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Framing Sectarianism in the Middle East

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Abstract

This paper argues that a long view perspective of contemporary sectarianism between Sunni and Shia Islam in the Middle East could be read on the background of earlier forms of sectarianism going back to the 19th and 20th century history of the region. Such an approach would disentangle sectarianism from primordial narratives as an intrinsic problem of Islam going back to the early schism of the 7th century and place it in social formations and social practices, and link it to the emergence of sectarianism during the Ottoman age of reforms. It would explicit arguments that link sectarianism with modernism, discussing how the emergence of modern, secular institutions that were based in early-modern millet system led to sects and sectarianism. The outcome of this approach is conceptualization of sect and sectarianism, its categorization, and confronting it with other modern narratives of the history of the Middle East.

1 | INTRODUCTION

The US invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 triggered an internal war that brought a new quality to Middle Eastern politics, unseen in its magnitude and intensity in previous decades: that of Sunni-Shia conflict. A decade later, as Arab uprisings of 2011 evolved into internal wars, sectarianism became the dominant ideology of conflict. The ruling regime in Syria, in its attempt to preserve the hegemony of the al-Asad dynasty, did not hesitate to transform a domestic crisis into a regional, sectarian conflict. The opposition to the regime developed a symmetrical sectarian discourse, describing the conflict in terms of Orthodox Islam fighting a despised heretical Nusayri (or 'Alawi) sect of the Syrian president and his loyalists. While the Iraqi crisis was triggered by foreign military intervention, the events in Syria – and those of Yemen, Bahrain and Libya – were triggered by internal causes, by explosions of popular anger and discontent against dictatorial regimes. It is paradoxical to see that the moment of "Arab Spring", which underlined the existence of a common Arab political space, it is equally the moment when pan-Arab parties have been definitely defeated, to be replaced by a new dominant narrative, that of Sunni-Shia sectarian antagonism.

The existence of sectarian differences in the Middle East in itself does not explain much, even less the deep political upheavals in the region. Yet, it is evident that the sectarian paradigm in contemporary Middle East, and especially the division within Islam is changing to shape attitudes and influencing political developments. Sectarian antagonism within Islam has never been as mobilized as it is currently. The internal wars in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Lebanon and beyond made sectarianism the new paradigm that shapes perceptions and public opinions,

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reformulates group identities, forces demographic redistribution, and serves as ideology of mobilization for violent conflicts. Sectarianism has evolved to become the dominant regional ideology with the power to motivate and mobilize youth to sacrifice their lives, in the name of a higher ideal, that of defending the sacred symbols of a religious community. Sectarian polarization is tearing societies apart, and reformulating boundaries across nation-states and frontiers, across cities and suburbs.[1]

Academic research interested in modern Middle East since the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the war in Afghanistan was largely focused on political Islam, jihadism and terrorism, and was drawn to the question of sectarianism within Islam. This trajectory is important to understand the way research questions are framed, and methodological approaches chosen. Initial research was focused on single case studies, discussing Iraq or Syria or Bahrain, and even in edited volumes single-case studies occupied much space. The burning issue was the link between sectarianism and violence, and much attention was given to the relationship between sectarianism in its hardened, mobilized and aggressive expression. As data and case studies piled up, it became obvious that there was a need to develop concepts and theoretical frameworks. It also became evident that sectarianism concerned not only its active phase – that of internal wars - but there were earlier forms of sectarianism practiced under nominally secular-nationalist regimes, in Syria going back to the period of Hafez al-Asad, and in Iraq under Saddam Hussein, if not earlier periods. The question of sectarianism in those earlier phases is described as "taboo", revealing deeper and contradictory tensions.[2] This observation reveals that secular-nationalist Baath lived through a double system, between formal secularism and informal sectarian practices, hence the taboo status. Researching sectarianism beyond its mobilized phase opens up a host of questions that cannot be addressed without investing in theorization.

Theorizing sectarianism is an old challenge. Already in the 1980's Lebanese scholars engaging sectarianism in their country – such as Mehdi 'Amel – had remarked that one of the major difficulties to address sectarianism was lack of conceptualization.[3] While in recent years there is a growing literature on sect and sectarianism in the Middle East, we still need efforts to develop a toolbox about the limits and specificities of the field and the sense in which key concepts are deployed. The lack of theoretical grid and at times even working definitions of what is meant by sect and sectarianism has led to much confusion as well as frustration. One scholar who has dedicated most of his academic career studying sectarianism in Iraq has gone as far as suggesting to "abandon" the concept for its vagueness, writing that "the term 'sectarianism' needs to be permanently discarded."[4] Another writer complains that the expression "sectarianism" has become "a dustbin where everyone throws in what it does not like."[5] Other scholars have complained of polarization between primodrialist and instrumentalist approaches, while more recent studies have argued that scholars are using a variety of approaches to discussed sectarianism.[6]

This article is part of a debate reflecting on sectarianism conceptually. It starts with the observation that recent polarization and antagonism between Sunni and Shia Islam in the Middle East has a new quality. A second observation is that other forms of sectarian polarization preceded Sunni-Shia tensions that of Muslim-Christian divisions in the 19th and 20th centuries.[7] Comparing these two major forms of sectarianism – the Muslim-Christian divide of the past, and Sunni-Shia one of the present – is edifying, I argue, and could help us have the broader view on how sectarian systems emerge, mobilize, and reproduce over a relatively long period of time. By choosing to compare contemporary Sunni-Shia sectarianism with the past Muslim-Christian sectarian history, a new potential for theorizing sectarianism emerges, but also the possibility of radical restructuring narratives of the modern history of the Middle East. Below, I am to address three issues: first, I will conceptualize sect and sectarianism. Next, I will address the history of sectarianism, its sources, when and how it emerged, and different case-studies that could be included in its study. Finally, I will suggest a typology of sectarianism.

1.1 | Conceptualizing sect and sectarianism

I define sectarianism as a political order based on religious-sectarian identification and communal autonomy. It goes in tandem with political inequality between religious groups. Sectarianism, therefore, is a specific system whereby

religious affiliation has political consequences, placing individuals and social groups within a hierarchical framework. Different sectarian identities have differentiated relationships to power: while one group is acknowledged as having the right to political monopoly, others are considered to be politically subordinate, even excluded from sovereignty, and are relegated to other social tasks. In order to frame sectarianism conceptually it is necessary to have a comparative and regional dimension, to be able to assess various expressions of sectarianism within the same approach. For the purpose of my definition of sect and sectarianism, there is no essential difference between what is "religious" on the one hand, and "confessional" on the other, as long as the body of religious belief produces social organizations with political stratification – just like the Ottoman Sultans recognized Greek Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic churches as autonomous *millets*, two Christian denominations, as well as Jews, a religious community as a recognized *millet*.[8]

A sectarian political order is a system and should be considered in its totality; it concerns both dominated "minorities" and hegemonic "majorities". In the modern age, with the development of the centralized state, bureaucratic administration, and public space, it is not possible to consider sectarianism of only one segment of a society – the "regime" or "minorities", etc. By consigning specific regimes to one part of a society, say "minorities", the entire social fabric is conditioned, albeit in an unequal manner. In other words, by giving certain (religious-sectarian) attributes to one segment of society, the entire nature of the political system is defined, including that of the dominant majority. In fact, the normative order starts with the definition of the hegemonic group, not that of the margins. This observation is equally true to the Ottoman *millet* system, the ancestor of contemporary sectarianism. Defining and recognizing three non-Muslim communities as dominated by Islam, the Orthodox, the Armenians and the Jews, was the result of a system where hegemonic power was defined by Orthodox (Sunni) Islam, and Muslim community as the dominant community, or the ruling nation - *millet-i hakime*.[9] Sectarianism, therefore, is systemic; it structures the entire political order based on sectarian principles.

