

**Primordial Identities, Bounded Territories, and Contemporary Violence?:  
American Geopolitical Perspectives on the Middle East's Cultural Landscapes**

By

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## Abstract

American perspectives on the Middle East often contend that the region's nation-states are comprised of clearly demarcated ethnic and religious groups whose identities remain static over time. Cultural features of the region are seen to be as durable as its physical features. These perspectives further maintain that when nation-state boundaries are incongruent with the boundaries of ethno-sectarian groups, civil unrest or violent conflict is inevitable. These assumptions are inaccurate because they employ outmoded colonial and Wilsonian views on social organization and can essentialize and/or depoliticize conflict. However, representations based on the assumptions of clearly bounded and static ethno-sectarian groups carry the advantages of making cultural landscapes legible, and thus amenable to geopolitical management. The goal of this project is to understand how ethno-sectarian territorial assumptions are employed in contemporary American views on the Middle East. To do this, I analyze three important sets of maps and texts which encapsulate contemporary American views on the region. The set of maps consists of easily accessible ethnographic maps of the Middle East. These maps are drafted, published, and made available by U.S.-based cartographers, journalists, government agencies, media outlets, and universities. The first set of texts focuses on the U.S. military's Iraq Troop Surge and are made up of American media coverage along with government, military, and think tank documents. The second set of texts focuses on the Arab Spring and are comprised of American media coverage, think tank reports, and academic commentary. My findings show that in most of these materials, it is assumed that the ethno-sectarian characteristics of the region can be depicted accurately, objectively, and completely in cartographic and textual representations. I conclude by asserting that problematic ethno-sectarian depictions are reinforced by the writing of prominent American foreign policy intellectuals. These depictions are important because they play roles in framing American geopolitical strategy and action in the region.

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## 1) Introduction

### 1.1) Color-coded Ethnographic Maps

Robert Kaplan, the popular and influential American public intellectual, has built a career on resurrecting dead geographical ideas that have long been discredited in academic geography. His writing has been critiqued for using environmentally deterministic, classic geopolitical, and racially informed frameworks in order to make a case for why the United States should stay on top of the global political and economic orders (Dalby, 1996; Morissey, 2009a). However, Kaplan's *Foreign Policy* magazine article, "The Ruins of Empire in the Middle East", is not nearly as controversial as some of his other writing.<sup>1</sup> His primary argument is that the events of the Arab Spring, the fall of authoritarian governments, and the rise of ISIS can be attributed to a rapidly changing political order in which the old rules and the old nation-state boundaries created and enforced by the Ottoman, British, French, and American empires no longer apply. To make his argument, Kaplan divides nation-states of the Middle East into two categories: historical states and artificial states. He identifies Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt as examples of historical states in which the Arab Spring protests were about who rules and what kind of government should exist. In these places, national identities predate the colonial era and trump all other modes of being. Thus, there were no questions regarding which ethnic and religious identities constitute these states.

Kaplan's artificial states, such as Syria, Libya, and Iraq, are comprised of territorial patchworks of ethno-sectarian identities. He contends that during the Ottoman era, ethnic and religious groups were protected from each other by a strong imperial government. After present day nation-state boundaries were drawn following World War I, European colonial

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<sup>1</sup> Kaplan, Robert, "The Ruins of Empire in the Middle East", *Foreign Policy*, 25 May 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/05/25/ruins-of-empire-in-the-middle-east-syria-iraq-islamic-state-iran/>.

and mandate administrations played a similar role. During the American-dominated post-colonial era, authoritarian rulers were responsible for preventing internecine conflict. Kaplan concludes by arguing that as authoritarian rulers have been deposed, there has been no central authority to keep ethno-sectarian differences in check. In his artificial states, ethno-sectarian fuelled conflict is an inherent structural issue.

Kaplan's assertion that cultural differences are an inherent part of the Middle Eastern landscape is a perspective echoed by other American observers of the region. Their views run the political spectrum from conservative to more mainstream. Victor Davis Hanson, a neoconservative American military historian writes, "[t]ribalism, oil, and Islamic fundamentalism are a bad mix that leaves Americans sick and tired of the Middle East — both when they get in it and when they try to stay out of it."<sup>2</sup> The journalist and geopolitical author Tim Marshall writes, "After the First World War, there were fewer borders in the wider Middle East than currently exist, and those that did exist were usually determined by [physical] geography alone. The spaces within them were loosely subdivided and governed according to [physical] geography, ethnicity and religion, but there was no attempt to create nation-states" (2015: 123). In September of 2015, Lieutenant General Vincent Stewart, the head of the U.S. military's Defense Intelligence Agency, made the prediction that Iraq and Syria may fail to survive as states in the future due to intercommunal war and sectarian tensions.<sup>3</sup> The prominent American political scientist, Vali Nasr writes that the Shia-Sunni conflict is a struggle of theologies and religious histories. At the same time, it can be seen as a

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<sup>2</sup> Hanson, Victor Davis, "We Give Up: Americans are Sick and Tired of the Middle East", *National Review*, 8 March 2012, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/292917/we-give-victor-davis-hanson>.

<sup>3</sup> "Intelligence Chief: Iraq and Syria May Not Survive as States", *NBC News*, 11 September 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/intelligence-chief-iraq-syria-may-not-survive-states-n425251>.

component of current Middle Eastern ethnic, religious, and tribal wars. Due to its very real contemporary implications, it is much more than simply a "hoary religious dispute" (Nasr, 2006: 21).

Belgian-Egyptian journalist Khaled Diab is one of the few who call these common perspectives on the Middle East's cultural landscapes into question:

The disintegration of Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Libya - and the increasing likelihood of the redrawing of their maps once the dust settles - are widely regarded by the West and the Arab world as a symptom of tribalism and sectarianism that the imperial powers were unable to contain through the "artificial borders" they imposed.... While it is true that many of the conflicts in the region have taken on a tribal, sectarian, or even religious dimensions - or a combination of the three - they did not start out that way. The idea that centuries-old, Sunni-Shia animosities are behind the violence in, say, Syria or Yemen, are simply self-serving myths and half-truths.... Yet, the media and politicians continue to fixate on this conviction, echoing the late Egyptian diplomat Tahseen Bashir's infamous quip that: "Egypt is the only nation-state in the Arab world. The rest are just tribes with flags."<sup>4</sup>

Diab's statement aligns with critiques of other high-profile events of the post-Cold War era such as the Rwanda genocide, the Darfur conflict, and the Balkans war. These conflicts continue to be explained using racial, ethnic, tribal, linguistic, or religious terms in American foreign policy, military, and media discourses. Such understandings of ethno-sectarian identities and related conflict share ideological affinities with how the formerly colonized world was represented in colonial-era social science research. In turn these representations formed the conceptual basis of governance systems in most colonial territories. These systems have been given a number of terms by scholars, including 'define and rule' and 'ethnographic

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<sup>4</sup> Diab, Khaled, "Tribalism and sectarianism afflict Western societies too: So why do they seem to be tearing the Middle East apart?", *Al Jazeera*, 14 September 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/09/west-hidden-tribalism-150909140315465.html>.

