Israeli military uniforms and equipped with its weapons. It is based on field work, interviews, and archival research in the local council and local press, thus supplementing the narrative of the state about these events, in addition to secondary sources on the relationship between the state of Israel and its Arab Palestinian citizens (Shihade, 2005).

My research demonstrates that the state has sanctioned and, in fact, encouraged Druze attacks against

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[1] A good translation of Ibn Khaldoun's work is: Ibn Khaldoun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, translated and introduced by Franz Rosenthal, abridged and edited by N.J. Dawood, with a new introduction by Bruce B. Lawrence (2005), Bollingen Series, New York and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

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Christians, and group violence among Arabs in general. This conclusion is supported by a pattern of repeated group violence among Arabs which is not prevented by the state, despite the presence of Israeli security at many of these incidents.   Furthermore, Israeli security forces have sometimes participated in the attacks along with the Druze perpetrators, and at times the state authorities have blocked intervention to prevent or stop the violence by third parties. And finally, the state has not punished the perpetrators, thus sanctioning such behavior and giving a green light for the perpetrators of violence to act with impunity.

During my field work, I discovered interesting historical material about my village--Kafr Yassif--that sheds new light on the relationship between the state and the village, and also on the issue of Palestinian Arab mobilization inside Israel. In an article in the Arab Studies Quarterly, Ahmad Sa'di (2001) has documented a little known history of coalition building and politics of resistance by the residents of Kafr Yassif against discrimination and oppression by the state of Israel, and government retaliation against local activists including the funding of religious parties to undermine the coalitions in the village and under funding of the local council in Kafr Yassif.

I also found that the village's history of resistance came to the attention of scholars and activists in Europe, including Simone de Beauvoir and Jean Paul Sartre, who visited Kafr Yassif after hearing about the non-violent strategy used by the village leaders and residents in 1952. In one incident, for example, they engaged in non-violent resistance to prevent the Israeli Army from entering the village to deport internal Palestinian refugees who had found sanctuary in Kafr Yassif after being displaced by Israeli Army in the 1948. This incident, as well as others, is barely known outside the Palestinian community in Israel but have important implications for they counter the Israeli state's narrative about the "culture of violence among Arabs" as the cause of conflicts within the community, which was also the official line regarding the events in Kafr Yassif in 1981.

Building on already established studies done by Gershon Shafir, Shira Robinson, Ian Lustick, and others that documented how the Israeli state have worked to segregate Jews from Arabs and divide Arabs among

themselves, I argue that we need to consider the origin of the state as a settler colonial state and its relationship to the indigenous population in order to explain this phenomenon. As a settler colonial state, Israel has worked to divide the indigenous community in various ways, exploiting differences and at times creating new ones to undermine the mobilization by the Arab Palestinian community against the state's policies of discrimination and marginalization. In the case of the Druzes, an Islamic sect, that like the Shi'a was not recognized by mainstream Sunni Islam, the Ottomans, or the British Colonial government in Palestine as a separate religion. The Israeli state, on the other hand, not only classified them as a separate religious group, but also an ethnic group for the first time in history. The state created for the Druze a separate educational system, drafted them into the Israeli army, and co-opted leaders of the Druze community in Israel effectively separating them from the rest of the Palestinian Arab community in Israel (Betts, 1988, Firro, 1992, Parson, 2000).

Analyzing Communal Violence: Preliminary Discussion

A fundamental aspect of mainstream theories of communal violence, or violence between ethnic or religious groups is that they examine this phenomenon from a perspective external to the concerned communities, generally from the perspective of the state that does not question its power. My own concern is not the stability and future of the state of Israel, or any other state for that matter, but rather the well being of the community itself—of the people, a project aimed at providing an indigenous perspective with the aim of decolonization, scholarly as well as political.

Although, I provide in my research information on the communities under study, their history, and their inter-communal relationship, in order to examine the claims about the "violent nature of Arab society" and other societies to test the different theories in the field dealing with historical antipathy and the like, I believe the state is the most important issue/variable in studying issues of racism and sectarian violence.

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The theorizing of the state and state-society relations has been going for decades. Timothy Mitchell provides a critical summary of these debates (Mitchell, 1991). While the topic is an interesting one where the debates are concerned with the boundaries between state and society, my definition and concern with the state in this article is quiet different, especially regarding this topic of inter-ethnic or inter-communal conflict and violence. As the paper will show, my argument is that the origin and the creation of the state is the defining moment for the inter-group relations.

This framing of the state as analytical unit and more so as the cause of this phenomenon has been largely marginalized in the mainstream field of ethnic conflict and resolution. Instead, there has been too much focus on the communities involved; their mindset, their religion, culture, identity…etc., in a way, in my view, providing the state, consciously or not, with tools to control them. Yet, in my view, this is a problematic approach, and underlies parochial and patriarchal predispositions of such scholars, even though many of them might be not aware of it.

To assume that cultures, identities of groups are the cause of conflict is in fact to argue that wherever we do not see conflicts/violence (at least on the surface) there is a more tolerant and flexible identities. Thus, it is a problem of culture. Against that, I argue that people are people regardless of where they live and what "group" they belong to. Rather, than looking at that, it is better to look at the state; its nature, origin, and development, structure and policies that create and bring about racism, inter-group conflicts and violence. It is true that people have their own agency, but people act freely to an extent and within the limits of the structure of the state that they live under. Most people around the world did not create these structures, but often, especially in the so called Third World, was imposed on them by the dynamic of colonial, and neo colonial dictates and resistance to it, which ended up producing the state system that we have today around the world.

