Muslim Minorities in Muslim Societies:
Inquiry about Expected Outcomes

Mazen Hashem
mhashem@csun.edu

Abstract

The tenuous position of Muslim minorities in Muslim majority countries is often overlooked because of presumed normalcy. This paper analyzes the dynamics of Muslim minorities along four macro factors: First, structural determinants, such as geography, spatial concentration, and the size of the minority, which constitute the material resource repertoire of the minority. Second, geopolitics and inherited colonial policies, which represent the boundaries of possible future development within the region. Third, minority accumulated grievances, including economic deprivation and political disfranchisement, which function as the fuel that justifies counter-majority collective action. Forth, cultural distinctiveness as it constructs the foreignness of the minority. The paper also discusses the nature of the ideological framework within which the minority articulates its demands, which determines its national leadership potential in the global context. Along this analytical map, the paper charts the expected future outcomes of three main Muslim minorities: the Kurds of Iraq, the Darfurians of Sudan, the, and the Amazigh of Algeria. Using the Boolean logic of comparison, the paper argues that the case of the Iraqi Kurds is the most conducive to a new political arrangement as all of the four conditions are strongly present. The case of Darfur is volatile as it takes contradictory positions on the stated dimensions, and where structural conduciveness is high and tribal conflict heightens grievances on all sides. The case of the Amazigh is muted although it has the potential of surprising escalation with shifts in geopolitics or structural conduciveness.

Introduction

The subject of minorities in Muslim majority countries is often discussed, in the media as well as the academia, in terms of religious minorities living in states that suffer from democratic deficit. However, a simple survey vividly shows that there is a wide-spread deep resentment of the status quo among all social groups in such countries, and more so among the majority. From the further east of Arab countries to its further west, we find discontented minority groups that cut across ethnic and religious divisions: The Muslim Kurds in Iraq (and Syria), the Christian Maronites in Lebanon, the Christian Qobts, three Muslim groups in west, north, and east of Sudan, and the Amazigh of Algeria. Again, most of those populations are Muslim, and significant numbers consider themselves Arabs. The issue then is not simply a democratic deficit, although democracy is lacking, but a nation-state near failure. However, what is distinctive about such minorities is their secessionist inclination, contrasted to the equally discontented majority that cannot escape from itself.

More specifically, this paper argues that the rise of minority demands at *this* juncture is the result of the confluence of several factors: the ideological justification of dislocated identities, the heightened levels of state and political elites' loss of legitimacy, the sense of political efficacy among the contenders, and geopolitical opportunity. The question here is whether such ethnic and minority claims could be absorbed by existing political systems, or that they will coalesce and intensify to a degree that warrants change in the political configuration of respective countries in which such minorities live. After a brief discussion of the context of the rise of minority demands, the paper presents a typology of the potential of four new political formations: a confederation, a federation, communal pluralism, or individualistic pluralism arrangement. The typology will be used to examine the possible outcomes available for three minorities in Arab-Muslim countries: the Amazigh of Algeria, the Darfurians of Sudan, and the Kurds of Iraq.

The Context of Heightening Minority Demands

The rise of ethnic demands in many countries in the last thirty years is a well observed phenomenon. Such rise has significantly heightened in Arab countries in the last decade. While local conditions are playing a role in the rise of such demands, such conditions are in significant ways a reaction to the development of the nation-states in such countries, or what we can call nation-state fatigue[1].[2]

The nation-state fatigue and partial failure are reflected in three-pronged realization. First is the development failure. Even oil-producing countries learned about the limits of state wealth highlighted by continuous unemployment and the inability to care for the poor. Despite the existence of some impressive new projects, a high-rise here and there or a new technology used at the airport, people's daily life is marked by the continuous deterioration of social institutions, being health, education, or public transportation. Second, there is a strong growing sense of the uselessness of the state and its ultimate external dependence. Even formal national boundaries have become meaningless, nothing more an obstacle in people's life. This occurred as part of how globalism was politically translated in Third World countries that lack mature institutions. For sure, globalism brought new consumer products that people enjoy. However, it was plutocracy-inducing globalization. Furthermore, the fragmented power structure of those countries is well-connected to the global capitalist system where statesmanship disappeared and political/military elite actors became active agents who work on behalf foreign companies and interests.

Thirdly, there is a significant level of cultural revival. Cultural revival is reflected in the ongoing formation of new hybrid identities with significant presence of the local.

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[1] Consider Spain's King, Jose Carlos, visit to Sapta and Milila, Nov 4, 2007, and the public anger and the inability of the King Muhammad VI to do anything other than a criticism of the visit and a call for "dialog" to resolve the issue.

[2] وقال محمد السادس في بيان قرأه مستشاره محمد معتصم إن" هذه الزيارة غير المجدية تسيء للمشاعر الوطنية المتجذرة لدى جميع مكونات وشرائح الشعب المغربي."

وحمل البيان إسبانيا المسؤولية عن المجازفة بتدهور العلاقات، وقال إنه "إزاء هذا العمل الذي يحن لعهد مظلم مضى وانقضى فإننا نحمل السلطات الإسبانية مسؤوليتها عن المجازفة بمستقبل وتطور العلاقات بين البلدين وعن الإخلال الجسيم للحكومة الإسبانية بمنطق وروح معاهدة الصداقة وحسن الجوار والتعاون المبرمة سنة." 1991

وشدد على ضرورة استرجاع الجيبين إلى الوطن الأم، ودعا إسبانيا إلى الالتزام بحوار نزيه وصريح ومنفتح على المستقبل يؤمن حقوق المغرب السيادية ويراعي المصالح الإسبانية. وقال إن الاحتلال لا يكتسب شرعيته بالتقادم أو عن طريق الأعمال أحادية الجانب وسياسة الأمر الواقع http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/B00EA561-53F5-4366-86DC-5D507F10FA84.htm .

What is new in the resurgence of the Arab identity is being highly attuned with Islam, along with significant adulterated global elements. Muslim but not Arab minority groups see that the Arab dimension of the new identity is worthless—after all, what we got from the claim of Arabism other than political authoritarianism. Non-Muslim groups have concerns about the possible development of an intolerant Islamic element that is different from the atmosphere of Muslimness in which they comfortably lived. Ironically, the cultural revival of non-Muslim minority groups is parochially religious and sectarian, and non-Arab minorities are mimicking old Arab nationalism.

Although all share deep resentment and loath toward the state, the majority sees the maintenance of state boundaries a practical necessity. This represents the major point of disagreement between the majorities and minorities, agreeing on the bankruptcy of the state and disagreeing what should be done about it.

The public realization of the problem of the state is highly a world-system, although it is not free from conspiratorial thinking. More importantly, there is a sharp decline in the political legitimacy of the state; and this decline is not simply a technical one in the sense that governmental procedures, but a lack of cultural legitimacy. It is not simply the state is ineffective or even predatory, but the state and its governing ideology does not resonate with the imaginations of people.

Pointing to the increasing disconnection between the nation-state and the people does not equate saying that the nation-state is a passé phenomenon of modernity. The nation-state as a political entity is well and alive in terms of its factness as the vehicle of organizing large collectivities. The strain of the nation-state is largely a legitimacy strain. The failure of the modern nation-state is still a conceptual one, in the heads of part of the intelligentsia, incapable of developing into a practical alternative. Power, interest, and even the revolting imagination of the public are still bound to an imagined state solution. Therefore, this paper does not take a postmodern view of the state, rather, it points to a position more consistent with Beck's notion of globality. The space associated with modern nation-states is becoming less meaningful and less imminent in the lives of people. Postmodern views neglect structural and material conditions; they stand as creative descriptions of the problematique of the nation-state more than theories of the state and its development. Certainly they debunk the assumed morality of the nation-state and disparage its sacredness. However, they fall short from suggesting a workable model of the transformed postindustrial state. After all, contemporary postindustrial states are completely rooted in capitalism and are

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conditioned by the variations of its dynamics. Rising minority demands that this paper are discussing reject the political state in which they live, but they surely dream of a nation-state that assumingly has more cultural resonance.