See also:

Andoni, Lamis, "The Arab World is at war with itself: An eventual break-up of the Arab world into sectarian splinters is a self-fulfilling prophesy.", *Al-Jazeera*, 26 November 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/11/arab-world-war-151125115525462.html>.

states'. Terms like these suggest that colonial perspectives on cultural landscapes were concerned with shoehorning fluid categories into rigid and timeless identities and then fixing them to clearly demarcated territories. One of the primary issues with ethno-sectarian perspectives is that when conflict does occur, it enables outside observers of the region to place the cause of conflict at the local scale while downplaying or ignoring exogenous factors.

The Beirut-based British journalist Robert Fisk argues that ethnographic maps are an essential means of visualizing the ethno-sectarian landscape of the Middle East, writing:

Why are we trying to divide up the peoples of the Middle East? Why are we trying to chop them up, make them different, remind them - constantly, insidiously, viciously, cruelly -- of their divisions, of their suspicions, of their capacity for mutual hatred?.....Take the maps. Am I the only one sickened by our journalistic propensity to publish sectarian maps of the Middle East? We are all familiar with the color-coded map of Iraq. Shiites at the bottom....., Sunnis in their middle "triangle" - actually, it's more like an octagon.....- and the Kurds in the north....Or the map of Lebanon..... Shiites at the bottom, Druze farther north, Sunnis in Sidon and on the coastal strip south of Beirut, Shiites in the southern suburbs of the capital, Sunnis and Christians in the city, Christian Maronites farther north, Sunnis in Tripoli, more Shiites to the east. How we love these maps. Hatred made easy.

.....Our guilt in this sectarian game is obvious. We want to divide the "other," "them," our potential enemies, from one another, while we civilized Westerners with our multicultural values are unassailable. I could draw you a sectarian map of Birmingham marked "Muslim" and "non-Muslim" but no newspaper would print it. I could draw an extremely accurate ethnic map of Washington, complete with front-line streets between "black" and "white" communities but The Washington Post would never publish it.

.....I, too, am guilty of playing these little sectarian games in the Middle East. I ask a Lebanese where he or she comes from, not to remember the mountains or rivers near their home but to code them into my map. But I easily come unstuck. The man who tells me he comes from the Lebanese south (Shiite) turns out to live in the southern Druze town of Hasbaya. The woman who tells me she's from Jbeil (Christian) turns out to be from the town's Shiite minority. Oh, if only these pesky minorities would go and live in the right bit of our imperial, sectarian maps.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Fisk, Robert, "The West's Racial Maps Promote Civil War", *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 6 March 2007, <http://www.seattlepi.com/local/opinion/article/The-West-s-racial-maps-promote-civil-war-1230282.php>.

Fisk observes that these "color-coded" ethno-sectarian maps of the Middle East frequently find their way into Western publications and are used as devices to explain events in region. Using Iraq and Lebanon as examples, he writes that ethnographic maps of these two states give the impression that they are composed of discrete ethno-religious communities inhabiting colorful, mosaic tile-like territories. The stark cultural boundaries illustrated by these maps are often used to explain intercommunal violence. He relays his own experience to demonstrate how difficult it is to fix individuals claiming particular identities to the well-defined cultural homelands represented by Western ethnographic maps. The political geographers Toal and Dahlmann (2011) make similar observations in the cartographic representation of Bosnia during conflict there in the early 1990s. They write that the conventions of cartographic representation were central to normalizing ethno-sectarian territorial modes of thought - especially amongst external observers of the conflict.

Fisk places his argument in the context of Western "multicultural states" by writing that the assumptions conveyed by ethno-sectarian maps don't apply to Western states. From Fisk's perspective, distance from the West is equated to cultural differences - former colonial territories are seen as unable to transcend their mosaics of clearly bounded cultural identities. Ascribing characteristics to places in this manner is central to imperial worldviews (McClintock, 1995). Writing from Franz Fanon's perspective on colonialism and race, Fuss writes:

Colonialism works in part by policing the boundaries of cultural intelligibility .....Space operates as one of the chief signifiers of racial difference here: under colonial rule, freedom of movement (psychical and social) becomes a white prerogative. Forced to occupy.....the static ontological space of the timeless "primitive", the black man is disenfranchised of his very subjectivity (1999: 296).

From this perspective, colonial subjects are denied the power to define their own subjectivities. The colonial subject is fixed in the mental realm by discourses that limit how he

or she performs their identity. The colonial subject is also fixed in physical space by being fixed to particular territories.

The maps Fisk describe go beyond simply representing aggregations of cultural data. They work as images and relay a particular way of understanding cultural identities and related conflict in so-called peripheral parts of the globe. The historian Ussama Makdisi (2001) argues that the dominant paradigm in explaining ethno-sectarian conflict understands ethnic and confessional subjectivities to be persistent and unchanging. He contends that ethno-sectarian strife is seen to be an affliction affecting lesser-developed parts of the world or peripheral areas of Europe. Such simple paradigms are reinforced by discourses accompanying or justifying ethno-sectarian violence - regardless of historical context. The sociologist Rogers Brubaker (1998: 273) understands this paradigm to be "[a] gloom and doom perspective [which] sees Eastern Europe - and many other world regions as a seething cauldron of ethnic....conflict - on the verge of boiling over into violence." Furthermore, the "Balkanization" of these regions is presented as natural and logical outgrowths of ethno-sectarian difference (Painter, 2010).