Rather than being critical of state power and actions, scholars have often concerned themselves with the status quo and the preservation of the state power, and often provided the state with pretexts to act violently within and without its borders. This is pretty much a familiar concept in

the U.S. since 9/11 and the surge of home land security studies, and before 9/11 and the theories of "just" wars, which the neocons took to the extreme. Many scholars have attached themselves to power, rather than being concerned with creating a better world, which can only happen through the critique of power and by exposing the hypocrisy and contradictions that lie at the heart of the racist structure of the nation state. This is for example is evident in the field of Middle Eastern studies, in which the role of the West and their allies in the region, mainly Israel, in promoting sectarian politics and terror as for example Robert Dreyfuss (2005) has shown in his work, remains marginalized.

Similarly, scholars who write about Israel, instead of being objective and apply theories and test them on Israel, they created specific theories to confuse readers and normalize an abnormal case. For example, instead of exposing that Israel does not fit the theory and category of a liberal democracy, and that it is better described as a settler colonial state, an apartheid system as Uri Davis (1987) has argued, they created new theories to, in essence, to obscure what is taking place in that country, and furnish it with all different "scientific" studies such as the theories of "ethnic democracy", "theo-democracy" and the like, theories which help Israel in its international public relations campaigns that present Israel as the "only democracy in the Middle East" rather than "the only settler-colonial and apartheid state in the region.

Furthermore, as I will show next, the labeling/categorizing the Israeli state, or any other for that matter, as democratic or otherwise is secondary to the real meaning of these labels, which can be better understood from the stand point of the application of the policies of the state, and how groups under its control, as the receiving end of these policies, labels, and justifications, feel about them, and what concrete results the application of these policies on them means, and what structure these policies create that imposes itself on these subjects-citizens.

The larger question addressed by my research, beyond the case study, is how to study the causes of communal violence within the nation-state and how this phenomenon is linked to structures of colonialism, settler-colonialism, and nationalism and to Western notions of modernity informed

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by racism. I do not argue here that violence was absent in pre-modern times, and that religious groups coexisted in harmony with each other; in fact one can argue that violence is as old as humans are. One need only to look at ancient scriptures such as the Old Testament or the Torah and find that violence is justified in the name of Chosenness and in the name of God; all religions and cultures justified violence and thus violence is not new.

Partha Chatterjee has written numerous works that dealt with the relationship between the modern or postcolonial state. In one of his works, Chatterjee (2004) argues that at the heart of conflicts in the postcolonial state is the unresolved question between what he calls citizens and population, or what Mahmood Mamdani called in his work on Africa citizens and subjects, in which the state was conceived of to represent and to be of certain group, and not others who live within its boundaries.

My aim here is to counter the rhetoric of modernity that claims that organizing our lives according to "secular," modern, rational, democratic, and liberal principles and free market theories is the road to better harmony and peace. Talal Asad, has showed in his work—The Formation of the Secular—how this rhetoric by the West has been used as a discourse of power and colonization, and that the West did not yet solve the question of separation between religion and state as the claim is often made. Furthermore, I argue that the very origins of this discourse is racist in its universalizing outlook and breaching--the supposedly rational West found a political and economic formula for the rest of the world to follow, which continues to mask the imperialist and patriarchal hegemony of the world we live in. Western colonial and neo-colonial powers claimed their notions of democracy and nation-state building would create equality among peoples and nations and equality of individuals within them but instead they created marginalization and hegemony; they exploited existing differences and created new categories of social difference endowed with political and economic powers in the name of modernity and liberalism of the "civilized" world as many scholars in Subaltern and Postcolonial Studies have shown.

As Laura Nader (1989, 2, 323) argues, the rhetoric of modernity in the West has been used to achieve two goals;

first, to justify Western interventions abroad, and second, to safeguard the status quo at home, included gendered and racialized relations of power. Although Nader's argument focuses primarily on the ways patriarchy is maintained through a discourse about the comparative status of women within and outside the West, this argument can also be extended to other discourses about notions of democracy, political systems, "culture", free markets, liberalization, violence, and modernity. A thematic extension of Nader's argument helps to deconstruct the rhetoric of modernity, civilization, and culture. As Mahmood Mamdani (2007) rightly argues, we should be wary of such discourses because they have been used by imperialist and colonialist powers to justify their so-called humanitarian interventions and or civilizational missions, which in reality were selective and politically motivated, and inevitably devastating for colonized societies.

Mamdani explores how the "politics of naming" underlies the selective classification of certain events as genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes especially in the United States, by the government and media alike. This analysis draws attention to the power of naming—that is, the power to make hegemonic the significance of some historical occurrences of violence while marginalizing and ignoring others. It also calls into question the powers behind the naming—for example, the ways the U.S. (government or media) forced a global acceptance of the designation of the Iraqi regime before 2003 as guilty of committing war crimes; the events in the Sudan as genocide; and the events in the former Yugoslavia as ethnic cleansing. Yet Iraq cannot create a global consensus that U.S. atrocities committed in Iraq before and after 2003 are acts of terrorism, war crimes, or genocide, nor can the Palestinians force the international community to recognize Israeli actions before and after 1948 as terror, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, or apartheid.