A Typology of Ethnic-Triggered Political Formations

Given the deep sense of nation-state failure among the peoples of Arab-Muslim countries, this section discusses the expected outcomes of different types of political formations: a confederate setting, and federal setting, a communal pluralism type, or an individualistic pluralistic situation, as Table 1. below indicates. Four conditions are identified as crucial in determining such outcomes: (1) structural conduciveness, including size, demographic distribution, geographic setting, and institutional resourcefulness; (2) geopolitical position; (3) Cultural distinctiveness, including identity dislocation and religious differences; and (4) mobilized grievance, including economic deprivation and political disfranchisement. The paper argues that the different combinations of the foregoing conditions determine the potential of reaching one of four outcomes.

Table 1. A typology of conditions that affect minority interfacing with the larger society

Structural conduciveness	Geopolitics	Cultural distinctiveness	Mobilized grievances		Potential outcome
Y	Y	Y	Y	➔	Confederation
Y	N	Y	Y	➔	Federation
N	N	Y	Y	➔	Communal Pluralism
N	N	Y	N	➔	Individualistic Pluralism

There is additional condition that is crucial for the full realization of the first two specified outcomes (confederation and federation), but which the paper will ignore: force. However, in the interest of keeping the model more parsimonious and conceptualizing the outcome as a mere potentiality, force was omitted. The admission of force into the model brings it down to a more applied level and calls for invoking other relevant factors, such as elite fragmentation. For example, we can say that the availability of verified means of violence and its effective use when the four conditions are met is likely to lead to the crumbling of the existing political order and the formation

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of a full-blown state. The model then would start speaking of state breakdown, which is not the focus of this article.

The typology starts with a rudimentary, but crucial, condition—structural conduciveness. This condition encompasses three aspects of resources that form the material base of a group. First, the demographic makeup of the minority, including its size and distribution, represents a significant factor. A minority of small numbers cannot negotiate a minority-wide solution even if many of its members are resourceful and have access to the corridors of power. This is a case where we can speak of political influence rather a change in the political arrangement of the country. It is a case where political favors could be bestowed upon the members of the tiny minority but in which no demarcated minority setting could be called for. In fact, it is in the political interest of the minority, in this case, to downplay its distinctiveness and avoid demarcated boundaries lest not put the minority on the spot and expose it to possible future backlash. The interest of the minority here is to camouflage its power and to claim speaking of the interests of the majority. It is not easy to speak of a specific necessary relative size since this condition interacts with other related demographic conditions, such as distribution. However, we may venture to say that a minority relative size of a single digit percentage of the total population should be considered a very small size below the threshold of asking for minority-demarcated solutions. In such cases, it is more likely that the small minority asks for *exceptions* in few areas deemed critical for the survival of the minority, rather than vying for real power.

The demographic distribution of the minority is another important demographic factor. The lack of physical concentration of minority members in one or several places makes several choices not feasible if not impossible. For example, district-based political representation requires concentration. Dispersion here dilutes voting power. The social implications of dispersion are more critical than simple political representation. It is more likely for the interests of a dispersed minority members to diverge, because interests are partially area based. Furthermore, dispersion represents a major impediment in mobilization potentials and makes it much more costly. Beyond sheer interests and politics, the social formation of a dispersed minority weakens as it operates under the assimilation pressures of the larger society. In this case, members of the minority are more likely to seek individual-based demands rather a minority-wide ones, be it ethnic, racial, or national claims. Additionally, in the case of small numbers

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the consciousness of kind is unlikely to grow strong. Social rituals and ethnic norms that perpetuate the group are harder to form or to be maintained.

The nature of the geographical area in which minority members are concentrated is also a crucial factor. Geographic setting may contribute to the insulation of a minority group; or it might push them to play certain economic roles, such as the role of the middleman minority. More importantly, the geographic setting is likely to be connected to the history of the minority group. If the minority had lived long in a certain area, it prompts an identity centered on such area, imbued with the imagination of their continuous peoplehood. Ethnic myths are frequently connected to a land that has history. The resourcefulness of the land when demographic concentration is present plays another crucial role in the collective imagination of the minority group. Images of past prosperity, or the dream in a prosperous future, become strong identity boosters. Moreover, such mental images can signal the sense of unfair distribution or exploitation on the part of the majority.

The last item in the structural conduciveness dimension is resourcefulness, broadly conceptualized to include human capital and institutional capacity. A high level of human capital avails to the minority a wide range of options. Probably, the most crucial aspect here is that low human capital leaves few options most of which are threatening to the majority, while high levels of social capital avails options that are deemed compatible with the interests and the liking of the majority. However, high levels of human capital alone are likely to be limited in their effectiveness if not coupled by institutional strength. The potentials of high levels of human capital would dissipate in the larger social terrain if not institutionally employed. Therefore, when speaking of the relative resourcefulness of a minority, it is crucial to differentiate between the resourcefulness of individuals and the resourcefulness of minority institutions. The former typically allows for cosmetic minority achievements and yields little social power. The latter permits the call for structural adjustments that have long-term effect in the future of the minority.

The second condition that largely influence outcome of a minority's type of incorporation is geopolitics, including the lasting effects of past colonial policies. For example, minority demands will be received differently in a country surrounded by rival states compared to an isolated country on a non-strategic edge of a region. The demands of a minority are not only constrained by the political system of the country, but also affected by strong players in the region. Satisfying the demands of a minority

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might be judged as acceptable based on the local conditions of a country. However, if satisfying such demands has the possibility of triggering parallel demands in neighboring countries, regional stability becomes a concern.

With intensifying globalism, geopolitics gained more importance in at least three aspects. First, the rising connectedness of the world made local outcomes less local; reverberations now travel further, prompting the concerns of, previously, unlikely actors. Second, the economies of the countries of the world are now more integrated, and the position of a minority in a country might be relevant to other. For example, minority demands might affect the availability of global labor, and would be judged favorable or unfavorable accordingly. The case of American southern slavery is a classic example, even before globalism became a cliché; Mexican Americans represent a contemporary case. Third, minorities are exceedingly considered as *leverage* population in world politics. Minorities are now structurally more open to the deliberate utilization from outside the national boundaries. This situation contrasts to the premodern world where the condition of minorities, even their migration, had only after-the-fact consequences. Minorities today are increasingly becoming convenient pressuring tools that call for deliberate external utilization.

Contemporary geopolitical conditions are not simply the creation of the moment. Colonial policies have put minorities in certain structural positions that largely affected their future, regardless whether such policies were deliberate or not. Analysis of conflict in Third World countries necessary calls for the examination of colonial policies prior-to and just-after independence. While invoking colonial policies may fall in nationalistic parochialism, it is necessary to account for them for many reasons let alone the very formation of the modern nation-states of invented boundaries and doubted cultural legitimacy. For example, the aftermath of the Napoleonic War, 1806, resulted in that the British wrested control over the Cape Colony. The unintended consequence came in the form of anglicizing the Afrikaners, the early 18th century population of Dutch, German, and French decent; also, English became the official language. Hutus and Tutsis lived together for centuries where the aristocratic Tutsis ruled over the 85% Hutus in pluralistic, unequal, but not particularly rancorous or violent relations[3]. It was the colonial policies, interacting with local conditions, which put them on the path of a

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[3] *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World*, 2nd ed., 2007, Cornell and Hartmann, Pine Forge.

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later ugly genocide. The lasting effects of colonial policies are not restricted to destabilizing existing political arrangements or fracturing national identities, but also tampering with the basis of traditional economy. Much of the conflict in Africa is partially due to the mismatch between the artificially-created boundaries and the space of the economic activities that were in place before colonization. The experience of Native Indians of Canada and the United States is a case point.