I distinguish sects from sectarianism. Sects are networks of social organizations, based on religious-confessional identities that occupy the space and mediates between the state and the individual. Sects could be conditioned by the state and its institutions, but could also exist independent from the state and even from formal institutions. It could be better visualized while we consider the Ottoman *millets*, religious-communities that enjoyed semi-autonomous status in running their internal matters. This included independence in religious matters, but also in education, social welfare through religious foundations (such as *awqaf*), and at times had even *millet* courts and prisons. In Ottoman Aleppo, where Muslim majority coexisted with several Christian confessions and Jews, even bathhouse towels clearly identified ones "religious faith".[10] This definition of sects surpasses the paradoxical claims that sectarianism is real but sects are not.[11] It conceptualizes sects as specific type of social groups, and grounds sectarianism in the practices of social organizations, rooted in daily practices that reproduction of sectarian imagination, group identity and ideology. Based on this, I define sects as social entity that exist outside the realm of the political, is sustained by series of various institutions, which creates conditions for its semi-autonomous functioning. By turning the arguments of Medhi 'Amel upside down – who rejected the existence of social foundations of sectarianism – and the concept of public sphere of Jürgen Habermas, I envisage sects as *independent social entities* that operate unequally side by side in the context of a common polity but by producing segregated, sectarian, public spheres.[12]

It is useful to distinguish sect from sectarianism, the former is of social nature, while the later is of political nature.[13] By referring to both sect and sectarianism we can conclude that we are addressing a phenomenon that is conditioned by political ranking of religious-communities in a vertical manner, but a feature that also has presence outside state and political institutions with roots within social organization. Sectarianism places one of the numerous sects in hegemonic position, while the others are excluded from state power. Therefore, a modern sectarian system has difficulties in defining the question of sovereignty, and whether the "people", a part of it, or not even, can be seen as the sovereign. Sectarianism has difficulties in recognizing equality between sects, sharing executive power, rotation in leading the state, but places those sects – religious communities - hierarchically within the pyramid of political order. Sectarian consociationalism, such as in the case of Mount Lebanon *Mutasarrifiyya*, or

Lebanon after independence, depends either on an external arbitrator (hence the tendency of sectarianism in relying on foreign patronage) in the first case, or the domination of one of the sects over decision-making processes in the second. The long isolation of one sect in state power, and others outside it creates over time social differentiations: different sects become specialized in different functions. Considering sects only within their social limits might lead to conclude that sects are sub-state identities. But considering the political dimension of sects, and especially in geopolitical considerations, one could also conclude that sects have supra-state identities, similar to pan-Islamist, pan-Turkism or pan-Arabism.[14] Therefore, sects could be found coinciding with state institutions, outside institutions of nation-states as sub-state entities, but also as supra-national ideologies. Isma'ili or Chaldean identities constitute sub-state groups, Maronites in Lebanon, or Sunnism in Turkey are associated with the state, while the *Rum millet* – or Orthodox identity in the Ottoman Empire, or contemporary political Islam in its Sunni and Shia variants are equally supra-national identities. Moreover, each community takes a special role in the state and within its institutions: in the case of post-war Lebanon the Shiite community self-proclaims the right to "resistance" and even to "national defence", the Sunni community that of reconstruction and economic development, while the Maronites attribute to themselves the task of restoration of national sovereignty.[15]

The last point I would like to raise here is the relationship between sects, sectarianism and religion. Surprisingly enough, literature dealing with sectarianism rarely refers to religion. The relationship between religion and sectarianism is not limited to questions of doctrinal differences between confessions,[16] but also the challenge of sovereignty and religion in the secular age. Religion, as a system of belief and specific teachings, can be distinguished from both sectarianism as political order and ideology, and from sects as social practice. On the other hand, the justifications for the existence of distinct religious-confessional groups politically and legally are rooted in religious teachings and traditions. Bruce Masters has emphasised the aversion of scholars in researching about religious and sectarian identities: "many of those who do deconstruct the 'Orient' avoid religion as category of identity in their historic analysis altogether."[17] This issue is important as it links with broader questions of religious reform, within the Ottoman Empire in the age of Tanzimat, as within Islam today. It reveals that one possible path to modernisation and secularization without religious reform could lead to sect and sectarianism.

1.2 | The long history of sectarianism

There are some attempts to refer to earlier, often Ottoman forms of organization as the past of contemporary sectarianism. Several historians, in the pre-2003 period had addressed sectarianism through historical sociological approach in their study of the earlier Muslim-Christian divide rooted in Ottoman history. For example, Mas'oud Daher argued that roots of Lebanese sectarianism goes back to the period when Ottoman rule was established in the region to in the 16th century,[18] while Bruce Masters rooted sectarianism in the religious division in Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire.[19]

One could question the utility of attempting to develop a general theory of sectarianism: why do we need a theory of sectarianism? Contemporary urgency in the studies of sectarianism has largely placed the focus on current forms of sectarianism, on its political dimension and its study in the context of violent conflicts. Yet, formal institutions, sectarian political mobilizations, and sectarian militias are only part of the story, the tip of the iceberg. Focusing on the contingent and the violent will give us detailed knowledge of the specific, but only a narrow view of what is sectarianism and why it emerges at certain junctures of historic crossroads, such as in the aftermath of foreign occupation of Iraq, or in the context of popular uprisings in 2011 and afterwards. The fact that sectarianism was a taboo under Baathist Syria and Iraq reminds us that sectarian informal practice existed and reproduced various forms of sectarianism outside institutional frameworks. Lebanon, the country that was the outcome of sectarian conflict and sectarian compromises in the mid-19th century, which institutionalized sectarianism in political, legal, administrative, cultural and other levels, witnesses that sectarianism could be a system that structures a political as well as social order more broadly.

Exploring sectarianism in the Middle East in its *longue durée* and through its social as well as political history could contribute to the theoretical discussion of sectarianism at least in three ways. First, it could reveal how sectarian group identity and practices take place in different spheres before it emerges in political mobilizations and formal institutions, and helps us discuss the various relations between different forms of sectarian groups. Second, it could suggest a historic framework of sectarianism by avoiding essentialism and overcoming the primordialist-instrumentalist-constructivist divide.[20] Here, I argue that the proper historic context to study sectarianism is not the history of the major schism within Islam that goes back to the conflicts of succession and the martyrdom of 'Ali, 'Hasan and 'Hussein, but in the social organization of Muslim empires, and more specifically the Ottoman practice of shaping the autonomy of religious communities, the "*millet* system". What is the relationship then between the Ottoman *millet* order, followed by Ottoman reforms aiming at religious equality, and Muslim-Christian tensions it produced, with contemporary sectarian antagonism between Sunnis and Shias? The comparison will take us to the tensions and polarizations created by the introduction of modern institutions and incomplete secularization processes that transformed traditional early modern societies under new secular forms of organization, while preserving features of early-modern religious group identities, therefore producing modern sectarian tensions. This approach, I argue, places sectarianism of the past, that of 19th and 20th century, and contemporary sectarianism, on an equal and comparative field. It also opens up the discussion of the influence of modernism, which I define as the introduction of secular institutions into Muslim Empires (such as Ottoman, Safavid-Qajar, or Egypt under Mohammad Ali) through mass education, print journalism, and ideological political parties. Third, it could help us restructure the modern history of the Middle East by the tension between secular-nationalist developments on the one side, and religious-sectarian on the other. Since its foundations, Middle Eastern Studies heavily relied on concepts like nation, nationalism, secularism, progress, modernism, etc. The narrative choices were heavily indebted to those concepts, and case studies were chosen accordingly. By assuming centrality of religious-sectarian group identities we create the potential of revising the modern history of the Middle East in order to answer the paradox: how did the introduction of modern institutions produced sect and sectarianism instead of nation and nationalism. Why did the "imagined communities" produce nation and nationalism in the case of Benedict Anderson's studies, and sect and sectarianism in the Middle East?[21]