Moreover, in addition to the politics of naming that Mamdani explores, there is the politics of theorizing that I think is crucial to the process of decolonization, in the process of exposing the linkage between knowledge and power and hegemony, concepts that were developed by Foucault, Gramsci, and Edward Said, and which Ibn Khaldoun warned us against. The U.S. academy serves

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largely the status quo instead of producing knowledge for social change and speaking truth to power, by largely evading the atrocities committed by certain states, regimes, and groups, sometimes providing them with pretexts and other times a cover up for their actions. Israel is rarely acknowledged to be a racist, colonial state and, in certain fields, neither is the U.S. Israeli and U.S. wars at home and abroad are justified by the governments of these states with different rationales and the academy has, to a large degree, either been silent, or even provided these states with theories of "security", "deterrence", or "just wars" that justify their wars and mask their crimes. Finally, in the field of ethnic and communal conflict and violence, there has been strong reluctance to theorize how racism, colonialism, and neocolonialism are at the heart of communal violence. Little attention is given to how these conflicts are the making of Western colonial and neocolonial practices that continue to impact dependent regions and groups around the world as long as theorizing largely evades this issue.

Thus, I see my research as an intervention into the larger literature on communal and ethnic violence and the field of "conflict resolution," examining theoretical approaches in the field and various cases from around the world. This comparative theoretical approach goes beyond a critique of a single state or analyses that claim to speak on behalf of a specific people, providing a deeper understanding of communal violence. I also believe that a comparative approach is the best way to avoid the pitfalls of political loyalty, which Ibn Khaldoun also warned against, and which can contaminate scholarship and knowledge.

As Hannah Arendt (1964) argues in her work, Eichmann as an official during the Nazi period should not be seen as an aberration but very much a product of modernity, modern state, and modern lethal weapons. Eichmann, thus, is a product of modern state structure that demands from its citizens, obedience to orders, and consequently Nazi Germany is no aberration rather it is a continuum of European camps, and interments and killings machines in Africa.

Building on Arendt's work on modernity's role in violence, Mahmood Mamdani (1996, 2001, 2004) argues that any explanation for any modern conflict can be only

understood through modern historical context, and that this violent racism that was the product of European/Western making was transplanted in their colonies in Africa and elsewhere, and continues to shape politics in these places.

In such framework, colonial modernity, and the nation state are the approach to understand the current structure of political, economic system that shapes states, and is central to global politics and only through that one can understand any modern problem. As many post colonial scholars such as Ania Loomba (1998) have shown; colonialism did not end with decolonization. Furthermore, Loomba and other scholars in the field such as Henry Yu, Donald Pease and Michael Rogin, to name just few, have shown how colonial divisions by colonial powers of the colonized was also practiced at home in the colonial motherland.

The main point in my argument in the context of modernity is that the nation-state is the framework one ought to use in explaining current communal/ethnic divides and conflicts, not ancient hatred…etc. The nation state is a modern European/Western phenomenon that was replicated through colonialism around the world. It is the only political organizing reality since the Westphalia Peace Treaty, and any alternative to that is not tolerated in the international system. Those who resisted Western colonialism had no choice; either remain colonized or fight for independence using the only language available—nationalism and nation state. When some tried to change that reality they were crushed as Ian Lustick (1997) argues in the case of Arab world.

When, one argues that the nation-state is the factor that creates ethnic/communal conflicts and violence, one does not argue that people have no agency nor that pre modern period was peaceful. Yet, modernity's discourse was that ancient frameworks were backward and irrational and that rational modern science and knowledge is better and can solve social, political, and economic ills. Modernity's rhetoric professed to get away from unscientific superstitious and irrational ideologies and proposed to offer a rational enlightenment (Max Weber and others) that would bring a better more peaceful life. Yet, the reality appeared to be different.

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The nation state was professed as the solution of modernity and Enlightenment that would organize a peaceful coexistence of all nations. Yet, as so many scholars of nationalism and nation state have argued, it is hardly possible to contain any nation in any specific state (Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and others); that it is impossible to have a homogenous nation state in the first place, and that the project of nation-state building had to follow a process of imagining a nation and shaping people who fall under the boundary of that state according to that imagination.

As the state tries to create a nation of its own, as it tries to homogenize, it also excludes those who do not belong, or in that process it excludes those who do not fit the prototype of the nation, and thus, these groups become excluded from complete and equal citizenship, and consequently from equal political, economic, and social rights and privileges and thus conflicts become inevitable.

This system of inclusion and exclusion is very much at the heart of each state, and it is felt much more pronounced in states that are poor and often subjugated to external influences and dictates. Yet, also wealthy states are not immune from it either as one can find example of different groups experiences and conflicts for example in France, Britain, USA among other places. Thus, only if we focus on the state, and try find means for changing its dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, we can better understand the phenomenon of ethnic/communal conflict, and maybe we will be able then suggest possible solutions.

Consequently, I argue that modern conflicts, including ethnic and communal violence cannot be explained through discourses of "ancient" cultural differences but ought to be situated in the context of the modern mechanisms and factors that cause them, and that were generated within the modern systems of the nation-state, colonialism, imperialism, and neocolonialism. This argument will be further illustrated with different examples and further explanation as I discuss the dominant theories in the field, and discuss some case studies to illustrate my points.

Before discussing my approach to the field of sectarian conflict and violence, I will discuss four dominant paradigms in the field of conflict resolution, and suggest an alternative

approach to the understanding of this phenomenon using various examples of violent conflicts from around the world, including that of the current violence in Iraq.

2. "Peaceful Democracy"

One of the widely accepted theories in the field of politics is the paradigm of peaceful democracy, which argues that democratic states are more peaceful than non-democratic states, internally and externally—for the groups living within the state as well as for other states. Despite the general acceptance of this paradigm, in my view it does not hold ground when examined through research— the logical inference that Ibn Khaldoun advised us to follow which contradicts commonly held assumptions. According to these commonly held assumptions, is that certain nation-states are assumed to be democracies, for example: the US, Great Britain, India, and Israel, and that these states are considered models of democracy to be emulated regionally and globally. Yet, these states have been no less, if not more, violent at home and abroad than many other states that are not considered democratic, such as Iran, Syria, North Korea, China, or Cuba, to name just a few.