The third condition affecting the way a minority is interfaced within the larger society is cultural distinctiveness. Cultural distinctiveness could be based on ethnic differences in descent lines or racial features, language, and religion. Even if the society enjoys relative peaceful coexistence, under certain conditions, cultural distinctiveness prompts adversarial competition, sense of superiority, or doubts about loyalty. Cultural distinctiveness becomes a more crucial factor if the strategy of the minority is that of resistance. Cultural distinctiveness avails to the minority an ample repertoire of tools essential for community survival, for communication and networking on one hand, and for resistance when need calls for, on the other hand.

The case that is examined in this paper is that of a Muslim majority society that developed within the Muslim civilizational domain, which was marked by a high level of communal pluralism. Diversity existed at multiple levels, ethnic, linguistic, and religious. Such diversity was maintained through cultural ethos along with institutional support, formal or informal, which endowed diversities a sense of security. This stands in contrast to the pluralism of modern democratic societies in which accepting diversity is highly coupled with legal rights secured by the state. However, modern states are typically interested in homogenizing the population along utilitarian citizenship lines, which could neglect ethnic *soft* claims that cannot be easily expressed in legal dicta. Commenting on the Amazighi case, Layach (2005) notes that in a "multiethnic and multilingual country, some people believe that to subordinate their primordial identities to a "generalized commitment to an over-arching and somewhat alien civil order is to risk a loss of definition" and autonomy through absorption into a "culturally undifferentiated mass" or into a larger group whose identifiers do not explicitly include theirs. The dilemma becomes even more acute when civic political structures are inherently weak – as is the case in Algeria" (pg. 215-216). Furthermore, it is important to remember that the diversity of pre-WWII Muslim societies operated in a system where the locus of state control and intervention was limited. Diversity was expressed in a communal type of pluralism that highly maintained particularities within the larger

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Islamic motif of the society. The common ground was immanently and meaningfully present, and particularities were also solidly rooted.

The last condition in the aforementioned typology is the degree to which grievances are mobilized. Of course, we cannot imagine group relationships in human societies without grievances. However, with the exception of sever levels of oppression, the realization of grievances and their mobilization is typically more consequential than their mere existence. Two sources of grievances are widely observed in human history economic deprivation and political disfranchisement.

Being a minority does not necessarily mean that it occupies a disadvantageous economic position, as it is customarily perceived. Minorities sometimes represent prosperous groups within the larger society, and it seems that such position is less problematic than the minority being in a deprived condition. That should be understandable since if a minority is prosperous, it claims only one advantageous position within the dimensions of social power. In contrast, when a majority is prosperous and the minority is not, the majority adds one extra favored source to its default political, cultural, and other aspects of social power. Minority economic elites are more likely to be immigrants and could be seen as providing crucial and welcomed services to the larger society. Middle Eastern Lebanese and Syrians in South America serve as one example. Evidence suggests that this is true even if the minority existed as a result of semi-voluntary migration associated with colonization. The Chinese in Malaysia and the Indian in Trinidad-Tobago serve as examples. However, when the economically prosperous minority is part and parcel of the colonization experience, then conflict and rejection is more likely be the order, and South Africa serves an example here. Generally speaking, an inflammatory situation develops when the minority is deprived within a larger majoritarian prosperity. Moreover, deprivation becomes more highlighted when the minority is an indigenous minority and has equal claim to national authenticity. The example of African Americans in the United States is telling, and to the extent Mexicans in the US perceive themselves as natives to the land the more their grievance of economic marginality is problematized. This was succinctly expressed in statement in the immigrant/Latino protest against HR4437 in Los Angeles, March 2006: "We did not cross the boarders, the borders crossed us."

A highly unjust situation can persist with little changes in the position of a minority until economic grievances and political marginalization is mobilized, and mobilization occurs only after ideological articulation takes place. Ironically, the

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potential of articulation is significantly dependent on economic and political resources. Minorities are often locked in a vicious circle of deprivation that lacks the objective conditions necessary for concretizing deprivation in ways that could be appreciated by the larger society.

Ideological articulation could draw on the majority's conceptions of fairness and justice, or draw on independent and external repertoire of legitimation. When the minority depends on the majority's conception of fairness, its claim becomes that of evenness of application. The rationale of the demands of equal treatment in this case is culturally preinterrupted, and the argument of the minority is self-evident. The dispute turns to one of verification: the degree of deprivation and the eligibility for actions that redress past inequality. The positive response of the majority is likely insofar few interrelated conditions are met. First, the majority should not feel threatened in significant ways. Second, the majority is, implicitly, assured that there will be no wholesale disbarment of its advantageous position. Third, changes are not retroactive and that the past is closed. Fourth, the process of equalization is coached in a language that bestows honor to the majority and acknowledges its benevolence.

A set of different dynamics take place when a minority can draw on independent sources of articulation. In this case the minority has the advantage of controlling its own means of ideological production, and is further removed from their manipulation by the majority. This situation is much more potent in providing the members of the minority with a sense of dignity and pride. Most importantly, internal mobilization is much easier as organizers and activists speak a language familiar to their people. The act of articulation is more potent as it uses preexisting symbols (of preexisting networks) that have established resonance. Such symbols and concepts are likely to have historical depth that gives them stability and legitimacy. However, all of such (internal) crucial advantages are countered by disadvantages in eyes of the majority. That is because it is not easy for the majority to appreciate the demands of the minority. The majority might perceive much of the claimed grievances as dishonest and not worthy of consideration. To the extent that the demands carry moral weight within the minority, they are questionable within the circles of the majority. Furthermore, many of the aforementioned conditions that calm down the majority, confirming their status and benevolence and assuring a non-threatening posture, are hard to be met when the minority has independent sources of ideological articulation. The case of African Americans demonstrates the first scenario, while the case of Native Indians partially

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demonstrates the second scenario. It could be concluded, therefore, that it is more advantageous for the minority to have its own basis for ideological articulation; nevertheless, the minority has to translate their claims into language understandable to outsiders when talking with the majority.

The above suggests that using a human rights discourse in grievance realization is pragmatic. The contemporary conceptions of fairness and justice, human rights and freedom, are all coached the abstract conceptions of liberalism. They represent the currency of today as they are (1) preinterpreted and endowed with clarity; (2) have established legitimacy that cannot be easily refuted; and (3) have institutional base and connected to recognized actors. However, each of these three advantages gives the majority near full control over the reinterpretation of rights, and gives them the upper hand in deciding their applicability to the minority's case. Furthermore, they may lack resonance with the subculture of the minority, and might be feeble in addressing the deep structural predicament of the minority. The irony is that minorities Muslim countries are often using a liberal discourse that did not prove effective in problem solving in its land of origin. Demanding liberal dreams in states that lack institutional stability fall terrifying threats on the ears of shaky polities. Response with undue state violence follows, and violence cements the feeling of separateness. The state slipping into generalized violence against the public becomes the dream of the opportunist agitator.

Illustrative Cases

Below, the paper discusses three cases of Muslim minorities in Muslim majority countries along the conceptual map that was discussed in the previous section. The cases are: the Amazigh in Algeria, the Darfurians in Sudan, and the Kurds in Iraq. The expected outcomes of the ongoing conflict in terms of sociopolitical structural changes will be anticipated.