I do not seek to discount cultural identities as simply leftovers from a bygone colonial era that could be shed if their members could simply see their constructed nature. Similarly, I do not seek to discount violence that has taken on ethno-sectarian dimensions. Violence, no matter its causes, is not to be dismissed. Often, ethno-sectarian identities are tied to administrative systems and political economies that are the only way for members of these groups to participate in local and national politics. There are very serious consequences for those attempting to gain greater political recognition or depoliticize cultural identities altogether (cf. Middleton, 2013a; 2013b) Importantly, in places where ethno-sectarian identities are relevant to daily lives, conflict is not pre-determined or inevitable. While many

parts of the Middle East are represented as conflict-ridden or violence prone, various ethno-sectarian identities exist side-by-side (or mixed together) in political arrangements in which the threat of real or imagined violence plays no role (Agnew and Muscara, 2012).

The Middle East is prominent in American geopolitical worldviews. Since the end of the Cold War, highly publicized military engagements have served to maintain the region's profile in the United States. It is well-understood by critical scholars that American perspectives on the region often lack nuance and rely upon conventional geopolitical tropes in order to rationalize military intervention and serve as a basis for painting the inhabitants of the region in a less-than-flattering manner (Gregory, 2004). In this context, ethno-sectarian narratives and their related territorial assumptions play a part in making the region legible to American observers. Thus, the goal of this dissertation is to examine how ethno-sectarian narratives inform contemporary American geopolitical views on the Middle East. I do this by examining three sets of texts that express important U.S.-based understandings of the region.

The first set of texts consists of American-authored and published ethnographic maps of the Middle East. My analysis of these maps is consistent with the approaches of critical cartographers - these scholars understand that maps can read as texts and can subsequently be examined using methods of discourse analysis. The second set of texts are taken from U.S. media, government, military, and think tank perspectives on the Iraq Troop Surge. The third and final set of texts are drawn from U.S. media coverage, think tank, and academic perspectives on the Arab Spring uprisings with a focus on Libya and Syria.

The set of ethnographic maps I examine are meaningful because they are easily accessible and a number of them represent some of the most detailed American-authored ethnographic maps of the region in existence. A small number of these maps take ethnographic mapping one step further by attempting to redraw nation-state boundaries in the

Middle East along the lines of ethno-sectarian group boundaries with the goal of minimizing or reducing conflict. Maps attempting to redraw nation-state boundaries in the Middle East have appeared in widely read American publications since 2006. These maps give the impression that ethno-sectarian groups in the Middle East inhabit clearly bounded territories that can be represented objectively and accurately using modes of cartographic visualization.

Texts focusing on Iraq during the time of Troop Surge are consequential because American pacification efforts were built upon the understanding that territory could be militarily secured along ethno-sectarian lines. The disconcerting violence occurring in Iraq in the years leading up to the surge and the seeming inability of the U.S. military to stop this violence brought a great deal of attention to the shift in military tactics and strategy at the beginning of 2007. Furthermore, The Iraq Troop Surge has clear beginning and ending dates, allowing for systematic analysis.

Texts focusing on the Arab Spring uprisings are important because two of the most prominent uprisings (in Libya and Syria) quickly devolved into armed conflict. The United States was involved in the NATO military operation carried out in Libya, which was legalized under the UN's Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine. As the conflict in Syria became more widespread, there were discussions of a similar military operation involving the United States. While such events did not come to pass during the first two years of the Syrian civil war, both conflicts have garnered a great of attention in the U.S. and have routinely been described as either "tribal" or "ethno-sectarian" in nature. The Arab Spring has clear start dates and its long duration allows for the selection of representative samples of media coverage which in turn makes systematic analyses possible.

My analytical framework for examining these three sets of texts has been drawn from theoretical and conceptual research by scholars working in cartography, political geography,

history, anthropology, political science, and sociology. This framework is laid out in this chapter and Chapters 2 and 3. My framework shows that conceptions of territory in which non-dynamic ethno-sectarian groups inhabit clearly inhabited "homelands" and are prone to violence have their source in outmoded colonial/Wilsonian understandings of social organization. I then use a methodology developed from Foucauldian discourse analysis and framing analysis to identify common ethno-sectarian tropes or "frames" present in the three sets of texts.

All of the ethnographic maps (and their related texts) give the impression that ethno-sectarian groups can be fixed on maps using colorful, mosaic-like tiles and text labels. Most of these maps are unclear about their data sources. In the cases where data sources are disclosed, it is unclear how textual ethnographic data is converted to territorial and spatial data necessary for cartographic representation. None of these maps hold up to prescriptive principals of cartographic design and they show little concern for aspects of reproducibility or ease of use. This lack of adherence to design principles demonstrates that these maps have been constructed with preconceived ethno-sectarian framings and work as a visual demonstration of territorial assumptions present in American understandings of the Middle East's cultural landscapes.

In my study of the Iraq Troop Surge, I employ two coding schemas to examine *New York Times* and *Washington Post* coverage of this episode. The first schema focuses on the ways in which politics behind U.S. military tactics and strategy are framed. The second schema focuses on ethno-sectarian tropes. The purpose of using two coding schemas focusing on two different themes demonstrates that ethno-sectarian narratives of Iraq are embedded in larger discourses on the country. I then compare these ethno-sectarian framings to U.S. government,

military, and think tank understandings of Iraq circa 2007. These comparisons show that media framings of Iraq's cultural landscape align with more formal and practical discourses.

Like my study of the Iraq Troop Surge, my study of the Arab Spring utilizes two coding schemas to examine how the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* cover these events from 2011 to 2013. The first coding schema focuses on struggles for democracy. The second schema focuses on ethno-sectarian tropes. The purpose of using two coding schemas focusing on two different themes demonstrates that ethno-sectarian framings are situated in broader discourses on these events. Importantly, my examination shows that ethno-sectarian framings are only significant in the coverage on Libya and Syria, while ethno-sectarian framings play minor or insignificant roles for coverage on Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, and Yemen. I then move on to compare ethno-sectarian framings on Libya and Syria to more formal and practical discourse on these events. These comparisons show that media framings of the Libyan and Syrian cultural landscape correspond with more formal and practical discourses from the 2011 to 2013 time period.

My examination of these three sets of texts demonstrates that the ways in which ethno-sectarian framings are used are consistent with my analytical framework. The ethno-sectarian territorial framings present in the ethnographic maps (and associated materials) I examine in Chapter 4 are reflected in texts I examine in Chapters 5 and 6. I conclude by arguing that the textual representations I examine are important because they align with plans that seek to remodel various portions of the Middle East along ethno-sectarian boundaries and reinforce tabloid understandings of the region put forward by prominent foreign policy intellectuals in the United States.