Some scholars, in fact, have challenged this paradigm and argued that democracy is not actually a guarantee to peace, in contradiction of the dominant paradigm (Keane, 2004, Ross, 2004). Furthermore, John Keane warns us to pay attention to the exporting of violence by democracies to their colonies; for example, by Britain, France, and the USA to Asia, Africa, and the Americas. I would also point out that the UK, like many states in the West, is not that peaceful internally and has had its share of communal and ethnic violence, a point that I will turn to in different parts of the article. Furthermore, Daniel Ross argues further that the very origin of democracy lies in violence, as evident from studying the historical development of liberal democratic states. Ross shows that democracies such as Australia and the USA were built on the slaughtering of the natives, which is part of the violent foundational history of these two countries. Thus, in my view, the paradigm of peaceful democracy needs to be reexamined or at least further

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qualified. Therefore, the cause of violence lies in factors other than the type of political system, as I will demonstrate here.

One final point on this argument that is often used, especially in the case of Iraq, is that the authoritarian (non-democratic) regime of Saddam Hussein has managed to suppress ethnic and communal violence in Iraq. I have two reservations on this argument. One is that it lacks any evidence. We are just supposed to believe that there were sectarian conflicts in Iraq prior to 2003, and that their suppression by the regime made us blind to their existence. This leads me to the second reservation regarding this argument, which presumes, or wants us to believe, that the American occupation regime in Iraq is somehow democratic, and that's why we see sectarian violence in Iraq among Shi'a and Sunni Iraqis today. I will discuss the situation in Iraq more in this paper, but for now let me just propose the following: The occupation of Iraq and its colonization is the ultimate authoritarianism that can exist in that country, which robs the Iraqis of a fundamental right—self determination—which is a central issue to democracy and self government. It is worth adding few words to those who are still in doubt: Balkanization, rape, mass murder, lynching, Fallujah, Abu-Ghraib, death squads…etc. These are the tools and realities of U.S. occupation of Iraq, which are the furthest that Iraqis had as democracy is concerned. The cause for sectarian violence in Iraq is largely because of U.S. occupation, as I will discuss later in the paper.

3. "Weak States"

A second major paradigm in the field of ethnic and communal violence is that of "weak states." For example, David Laitin and James Fearon have argued in much of their work that the defining factor in keeping internal peace is the strength of the state under consideration, rather than the type or form of the political system. They argue that the weakness of particular states is the cause for ethnic and communal violence (Laitin &Fearon, 2002). While this theory has much merit, it is still limited in content and scope for it does not shed light on ethnic and communal violence in "strong" states, such as Israel. Even more importantly, I argue that this approach explains only the surface, and not the core, of the problem of communal violence.

Taking as an example the sectarian violence within Iraq since 2003, it may be plausible to argue that the weakness of the state—especially the security branch--is partly responsible for the ethnic and communal violence among Iraqis. But such an explanation, if it stops there, skims just the surface of the issue, failing to address why the state became weak in the first place, when it became weak, and who is the state under the present circumstances. It is now common knowledge that the U.S. has since its invasion of Iraq destroyed the pre-2003 state apparatus, armed the militias, and empowered certain Iraqi groups (e.g. Kurdish and Shi'a militias) with the aim of undermining other groups (Sunnis and Ba'thists). This process has created many state-like groups in Iraq who take the law in their hands when they wish to, without any serious attempt by the U.S. to change that reality. How, then, could the notion of the weak state explain the situation in Iraq and what can even be considered the state at such a moment, when the sovereignty of Iraq and its people has been hijacked by the U.S. and its military? My argument here is that the current ethnic and communal violence in Iraq cannot be explained without situating it in the context of the U.S. occupation and colonization of the country.

Furthermore, theories of weak states are generally applied to examples of states in the global South as if this phenomenon prevails only in the South and states in the North are orderly and peaceful. Such approaches ignore historic conflicts in the USA, France, Britain, Spain, Ireland, Australia, and many other states in the North that have witnessed, and still witness, violence against ethnic and religious groups, particularly minorities, for a very long time. Although these minority groups are often used by these states as enablers of their nation-building project— economically, politically and in other ways—they are always the targets of violence when the national project fails or seems, to some, to be failing or is threatened—economically and politically.

Finally, even so-called weak states are not truly impartial in their responses to ethnic and communal violence. One example of this is the current conflict that has been brewing in the Darfur region of the Sudan. Even though the state has been described as weak by many

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scholars, it has not been neutral in the violence in Darfur, at times directly taking part in the killings, and at others supplying support or allowing one party to attack another in order to achieve the Sudanese government's primary goal of controlling the region and its resources. Furthermore, the weakness of the Sudanese state should be assessed in relation to the external, regional and global, powers that are involved and their relative strength and role in affecting the unfolding conflict in Darfur. To explain the situation in the Sudan chiefly in terms of the weakness or strength of the state is to ignore the many external factors affecting the conflict there (Mamdani, 2007). A situation such as this cannot be explained in isolation, as is also the case for conflicts in Iraq, Lebanon, or other countries around the world that are highly dependent in the world system. Even though many of these states are no longer subject to direct colonial control by Western powers, indirect control and influence operates economically and politically. The hegemony of global and regional powers can not to be freed from responsibility for the outbreaks of violence in the so-called "weak" states.