The Amazigh of Algeria

The Amazigh of the Maghreb represent the aboriginal population of the area of North Africa which received many invasions and migration waves throughout history. The popular belief among the Amazigh today is that it was the Romans, who once invaded the region and faced tough resistance, labeled the inhabitants with the name Berber; now those populations call themselves Amazigh, the brave ones. The wave of ethnic Arabs who settled in the area came as part of the diffusion of Islam. The establishment of an Islamic order in the region took fifty years. The Byzantines then were controlling the northern shores of the Maghreb, and the Muslim forces had to deal with them and the aboriginals. Initially, the aboriginals were not enthused by the Arab-Islamic encroachment and mounted visible resistance. However, the attitude changed after the Umayyad center in Damascus replaced the ineffective leader of the Maghreb with Uqba ibn Nafe'. This statesman built the city of Qayrawan (in Tunisia today) making it a center of knowledge and trade. The approach toward the aboriginal population changed toward a policy of coexistence. Islam soon formed the primary identity of the aboriginals and became the basis of their social reality: "Historically, it has not been despite but through Islam that Imazighen have achieved significant political power" (Crawford 2005:181). Moreover, some indigenous population achieved high grounds in terms of valued knowledge. For example, The Almoravids were not important simply because of their prowess; they were Islamic revisionist too.

Structural Conduciveness:

Due to the backdrop of this ancient history, the demographic picture of the Amazigh cannot be easily framed. Many former Amazigh became Arabs as they became Muslims, and some Arabs became Amazigh through intermarriage. Therefore, there is no accurate way of speaking about the exact percentage of the Amazighi people. Nevertheless, we can speak of four main groups: the Qbayil in the north; the Shawiyya

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in the east, the Mzab in the northern Sahara, and the Tuareg in the far south. It is only the Qbayil of the north that recently gained sociopolitical significance; speaking of the problem of the Amazigh in Algeria is speaking about the Qbayil in particular. Although the members of the Qbayil live in different places including the capital, the northeast represents contagious areas in which a large number of them live and in which the Tamazight language is commonly used. The beauty of this area and its resourcefulness adds to the sense of the newly formed ethnic pride. However, the primary use of the land is agriculture, and such resourcefulness does not lend itself into forming a separate entity. That is because economic and other basic activities are highly linked to the rest of the country and to the capital in particular. The area of the Qbayil, though, in not internally enclosed. Thus, conceivably, it can become more viably autonomous through exploiting its shores on the Mediterranean and creating external contacts and investments tied to the region.

Geopolitics:

The contemporary problem of the Qbayil links directly to the colonial heritage of Algeria. Customarily, colonial administrations try to lure minorities as part of their effort to create internal sympathizers. That is truer for in the French case were the declared aim of the colonial effort was to "civilize" the Algerians and incorporate them into the larger enlightened France. The special significance of the Qbayil region was not overlooked by the colonial administration. French policy offered the Qbayil, including the Amazigh of other regions, more educational and professional opportunities than the rest of the population. But that is not to suggest in any way that the Qbayil functioned as traitors. To the contrary, and by the very fact of the relative insulation of their mountainous area, the Qbayil offered formidable resistance against the French. For example, Abd al-Karim is a noted leader who championed the jihad for the Rif's independence from the Christian occupiers.

Chaker (2005), a noted contemporary nationalist Amazigh scholar, discusses at length the issue of an assumed French Amazigh policy. He passionately argues that there was not any policy that favored the Amazigh. To the contrary, if anything, it was a policy of fragmentation. The claim of Amazigh exceptionalism in the French policies does not hold, according to Chaker. The French did even think in teaching the Tamazight. Specialists in the Amazigh came after independence not before. He also disagrees with the notion that the French favored the Amazigh in education since it was

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restricted to specific Amazighi areas while it did not touch other important villages. The relative success in education in the Qbayil region is due the poverty of the region and due to seeing education, as well as emigration, as a tool for mobility, not due to French policies. Moreover, French policies divided the Qbayil region into Grand-Qbayil administratively attached to Algiers, and Minor-Qbayil administratively attached to Kusantina. Chaker also claims that fragmenting Amazigh people was also achieved through incorporating some of them with Mali and Niger.

The assertions of Chaker stand only as a defense against painting the Amazigh as a Fifth Column in the process political liberation, but do not negate France's exploitation of ethnic differences. Indeed, it is something to say that the Amazigh as an ethnic-linguistic group is a mere French invention, and it is something else to say that France exploited the language and decent difference. We can find parallels of this French colonial behavior, as it exploited the rivalry among the native Indian tribes in what it is now Canada; and such colonial policy similar to pitting the Syrian cities of Damascus and Aleppo against each other before independence. Certainly, creating a pan-Amazigh region was not part of the French position. France was eager to divide the Amazigh region because invaders know well that the resistance of brave mountain fighters of insulated areas is always formidable. It is exactly after dividing and conquering that an invader can select pockets worthy of being "civilized." Indeed, the physical destruction of the Qbayil area was accompanied with efforts to deconstruct the traditional order, the womb of resistance.

However, speaking of geopolitics of the present, the Qbayil region does fare high. Neighboring countries of Tunisia and Morocco are in very good terms with France, along with the Algerian government itself. Furthermore, it is not in the interest of France to destabilize the large area of West Africa where France faces only limited economic competition brought with global trade agreements.

Cultural Distinctiveness:

The Amazigh people do not constitute a clear-cut ethnic minority (Layachi 2005:208), as has been explained before. Few may rightly claim to be of pure Amazigh descent as the entire population lived together for centuries intermarrying and absorbing waves of individual and group migrations from outside the area. Language as a cultural item and an anchor of identity fare very high in the region; after all, the French are known for their linguistic pride as well as the Arabs. The Tamazight language

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became one major anchor of the Amazigh. However, because of the Arabization efforts after independence, some Amazigh do not speak Amazigh well (Layachi 2005:209); nevertheless, near 20% of the population speaks one variation of the Tamazight. However, Gellner disputes the importance of the Tamazight language and asserts that the Amazigh are essentially tribal rather than broadly ethnic. The tribe is what is important to them, not linguistics as activists claim. Nevertheless, there is no question that the centrality of language came to the fore in recent years.

To appreciate why language faired high in Algerian identity, we need to remember the tight connectedness of Arabic language to Islam. Therefore, the Arab national discourse of the liberation movement could not completely disassociate itself from Islamic metaphors. The Islamic imagination is simply deeply rooted in Algerian society, and Islamically-flavored social practices constitute the cornerstone of the historical identity of the people there, including the Amazigh. For the largely secular and leftist Arabist nationalist discourse, acknowledging Islam was a necessity for many reasons including public relations matters.

The post-WWII period was a period of rising nationalism across the Third World wresting itself out of colonial direct rule. Algeria was a showcase in that regard as it fought it way out of a brutal occupation that perfected control over all areas of life, from economic to political to cultural. The National Liberation Front (FLN) united the population in resistance attracting material and moral support from people and governments across the Arab and Muslim worlds. Despite the FLN's Arab leaning, the liberation movement as a whole was not exactly Arab. There were notable leaders in the Algerian liberation movement who were Amazigh, and despite their connections with their regions they were very far from developing a clear Amazigh consciousness and identity; some of them even objected the idea of an Amazigh identity, such as the notable leader, Karim (Chaker 2005:39). Between 1930 and 1954, the Algerian nationalists were faced with a crucial identity question: should Algerians fight French colonialism as a united front under the banner of an Algerian nationalism that is part of Arab nationalism, or should the Amazigh component of Algeria be explicitly identified as part of this nationalist effort, or should it be stand apart as a distinct Amazigh nationalism? (Layachi 2005:201). Amazighism is at least partially induced by French colonial behavior too eager to fragment the society, especially that the larger decolonization discourse in the region was overly Arabist.

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This identity challenge marked the post-independence period of the young Algerian nation. More specifically, the Algerian national identity was born in a schizophrenic independence. The independence effort was imbued with religious feelings rejecting the occupier and its cultural superiority claims, while the political organization of the independence effort was secular. Moreover, formal independence brought a secular regime hostile to religion and Islam. Convinced that the problem of Algeria was that of backwardness, "progress" was the overall framework for the new polity. Modernization along a socialist agenda was the order. Opposing social forces that valued the more traditional order were considered reactionary and should be crushed for the sake of a new Algeria.