My focus on American cartographic and textual representations does have its limitations. It cannot state with any certainty how these discourses circulate within the United

States or within the American foreign policy establishment. It cannot make statements regarding what interests are served by the circulation of these discourses within the United States. It cannot make specific arguments regarding how causes for violence in the Middle East are explained. Nor can it say how ethno-sectarian identities are used in the region by local actors in order to gain political power or further claims and projects of irredentism. Despite these drawbacks, my approach does show that territorial understandings of ethno-sectarianism are a prominent means through which contemporary American geopolitical representations of the Middle East are structured.

In places afflicted by violence with ethno-sectarian dimensions, many scholars contend that ossified ethno-sectarian identities and territories are the end results of conflict, not the other way around. When taken as a whole, a large body of reflexive and feminist ethnographic and historical research on the Middle East can be interpreted in a manner that seriously undermines American geopolitical narratives on the region's cultural landscapes. This reflexive and feminist research indicates that American geopolitical narratives communicate a distorted view on how ethno-sectarian identities are lived and performed in the region. My findings are in line with the conclusions drawn by reflexive and feminist scholars because they clearly show that American understandings of the Middle East often rely upon problematic notions of territorialized ethno-sectarian identities.

In the disciplinary context of political geography, ethno-sectarian identities, territory, and violence are taken for granted by a surprising number of scholars. Only a limited number of political geographers adopt conceptual frameworks which allow for investigations into commonplace assumptions regarding ethno-sectarian identities. The studies which do recognize the problematic territorial assumptions related to ethno-sectarian identities (and

associated conflict) have only engaged in a limited number of ways with similar frameworks developed by historians, anthropologists, political scientists, and sociologists.

No research in political geography or critical geopolitics examines how ethno-sectarian territorial assumptions inform geopolitical discourses of entire world regions. While the majority of studies using frameworks of critical geopolitics rightly focus on textual discourse, there is surprisingly little critical geopolitics research on maps as technical works or on maps as images. In focusing on cartographic representations and territorial assumptions in geopolitical texts, I seek to demonstrate how maps and the conceptions of territory they engender in writing can frame and explain geopolitics.

Popular understandings of the Middle East's cultural landscape often reflect more formal and practical registers of geopolitics like foreign policy documents, military doctrine, and think tank papers on the region. In the case of the ethnographic maps I examine, they constitute the majority of easily accessible maps of the Middle East's ethno-sectarian groups in the United States. But it is impossible to classify them as simply popular representations. Maps can be imbued with a sense of truth that no other visual or textual discourses enjoy. While mapmakers and others who study maps understand the challenges of representing territorial and spatial phenomena cartographically, this circle is very small. Furthermore, the majority of the maps I examine were authored with the intent of informing and influencing American foreign policy makers. These maps' representations of the Middle East's cultural landscapes bleed from practical and formal realms into the popular realm - rather than the other way around. The ease of access of most of these maps via the Internet gives them much wider circulation than they would have ever seen in printed forms.

The *New York Times* and *Washington Post* representations of the Iraq Troop Surge and the Arab Spring demonstrate that the frames I identify in these popular publications often

align with more formal and practical American geopolitical discourses (including cartographic) on the Middle East's cultural landscape. Using relatively large sets of texts derived from print media has several advantages over policy papers, military documents, or social media. The first advantage is that I was able to gather text that represents 12 months of Iraq Troop Surge coverage and 24 months of Arab Spring coverage. These texts allow me to obtain a representative picture of how the *Times* and *Post* understand particular episodes in the Middle East. Foreign policy papers and military documents are often considered to contain a more realistic picture of American geopolitics that reside closer to the levers of political and military power. However, I find that scholarship which uses these types of textual sources often cherry-pick materials in order to fit theoretical and conceptual frameworks. They can say a great deal about the documents they focus on, but not much else. While this type of issue is inherent with critique, the ability to leverage large(r) sets of texts to obtain a more representative picture of discourses is an advantage when working with print media.

The second is that print media continues to retain a degree of permanence when compared to forms of social media. In the case of the Iraq Troop Surge, the social and electronic media landscape has changed drastically since 2007. Constructing research methods for a media landscape that no longer exists and data that may no longer be available could prove to be incredibly difficult. On the other hand, the events of the Arab Spring were relayed primarily through social media. Sampling and systematically analyzing the massive amount of social media data generated by the Arab Spring would be challenging to say the least. One of the primary issues when conducting research with social media is that data is generated at the scale of quantitative data, but the methods used to examine them must be qualitative. Print media's consistent levels of coverage and uniform structure allows for the generation of sets of texts that are both representative and manageable.

The final advantage when working with print media is that it allows for the identification of themes which are used consistently (or inconsistently) across relatively long time-spans. Social media discourses are characterized by their ephemeral nature. Themes often experience intense usage over extremely short timespans - before their use drops off precipitously. Related to this, how are social media archived? What happens to social media data once a particular platform falls out of favor or goes defunct? Mainstream print media has well-established archival infrastructure in the form of physical copies, microfilm, and electronic databases. This is not to say that social media is not an appropriate medium for research. But given the challenges associated with social media at this time, print media remains a viable medium for academic analysis.

In juxtaposing print media with more formal and practical forms of American geopolitical discourse like government and military documents on the Middle East, I seek to better understand how colonial era conceptions of cultural landscapes and Wilsonian ideals of the international order influence present day geopolitical perspectives on ethnic and religious categories. The cultural anthropologist Peter Pels (1997) maintains that the comparison of discourses from disparate times and places can demonstrate how colonial worldviews continue to form the basis of contemporary understandings of social phenomena. He writes:

To understand a discourse, one must step back and compare tropes and topoi derived from disparate times and places.....It brings together cultural stereotypes from different contexts - political domination, popular prejudice, academic scholarship - to inquire whether and to what extent they are founded on a similar history of colonial violence.....the power of discourse analysis is precisely to show the extraordinary redundancies produced by colonial commonplaces across the lines that divide political, economic, religious, and cultural contexts and the disciplines that study them....They allow one to trace continuities between past colonial and today's professional ethnography, or between 19th century reinventions of ethnicity and their present day deployment (Pels, 1997: 168-169).