4. Manipulative Leaders

A third common paradigm in the field is theories that focus on the manipulation of leaders, for example, in Paul Brass' work on communal violence in India (2003). Brass argues that a primary reason for violence is the role of community leaders who utilize violence in order to gain greater support from their communities, especially during election campaigns, and that this was a factor in the rise to power of the right-wing, Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India. This theory has a kernel of truth for it is evident that leaders of ethnic and religious groups could benefit from ethnic and communal violence that bolsters communal identities and compels members of these communities to turn to leaders for protection, especially when they believe that the state is unwilling or unable, to protect them in times of internal violence. However, this same perspective on the belief in the state's ineffectiveness is

also the weak point in this explanation. The question ought to be why the state is unwilling or unable to intervene in violent conflicts, punish harshly those who commit such acts, and hold officials accountable for such incidents, when the state is ultimately responsible for the safety of the public. Thus the state is let off the hook according to such explanations, while I argue that the role of the state is the primary analytical tool in studying communal violence.

Furthermore, Brass' theory fails to account for the lack of violence in many regions and localities in India where mixed religious communities lived for years in close proximity without experiencing violence, even during election campaigns. Thus, the particular case or two that Brass uses from India seem to be the exception, not the rule, and so there must be other reasons more primary than the role of community leaders. Even more problematic is the implication that ordinary people who participate in these incidents are passive subjects manipulated by their leaders and lacking any agency of their own.

Finally, if the manipulation of ethnic or religious violence is a strategy by political leaders to increase their standings in the polls, why would that strategy not be used, to varying degrees in other countries, such as the United States or Canada, given that violent conflicts do occur in these countries at various moments? Or is this communalization of politics and violence just an Indian phenomenon? It is very apparent that political parties in various Western states do attract particular religious constituencies. For example, the Republican Party in the U.S. tends to draw its supporters heavily from the Christian right and it is well known that the Conservative party in Canada draws its political power mainly from Catholics, especially in the Quebec region. This is also true for many parties in Israel and Europe that have religious bases or followings, but it seems that the manipulation of leaders for vote banks is not related to violent conflicts in discussions of these other cases. Is this strategy of communalizing politics, then, a cultural explanation? In my view, the theory of manipulative leaders cannot be used in many other cases from around the world because it fails to offer a sufficiently complex account of communal violence and ignores the role

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of the state, which is after all the only legitimate source of power and perpetrator of violence.

5. Historical Antipathies

The fourth and most commonly used explanation in the field is the "historical antipathy" paradigm, which is offered by scholars such as Donald Horowitz (1985, 2001), who argues that the primary cause of ethnic and communal violence is historical antipathy—economic and/or political. This paradigm is often used to explain violent conflicts in the Middle East by liberal and conservative scholars alike, thus it is a significant approach to consider in relation to the cases I use in this article. In my view, historical antipathy might be a factor that comes into play after a conflict begins to unfold, but is not the chief cause of conflict and violence and should not be used as a totalizing, ahistorical framework. Thus, when mainstream analysts suggest that the sectarian violence in Iraq is due to deeply ingrained antipathies, real or imagined, between Muslim sects that stretch back in time to the 7th century, they forget that if this were the case, there should have been Shi'a-Sunni violence in Iraq based on religious beliefs for hundreds of years. But there is no evidence for this argument. It is important to historicize conflicts in the region rather than resorting to Orientalist explanations of ancient hatreds that evade analysis of specific temporal and political contexts and frame the problem in primordial views of culture and essentialist constructions of history. The current seemingly "religious" conflict simmering in Iraq is, in fact, is a political conflict between various segments of Iraqi society (Shi'a, Sunni, and Kurdish) that is born of the U.S. occupation and colonization of Iraq. As histories of colonialism show, the main principle of colonizing projects is to divide--not unite --and rule, and divide and quit when rule becomes too costly.

A simple question that can be easily answered and help shed light on the internal violence in Iraq is: who armed the Iraqi religious factions currently fighting one another? Who sanctioned the political power of their leaders and damaged not only the economic, but also the social and political, fabric of Iraq? It would be more accurate to conclude that the violence in Iraq is waged mainly by an insurgency that is fighting U.S. occupation and colonization

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of Iraq and their local enablers, who tend to be heavily from among the Shi'a. Thus, the focus on historical antipathy seems to treat historical actors as permanently static subjects that do not change and evolve; according to which, a Shi'a-Sunni conflict that took place in the 7th century remains the primary explanatory paradigm for Shi'a-Sunni relations in the 21st century. Such explanations tend to frame historical events through an essentialist and primordialist cultural lens, often providing ahistorical explanations. As Mahmood Mamdani (2004) has rightly argued, such culturalist explanations are superficial, simplistic, and tend to obscure political and historical contexts. Furthermore, such totalizing theories lump various groups of people together in certain categories without seeing through the differences in time, space, and context to the diversity within such categories, homogenizing Muslims, Druzes, Christians, Jews, and Hindus.

This perspective emphasizing ancient hatred and the culture of violence is exposed in a recent article in the U.S. media (Hallinan, 2007, p.8) about a massacre in Iraq of Shi'a tribes in southern Iraq in January 2007. These Shi'a tribes are actually opposed to the Shi'a led government in Baghdad and have been building coalitions with Sunni Iraqis, who have been the target of Shi'a (Al-Badr and Al-Mahdi militias) militias who dominate the Iraqi army and police under U.S. occupation. When these militias were unable to suppress these Shi'a tribes, despite assassinating many of their members and leaders, they engaged in a direct, full-fledged confrontation with them near the city of Najaf. They were unable to defeat the tribes, so the Iraqi army and militias called on the U.S. and British forces that came to their aid and bombed the two tribes, killing and injuring hundreds of their members. Yet this massacre was covered up by the U.S. media which reported the official line of U.S. and Iraqi governments that the battle was against a fanatic religious group. The media has echoed the U.S. government's focus on Shi'a-Sunni tensions, obscuring the reality of the situation in Iraq and presenting the violence in Iraq as a conflict between two groups with ancient antagonism.