As the French colonial style gives culture a high significant, uprooting the Arabic language was a sure aim. Indeed, after more than one-hundred and thirty years (1830-1962) of occupation, Algeria did become part of the francophone countries. French became the language not only of science and diplomacy, but also of day-to-day communication in urban areas. Arabic retreated to the Islamic quarters of mosques and teaching circles. Again, the schizophrenic nature of independence is further deepened. Arabic language is perceived by the population, including the Amazigh, as the language of free Muslim Algeria, yet the regime after independence was unsympathetic to religious overtones.

Nevertheless, adopting the Arabic language in the process of forging a national language upon independence was expected. Such a necessary effort of nation building would not have caused resentment in itself, since Algeria was an Arab-speaking country for centuries. The source of resentment toward Arabization was two-fold. First, Arabization policies carried the fervor of the revolution itself. Lacking more gradual implantation plans in addition to the lack of human resources, such effort plagued the educational system with inconsistencies. Second, for some, Arabization risks falling behind in teaching science and technology; but behind this argument laid a modernist attitude (among Amazigh as well as Arabs), that the cultural package of Arabization is not welcomed.

It was not the Arabic language, but rooting the new identity in Arab nationalism that was debatable—the overly Arabist discourse of independence espoused by the FLN and the post-independence regime was the source of resentment. Crawford (2005) asserts that the "conflation of Arabic language, Islamic legitimacy, and Arab ethnicity is the bone of contention for Amazigh activists" (pg. 167). The Amazigh in their long

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history in the area under the Islamic umbrella did not have to compromise their tribal particularities, including their languages. However, with the birth of the modern Algerian state, solidifying a national language was seen as necessary for many reasons. French language was the language of the occupier and Arabic was the language of resistance. Arabic is the language of the Quran, and French is the language of missionaries that exploited the colonial opportunity. Moreover, and beyond identity and symbolic dimensions, there were more compelling organizational reasons for adopting a national language. A new state needs strong bureaucracies, such as those of France, requiring a unified medium of communication. The idea of unity itself becomes paramount after an occupation that tore apart the very fabric of the society. The political logic of the time was that of centralization. The idea of unity under an Arab banner was not restricted to Algeria; it was very high in the imaginations of Arab nations from the "Arabian Gulf" in the east (Persian Gulf) to the Atlantic coast in the west.

Once again, we can say with confidence that the Arabic language per se was not the point of contention. After all, the Amazigh people were Muslims and read Quran in Arabic. It was Arabic secular nationalism behind Arabization that stirred an Amaizgh response. It is only logical that when Arabs claim a secular national identity the Amazigh would claim their own. Furthermore, the development of the Amazigh associations and activities in France proved to others that it is "not only antipatriotic and anti-Algerian, but also an instrument of French neocolonialism" (Layachi 2005:208).

More recently, the Amazighi identity took new turns. As the French society holds deep racist views toward Arabs, being an Amazigh in France became an advantageous mark and draws positive evaluation. That is especially true among the second-generation Amazigh females who stress their Amazigh identity to distance themselves from the Arab-Islamic mold that they consider oppressive (Chaker 2005:70). Unlike earlier Amazigh immigrants, the second generation of the Amazigh in France takes a highly assimilationist position and coordinate their efforts with France's governmental offices, including the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture; they work on carving an Amazighi cultural space in French society (Chaker 2005:78), which would spillover to Algeria. While this is typical in the behavior of minorities, echoing their national feelings toward Algeria and the Qbayil region to which they only minimum connections is naturally seen by the Arab majority as a reincarnated French intervention.

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Contemporary Arab irritation from Amazighism is understandable since Amazighism does not simply ask for a cozy cultural space in Algerian society, but espouses an anti-majority stance. The insistence on not using the alphabet of the Arabic language represents a good example. From a practical point of view, adopting such alphabet makes Tamazight more congruent within the Algerian society. However, with the hyper and politicized Amazigh identity in France an older Amazighi alphabet (along with the Latin alphabet) was adopted to stress ultimate particularity of the Amazigh and to further construct their culture as counter to the Arab-Islamic culture of the Algerian society (Chaker 2005:89). Chaker acknowledges that the Amazighi project has consciously and purposively molded itself as a secular anti-Arab and anti-Islamic, invoking the following binary positions: Tamazight vs. Arabic, continuous Amazighi history vs. Arab-Islamic Ummah, local popular heritage vs. larger Muslim heritage (Chaker 2005:93).

The politicization of the ethnic identity was later enforced by the failure of the state. Arab nationalism generally failed and the dream did not come through. Arab countries suffered a humiliating defeat with Israel in the 1967. Development in Algeria stumbled by one obstacle after the other. Socialism along with political repression retarded the country. Later on, President Bin Jadid's political liberalization of the 1980s represented a certificate of death for secular-leftist Arab nationalism. The Islamic-friendly and world-openness of the new president unleashed unanticipated forces. The success of Islamic organization in local elections threatened the status quo and warranted the indirect military and French intervention. Cancelling the elections plunged the country into civil war and opened the opportunity for the Amazigh secular actors to exploit the language issue to further the construction of an ethnic identity in a turbulent moment. Even claims arose that the Amazigh people, some of whom are white, are of European origins.

Grievance Mobilization:

Grievance exists in human societies and stays dormant until leaders raise it to the state of realized consciousness. Political power has an important role in denying grievance as well as in its construction. In few years, the Amazigh suddenly began to seem themselves as victims of Arab hegemony; and it is specifically the Qbayil part of the Amazigh that developed this feeling. To what degree France is responsible for the rise of this ethnic consciousness is a matter of heated debate.

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Chaker (2005) launches a passionate defense against the allegation of France's sponsorship of the Amazighi issue. However, he acknowledges that western social sciences opened unexpected horizons for the Amazigh intelligentsia. Before occupation, the discourse of the Amazigh used to refer to local Aamzigh values, to the pious saints, more than to language and history. The French occupation opened the door for anthropological studies of the region that had significant impact. Chaker claims that is these anthropological studies, and not the myth of a French Amazighi Policy, that contributed the rise of Amazighism (Chaker 2005: 29). Obviously, this is a naïve if not simplistic rationalization. Early anthropological studies being part of the colonial arsenal is well established in Academia.

Analyzing the discourse of the Amazighi leaders shows that early Amazigh nationalist were influenced by Europe's revolutionary movement of the 19th century, such as the Bolshevik revolution and the Irish resistance (Chaker 2005:90). Setting the Amazigh and Arab cultures apart was highlighted in the Amazighi rejection of the 1986 Algerian authority proposal to include Tamazight as "an element in the national heritage," insisting that it should become a national language and a special language to be used in Amazigh areas. The 1990 Arabization protocol that was approved by the national assembly was considered by the Amazigh as anti-French and anti-Amazighism (pg. 186). Chaker, an Amazighi intellectual and activists, is completely aware that the identity of the most of the Algerian society is Arabo-Islamic, and claims that the identity of the Qbayil region and the Mzab diametrically opposes Islamism and Arabism (pg. 190). In terms of mobilization, Chaker, writing in 1995 and seeing little chance for integration within the Algerian society, did not rule out the "theoretical" possibility of coordination between the Amazigh and the "oligarchic military bureaucracy in charge of governance and of the Qbayil region within the framework of a modernist front against the Islamists" (pg. 192).

Again, it should be noted here that the centrality of language is not simply an Amazigh problematique; it is a societal one that Arabs struggle with too. Despite Arabization policies, French language was still dominant as the language of high literature and science, as well as the language of sophisticated daily conversation. People of interior regions are much less familiar with French. Arab students from interior areas would suffer in school because of their lower mastery of French. Even teachers who would not object the Arabization of the curriculum find themselves unable

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to utilize Arabic educational material. Certainly, it is hard to live and function effectively in the Algerian society without knowing French.