In the case of geopolitical discourse, media perspectives illuminate how formal and practical discourses of geopolitics use and deploy cultural stereotypes. Media perspectives form part of the broader cultural milieu through which geopolitical worldviews are formed - even if research that attempts to demonstrate how media perspectives influence the ways in which foreign policy is formulated and implemented is in short supply. Sharp (2011) argues that the media are central in shaping the ways in which individuals perceive the world around them. This is because of the unrivaled power that media outlets have in creating narratives of global events. These "representational schemas" provide the language through which understandings of the world are communicated. They provide a means to frame global events and relate these the reader's own life - serving to make distant events relevant (Sharp, 2011: 298). Ó Tuathail (2004: 80) takes a similar perspective, describing the modern "geopolitical condition" as a "technological structure of public communication and popular culture reception within which the dramas of international affairs unfold". Put another way, considering popular geopolitical discourses to be less powerful or less important than formal and practical registers serves to eliminate significant and relevant portions of geopolitical discourse from analysis.

Edward Said (1993: xxv) writes, "the idea of overseas rule - jumping beyond territory to very distant lands...-has a lot to do with projections, whether in fiction, geography, or art". Said suggests that colonial rule is based upon projecting pre-conceived images upon distant colonized territories. These projections can say much more about the colonizer than the colonized. It is difficult to know whether or not Said was speaking directly about map projections in a cartographic sense. But in the case of American ethno-sectarian narratives on the Middle East, literal map projections are central to extending American understandings of identity, territory, and violence to the landscapes of the region.

Ethno-sectarian narratives have material effects. As my discussion of US counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine in the next section shows, ethno-sectarian group boundaries are used as part of military tactics and strategy to secure territory. COIN seeks to define sets of hard and fast rules to be deployed on battlefields across the Middle East (and beyond).<sup>6</sup> Proponents of US counterinsurgency argue that it draws upon a broad range of social science scholarship, while many critical scholars see no distinction between COIN and colonial-era military pacification operations. COIN is only a small (but highly visible) part of overall American military policy used across the Middle East. The use of ethno-sectarian categories as the conceptual basis of COIN demonstrates that ethno-sectarian narratives and their related territorial assumptions play a key role in contemporary American geopolitical understandings of the region.

## 1.2) Conflict Ethnographies

It is known that by the early 2000s, the United States military remained wary of counterinsurgency after its experiences in Vietnam. Training, battlefield methods, and equipment continued to be designed around a potential World War III, where it was

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<sup>6</sup> The U.S. military's Africa Command (AFRICOM) deploys COIN tactics across its Area of Responsibility (AOR). Berard writes, "AFRICOM deploys its own special units of social scientists — Socio-Cultural Research and Advisory Teams, or SCRAT. Embedded with military units, these groups of social scientists conduct field research meant to aid AFRICOM's core mission, most notably acting as an early warning system for large-scale conflict.....AFRICOM has stated that this research, often village ethnographies, is going into "a database of knowledge on East Africa," presumably for use if the United States decides to send troops into the region. We don't know much else; for now, the SCRATs seem to be working in the mode AFRICOM prefers — quietly."

Berard, Peter, "Occupation with a Human Face", *Jacobin*, 9 December 2015, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/12/counterinsurgency-human-terrain-system-montgomery-mcfate-petraeus/>.

anticipated that NATO tank and infantry units would battle Warsaw pact states in Central and Eastern Europe with the goal of containing the Soviet Union. When the U.S. did become involved in smaller scale conflicts after the end of the Cold War, they were dismissed as simply "military operations other than war". During this time, U.S. military counterinsurgency operations were seen as a peculiar interest of Special Forces units.

In the latter half of 2003, it was becoming clear that Cold War military stances were ill-suited to the Iraq and Afghan wars (which were morphing into long-term occupations).<sup>7</sup> At this time, strategists began to develop new theories and doctrines of counterinsurgency that could be implemented by regular Army and Marine units (Cornish, 2009). To do this, strategists borrowed heavily from anti-guerilla campaigns of the late colonial era and the Vietnam war (Crider, 2009).

Evidence of this shift in military stances can be seen by September 2003. The Pentagon held a public screening of *The Battle of Algiers*.<sup>8</sup> The 1965 film has been praised for its realistic depictions of the French Army's methods used against Algerian insurgents during the late 1950s. Pentagon officials hoped to gain insight into fighting insurgencies due to the parallels that seemed to exist between colonial Algiers and Baghdad after six months of American occupation. These parallels can be attributed to military tactics and strategies that sought to physically segregate population groups in order to pacify and secure each city section-by-section (Graham, 2006; Weitzman, 2007; Gray and Wylly, 2007).

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<sup>7</sup> Hayden, Tom, "Kilcullen's Long War: An influential Pentagon strategist advocates a fifty-year counterinsurgency campaign", *The Nation*, 14 October 2009, <http://www.thenation.com/article/kilcullens-long-war/>.

<sup>8</sup> Kaufman, Michael T., "The World: Film Studies; What Does the Pentagon See in 'Battle of Algiers'?", *The New York Times*, 7 September 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/07/weekinreview/the-world-film-studies-what-does-the-pentagon-see-in-battle-of-algiers.html>.

In Algiers, anti-colonial insurgents blended in with the larger populace to plant improvised bombs in order to maximize terror amongst European quarters of the city. At the same time, pro-colonial groups adopted similar tactics for Muslim quarters of the city. Martial law was declared and French paratrooper units (the equivalent of US Special Forces at the time) were charged with establishing cordons around Muslim quarters with the goal of capturing insurgents as they moved through the city. The disruption caused to Algiers during this time was due to violent acts committed by both sides and also due to the extreme restrictions placed upon the movement of the city's inhabitants. Starting in 2003, and almost fully realized by 2006, Baghdad saw a *de facto* partition of the city's neighborhoods amongst Sunni and Shia groups due to so-called sectarian violence. The American military hardened these divisions with a series concrete of blast walls across the city. As in Algiers, military checkpoints were established with the goal of capturing insurgents, while life for Baghdad's inhabitants became increasingly dangerous and circumscribed.<sup>9</sup>

Deciding who likely belongs in which quarter or neighborhood of each city and whether or not individuals had the potential to be insurgents became incredibly difficult in both cases. Thus, ways of placing individuals into groups became necessary (Khalili, 2010). In the case of Algiers, a settler/indigenous divide that already existed from colonial urban segregation practices became more rigidly enforced. When this happened, women (who were not subject to checkpoint searches) were recruited to do the primary work of the insurgency. Divisions between Sunni and Shia individuals and groups were much less clear in Baghdad, especially since the city's different population groups were largely mixed prior to the American occupation (Cornish, 2009; Kilcullen, 2009)

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<sup>9</sup> Rosen, Nir, Interview with Amy Goodman, *Democracy Now!*, 1 April 2008, [http://www.democracynow.org/2008/4/1/iraq\\_has\\_become\\_somaliaa\\_collection\\_of](http://www.democracynow.org/2008/4/1/iraq_has_become_somaliaa_collection_of).