By discussing sectarianism in its broader historic context, we could develop a tool with the potential to compare across cases and across several centuries of sectarian manifestations. The challenge here is to develop a dialectical process between conceptualization and the choice of case-studies, to enable us both to define what sectarianism could look like theoretically, and to check those suggested theories with the historic record. If we make a quick survey, we can find diverse cases considered in studies under the heading of sectarianism. We have the most recent writings on sectarianism that concentrate on post-Arab Spring Syria,[22], Iraq[23], Bahrain[24], Yemen and the Gulf in general.[25] What characterizes this period is that sectarianism is seen as a regional problem. There is an earlier body of literature that evolved in the aftermath of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003, which is based on a single case-study, that of Iraq. Yet, already in the post-2003 there was a generalized consciousness of the emergence of a new kind of regional political divide, based on sectarianism within Islam, and especially after the declaration of King Abdullah of Jordan about the emergence of a "Shiite crescent".[26] If we take into consideration those two groups of scholarship, the Iraq invasion of 2003 and the post-Arab uprising conflicts, we see that those two events are triggers that transformed earlier forms of sectarianism into a more open and aggressive mobilizations.[27] Others have argued that authoritarian regimes have used sectarianism against social mobilizations calling for reforms. Sectarianism in its political manifestation could be caused by state actions, as Madawi al-Rasheed has argued, or the result of grass root mobilizations.[28]

What then are the long-term causes for the emergence of sectarianism? A major event that has contributed to Sunni-Shia sectarian divide is the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. Yet, at least in its initial period, Iranian revolutionaries saw themselves as Islamic revivalists and aimed at creating a common Islamic front against secular-nationalists like Iraqi Baath, pro-American conservative monarchists, as well as atheism and communism.[29] That year also marks the beginning of a long process of the emergence of salafi-jihadism, with the radical sect of

a-Ikhwan, led by Juhayman al-'Otaibi occupied the Great Mosque of Mecca. The event that shook the foundations of the Saudi dynasty, and encouraged Muslim activists to join the far away jihad in Afghanistan. It is the emergence of Sunni jihadi radicalization in Afghanistan, on the one hand, and Iranian-led Shia activism, which will fan the flares of sectarianism in post-2003 Middle East.[30]

A central idea among Middle Eastern historians and sociologists concerning the causality of the resurgent sectarianism is the failure of secular-national project. Syrian sociologist Bourhan Ghalioun has remarked that it was not the multiplicity of religious communities that produces sectarianism. He observed that powerful national-movements had emerged "achieving independence and chasing the occupation forces" (meaning European colonial mandates). Those movements succeeded initially in founding modern nation states. Ghalioun suggests that sectarianism was introducing to this state from the "outside", to conclude that sectarianism resurfaced only after the failure of the "pro-independent national project."[31] Sectarianism, for Ghalioun, emerges each time the political system enters into crisis. A variation of this theme could be found among the Lebanese leftist thinkers that considered sectarianism to be the result of the "incapacity of Lebanese capitalism to unite the Lebanese society."[32] Indeed, the decline and the "defeat" of leftist-secularist political formations in Lebanon, and the "failure of the secular project" led to sectarianism among Druze and Shiite communities, which earlier provided the rank-and-file of secularist and leftist parties.[33] Similarly, with relation to Syria and Iraq Hinnebusch remarks that "the institutional and inclusive capacity of Arab authoritarian regime declined"[34] creating conditions for sectarianism.

Relations between Sunnis, Shias, and other Islamic communities were not always antagonistic, but took various forms, including dialogue, cooperation, and coordinating actions against perceived common enemies.[35] During the 19th and most of the 20th century we did not witness violence within Islamic confessions. A major exception is the attack of Wahhabi tribal warriors on Karbala in 1801-02, massacring its inhabitants and desecrating the tomb of Imam Hussein, a key spiritual reference for Shi'ism.[36] Moreover, during most of the 19th and 20th centuries there were several attempts to rapprochement between the two sects. We even have a singular ruling issued by al-Azhar rector Mahmud Shaltut who recognized Shi'ism as the fifth *madhab* (school of jurisprudence) of Islam.[37] Yet, in the same period we have a large number of historic facts in the field of sectarianization: mobilization, segregation, institutionalization, and mass violence. In fact, those two centuries are plagued by religious-sectarian mobilization, polarization and violence within those same societies that we are interested in.

Unlike the post-independence Arab states dominated by secular-nationalism, Lebanon presents an exception by openly embracing sectarianism and institutionalizing it. Lebanon illustrates the overlap between the Christian-Muslim divide of the 19th century, with the more recent Sunni-Shia polarization. In conceptualization of sectarianism, Lebanon is interesting for more than one reason: because its political institutions emerged from a sectarian conflict and a sectarian compromise, that of the Maronite-Druze conflict in 1860, followed by the emergence of the Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate in 1861. Independent Lebanon openly practiced sectarianism and institutionalized them in its political system. Lebanon was the only post-Ottoman country that institutionalized religious-sectarianism in a larger context of dictatorial regimes professing secular-nationalism. Therefore Lebanon provides recorded historical material absent in the case of neighbouring states. Finally, the war in Lebanon (1975-1990) is the precursor of contemporary conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, and reveals how a conflict that started largely but not exclusively in one type of sectarian division (Christian-Muslim) at the end of the conflict cycle could produce a new type of sectarian antagonism (Sunni-Shia).[38]

The beginning of the sectarian history in Lebanon takes us to the Ottoman 19th century. Scholars writing about the Mount Lebanon war of 1860, or the massacre of Christians in Damascus in the same year, they link those events with the Ottoman reforms – the Tanzimat – and how those reforms had destabilized relations between communities. They also remark that communal relations between Mount Lebanon Maronites and Druze shifted and started deteriorating during the rule of Ibrahim Pasha and Egyptian occupation of Syria (1832-1841).[39] Yet, it is necessary to link the local with the global, the destabilization of inter-communal relations in Mount Lebanon, with the reform processes in the imperial centre. Paradoxically, the Ottoman reforms aimed at overcoming the Muslim-Christian divide by creating a top-down, modern, secular, "Ottoman" national identity. At the height of the

19th century reforms, Ottoman rulers introduced notions of legal equality for their subjects, regardless of religious belonging. Yet, during the era of reforms we also notice proliferation of *millets*, increasing sense of religious belonging, and polarization and violence between Muslims and Christians. In other words, modern Middle Eastern sectarianism emerged as a result of attempted modernization and secularization process that dates back to the age of Ottoman reforms, the Tanzimat.

1.3 | Ottoman *millets*, *Tanzimat* reforms, and anti-Christian violence

The study of the Ottoman 19th century has several interesting parallels with the rise of contemporary sectarianism. Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876) – the four-decade long top-down modernizing reforms initiated by three Ottoman Sultans, and especially their four reformist Grand Viziers – aimed to modify the *millet* system of political and legal divisions based on religious-identity. They aimed to replace it with legal equality of all Ottomans regardless of religious belonging, based on the concept of "Ottomanism". Those reforms laid the ground to modern institutions in the Ottoman Empire – and are at the root of modern institutions in the Middle East – from establishing a state bureaucracy, to mass education, print journalism and secular legal framework.[40]

The Ottoman reforms are paralleled with the fragmentation of Christian communities: confessional infighting within Christian *millets*, that of the Greek (Rum) Orthodox and especially Armenian Apostolic Churches on the one hand, and Catholic communities on the other. In Aleppo, violent clashes took place between the Melkites (Greek Orthodox) and Syrian Catholics in 1818.[41] After decades of struggles and repression, the Catholics were recognized as an independent community in 1830, separating from the Armenian *millet*;[42] the Chaldean (formerly known as Nestorians) were recognized as a *millet* in 1844[43], Protestant *millet* was founded in 1847,[44] the Melkite Catholic *millet* in 1848[45], the Bulgarian Church in 1870[46] and Syriac Orthodox (Jacobite) in 1882.[47] This earliest wave of sectarianization in the Middle East is the result of confessionalization within Orthodox and Armenian Churches, under double and contradictory pressures: weakening of the traditional Ottoman system and the grass-root mobilization under secularist reforms.[48] There is no parallel confessionalization within the Muslim *umma*, as the Ottomans do not recognize the autonomy of the various Islamic sects, but tolerate their existence outside the official institutional framework.