Against these larger linguistic dilemmas, the Amazigh problem started to foment. The language question was raised within the underground nationalist Party of the Algerian People (the PPA, a revolutionary organization) and the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties (the MTLD, a reformist organization). Two nationalist tendencies toward language were formed: one favoring an "Algerian nationalism" that explicitly identified the Amazigh component, and one favoring an "Arabo-Islamic" nationalism that dismissed the ethnic element. In 1949 a major crisis over this issue exploded within the nationalist movement. As a result of the predominance of the Arabist tendency, many Amazigh militants in the PPA and MTLD ended up either leaving the movement or being thrown out. Others were assassinated (Layachi 2005 201); the Amazigh as well as the non-Amazigh leaders in the National Liberation Front were contended with such ending (Chaker 2003:38).

Not until the 1980s, that there was a proliferation of Amazigh literary, linguistic, and artistic production; and it developed specifically among those who were living in France. The militant movement of the Amazigh language and identity took on a clear secular character, although the Qbayil region also produced some of the most radical Islamist militants. The sudden political liberalization of 1989 and the legal recognition of the freedom of association permitted the birth of many new parties and civic groups. In addition to the Islamic Front for Salvation (FIS), the Front of Socialist Forces (FFS) went public after it was illegally operating since the 1960s. The Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD), formed in 1989, and the Berber Cultural Movement (MCB), formed in 1980 (Layachi 2005: 202-205).

While the marginalization of rural areas and small cities is a given in Third World countries that failed in their developmental plans, no explicit social or economic discrimination existed against those are self-defined or other-defined as Amazigh. Many persons for Amazigh origin were among the country's top political leaders and among most successful businessmen (Layachi 2005: 209). Nevertheless, the colonial developmental plans, squarely coming from the modernization theory perspective, concentrated on urban centers (usually the capitol, the largest city) and neglected rural areas. Then it was enough to get a critical mass of the economically marginalized people far from the urban center to be agitated by ethnic entrepreneurs. The Qbayils were not the only disadvantaged group, and their disadvantage was part of their geo-class

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position in haphazard authoritarian, highly centralized, socialist modernization efforts—a combination of contradictions, indeed. People of the Qbayil organized the 1980 Spring commemoration of Amazigh language; it was harshly repressed by the unprofessional governmental law enforcement agencies, only to add a crucial element to the construction of an ethnic identity. The demands of the Berber Spring were impossible to be met, and they may have been intentionally designed as such. The use of violence by the Algerian state symbolically cemented the feelings of hostile marginalization by a vague majority against a vague minority.

Darfur of Sudan

Darfur is located in western Sudan, where an active civil war is going on. Darfur itself is formed of three parts, the North, the South, and the West, with some parallels in ethnic stock in each part. It is a large region that is markedly underdeveloped. To the mid-north live the Fur, customarily referred to as African, and to the south live Arab-Africans, customarily referred to as Arabs.

Despite the extensive coverage over the current conflict, few academic references are available on the issue. Therefore, I will try to piece together the fragments of available knowledge, hoping the research plan of this paper would escape the ideological ferments that cloud understanding. Emily Wax of the Washington Post summarized the five common misconceptions about Darfur in saying that: "(1) Nearly everyone is Muslim; (2) Everyone is black; (3) It's all about politics; (4) This conflict is international; and (5) The "genocide" label made it worse."[4]

Darfur used to be a kind of independent state around 1504 AD, formed by Abdallah Jam'aa. This leader was not an African as he was a migrant from the Arabian Peninsula. Darfur became known then as the "Abdailab," basing its legitimacy on a diffused Arabo-Islamic identity and the pragmatic success of charismatic leader who managed people's day-to-day needs. Next to Darfur was a state under formation. Khalifah Abdallah led Sudan from 1885 until 1899; he was the successor of the Mahdi who defeated the British in 1881and died shortly thereafter. The British re-colonized the country in 1899, and it was in this year that the Sudan was formally born as modern state. However, Darfur was not yet part of this new state. Darfur was an independent entity run by the Fur tribe, which is itself a mixture of Arab and non-Arab tribe. The Fur of the northern Darfur constituted the political elite while the "Arab" of the southern Darfur constituted the economic base of the region. The distribution of power was also reflected in demography and geography. The Arabs were more numerous and constituted two-third of the population while occupying only one-third of the geographical space. The Fur commanded the other two-thirds of the space. Darfur was then an independent entity until 1916 where Britain annexed it Sudan.

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[4] Emily Wax: "Five Truths About Darfur," April 23, 2006, B.03. *The Washington Post*.

Structural Conduciveness:

After visiting Darfur, the United Nation's Secretary General Ki-Moon succinctly summarized the root of the problem: "…Nor is the crisis confined to Darfur. It has spilled over borders, destabilizing the region. Darfur is also an environmental crisis—a conflict that grew at least in part from desertification, ecological degradation and a scarcity of resources, foremost among them water[5]. The conditions of the region are not conducive to secession. The interests of people there should be aligned with a larger political power capable of providing a higher level of organization. However, as the central government of Sudan was failing in providing services, the people feel that they would be better off managing their own affairs. That is especially true after the discovery of oil in the Sudan, the proceeds of which did not even reach the closest village to Khartoum, the capitol.

Darfur is a landlocked region surrounded by poor countries. The region does not have institutions upon which an independent or semi-independent political entity could exist. Infrastructure is close to nil and human capital is effective only in producing substance living connected to the locality. However, given the low level of development of the larger region, including the Sudan and neighboring countries there is a measure of structural-conduciveness in the sense of the ability to support subsistence (in the absence of environmental pressures) without the need for a state.

Geopolitics:

The Sudan is not an exception in that, as a state, it was born following the European colonial adventure. In fact, Sudan is a showcase study of packing together different entities and calling it a state. As a state, the history of Sudan is a history of state-formation failure. Neither Sudan had enough means of coercion to tightly lace together a country, nor was it able to develop the necessary institutions to formalize a new modern social contract. Beyond the capitol Khartoum, social units continued to function along old social, economic and political lines, save for some intervention of the modern states, a long arm obtrusive intervention that taxes without representation or significant payoffs. The local in most of Sudan still represents the socio-political as well as the economic nexus. Beyond the centrality of the local there exist regional formations

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[5] What I Saw in Darfur: Untangling the Knots of a Complex Crisis. Ban Ki-moon. *The Washington Post*, Friday, September 14, 2007; A13.

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that have historical and cultural significance that enjoy legitimacy over that of a feeble and dysfunctional state.

The precarious balance of power of independent Darfur matched that of economics: the nomadic activity of the Fur needs more land than that of the Arabs traders and local farmers. In the times of drought, such balance get challenged as the northern Fur cross the river separating the north form the south, Nahr al-Arab, seeking water and encroaching on the crops of the south. Darfur was still independent, and not until 1916 that the British annexed the Darfur region to a state called Sudan; the south was also included in this new state. It requires further research to estimate the strategic and practical reasons that led Britain to form such a country out of three regions.

Following the 1916 British annexation to Sudan, Darfur, became embroiled in the conflicts of the caesarean newborn states: the Sudan itself, Chad, in addition to Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia. While there is no direct connection between the conflict in Darfur with those states to the east of Sudan, for the young state of Sudan and its struggle with the south, the eastern front adds to the instability and heightens the threats against the Sudanese regime.

The political aspirations of the southern leader John Carang and Chad's president were of specific importance. Through them, the rebels of Darfur were supplied with weapons. Chad's President Idriss Deby overthrow President Hissan Habre in 1990 through military attacks stationed in Darfur region. Coming from the elite Zaghawa tribe, which is also the tribe of one of the Darfur rebel groups, Idriss supported the rebels against the Sudanese government.[6] The Darfurian rebels established bases in Chad, while Khartoum is accused of supporting Chad's anti-Deby rebels who have a military camp in West Darfur[7]. As a weak and ill-equipped force facing the Darfurian rebels, the Sudanese army found it opportune to arm the Janjaweed, the formidable tribal groups living on mercenary activities.