6. An Alternative Paradigm: Structural Explanation

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Having briefly discussed a few dominant paradigms in the field, I now offer an alternative paradigm, which I call the structural paradigm**.** The structural paradigm helps explain communal violence by contextualizing its temporal, political, and materialist dimensions and addresses the weaknesses and limitations of the approaches discussed previously. This framework contextualizes the inter-ethnic/inter-communal relations in the context of the policy of the nation-state towards its minority groups—native or non- native—through an analysis of the nature of the state and its historical development, taking into account which groups were included and excluded from the national project at its origin. This structural framework helps focus on the attitude of state's authorities towards those who are not included within the nation-building agenda. This paradigm is built on the work of scholars that discuss cases from around the world and thus provide a basis for my argument.

For example, Aijaz Ahmad (2000), in his work on India and Muslim-Hindu violence, argues that this communal violence is a consequence of the partition of India into two states—Pakistan and India--in 1947 by Britain at the end of its colonial rule of the subcontinent. Ahmad suggests that partitioning India, and creating Pakistan as a state for Muslims by the British, placed the Muslims who remained in India in an ambiguous position. The partition implied that the more suitable national home for Muslims in post-1947 India was Pakistan, since the basic rationale for its creation was to "create a safe and secure place for Muslims." This logic suggested that Muslims did not completely belong in independent India, and their marginalization after 1947 was a corollary of the partition, even if Indian leaders and governments aimed at their integration. The growth of violence against Muslims by Hindu nationalists after 1947, and especially since the 1980s, is a natural consequence of the politics of communal partition imposed on the Indian subcontinent by Britain and of neo-liberal globalization or neo-colonialism.

Thus, Hindu-Muslim violence in India is not an issue that can be simply attributed to the manipulation of some leaders, as Brass argues, even though leaders could certainly foster communal divisions to some extent. Rather, it is an issue that goes to the heart of the British colonial project in

India that created two states—one for Muslims and one implicitly, if not explicitly, for Hindus. The manipulation of Hindus by right-wing leaders in India was easier under British colonial rule and, even more so, after 1947 where Muslims became seen as illegitimate group who were often associated with an enemy state, Pakistan. Furthermore, the violence against Sikhs in India, as well as Christians, can also be better understood as a result of the origin of the post-colonial state and the partition, a legacy of the politics of confessions long practiced by British colonizers in India. As a result of these colonial policies, the Muslim-Hindu divide was widened, emphasized, and made official, for example, through the history textbooks produced for Indians by the British colonial government, according to which all ills in India were attributed to the Muslim invasion and influence since the 11-12th century (Bernard Cohn, 1994).

Many works on the subject of communal relations in India and other decolonized states in one way or the other blame the national leadership for failing to overcome the communal divide and the communal nature of the state created by colonial regimes. While some scholars acknowledge the role of colonialism's legacy, they overlook the fact that communal and ethnic classifications were officially established as the framework for belonging in the postcolonial nation the moment that colonized states were partitioned or created based on politicized communal and ethnic lines. In my view, there is hardly any way out of this communalized framework other than turning back the clock of history to the time before colonization invented, or at least politicized, communal and ethnic boundaries.

Colonial rule invested these categories with varying political and economic power, sowing the seed for the communal ills that later plagued these nation-states. Violence that took place under such circumstances takes life of its own. Works on Lebanon by Lara Deeb, Fawwaz Traboulsi, and Ussama Makdisi, are illustrative on how sectarianism is a creation rather than an old age phenomenon. Thus, "modernization" rather than creating a harmonious developed and unified political entities that can govern themselves and live in peace with themselves as well as with other states, created polities according to communal

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lines that made these entities less peaceful within and without as the history of India and Pakistan show.

Furthermore, even after decolonization, nation-states remained hostage to global powers and dependent on them economically, politically, and for security. The theory of dependency is often discussed in terms of economic and political development in Latin America, but it also applies to other regions of the global South that were never left alone, not just marginalized, by the great powers, who often intervened politically and economically in their affairs, and still do for weaker, dependent states. Colonialism and neo-colonialism created patterns of governance in Africa and Asia designed to either divide and rule directly (colonialism), or "divide and quit," keeping formerly colonized states weak, unstable, and dependent (neo-colonialism). Setting aside the issue of the intentionality of these colonial policies, they undoubtedly created conditions of instability and divisiveness in these nation-states that are difficult to overcome.

While many scholars blame postcolonial states and their leadership for not being able to resolve the messy conflicts whose structures were put in place during the colonial period, other scholars assign blame both to the colonial legacy and the postcolonial national leadership. For example, in When Victims Become Killers, Mahmood Mamdani is critical of the colonial regime as well as the Rwandan state and its leadership after decolonization for being unable to break out of the categories created by European colonization. Furthermore, he argues that post-colonial Rwanda, in fact, used the same invented ethnic categories which were invested with political and economic powers leading to the Tutsi-Hutu confrontation and the bloodshed in Rwanda. Mamdani suggests that there is a need to rethink the frameworks created by colonialism which have caused ethnic and communal violence in Rwanda and other postcolonial states. However, asking postcolonial nations to rethink categories that are a major source of their internal conflicts is easier said than done. In my view, it is not so easy to rethink these categories, and even harder to undo structures have been in place for decades and, in some cases, for centuries.