Difficulties in parsing Baghdad's population was one factor in the development of ethnographic guidelines in the U.S. Army and Marines Counterinsurgency Field Manual, which was first published in 2006 (and updated in 2014.)<sup>10</sup> It is understood that observed traits, behaviors, customs, and modes of social organization would allow individuals to be slotted into single ethno-sectarian groups. The counterinsurgency expert David Kilcullen refers to ethnographic research of this nature as "conflict ethnography". In this way, conceptual frameworks and social science knowledge have become part of the newly developed doctrine.

From Kilcullen's perspective tactical battles for territory and wars themselves can be won if social rules discovered by conflict ethnographers are put to use by occupying forces (Kilcullen, 2006a; 2007, Khalili, 2014). Counterinsurgency warfare has been called 'graduate level' and 'smart' due to the research that has gone into it and its goal of structuring tactics around the customs and rules of occupied populations.<sup>11</sup> Thus, in contemporary counterinsurgency doctrine, the ability to interpret cultural landscapes is seen to be as important as the ability to read physical landscapes. It is thought that by raising cultural awareness within military organizations, root causes of insurgencies can be identified. Once root causes are resolved, economic and political reconstruction projects can be implemented (Petraeus, 2010).

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<sup>10</sup> Robson, Seth, "Military to unveil new counterinsurgency field manual", *Stars and Stripes*, 28 January 2013, <http://www.stripes.com/news/military-to-unveil-new-counterinsurgency-field-manual-1.205579>.

Bacevich, Andrew "Daniel Bolger's 'Why We Lost' ", *The New York Times*, 14 November 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/16/books/review/daniel-bolgers-why-we-lost.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/16/books/review/daniel-bolgers-why-we-lost.html?_r=1).

<sup>11</sup> Petraeus, David H. "How We Won Iraq", *Foreign Policy*, 29 October 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/10/29/how-we-won-in-iraq/>.

The idea that ethnic and religious social structures can be indexed in a rule-based way and that these rules can be used to segregate, integrate, or eliminate insurgents through cordons set up along ethno-sectarian territorial lines has been roundly critiqued by social scientists. They argue that counterinsurgency tactics are based on Victorian-era ideas of social organization and are no better than colonial methods of population surveillance and control (Belcher, 2014a; Bryan and Wood, 2015; Zuriek *et al.*, 2011).

The research undertaken by this dissertation demonstrates that dated understandings of social organization and violence remain a significant part of American geopolitical imaginations in relation to the Middle East. Examining these problematic worldviews matters in part because American military tactics and strategy used in the region during the past decade has been largely built around efforts to secure, pacify, and administer territory using ethno-sectarian group structures (Gregory, 2005). Building governance structures around these conceptions of social organization is profoundly undemocratic as authority over a group is invested into male patriarchs who are given free reign over their "homelands" as long as they satisfy the demands of commanding military officers (Belcher, 2014b; Gregory, 2008; Gonzalez, 2009a; 2009b).

Once considered the showpiece program of counterinsurgency doctrine, the Human Terrain System (HTS), was quietly disbanded by the U.S. Army in September 2014.<sup>12</sup> This program, developed for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, was largely seen to be ineffective after being implemented in the field for more than a half-decade. Critics of counterinsurgency argue that the fundamental contradiction between contemporary social science research and

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<sup>12</sup> Dearing, Matthew and Jim Lee, "Research Returns From War", *Foreign Policy*, 23 July 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/07/23/research-returns-from-war/>.

military objectives was the primary cause of the program's ineffectiveness.<sup>13</sup> Proponents of counterinsurgency acknowledge the poor returns of the HTS and blame institutional and administrative issues within the program, rather than its problematic conceptual basis and end goal of pacification.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the cancellation of the HTS, counterinsurgency doctrine is here to stay. The methods and knowledge developed from it is seen as an essential means of conducting "small wars".<sup>15</sup> Determining threats and target sets is increasingly relegated to intelligence technicians who mine large datasets on group and individual behavior and analyze remotely sensed geospatial data. This type of knowledge is intended to dovetail with conflict ethnographies conducted by counterinsurgency practitioners in the field (Gonzalez, 2015a; 2015b). Counterinsurgency doctrine continues to morph in a quest to develop a set of hard and fast rules that can be adopted in any theater of battle (Porch, 2013).

Regardless of these changes, the parallels between counterinsurgency and colonial-era pacification schemes remain disconcerting (Khalili, 2011). While I am not disputing that the U.S. military's counterinsurgency warfare is "smarter" and less violent than conventional military operations, the understandable lack of reflexive and feminist ethnographic studies documenting the voices and experiences of those in conflict zones makes it very difficult to gauge how these programs affect people living in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Greater Middle East.

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<sup>13</sup> Gentile, Gian, "Counterinsurgency: The Graduate Level of War or Pure Hokum?", *E-International Relations*, 3 August 2015, <http://www.e-ir.info/2013/08/03/counterinsurgency-the-graduate-level-of-war-or-pure-hokum/>.

<sup>14</sup> Davies, Michael, "The Truth About Human Terrain Teams: An Evidence-Based Response to Gian Gentile", *E-International Relations*, 21 September 2015, <http://www.e-ir.info/2013/09/21/the-truth-about-human-terrain-teams-an-evidence-based-response-to-gian-gentile/>.

<sup>15</sup> Berard, Peter, "Occupation with a Human Face", *Jacobin*, 9 December 2015, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/12/counterinsurgency-human-terrain-system-montgomery-mcfate-petraeus/>.