In the conventional sense, Darfur is not a strategic geopolitical region. However, adjusting our understanding of geopolitics to include tribal conflict operating in the context of state power and international interests, Darfur is geopolitically entangled. Yet, such a geopolitical position does yield power; it does not make of Darfurian rebel

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[6] Voice of America, Noel King, Kass, Darfur, Sudan 26 February 2007.
[7] Voice of America, Noel King, Kass, Darfur, Sudan 26 February 2007.

groups power brokers capable of pressing own demands. Rather, this kind of geopolitical position opens Darfur to external intervention with minimum control over the region's fate and interests.

Most related to the conflict in western Sudan is the conflict of the South. The desperation of the Sudanese government to find a solution to the southern problem coincided with the oil interests of the United States, which pressured both Sudan and southern rebels (who were supported by Ethiopia and American Christian missionaries) into a peace accord. After appointing the once rebel leader Carang as a second vice president of Sudan, oil revenues were to be divided equally between the south and the north. However, why should the south settle for the half if the Sudanese government was unable to control the south and accepted a once unthinkable compromise? Furthermore, Ethiopia, a landlocked country is naturally too eager to have southern Sudan secede, expanding its influence in the region rescuing the pagan and Christian African south from the Arab Muslim north. That would put Ethiopia in a much better position to get access to the eastern shores of the red sea.

Cultural Distinctiveness:

Speaking of cultural distinctiveness often calls for invoking the urban-rural schism in Third World countries. Whatever of cultural differences we might register between the people of Darfur and the rest of the Sudan is largely a function of modernity's imprint on urban areas vis-à-vis its faint touch on rural areas. In terms of lifestyle, social organization, and economic activities, the poor rural areas that are far from the capitol still function along ancient methods and conventions. Modernity and its application have the slightest of surface impact, mainly in some technology that is used to shore up the traditional way of life, with modification on the periphery of culture and not in its internal logic.

Speaking of cultural differences between the Darfur region and the rest of Sudan is only valid in a narrow sense. Identities in the Darfur region are not Darfurian identities, rather, tribal and more locally based identities. These identities are represented in the different rebel groups, which largely parallel tribal affiliation. Should the Sudanese government have succeeded in serving the Darfur area, the Darfurians would be happy to espouse an extra Sudanese layer of identity. This pattern of multilayered identities is well observed in the Muslim World. The local is well and alive, itself multilayered, and the national-state identity is added only when it means

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something: defense against external threat, and to some extent, providing generous service. Such cultural demarcations relate to Islam itself as it forms the base of identity, along with local conditions that form the conduits through which Islamically-imbued social practices flow. Therefore, and unlike southern Sudan, cultural distinctiveness of the Darfur region is part of the rural-urban divide. While it could not be considered as a standalone contributing factor to cession demands, with state failure such diffused cultural distinctiveness gets unexpected salience.

Grievance Mobilization:

The aforementioned discussion should have made clear that grievances are based mainly on the failure of the state to deliver. The exploration of oil should have heightened the sense of deprivation, and the peace deal with the south prompted the thinking of independence or semi-independence. More importantly, grievances in the Darfurian case did not precede conflict; rather they mainly developed as a result of challenging the state. Ironically, from a pure nation-state perspective, the Darfunian rebels could be considered terrorists—armed groups challenging a sovereign nation.

As mentioned before, state repression galvanizes the identity of dissenting/alienated groups and provides them with legitimate complains, regardless of the initial source of grievance. That is especially true because resistance forces are largely informal organizations. The big stick of the state is bound to inflict harm on civilians, including those who do not have significant role in the rebellion.

Grievance in such situations is a free-floating one. Indeed, choitic conflict was registered internally. For example, desperation over food and water led to inter-Arab conflict between the Terjem and the Reizegat Arab tribes, although they had friendly relations before. The mercenary attacks by Arab nomad Janjaweed inflicted all those living in the area since 2003.[8]

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[8] Voice of America, Noel King, Kass, Darfur, Sudan 26 February 2007.

The Kurds of Mesopotamia

The Kurds represent quite a unique case in minority affairs because of their large numbers and because they stretch across four countries: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. It said that the Kurds are the largest minority without a state. While the Kurds in those four countries share a common Turkestan dream, their predicament is largely connected to the specific country in which they have lived since the rise of the modern state. Some Kurdish national aspiration showed up earlier in history; however, for the most part, it was modernity that upset older societal brought their situation to a brink point.

Structural Conduciveness

The number of Kurds ranges from 25 to 40 millions. The demographic weight of the Kurds is significant. The low limit of this number (25 millions) exceeds the population size of each of Syria and Iraq; the upper limit comes close to the population size of each of Iran and Turkey. It is estimated that 46% of Kurds live in Turkey, 31% in Iran, 18% Iraq, and 5% in Armenia and Syria. In three of these countries, the Kurds form a sizable minority. Relative to the population size of the country, Iraq comes first as the 3.4 million Kurds there form around 20-23% of the whole population; the 12 million in Turkey form 18-21% of the total population, and the 6 million of Iran represent 11% of the total population.

Although the Kurds of today live in four adjacent countries, the areas that occupy are contiguous, and there are dispersed areas of very high Kurdish concentration. Therefore, one basis of forming a state with formal boundaries is possible. However, it should be noted that much of this area is mountainous, and a plain surrounding area would be crucial for a more viable state. The southern plains adjacent to a proposed Kurdistan have less than 20% of Kurdish population; only in Turkey, there are plains in which there is a large percentage of Kurds. Water should be added to the equation where the two large rivers flow next to their high concentration region but not through it, except in one section of Turkey. However, smaller branches do flow through their highly concentrated area. Building damps on those feeding branched could conceivably threaten water supply of Iraq in particular. Furthermore, the Kurdish areas lie on much of oil reserves of northern Iraq, with Kirkuk, that has Turkmen and Arab population, becoming a disputed city between aspiring Kurds and others.

Since the 1991, the Kurdish area of Iraq enjoyed the de facto independence in local affairs, and significant institutional building efforts took place. From media to

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education to political party-building activities, twelve years made the Iraqi Kurdistan more ready to independence, a process which accelerated after the 2003 intervention and finishing the old Iraqi state. However, the Kurds of Iraq are stuck with traditional charismatic leadership, Barazani, that commands larger influence than the more secular Talibani. The message of Talibani suffers the liability of secular ideologies in the area, having little resonance with the larger Muslim population. Furthermore, considerable political corruption exists, and the ongoing signing of oil deals is likely to push Kurdistan to a highly oligarchic political formation, Russian style, without Russian high levels of human capital.

Geopolitics

It is said that those who rise on geopolitics fall by geopolitics. Up to the 1991 invasion of Iraq, the geopolitical odds were stacked against an imagined Kurdistan. Fragmented among four countries, the formation of Kurdistan would amputate important parts of Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. The Kurdish area in Turkey is huge, and no modern state would give up such chunk of land. The areas in Iraq are also of high strategic importance as they form the border areas with Turkey and important trade routes. Also, the Kurdish areas of Iraq have significant numbers of Turkmen and Arabs, the latter of which increased in numbers as they were ordered to resettle there by the old Iraqi dictatorial regime.

These are now facts on the ground. A Kurdistan would form a buffer zone between Iraq and Iran, but also it could function as a double agent playing one again another. Turkey's aspiration to join the European Union comes in favor of Kurds. As Turkey is pressured to watch for the human rights of Kurds, it undermines its own existence as a nation-state.

Oil being the major source of an independent Kurdistan is likely to make it a highly dependent state. The oil industry is capital intensive, which Kurds cannot locally generate. Furthermore, the profits of oil cannot be captured in the short run, deepening its economic dependence.