The other process resulting from the Ottoman reforms is the emergence of anti-Christian mass violence, unseen in the Ottoman Empire in previous centuries. The Reform Edict of 1856 promising legal equality between Muslims and non-Muslims, met with popular opposition and communal violence. The civil war in Mount Lebanon in 1860, mentioned earlier, is not a singular event. In 1843 and 1846 we have massacres of Assyrians by Kurdish emir Bedirkhan;[49] in 1850 we have anti-Christian riots in Aleppo;[50] the massacre of Christians in Damascus in 1861 by local Muslim inhabitants aided by the Ottoman governor Ahmad Pasha; the Hamidyan massacres of 1894-96; the 1909 massacre of Armenians in Adana in the aftermath of the 1908 "Young Turk" revolution; and finally the deportation and massacre of Armenians, Assyrians, and Anatolian Greeks during the period of 1914-1923. These events listed above are of different scales – between twenty victims in Aleppo, the killing of 5'000 Christians in Damascus and 20'000 or more in Adana.[51] The reaction of the Ottoman state differs in the cases up to the war in Mount Lebanon whereby the central reformist authorities tried to punish aggressors and restore order, compared to state sponsored massacres in 1894-96, and state organized genocide in 1915.

Mass violence during the First World War is described in the available literature as a conflict between the emergent Turkish nationalism, and separatist nationalism of Armenians.[52] This approach is a narrow one that has produced only a partial narrative of the mass violence during WWI. While the Armenians were the major target of the genocidal violence unleashed by the ruling Committee of Union and Progress, they were not the only one. We have deportation and massacres of two other major communities, the Assyrians and the Anatolian Greeks. In the same period, Christians of Mount Lebanon who enjoyed autonomous status were subject to artificial famine, which led to the death of an estimated 200'000 casualties. An integrated narrative of the mass violence, therefore, needs

to overcome the obstacles posed by theories of nations and nationalism, and consider those events as a continuum, whereby the Ottoman leadership attempted to eliminate its Christian communities. The Ottoman era of deportations and massacres remained a taboo for many decades, and subject to heavy censorship. Scholarly research on the Armenian genocide started timidly in the 1990's, and developed mostly in the last two decades.[53] Initially, its scope was limited to that of Armenian Studies, yet today it is widely accepted in Ottoman Studies as well as in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. There is also a growing literature on the history of the Assyrian Genocide,[54] while we still need serious scholarly effort on the fate of the Anatolian Greeks.[55] In spite of this progress, the history of the deportations and massacres of the Ottoman Christians has been marginalized in the Middle Eastern Studies up to today, which is one of the fundamental failures in this field. I argue that the extermination of Armenians was not executed based on the concept of the nation, but in the context of the Ottoman society it was seen as the destruction of the Armenian *millet*, a concept that was understood by all Ottomans.[56] We could push this argument further and suggest that deportations and the massacres targeted the elimination of three Christian communities: Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians. By developing a concept of sect and sectarianism, and by integrating the history of the mass violence during WWI through a religious-sectarian approach, we can finally develop a narrative on the modern history of the Middle East that includes not only the history of genocide as a pivotal moment between the decline and the collapse of the Ottoman order and the emergence of the secular-nation states, but also regarding the histories of three (Christian) native nations of Anatolia, Syria and Mesopotamia as Middle Eastern histories.

In post-Ottoman Middle East, we also have a series of religious-sectarian communal violence: there is the cases of anti-Assyrian massacres a year after Iraq's formal independence in Simele in 1933, the anti-Jewish pogroms in Turkey in 1934, and the anti-Jewish pogroms in Baghdad in 1940 should be considered as early cases of sectarian violence in the post-Ottoman political order.[57] The first violent confrontation that could be categorized under "Sunni-Shia" antagonism is probably the confrontation between the Syrian regime forces and its paramilitaries on the one hand and the Fighting Vanguard (al-tali'a al-muqatila), a spin-off from the Muslim Brotherhood, in Hama in 1982.[58]

By looking at the way sectarianism developed between 19th and 20th centuries, we could divide it into three major periods: the first is religious-sectarian mobilization, institution building, and violence that starts in the age of Ottoman reforms and end with the Ottoman decade of mass violence (1914-1921). Then, we have the post-Ottoman period with the emergence of the national-secular project which itself produces new types of religious-sectarian tensions, mobilization, and finally mass violence. I call this period as the second phase of sectarianism in the Middle East.

1.4 | Categories of sects and sectarianism

Theorizing sect and sectarianism not only needs to consider various historic events, but also should deploy different disciplinary approaches. If we are interested in investigating sectarianism before its violent manifestation, we need to consider sectarianism and legal approaches,[59] cultural differentiation,[60] education,[61] charitable foundations and social services,[62] spatial and geographic divisions,[63] next to sectarianism in its political, institutional, and violent forms. Also, scholars have noted links between religious-communities on the one hand and social class on another, whether in the context of the Ottoman Empire, or in post-Ottoman nation-states.[64]

How to classify such diverse approaches to study sect and sectarianism? Fanar Haddad suggested categorizing them as assertive, passive and banal. It is based on the degree of importance of sectarian identity to an individual. Assertive defined as openly waving the sectarian flag, the passive reveals sectarian identity and symbol only when provoked, and banal is when the subject is not a believer in sectarian dogmas and is not the primary reference of ones identity. Moreover, Haddad suggests that assertive sectarianism should not be confused with aggressive sectarianism, therefore suggesting a fourth category that is the most extreme manifestation of sectarianism that

would – for example - denigrate symbolically or physically other groups.[65] Elsewhere, Haddad proposed four different approaches to categorize sectarianism: "doctrinal, subnational, national and transnational."[66]

My interest in proposing a set of differences in sect and sectarianism is to discuss how those group identities are sustained and reproduced over a long period of time. We could categorize different sectarianisms based on the nature of the bond that sticks the group together. To do so, I will propose five approaches that could help us consider sectarian identities over several decades, independent from intensity of mobilization and polarization: legal, cultural, class, political and finally violent sectarianism.

The first is ***legal sectarianism,*** whereby members of the same state (or empire) have different rights and duties based on their religious or confessional belonging. Consequently, different religious communities recognized by the state have legal autonomy to manage those legal differences. In its most restrained form, personal laws and their management are delegated to religious hierarchies: from marriage to divorce, heritage, etc. In some other cases, as in the Ottoman practice towards the three recognized religious communities – rooted in long tradition of recognizing but also dominating over other monotheist religions - it made the head of those religious communities simultaneously their secular representative, and in charge of vast number of institutions and prerogatives, from running religious foundations, education, tribunals and prisons, organizing tax collections (especially *jizya* and *kharaj*), and even issuing letters to obtain travel documents. In legal sectarianism political power is attributed directly or indirectly to a single religious community. State institutions become the domain of one religious community, excluding others. Many pre-modern societies had such legal differentiations, something that was not unique to the Ottoman order, although the Ottomans codified it more than others through the *millet* institution.[67] The same practices survived in most post-Ottoman states, and not only in the more obvious example of Lebanon.[68]