Conflict ethnographers are quick to point out that they borrow conceptual frameworks and methodologies from colonial and more contemporary versions of social science. But they have somehow completely overlooked the massive body of reflexive and feminist research conducted in or on the Middle East at least since the early 1990s (cf. Abu Lughod, 1991; Al-Rasheed, 2013; Ahmed 1992; de Koenig, 2009; Ghannam, 2002; 2013; Hoffman, 2008; Mahmood, 2004). These omissions are especially striking since a good deal of recent academic and military literature on counterinsurgency seems to be researched and written by competent scholars and thinkers who genuinely believe their work is saving the lives of U.S. military personnel and keeping occupied populations out of harm's way. However, conflict ethnographers seek to compile laws, rules, and boundaries on social organization. Reflexive and feminist scholars seeks to problematize such laws, rules and, boundaries. These fundamental difference in research conceptualization, methodology, and goals indicates a fundamental incompatibility between these two types of investigation.

Ethnic and sectarian identities are important in day-to-day lives. But gender, class, urban/rural identities can often be just as or more influential in lived experiences. Often, ethnic and sectarian identities have no role in struggles to gain increased political and cultural freedoms or in efforts to exercise greater degrees of personal agency. One of the strengths that reflexive and feminist scholarship brings to the table is that it can show how lines between different identity categories are often unclear and parsing them can be extremely difficult, if not impossible. Pigeonholing entire swaths of populations across the Middle East into reductive categories, like "tribal", "Sunni/Shia", "Muslim/Christian" or "Arab/non-Arab", is not only innaccurrate, but a legacy of racist and colonial worldviews and oppressive political structures based in cultural identities.

The ethno-sectarian territorial assumptions that US COIN doctrine is built around can be understood as a means to make cultural landscapes legible, and thus amenable to intervention. The views on cultural landscapes expressed by COIN are derived from and reinforce American metageographies of the Middle East. These culturally constructed conceptual grids came to prominence in the United States during the early Cold War as the Middle East was arrayed in the global containment of communism. In the world regional framework, the Middle East is tied together using allegedly region-spanning cultural traits. Thus, inaccurate perspectives developed for one part of the region are often extended across the entire region.

### **1.3) The United States and the Middle East**

#### **1.3a) Metageographies, Imagined Geographies, and Orientalism**

Examining the creation, bounding, and description of world regions is a discussion of metageographies. This term describes culturally constructed conceptual grids of how geographies are ordered (Gregory 2009). Lewis and Wigen (1997) see two underlying principles within American metageographies that lead to erroneous assumptions regarding basic geographical principles. The first is a "jig-saw puzzle" view of the world. In this view, proper maps show sharply bounded units with no overlap and no unclaimed territory. The authors speculate that the map of American states could serve as the template for this viewpoint. This map is taught universally at the elementary school level in the United States. This simplistic perspective is never critiqued at later stages in the American education system. Thus the jigsaw puzzle serves as the analytical tool for more complex spatial patterns. The main issue is that it is rarely appropriate to use large, contiguous, colorful blocks in spatial analysis. In this perspective, mapping is simply a technical exercise in which lines are drawn around pre-existing units as they exist on the ground. Spatial patterns displayed in this

manner are understood to be stable and rote memorization of these jigsaw patterns stands in for any kind of deeper examination of spatial patterns or spatial relationships.

The second is a hierarchical version of the world which treats units of human-defined territory as if they were amenable to taxonomic classification. Thus nations of peoples fit into nation-states and nation-states fit together to make continents or world regions. This totalizing spatial framework imposes a rigid order in which the complexities of spatial phenomena are deformed to fit a set of standardized shapes that cannot accommodate them. Linguistic geography, which is often thought of as simply mapping predetermined hierarchies of language "families", "sub-families", individual languages, and dialects is much more complex than this. The simple spatial projection of evolutionary relationships is beyond the limits of cartographic representations seeking to demarcate territorial units.

Lewis and Wigen define world regions as multicountry agglomerations that are defined by important historical and cultural bonds. Regions like Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East are widely used in the popular media. These divisions are reinforced by area studies centers that were created in American universities during the Cold War. The authors state that world regions are often overgeneralized and used as all-purpose frameworks for analysis. Area studies centers compound this problem by making it difficult for scholars to conduct research on phenomena that span more than one region. Due to the nation-state being used as the base unit for world geography, world regions usually adhere to nation-state boundaries. Lewis and Wigen argue that despite these shortcomings, the world regional hierarchy is necessary in order to speak about the world. But world regions should not be treated as natural or ahistorical entities. They need to be understood as intellectual constructs which reflect cultural and historical relationships.

Like Lewis and Wigen, political geographers and other scholars recognize that world regions are constructed and are not simply lines drawn around pre-existing historical and cultural regions. These scholars argue that the creation, description, and ascription of importance to world regions depend entirely on the site of discourse production and the purposes for which the discourse is being created (Agnew, 2013a; 2013b; Hammond 2013; Sidaway, 2013). Studies of metageographies do not seek to determine “correct” regional boundaries. Instead their goal is to examine the effects these abstract categories have on how people think and act with respect to world regions (Gasper 2011).

The related concept of imagined geographies has a great deal of currency within the discipline of geography. Examinations of geographical imaginations recognize the role played by "imagination in shaping the ways that geographical information is circulated." (Cosgrove, 2008: 8). Imagined geographies overlay more material geographies and shape perception and attitudes to other peoples and places (Valentine, 1999). As in metageographies, reading places is never an innocent metaphor. Landscapes cannot be surveyed from value-free perspectives - although much geographical scholarship claims this is so. All geographical readings are "tied up in constellations of power, knowledge, and spatiality" (Gregory, 1995b: 52). Imagined geographies are situated knowledge, "with their distinctive silences, blank spaces, and distortions" (Gregory, 1994: 203). Thus struggles over ideas and images can be just as contested as material struggles over territory (Said, 1993).

Within geographical (and other) approaches to post-colonialism, Orientalism is one of the most prominent means used to understand geographical imaginations. In Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), he argues that modes of orientalist scholarship during Europe's Enlightenment era were concerned completely with textual representations of the Orient. This created rather warped views on the 'East' that didn't have much basis in reality. Gregory

(1995: 51) writes, "Orientalism, by nature, was citationary. It represented the Orient less as a place rooted in history and geography than as a chain of references embedded in the library." What Said seeks to demonstrate that the 'East' does not simply exist, waiting to be discovered and catalogued. He contends that the East was initially constructed as a place through Orientalist scholarship and assigned a particular set of attributes. The discourse of Orientalism was represented in dominant frameworks, legitimizing European hegemony. Orientalism has material effects because it served as the basis of European imperialism (Valentine, 1995). These Enlightenment era and colonial era understandings of Orient have been carried over into contemporary American representations of the Middle East, in which the region is often represented as exotic and backward (Driver, 2014). Within American military strategy, foreign policy, and media discourse, it is well understood that Orientalist tropes inform these understandings of the region (Little, 2008; Morrissey, 2016). The development of a uniquely American version of Orientalism can be traced to the early Cold War when the region's oil supplies and location in relation to the Soviet Union were seen as essential in the fight against communism. Thus, American Orientalism is set apart from European versions due to recent creation and the unique circumstances in which it was constructed (Makdisi, 2014).