Furthermore, it is assumed in many postcolonial analyses that colonialism has ended, and neo-colonial interventions are absent. Rather, as Gerard Prunier (1997) argues, even if European colonialism has officially ended in the case of Rwanda as elsewhere in Africa, European states such as France, and also the U.S., remain deeply involved in these postcolonial states. These Western states have in many ways helped shape conflicts in Rwanda and elsewhere in Africa and Latin America, often through proxy arm suppliers such as Israel. Similarly, Mamdani (2007) argues in a later article that the Rwandan genocide was partly also the making of the U.S. since it supported the Rwanda Patriotic Front (PRF), a dominantly Tutsi political group, and its military arm; instead of being pressured for compromise, they were encouraged to pursue a victory, and thus acted with impunity in the massacre that ensued. Furthermore, it needs to be kept in mind that there is a pattern of U.S. and other Western states selectively calling for UN and non-UN involvement and non-involvement at different times, such as the push for intervention in Yugoslavia in the shape of NATO, and for UN non-involvement in the case of the U.S.-British invasion of Iraq. Thus, the role of the postcolonial state and its leadership is only part of the story of communal violence, and in my view, less significant than that of the structures created by colonial and neo-colonial regimes. These formerly colonized states ought to be analyzed and considered not as post-colonial states, but as still colonized in one form or another, and hence the burden is on those states that hold power in the international system. Furthermore, this structure of communal boundaries is informed by racist notions of modernity transplanted by Western powers through colonialism around the world, creating states in their own image—that is tribal, ethnic, and religious, despite the rhetoric of secularism and modernity. And this is not only a one-way structure that impacts only the colonized or ex-colonized societies, but a two-way structure that also plagues the colonial states and societies themselves to this day.

For example, racism against Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. after 9/11 needs to be situated within the structures that were created in the U.S. in its own national formation and understood in this context. Steven Salaita (2006) argues

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that racism against Arabs and Muslims in post-9/11 USA needs to be understood not simply as a reaction to the events of 9/11 but as a reflection of the nature of the U.S. state, its origins and historic development. Salaita suggests that the post-9/11 violence and racism against Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. and abroad after 9/11 has to be contextualized in the structural racism that is embedded in the origins of the U.S. settler colonial state. The state was built on the cleansing of the Native Americans and conquest of their territories, on slavery, and on colonialist expansion and imperialist interventions around the world. In this analysis, violence and racism against Arabs and Muslims in the USA is a part of a pattern that has been present in the USA since its inception, and according to which different groups throughout U.S. history experienced a similar fate of racialization and subordination.

Colonialist processes of racialization and subordination are a consequence of the creation of the European nation-state and its historic development through the colonial period and the racist thought underlying this adventure that was disseminated around the world. This racist outlook sees the world through politicized identities based on race, ethnicity, or religion. This framework has created economic and political structures of exclusion, domination and marginalization of groups who are seen as not belonging to the colonizing as well as the colonized states, which leads to conflict and possible violence between those included and excluded as well as among them. This phenomenon has not only plagued the colonized but the colonizer as well, since racism is dynamic and affects the outside and the inside of the colonial state.

According to Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen (2005), settler colonialism, and in my view colonialism in general, is not simply an event contained within the past but rather as a structure with long-lasting ramifications on both colonizer and colonized, that are still present on both sides of the colonial equation. In colonial and settler colonial structures, the marginalization of the colonized is central and is sought in every aspect of the lives of those colonized: economic, political, and social. This marginalization has been historically achieved through the principle of divide-and-rule, as well as divide-and-quit, as often happened when

direct colonization was no longer possible. Internal politicized divisions along ethnic and or religious lines remained intact, even after colonization officially ended, and became the hallmark of the post-colonial state. The ramifications of colonialism are at the heart of all ethnic and religious conflicts and violence in postcolonial nation-states. Racism as it informed Western adventure abroad plagues the West as well and manifests itself in violence against minorities, immigrants, and violence abroad.

Karen Armstrong (2006) rightly argues that the remarks made in 2006 by the British ex-foreign minister, Jack Straw, condemning the hijab used by Muslim women in the UK is not an exception, but rather the rule of British communalism, even if communal politics is hardly ever named as such for Western "liberal democracies." She observed that when Catholic nuns started appearing in Britain wearing head covers they were also attacked and were portrayed as a threatening fifth column connected to despotic foreign regimes-- not loyal British, not belonging. Thus, in my view, the violence that took place in Britain against South Asians in the 1980s or against Turks in Germany in the 1990s or in France against North Africans and Africans in general, is at its roots a reflection of the state's nature and historical policies of inclusion and exclusion. This is one of the main problems of the nation-state, colonizing and colonized alike, and it is at the heart of communal and ethnic conflicts and violence. And in the case of postcolonial states, colonial powers have not only created sectarian or ethnic states in order to better divide and rule, which they did, but also they did so because it is a reflection of their own self image—sectarian and ethnic, despite the rhetoric of modernity, tolerance, and separation of state and church.

In conclusion, I argue here that the problem of communal violence and racism is fundamentally a structural problem. This analytic approach is needed in the field of ethnic conflict in order to better understand the phenomenon and move away from blaming the victims of historical structures of colonialism and, by extension, postcolonial nationalism, as well as neocolonial global structures.

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Many scholars agree that the modern nation-state is the cause for most ethnic and communal conflicts since there is hardly any state that is uniform in either category—race or religion-- and thus by nature it must exclude while it includes. Most scholars agree also that the nation-state is a modern European phenomenon created and replicated by European colonialism and imperialism around the globe. Yet, there is less theoretical emphasis on the fact that the root of ethnic and communal conflicts and violence is in the structures linked to European and Western colonialism and imperialism, which has created and still creates the same problem over and over again, as we now see in Iraq. Behind this universalizing mechanism of political systems around the world lies at the heart a racist mindset that sees itself as a model that other need to follow. Furthermore, European and Western colonialism is still continuing in many different forms in Africa, Asia and the Americas, and must be seen as responsible for what takes place in these countries.