In Lebanon, the entire political system is structured around religious-communities, the sects (*tawaef*), but also social and cultural institutions, from mass media to charitable foundations or sports clubs. This power-sharing arrangement was nevertheless based on Maronite hegemony – the idea of Lebanon was largely a Maronite project, a system that was broken after the explosion of the 1975 war. All other post-Ottoman states inherited one form or another of legal sectarianism. The management of personal laws were delegated to religious hierarchies of Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities, a practice that goes back to the Ottoman *millet* system, and preserved in secular laws that emerged from Tanzimat reforms realized under Grand Vizier Aali Pasha.[69] In post-Ottoman Iraq laws adopted in 1931, the "Law of the Israelite sect number 77 of 1931" organized the spiritual and the secular representation of Iraqi Jews on the exact model of Ottoman *millets*: various Jewish communities, defined as having three centres - Baghdad, Basra and Mosul – are represented by a leadership in Baghdad composed of two committees: one lay and one religious. The head of the community could be a lay or religious person, appointed by a royal decree. This community leadership is in charge of not only religious and spiritual matters, but also the management of community infrastructure, including religious endowments and schools.[70] While in the Ottoman Empire Shiites and other non-Sunni Islamic confessions did not enjoy formal and official recognition, similar to Christians and Jews, they nevertheless had local community structured around Shiite *mujtahids*, often in one of the holly cities in Iraq.[71] The emergence of the Da'wa party in Iraq in the 1960's and Amal Movement in Lebanon in the 1970's transformed those localized communities into the modern Shiite sect – what I call a latecomer into sectarianism. The Supreme Islamic Shia Council was established in Lebanon only in 1967, by non-other than the cleric Musa al-Sadr, who is also the founder of the Amal Movement.

This legal differentiation should be considered in the broader context of a given society, and to see if there are other institutions permitting social mobility - or not. Where social mobility exists through other channels (trade-unions, secular parties), then the impact of legal segregation could be attenuated. The unequal introduction of modern institutions and practices, and especially when this is done through the means of sectarian institutions, it leads to what I call ***cultural sectarianism***. Since religious communities managed schools dedicated to their members, religious differences produced different levels of education and culture in general. Even after the Tanzimat reforms, and the spread of mass education in the Ottoman Empire by mid-19th century, this was done in an unequal manner between various religious communities. The emergence of journals, mass media, and public opinion only enhanced

this trend. The outcome was the emergence of a new social group, the intelligentsia, which were institutionalized by their religious-community, rather than by broader Ottoman ones. This new intelligentsia differed from its peers in Europe and refrained from engaging in anti-clerical struggle – hence the absence of religious reforms in the Middle East in general and in Islam in particular. Rather, this emerging intelligentsia adopted a position of defence of its own religious-community against outside threats, which included European influences. This intelligentsia also struggled for status and hegemony threatened by other religious-communities at home. When we have strong legal differentiation between religious-communities, plus cultural institutions like schools and mass media under religious-community influence, we can see how sectarian identities can be reproduced over long periods of time.

While keeping in mind legal and cultural differences, and add to the equation access to state institutions, or exclusion from it, based on religious-belonging, then we remark the development of certain class characteristics. Some communities, and especially their elites, access power and gain their fortune thanks to the state, by careers in its military, political leadership, or administration. Other communities, excluded from the state, specialize in crafts, trade, banking and other activities. Their strength becomes their entrepreneurial skills, specialized crafts, and their community leaders emerge from among influential traders and bankers. When we have strong correlation between religious groups and social specialization, then we can talk about ***class dimension*** of sects and sectarianism. In Lebanon, Marxist scholars debated possible correlation between sectarianism and social class; Mas'oud Daher insisting on overlap between sect and class, and Mehdi 'Amel rejecting to recognize any social dimension of sectarianism, limiting it to the field of ideology of the dominant bourgeoisie. Elsewhere, Hanna Batatu describing Iraq in the early 20th century writes that social stratification was not based on class but on religious differences, suggesting that there was "juxtaposition… between confessional allegiance and social standing."[72] He adds that class ties had local significance, suggesting the lack of class solidarity throughout provinces, not to say throughout Iraq.[73] Batatu argues that while Sunni Arabs were over-represented in the higher posts within the state administration and within the officer corps of the army (the rank-and-file were filled by Shia tribesmen from the south), traders in Baghdad were largely Shi'as.[74] The forced exodus of Iraqi Jews only reinforced Shia domination over the economy in Baghdad and other urban centres. We have equally class and religious-community overlap in the Ottoman Empire. Under the impulse of modernization, the upper classes were developing in different directions: "the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, which (…) developed into the Turkish national bourgeoisie; the commercial bourgeoisie, which contained the Greek, Armenian, and Jewish minorities."[75] Here we have not only legal differences between groups but also unequal access to education, access to jobs and therefore capital. In cases of institutional blockages, economic difficulties, military setbacks abroad, or other causes leading to social stagnation, new tensions around social identities can emerge. If a power struggle reflects religious competition as well as social struggle, when the sectarian and the class dimension overlaps, then their outcome could be devastating.

This correlation between the religious-sectarian and the social class is not specific to the Ottoman and post Ottoman realities. Max Weber has made similar remarks in the context of Central Europe, noting that most of the developed and rich German cities converted to Protestantism in the sixteenth century. Weber notes: "The results of that circumstance favour the Protestants even to-day in their struggle for economic existence." Weber adds that Protestants "have shown a special tendency to develop economic rationalism which cannot be observed to the same extent among Catholics (…) Thus the principle explanation of this difference must be sought in the permanent intrinsic character of their religious beliefs, and not only in their temporary external historical-political situation."[76] The intensity of the cultural institutions of a sect and the overlap between sects and class functions determines whether a crystalized "independent social entity" emerges and whether a sectarian and "segregated public sphere" develops next in an environment of a multitude of sectarian public spheres.

We can notice that sectarian discourse can become a political ideology mobilizing society in its struggle for power. This, in time, could generate mobilization based on religious-sectarian identity to voice social, economic and political grievances, leading to antagonistic visions of society and its political order. I identify this as ***political sectarianism***.[77] The passing of sectarianism from legal to cultural and political depends on a number of factors, such as the existence of a strong, liberal political movement, trade-union activism, and social mobility, but also on

whether a society is politically stable or going through internal or external tensions, challenges and threats. I suggest that there is a correlation between the rise of political sectarianism and a sense of crisis within a society. Sectarian identity, and inter-communal relations are polarized when a society enters a phase of crisis and violence, while conversely sectarianism deepens the crisis instead of resolving it. Political sectarianism is the reflection of severe power struggle; opposition forces demand more from the system, while dominant groups defend their privileges against challengers. Political sectarianism, in this sense, is an ideology of mobilization that aims at exclusive political hegemony by excluding other social groups from political power, and reproduces a political map based on a new (sectarian) order.

The last stage is that of ***violent sectarianism***, whereby power struggle takes the form of violent confrontations, population displacements, massacres of civilians based on religious-sectarian identification. Violence further escalates the development of sectarian stigmatization, group consciousness, and demographic reshuffling based on sectarian redistribution. Violence also transforms sectarian political parties into armed militias. Mass violence brings rapid transformation to the geographic space by the creation of purified sectarian areas with entire urban neighbourhoods or villages take a specific sectarian character where civilians feel safe. At this stage, sects become equated to political parties and armed militias.

To conclude, sectarian groups are not identical or symmetrical; they are reflection of different social realities, have different positions in regard with state institutions, and play diverse social roles. Sectarianism produces political parties, where sects become equal to political party institutions, therefore eliminating their competitors, the secularism political formations. By doing so they eliminate political competition, as no "foreigner" could attract, win over and mobilize another sectarian public. Sects, therefore, is a social domain that is composed of a dense network of individual organizations, that are set up in the name of the religious-sect and for the service of the group, that mediates between the individual and the state, for protection and for access to resources and services, and is an autonomous actor in the space between the individual and the state. In the presence of the sect, neither the individual could become a citizen, nor a state could become national.