What is distinctive about the Kurdish case is its strong hold on means of violence. The Turkish army would not be able to be more successful with the KPP than the coalition with the Taliban. The *peshmergas* of Iraq proved effective and filled-in the vacuum since US 2003 intervention. The uniqueness of the Kurdish case lies exactly here: having significant portions of their land under the control of two highly

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nationalistic states, Turkey and Iran. Both of these states are important regional players who would appose any territorial compromise. On the other hand, not any of would be able to able to finish the terror tactics of Kurdish paramilitary groups. But the sabotage of guerrillas, in itself, does not produce a viable state. Finally, it should be pointed that some of the land that Kurds dreams of may be also part of Armenian historic claims.

Cultural Distinctiveness

The Kurds lived for centuries in their historic land. The most relevant to their situation today is the autonomous principalities in which they lived under the Ottomans. It is ironic that the Kurds fared well in the millet Ottoman system under a prominent sultan, and suffered badly under a democratic system of a secular leader. Kurdistan fell out of the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement, depriving them from a promised state. Within millet system, Kurds, as other minorities, were able to maintain their culture within the larger Islamic pool.

We can speak of Kurds as an ethnic group, where the elements of language, land, and mythical descent are deeply present. However, maintenance of the Kurdish culture completely occurred within the context of Islamic civilization. Furthermore, the Kurds were major contributors as they were subcontracted the leadership of the heart of the Muslim world in one of its more crucial epochs of external threats. Thus, while Kurds satisfy the definition of an ethnic group, it is an ethnic group that had identical goals of the larger area. Historic Kurd leaders have preserved the Quranic Arabic base of Arabs. Clearly, it was modernization that disrupted the Kurdish autonomous lifestyle. Urbanization also conditioned them to become a modern pseudo-ethnic group.

Kurds form two main linguistic groups. The language of the Kurmanji/Sorani group is spoken by 3/4th of the Kurds; the Dimili-Gurani is the second major group, in addition to many smaller formations of dialects. Part of Kurds use the Arabic script, and Arabic loan words retain their original spelling, though are often pronounced quite differently in Kurdish. In Turkey Kurdish is written with the Latin alphabet, and in parts of the former Soviet Union it is written with the Cyrillic alphabet[9].

Ironically, Kurds who were least culturally deprived in Iraq (leaving Syrian Kurds aside) are the most emboldened now. In contrast, Kurds in Turkey were culturally

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[9] http://www.omniglot.com/writing/kurdish.htm

persecuted, until the AKP party loosened restrictions as part of their policy of engagement. Interestingly, Kurds are main supporters of the AK party as it stands in sharp contrast to older regimes of secular nationalists.

Grievance Mobilization

As mentioned before, the problematic of the Kurds started with the creation of the modern states in the Middle East after WWII. It is then when the idea of the nation-state supplanted the pan-Islamic ties since the Ottomans and back to the beginning of Islam. Modern Turkey formed a patriarchal nationalistic state that has no room for ethnic minorities and expressions. Turkey's adoption to European style nationalism was also paralleled by Kurdish groups adopting revolutionary Marxism. The Kurdistan labor party (PKK) espoused violence to counter Turkish hegemony. According to Turkish state statistics, since 1984 as many as 4,302 civil servants, 5,018 soldiers, 4,400 civilians, and 23,279 PKK members were killed. During the conflict, the government of Turkey vacated 4,000 villages, and one million people were relocated. Kurds rebel groups get unwavering moral support from Kurds, although they might not agree with their tactics.

Conclusion

Recent years have witnessed the rise of ethnic sensibilities and the calls for recovering indigenous cultures, and minority demands have become a staple in today's politics. Such demands went hand-in-hand with the erosion of the sanctity of the modern nation-state. The state once conceptualized as the mark of progress and rationality became the nexus at which social problems collate and compound. The disappointments of modernity marked all social institutions, including polity. Minorities within the nation-states were the first to carry the negative unintended consequences of modern political structures. States with ample resources were able, more or less, to absorb the demands of minorities. Failed, and half-failed, states that either have meager resources to co-opt public support or could not develop institutions that can adequately replace premodern ones suffered badly. The rise of Muslim minority demands in Muslim countries is to be understood in this context. Moreover, the polity in Muslim majority countries suffers from the lack of legitimacy. What makes the case of Muslim majority countries unique is not just the absence of legitimacy in the legal sense, but the lack of socio-cultural legitimacy. The majorities in these countries are alienated from their governments and seek major social change; the minorities are asking to be disowned.

The three cases that were discussed show that the core problem that motivates Muslim minorities is their rejection of the new national framework that post-colonial states espoused. As those Muslim majority states moved from an Islamically imbued social contract to a nationalistic one, minorities felt that they are thrown out of the national equation. Two of the above cases, the Kurds and the Amazigh, reject the Arabist framework of the state for a simple reason—they are not Arab. The secular *Arab-minus-Islam* framework did not resonate with all of the constituent groups of those countries.

The states in these two cases, Iraq and Algeria, were able to develop modern institutions, but those institutions were marred by distance from the masses. Such disconnection goes beyond technical inefficiency. Those modern states and their institutions turned their backs on the cultural basis of their people. Resistance of all kinds developed, heavy-hand authoritarianism or repression became the reality of life. While the responses of the majority varied, the Islamically spirited response was dominant. Minorities on the other hand were largely led by secular leadership. In the Kurdish case, it was communist spirited, in addition to loose and not so-well-organized

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traditional patrimonial leadership. The Amazigh case was led by liberal secularist with leftist leanings. Both do not have simply an aversion to Islam, but ideological enmity. That in turn, puts them at odds with the national society as a whole, respectful of Islam even if not religiously committed, in addition to being at odds with the bankrupt state running on an immobile flat Arabist agenda. The case of the Amazigh is ironic where they gained some political currency as they were seen as a force that could counterbalance radical Islamist pressures. The threat of such groups does not lie in simply asking for ethnic demands, such as language recognition. The threat comes from being secessionist, camouflaging their ethnically-centric demands with human rights talk.

Ironically, the liberal discourse that some minorities use in coaching their demands are unacceptable in countries in which they lookup to. France, a stable state that is institutionally mature would not tolerate Amazigh like demands within its own borders. That is true for the United States too.

Moreover, such minorities gained importance as they functioned as conduits for external pressures. The case of Darfur, similar to that of the south, largely hinges on state failed incorporation. The western areas were never meaningfully incorporated to the state of Sudan with extensive and intensive[10] intuitional linkages. When inter-tribal precarious balance was upset by environmental factors, conflict spilled over to the state.

Table 2. Cases satisfying the conditions for new political formation

Structural conduciveness	Geopolitics	Cultural distinctiveness	Mobilized grievances		Potential outcome	Corresponding Case
Y	Y	Y	Y	➔	Confederation	Kurds (Iraq)
Y	(N)	(Y)	Y	➔	Federation	Darfur
N	N	Y	Y	➔	Communal Pluralism	Amazigh

Again, this paper considers that the relative failure of the modern state, and its tampering of the social basis of legitimacy, constitutes the larger context in which minority demands arose. The outcome of minority demands depends on four major factors, structural conduciveness, geopolitics, cultural distinctiveness, and the

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[10] See Michael Man for the definition of extensive and intensive

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mobilization of grievances. The absolute size of the minority group, its geographical concentration, and the resourcefulness of the area in which minority members live constitute one determinant of the potential outcome. A second factor is the extent to which the area enjoys a geopolitical advantageous position through which it can manage regional powers and marshal international pressure. Cultural distinctiveness makes minority members identifiable and facilitates for ethnic entrepreneurs the construction of a new identity. Grievance mobilization becomes then possible, and violence by state forces, typically weak and lack discipline, heightens grievances to a near breaking point.