Thus, what I am suggesting here is to stop ignoring the elephant in the room—the colonial structures that are informed by racism and that had and still have a two-way effect, on the colonized as well as the colonizer. A focus on the role of racism in communal conflicts and its modern colonial structure is central to a discussion about how to undo its effects, if that is possible. This is much needed in order to analyze and try to find a solution to the phenomenon of communal violence. At the same time, we need to keep in mind that neo-colonial interventions disguised under slogans of "reform," open markets, "liberalization," "democratization," "war on terror," and globalization are all structures that reinforce colonial mechanism of subjugation, control, marginalization, and hegemony affecting dependent states in the global economic and political system.

As this article shows, the state regardless of whether week or strong, colonial, settler colonial or post-colonial ought to be the center of analysis on the question of ethnic and communal conflict and violence. How the state was created, who excluded and who included, who was empowered and who was marginalized, come to determine and shape the relationship between the different religious

and ethnic groups in that state. The historical development of the state also helps shape these relationships.

And when dealing with the question of the state, that is the nation state, and the problems that come as a result of its creation, it is crucial to keep in mind that it is a modern construct that came as a result of the theories of nationalism and racism emanating from Europe, and that was transplanted all around the world through European colonialism, which created political entities around the globe in their own image, that is religious, ethnic, and tribal, despite the rhetoric of secularism, cosmopolitanism, and universalism that is often veils the origin and reality of modernity shaped by European powers mainly and the west in general. Take Iraq for living example on that. Created in its current borders by British colonialism, challenged since then by Western imperialism, colonized again by the U.S., divided and controlled through the politics of ethnicity and sectarianism, its development is seen through a security lens that focuses on military and police institutions' building, the violence that has been taking place there as a result, which will have a life on its own for very long even after decolonization, Iraq, even if liberated will be defined by sectarianism, ethnicity politics, and militarism. This will be further complicated by the politics of neocolonial interventions in that country by the U.S and others. No one should wonder what the plague of internal relations in that country are and will be for long time to come. Here, it is worth emphasizing again that my point is not that the US has pursed ethnic and sectarian policies in Iraq out of the principle to divide and rule, but also because it is a reflection of American self-image, how US officials see themselves and perceive the world, which is ethnic, tribal, and sectarian.

Thus, this question is not an event in the past, but a structure that is hard to undo, more so in places where colonialism is still directly involved, but in general as well all around the world that is under a global structure of neo-colonialism and imperialism, which is often veiled under the rhetoric of spreading democracy, free market, human rights, structural adjustment, and globalization, and which are all tools in the hand of powerful states and empires such as the United States and other European countries, who, despite resistance here and there, attempt to utilize these tools to

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dominate global political, military, and economic organizations, such as the United Nations, World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, and intervene in the lives of billions of peoples around the world. Until colonialism, neo colonialism, and imperialism are defeated there is no way to get out of this global problem of ethnic and communal violence. Maybe then, when that time comes, we can try to rethink the racist origins of the nation state and possibly undo them through a new form of political entities that can be based on equality for all regardless of any ethnic or religious differences. This is only possible when such future political entity also enjoys global equality and respect regardless of economic and military power. Maybe, as the Venezuelan president Hugo Chaves suggested, global democracy is possible to reach when the undemocratic global structure embodied in the UN and other global organizations is reformed to reflect democracy in which equality is at the core of any political organizing.

Until then, those states who assume power in this global structure, and reap the benefits that come from that role, ought to be the ones responsible for global security, and global justice, and they are to blame and be held responsible for what is taking place and the suffering that is evident in countries around the world that is plagued by ethnic and communal violence. This is true for countries in the Middle East such as Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine, but also elsewhere around the world.

In this context and as a possible proposition for possible future, it is worth bringing here the issue of traditional Arab conflict resolution method-Sulha (Jabbour, 1996), which these big powers—colonial, ex-colonial, and neo colonial alike must adhere to if we want to end this problem-sectarianism. According to this method, to bring about a resolution to a conflict, two essential conditions are needed. The first condition is the admitting of wrong doing by the aggressor party with an open, clear cut, public apology for the wrong doing, which serves to bring closure to the offended party. The second condition according to this method of conflict resolution is that reparation for the wrong doing must be paid by those who committed the offense and caused harm to others. In this case, Britain, France, the U.S., for example, will be forced to pay reparation for many

countries and societies around the world. Making those states apologize publicly and pay reparations to people in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. This can help heal those states and groups that were wronged by global powers, who if made to pay for their actions will be more hesitant to keep doing the same thing to different groups, societies around the world if they are held responsible and made to pay for their misdeeds. Those states who continue to transgress against others and cause so much harm will continue to do so if they feel they can act with impunity. This is evident if one takes the U.S. as an example that has been going to wars against others since its inception as a nation state. Similarly France who was the cause of communal-sectarian politics in Lebanon, and because it never apologize for what it did there since 18th century, and because it never paid reparation for Lebanon, feels that it can act with impunity and keep interfering in internal Lebanese politics.

Only then such states will realize that colonization, promoting sectarian politics around the world, neocolonialism must have consequences—financial and political—which might deter these states in check rather than keep acting with impunity. And maybe then, we will have a better chance to proceed with a resolution and future that is better for all, where sectarianism is less deadly, more contained, and might at one point disappear.

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