2 | CONCLUDING REMARKS

I have argued above that we need to consider historic case studies in the largest selection possible in order to come up with a theoretical framework of sect and sectarianism. Simultaneously, in order to be able to select a historical timeframe of sect and sectarianism, in order to be able to choose which historic event, mobilization, institution building processes, etc. should come under the heading of sect and sectarianism, and which one to be excluded, we need conceptualization and theorization. By limiting this paper to the Middle East, I suggested that to understand the current wave of sectarian mobilization and antagonism pitting Sunni against Shia we could look for its roots in earlier forms of sectarianism, which started in the early 19th century within major Christian communities, and later took the form of Muslim antagonism against Christian *millets*. By taking this long view this paper argued for a conception and categorization of sect and sectarianism, but it also raises additional questions for further research.

I also argue that we need to look further than the violent and politically mobilized phase of sectarianism to understand its lifecycle. In order to identify sects and their capacity of reproduction we need to root it in its daily social practices. Sects emerge on the background of early-modern forms of religious-community segregations, such as the Ottoman *millets*, and the confrontation with modernity – understood as modern institutions of mass education, mass media, ideology and political parties, state bureaucracies and conscript armies. I also suggest that those modern forms of organization and mobilization were introduced unequally among the religious-communities of the Middle East leading to segregated, religious-sectarian public spheres, instead of leading to the common public sphere of the nation.

Here, it is necessary to carry out further research to confront my arguments with hard archival facts. This would enable us to write the modern history of the Middle East by choosing a different starting point and

suggesting a different narrative: instead of starting with the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 or the end of WWI or the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, a modern history of the Middle East starts with the Ottoman reforms that introduced modern institutions, attempted to secularise while preserving Sharia laws and community autonomy. The tensions that emerged from those contradictions are further sectarianism and mass violence between various religious communities. Such a historiographical approach would integrate the before and the after of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, a task that remains to be accomplished in Middle Eastern Studies, where several black holes or the "elephant in the room"[78] have been ignored for too long.

A last point that needs further elaboration is the question of political Islam and sectarianism. When we consider the two waves of sectarianism – that of the 19th century until the destruction of Ottoman Christian *millets* being the first wave, and the post secular-nation states sectarianism representing the second, we can see in both cases a key role played by political Islam in enhancing sectarianism.[79] Modern, political Islam, and the pan-Islamic imagination took shape in the second half of the 19th century first among the emerging Turkish intelligentsia, and later adopted as state ideology by Sultan Abdul Hamid II, with catastrophic consequences for the Christian communities of the empire. In the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution in Iranian and the Arab-Afghan experience and the making of Sunni jihadism, a new wave of political Islam emerged, opposing secular-nationalism, communism, and later clashing with the "west". While initially those movements were not sectarian and antagonistic, they eventually evolved to become the vanguard of Sunni-Shia sectarianism. This brings us to the broader debate of religious reform and the difficult question of sovereignty within Islam, a debate that emerged during Ottoman Tanzimat, and which still remains valid today.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

ENDNOTES

[1] In this article I will limit the study of sectarianism to the Arab Middle East, the Ottoman Empire and Qajar Iran. There is rich literature about sectarianism outside those areas, see among others: Kaushik Basu and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (eds.), *Unravelling the Nation, Sectarian Conflict and India's Secular Identity*, Penguin Books, 1996; Frédéric Grare, "The Evolution of Sectarian Conflicts in Pakistan and the Ever-Changing Face of Islamic Violence", *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, Issue 1, 2007, pp. 127-143; Khaled Ahmed, *Sectarian War, Pakistan's Sunni-Shia Violence and its Links to the Middle East*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011; Vali Nasr, "International Politics, Domestic Imperatives, and Identity Mobilization, Sectarianism in Pakistan, 1979-1998", in Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel (eds.), *Sectarianization, Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East*, London: Hurst, 2017, pp. 77-100.

[2] For sectarianism as taboo in Syria, see: Burhan Ghalioun, *Al-mas'ala al-taifiya wa-mushkilat al-aqaliyat* (Sectarianism and the problem of minorities), Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers, fourth edition 2014 [1979], pp. 25-26; for Iraq, see Fanar Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq, Antagonistic Visions of Unity*, London: Hurst, 2011, page 53.

[3] On the theoretical contribution of Mehdi 'Amel, see: Samir Frangie, "Theorizing From the Periphery: The Intellectual Project of Mahdi 'Amil", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3, 2012, pp. 465–482.

[4] Fanar Haddad, "'Sectarianism' and Its Discontents in the Study of the Middle East", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 71, No. 3, Summer 2017, page 381.

[5] Antoine Masarra, "Ma ma'na al-taifiyya, wa-kayfa nadrusuha al-yawm?" (What is the meaning of sectarianism, and how do we study it today?) in *Al-taifiyya wal-tasamuh' wal-a'adala al-intiqaliya* (Sectarianism, Tolerance and Transitional Justice), Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 2013, page 51.

[6] Morten Valbjørn and Raymond Hinnebusch, "Exploring the Nexus between sectarianism and regime formation in a New Middle East: Theoretical points of departure", *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2019, pp. 2–22; Morten

Valbjørn, "Beyond the beyond(s): On the (many) third way(s) beyond primordialism and instrumentalism in the study of sectarianism", *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 2020, pages 91-107.

[7] Vicken Cheterian, "Confessionnalisme et conflits au Moyen-Orient. Une perspective de longue durée", *Relations Internationales*, 2017/4, No. 172, pp. 115–126.

[8] For a discussion of Ottoman *millets* and their modernity, see: Maurits H. Van Den Boogert, "Millets: Past and Present", in Ann Nga Longva and Anne Sofie Roald (eds.), *Religious Minorities in the Middle East, Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation*, Leiden: Brill, 2012, pp. 27-45; Karen Barkey and George Gavrilis, "The Ottoman Millet System: Non-territorial Autonomy and its Contemporary Legacy", *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2016, pp. 24–42.

[9] Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East, 2000 Years of History from the Rise of Christianity to the Present Day*, London: Phoenix Press, 2000, page 322; Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire, Ottoman Westernization and Social Change*, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 135.

[10] Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World, The Roots of Sectarianism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 6. See also: Elyse Semerjdian, "Naked Anxiety: Bathhouses, Nudity, and the *Dhimmi* Women in 18th-Century Aleppo", *International Journal Middle East Studies*, 45 (2013), pp. 651–676.

[11] 'Azmi Bishara, *Al-taifa, al-taifiyyah, al-tawaef al-mutakhayyilah* (Sect, sectarianism, imagined sects), Beirut: Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies, 2018. See also Rima Majed, "In the Arab world, sectarianism is real, sects are not", *Al-Jazeera*, October 16, 2016: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/arab-world-sectarianism-real-sects-161012110949666.html.

[12] Mehdi A'mel, *Fi al-dawla al-taifiya*, (Concerning the sectarian state), Beirut: al-Farabi, 2006 (third edition), 234-36; Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006, p. 27.

[13] In their definition of sectarianism, Salloukh *et al* place the social before the political. See their definition at: Bassel F. Salloukh, Rabie Barakat, Jinan S. Al-Habbal, Lara W. Khattab, and Shoghig Mikaelian, *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon*, London: Pluto Press, 2015, p. 3.

[14] Burhan Ghalioun, *Nizam al-taifiyyah min al-dawlah ilal qabila* (They sectarian system, from the state to the tribe), Beirut: Centre fro Research and Policy Studies, 2017 [1990], p. 50; Faleh' A'bdul Jabar, "Al-mushkila al-taifiyya fi al-watan al-a'arabi" (The sectarian problem in the Arab world), *Al-taifiyya wal-tasamuh' wal-a'adala al-intiqaliya* (Sectarianism, Tolerance and Transitional Justice), Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 2013, page 25; Kamran Matin, "Lineages of the Islamic State: An international historical sociology of State (de-) formation in Iraq", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 31, No. 6, 2018, p. 8.

[15] Ahmad Beydoun, *La Dégénérescence du Liban, ou la Réforme orpheline*, Arles : Actes Sud, 2009, pp. 88–94.

[16] See Sabrina Mervin, "On Sunnite-Shiite Doctrinal and Geopolitical Tensions", in Maréchal, Brigitte and Sami Zemni (eds.), *The Dynamics of Sunni-Shia Relationships, Doctrine, Transnationalism, Intellectuals and the Media*, London: Hurst, 2013.pp. 11–24.

[17] Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World, Roots of Sectarianism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, page 2.

[18] Mas'oud Daher, *Al-juzour al-tarikhiyya lilmas'alah al-taifiyyah al-lubnaniyah 1697-1861*, Beirut: al-Farabi, 4th edition 2009 [1986].

[19] Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews*, op. cit.

[20] Max Weiss, "Practicing Sectarianism in Mandate Lebanon: Shii Cemeteries, Religious Patrimony, and the Everyday Politics of Difference", *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 43, No.3 (Spring 2010), page 709. For a constructivist approach, see: Paul Dixon, "Beyond Sectarianism in the Middle East? Comparative Perspectives on Group Conflict", in Frederic Wehrey (ed.), *Beyond Sunni and Shia, The Roots of Sectarianism in a Changing Middle East*, London: Hurst, 2017, pp. For primordial narratives of Sunni-Shia sectarianism, see: John McHugo, *A Concise History of Sunnis and Shi'is*, London: Saqi, 2017; Antoine Sfeir, *L'islam contre L'islam, L'interminable guerre des sunnites et des chiites*, Paris: Grasset, 2013; Ofra Bengio and Meir Litvak, "Introduction", in Ofra Bengio and Meir Litvak (eds.), *The Sunna and Shi'a in History, Division and Ecumenism in the Muslim Middle East*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011; Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival, How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future*, New York: W. W. Norton, 2006.

[21] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, revised edition, 1991.

[22] Christopher Phillips, "Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria"; Heiko Wimmen, "The Sectarianization of the Syrian War", in Frederic Wehrey (ed.), *Beyond Sunni and Shia, The Roots of Sectarianism in a Changing Middle East*, London: Hurst, 2017. pp. 61–85.

[23] Fannar Haddad, "Shia-centric State-Building and Sunni Rejection in Post-2003 Iraq", in Frederic Wehrey (ed.), *Beyond Sunni and Shia*, pp. 115–132.

[24] Sossie Kasbarian and Simon Mabon, "Contested spaces and sectarian narratives in post-uprising Bahrain", *Global Discourse*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2016, pp. 677–696.

[25] Frederic M. Wehrey, *Sectarian Politics in the Gulf, From the Iraq War to the Arab Uprisings*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

[26] François Thual, "Le croissant chiite: slogan, mythe ou réalité?", *Hérodote*, 1, 2007, pp. 107–117. 2007; Kayhan Barzergar, "Iran and the Shiite Crescent: Myths and Realities", *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. 15, No. 1, (Fall/Winter 2008), pp. 87–99.

[27] Bassel F. Salloukh, Rabie Barakat, Jinan S. Al-Habbal, Lara W. Khattab, and Shoghig Mikaelian, *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon*, London: Pluto Press, 2015, p. 2.

[28] Madawi al-Rasheed, "Sectarianism as counter-revolution: Saudi response to Arab Spring", *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 2011, pp. 513-526; Nader Hashemi, "Towards a Political Theory of Sectarianism in the Middle East: The Salience of Authoritarianism over Theology", *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies*, Vol. 1.1, 2016, pp. 65–76.

[29] Shireen Hunter, "Iran and the spread of revolutionary Islam", *Third World Quarterly*, 10:2, 1988, pp. 730-749; Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution, Iran and the World in the Age of the Ayatollahs*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

[30] Yaroslav Trofimov, *The Siege of Mecca*, New York: Doubleday, 2007; See the memoires of an Arab-Afghan leader Abdullah Anas with Tam Hussein, *To the Mountains: My Life in Jihad, from Algeria to Afghanistan*, London: Hurst, 2019; on the role of Zarqawi in transforming salafi-jihadism into a sectarian instrument, see Vicken Cheterian, "ISIS and the Killing Fields of the Middle East", Vol. 57, No. 2, *Survival*, 2015, pp. 105–118.

[31] Burhan Ghalioun, *Al-mas'ala al-taifiya wa-mushkilat al-aqaliyat* (Sectarianism and the problem of minorities), Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers, fourth edition 2014 [1979], p. 16, 19 and 107.

[32] Suleiman Taqi ad-Din, *al-masalah al-taifiyah fi lubnan, juzur wal-tatawur al-tarikhi*, (Sectarian interest in Lebanon, roots and historic development) Beirut: Ibn Khaldun, 1997, page 50.

[33] Yusri Hazran, "Re-confessionalising the Shi'ites and the Druzes: The Failure of Secularism in Lebanon", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 2013, pp. 162–182.

[34] Raymond Hinnebusch, "Sectarianism and Governance in Syria", *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2019, p. 48.

[35] Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1982, page 17; Rainer Brunner, "Sunnis and Shiites in Modern Islam, Politics, Rapprochement and the Role of al-Azhar", in Maréchal & Zemni (eds.), *The Dynamics of Sunni-Shia Relationships: Doctrine, Transnationalism, Intellectuals and the Media*, London: Hurst, 2013 pp. 25–38.

[36] P. M. Holt, "The Later Ottoman Empire in Egypt and the Fertile Crescent", in Peter Malcolm Holt, Ann K. Lambton, Bernard Lewis (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Islam*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, Volume 1A, page 380; See also Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, Princeton University Press, 2003 [1994], page 28.

[37] Rainer Brunner, "Sunnis and Shiites in Modern Islam: Politics, Rapprochement and the Role of Al-Azhar", in Brigitte Maréchal and Sami Zemni (eds.), *The Dynamics of Sunni-Shia Relationships, Doctrine, Transnationalism, Intellectuals and the Media*, London: Hurst, 2013, page 32.

[38] Ahmad Beydoun insists on the novelty of Sunni-Shia animosity in Lebanon, before adding that sectarian dividing line in the country is an old story, but in the past it was articulated around Christian-Muslim divide. See: *Ashya' al-sunnah wa-asnan al-shi'a*, in Hazem Saghiyah (ed.) Nawaseb wa-rawafed, munaza'at al-sunnah wal-shi'a fi al-'alam al-islami al-yom (Sunnis and Shias in the Muslim World Today), Beirut: Al-Saqi, 2009, pp. 11-12. See also on Iraq: Toby Dodge 'Bourdieu goes to Baghdad': Explaining hybrid political identities in Iraq, *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 2018, pp. 25–38.

[39] Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism, Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, pp. 51–53.

[40] On the Ottoman Tanzimat reforms, see among others: Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963; Paul Dumont, « La période des Tanzîmât (1839-1878) », in Robert Mantran (ed.), *Histoire de l'Empire Ottoman*, in Robert Mantran (ed.), *Histoire de l'Empire Ottoman*, Paris: Fayard, 1989, pp. 459–522; Sükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, Princeton University Press, 2008, chapter 4, pp. 72-108; Hamit Bozarslan, *Histoire de la Turquie, De l'Empire à nos jours*, Paris: Tallandiers, 2013, pp. 133–186.

[41] Hidemitsu Kuroki, The Orthodox-Catholic Clash in Aleppo in 1818, *Orient*, Vol. 29 1993, pp. 1–18.

[42] On the emergence of the Catholic *millet*, see Malachia Ormanian *Azcabadoum*, (Armenian: National History), Volume 3, Antelias: 2001 (First publication Istanbul-Jerusalem 1913-1927) col. 3549-3553; Hagop Jololian Siruni, *Bolise yev ir Tere* (Constantinople and Its Role), Antelias: Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia,
2010 (first published 1965), Volume II, pp. 207–214.

[43] Hirmis Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds and Ottomans, Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire*, Amherts: Cambria Press, 2008, page 84.

[44] Hirmis Aboona, *op. cit*., page 152.

[45] Bruce Masters, "The Establishment of the Melkite Catholic Millet in 1848 and the Politics of Identity in Tanzimat Syria", in Peter Slugett (ed.), *Syria and Bilad al-Sham under the Ottoman Rule*, *Essays in Hanour of Abdul-Karim Rafeq*, Leiden: Brill, 2010, pp. 455–473.

[46] R. J. Campton, *Bulgaria*, Oxford University Press, 2007, page 77.

[47] Benjamin Trigona-Harany, *The Ottoman Suryani*, *From 1908 to 1914*, Gorgias Press, 2009, page 100.

[48] The impact of secularization, and the emergence of new social forms and groups on the process of *millet* proliferation and sectarianisation within Ottoman Christians, needs further research, and it could provide interesting comparative platform to compare with processes of sectarianization within Muslim communities. The current article format does not permit to develop this discussion here.

[49] Hirmis Aboona, *Assyrians*, *Kurds*, *and Ottomans*, *Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire*, Amherst: Cambria Press, 2008, pp. 196-200 and 211.

[50] Philip Mansel, *Aleppo*, *The Rise and Fall of Syria's Great Merchant City*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2016, pp. 40-41; Bruce Masters, "The 1850 Events in Aleppo: An Aftershock of Syria's Incorporation into the Capitalist World System", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1, (Feb., 1990), pp. 3–20.

[51] A quarter of the total Christian population of the city perished in the massacre. See Eugene Rogan, *The Arabs*, *A History*, Penguin Books, 2012, second edition, page 119. On the Adana massacre of 1909, see Bedros Der Matossian, "From Bloodless Revolution to Bloody Counterrevolution: The Adana Massacre of 1909", *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2011, pp. 152–173.

[52] Since Bernard Lewis presented the extermination of the Ottoman as a struggle between two nations: "Now a desperate struggle between them began - a struggle between two nations for the possession of a single homeland". See *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, New York: Oxford University Press, Third Edition, 2002, page 356.

[53] Vicken Cheterian, "Censorship, indifference, oblivion. The Armenian genocide and its denial", in Aidan Russell (ed.), *Truth*, *Silence*, *and Violence in Emerging States. Histories of Unspoken*, Routledge, 2018, pp. 198-224. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and emergence of independent Armenia, Turkey continued to show hostility towards Armenia by refusing to have diplomatic exchange, and imposed an economic blockade by keeping the common border hermetically closed. See: Vicken Cheterian, "The Last Closed Border of the Cold War: Turkey-Armenia", *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2017, pp. 71–90.

[54] David Gaunt, *Massacres*, *Resistance*, *Protectors*: *Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia During World War* I, New Jersey: Georgias Press, 2006; Hannibal Travis, *Genocide in the Middle East*, *The Ottoman Empire*, *Iraq*, *and Sudan*, Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2010.

[55] Gorge Shirinian (ed.), *The Asia Minor Catastrophe and the Ottoman Greek Genocid*e, Bloomingdale: The Asia Minor and Pontos Hellenic Research Centre, 2012; Erik Sjöberg, *The Making of the Greek Genocide*, *Contested Memories of the Ottoman Greek Catastrophe*, New York: Berghahn Books, 2017.

[56] Shavkat Kasymov, "The example of the Armenian genocide and the role of the millet system in its execution", *Social Identities*, Vol. 19, No. 1–3, 2013.

[57] On the anti-Jewish pogroms in Thrace in 1934, see: Rifat N. Bali, *Modern Citizens of the State*, *The Jews of Turkey During the Multi-Party Period*, Plymouth: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2012, pages 9–10; on Simele, see Sargon Donabed, *Reforgin a forgotten history*: *Iraq and the Assyrians in the twentieth century*, Edinburgh University Press, 2015; on Farhud, see Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians*, *A History of Jews in Modern Iraq*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.

[58] Faleh' A'bdul Jabar, "Al-mushkila al-taifiyya fi al-watan al-a'arabi" (The sectarian problem in the Arab world), *Al-taifiyya wal-tasamuh' wal-a'adala al-intiqaliya* (Sectarianism, Tolerance and Transitional Justice), Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 2013, p. 25.

[59] Antoine Fattal, *Le Statut Légal des Non-Musulmans en Pays d'Islam*, *Beyrouth*: *Imprimerie Catholique*, 1958; Hasan al-Zayn, *Al-awdha' al-qanuniyah lil-nasara wal-yahud fi diyar al-islamiyyah h'atta al-fath' al-u'thmani* (The legal situation of Christians and Jews in Muslim lands until the Ottoman conquest), Beirut: Dar al-fikr al-h'adith, 1988. Mark Farha, "Stumbling Blocks to the Secularization of Personal Status Law in the Lebanese Republic (1926-2013)", *Arab Law Quarterly*, Vol. 29, 2015, pp. 31–55.

[60] Faleh' A'bdul Jabar, "Al-mushkila al-taifiyya fi al-watan al-a'arabi" (The sectarian problem in the Arab world), *Al-taifiyya wal-tasamuh' wal-a'adala al-intiqaliya* (Sectarianism, Tolerance and Transitional Justice), Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 2013, page 25.

[61] Mark Farha, "The Historical Legacy and Political Implications of State and Sectarian Schools in Lebanon", in Maha Shuayb (ed.), *Rethinking Education for Social Cohesion*, *International Case Studies*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 64-85; Hoda Baytiyeh, "Has the Educational System in Lebanon Contribute to the Growing Sectarian Divide?" *Education and Urban Society*, Vol. 49, Issue 5, 2017, pp. 546–599.

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[66] Fanar Haddad, *Understanding 'Sectarianism': Sunni-Shi'a Relations in the Modern Arab World*, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 5.

[67] Aylin Koçunyan, "The millet system and the challenge of other confessional models, 1856-1865" *Ab Imperio*, 1/2017, pp. 59–84.

[68] Antoine Masarra, 2013, *op. cit*., pp. 52-55. Mark Farha, "Stumbling Blocks to the Secularization of Personal Status Law in the Lebanese Republic (1926-2013)", *Arab Law Quarterly*, Vol. 29, 2015, pp. 31–55.

[69] Paul Dumont, *op. cit*., pp. 476–7.

[70] "Qanun al-taifa al-israiliyyah (raqm 77) lisanat 1931" (Law of the Israelite sect number 77 of 1931), in *Collection of Laws and Regulations for the Year 1931*, Iraqi Government, Ministry of Justice, Baghdad: Dankur Modern Printing, 1932, pp. 721–729.

[71] Pierre-Jean Luizard, *Histoire politique du clergé chiite, XVIIIe-XXIe siècle*, Fayard, 2014, p. 46.

[72] Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements in Iraq*, Princeton University Press, 1978, page 44.

[73] Hanna Batatu, *op. cit*., pp. 8–9.

[74] In 1958, six out of seven biggest landowners were Shiites. Agriculture product also made the bulk of commercial exchange. Batatu, *op. cit*., page 49.

[75] Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire, Ottoman Westernization and Social Change*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, pages 19.

[76] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London: Routledge, 2001 [1930], pages 4 and 7.

[77] Faleh' A'bdul Jabar, argues that the "politization and ideologization of those partial identities is a new phenomenon, in spite of the oldness of those identities as cultural-social space". See: "Al-mushkila al-taifiyya" op. cit., pp. 25–26.

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