### **1.3b) Describing and Delimiting the Middle East**

The Middle East is often described in American geopolitics as exceptional relative to other world regions (Salamy, 2009; Struckman and Sturm, 2013). This was especially so following the events of September 11, 2001. A narrative came to prominence in American foreign policy in which the Middle East was depicted as exceptionally "dangerous" in comparison to other parts of the world. This narrative holds that the region possesses a

population that is capable of uniting under fundamentalist Islam and would be in a position to challenge regional and global stability. Western-style representative democracy is seen to be the solution to this problem. Changing this state of affairs would require bringing democracy to the region by military force (which would be welcomed by local populations due to democracy's inherent benefits over existing political arrangements). This narrative was central to rationalizing the 2003 US invasion of Iraq (Murphy, 2011). As the Middle East has become the most prominent region in American geopolitical worldviews, its territorial extent and fundamental characteristics are continuously being redrawn and contested (Sidaway, 1994; 1998; Bacevich, 2009; 2016).

At present, American cartographic definitions of the Middle East are at their widest span since it became part of American world regional geographies (Westad, 2007; Sidaway, 1994; Bonine, 2011). Current American understandings of the region place it between the Atlantic coast of Northwest Africa in the West to Pakistan's eastern border (Culcasi, 2010). Other world regions, at different periods, have been physically bounded, described, and made important in American geopolitical discourse (Agnew, 2012). For example, Tyner (2006) shows how Southeast Asia was charted in the stark terms of Cold War domino theory that rationalized American military action in the region. Domino theory constructed Southeast Asia as a "region of action" while at the same time eliding important events that took place there during the 1940s and 1950s, such as last-ditch efforts by the French to maintain their colonies and protectorates in Indochina as well as various local groups competing for state and regional power.

It is impossible to give a definitive genealogy of the use of the term "Middle East", since it has been used by a variety of players for various purposes (Yilmaz, 2011, 32). However, some scholars argue that the "Middle East" as a world region was initially

constructed by British geopolitical discourse in the mid-19th century, when the region became crucial for British shipping routes to India upon the completion of the Suez Canal. With the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, it became an object of British and French colonial maneuvering (Sidaway 1994).

The term Middle East became more familiar in the United States during World War II as a major theatre of battle (Adelson, 2012). Culcasi (2010) argues that Middle East began to take on its present boundaries and characteristics in American geographical imaginations during the 1950s and that the label gained popularity later on in the Cold War, in relation to key events such as the oil crisis of the early 1970s, the Iran hostage crisis, and the first Gulf War. Adelson (2012) understands that North Africa was appended to the Middle East starting in the 1960s thanks to American Cold War military strategy and academic Area Studies divisions of labor. Afghanistan and Pakistan were added in the early 2000s as a result of the War on Terror.

Regardless of how the region is delimited, the Middle East is conceptualized in the United States as important thanks to its purported strategic global location and what are understood to be vast oil supplies (Mitchell, 2011). Its inhabitants are often seen as singly Arab in ethnicity and as practising a uniform version of Islam (Curti, 2011). Terrorism is understood to spring from these ethnic and religious characteristics (McAlister 2005). Yilmaz (2011, 34) generalizes these viewpoints, arguing that “by regionalizing a given geographical space and rendering its essential qualities into a few universal characteristics, it [simplifies] dealings with the perceived region in question.” Based on these simplistic physical and human geographies, conventional geopolitical discourse constructs the region as a place that needs to be “secured from itself” by U.S. military infrastructure, U.S. military action, and U.S. military knowledge-creation systems (Morissey 2011; Gregory 2004).

Culcasi (2010) uses a metageographical perspective to examine how British and American-produced maps have discursively constructed the region. Her findings show that the boundaries of the Middle East have varied greatly over time. Frequent regional boundary shifts can be tied to changing British and American geopolitical interests in the region. She further problematizes this cartographic discourse by arguing that other criteria used to tie the region together, like religion, language, ethnicity and physical geography are also problematic due to the vast diversity of peoples, social structures and landscapes found across the Middle East. Based on these arguments, she shows that while the Middle East is seen as an easily definable place in British and American metageographies, closer examinations of unifying traits prove to be problematic. She concludes by arguing that the moniker of the 'Middle East' is used mostly outside of the region, while regional designations like the 'Arab World' or the 'Arab Homeland' are much more meaningful within the region itself. By deconstructing the category of the Middle East cartographically and conceptually, Culcasi shows that traits used to describe the region and tie together in British and American metageographies are highly problematic

Bonine (2011) is interested in understanding how professional American geographers have delineated the Middle East. He does this by examining maps in university-level geography textbooks and atlases published in the United States since the end of Second World War. Bonine observes that the state of Middle East studies within the discipline of geography has involved only a small number of scholars, even during regional geography's peak (bolstered by its links with Area Studies) during the Cold War. Because of the low profile of Middle East regional studies amongst American geographers, very few university textbooks focusing on the Middle East have been published during the past 60 years. Likewise, he argues that atlases with sections focusing on the Middle East tend to differ

greatly in their depiction of the region. As Culcasi demonstrates above, Bonine finds that the boundaries of the region have shifted significantly over time in the material he analyzes. Bonine attributes these ever-shifting boundaries to the conceptual problems of the American world regional geography framework rather than any kind of underlying Orientalism in American geographers' worldviews.

While studies that investigate the politics of representing the Middle East in American understandings of world regions, only a few studies seek to understand how people living in the Middle East commonly understand the term. Culcasi (2011) takes a cartographic approach to this question by examining a large number of maps produced in eight Middle Eastern countries. In this material, she finds that the concept of an "Arab Homeland" or an "Arab World" is a nearly-universal identifier of linguistic and/or ethnic unity across the region. Culcasi's research show that the cartographic discourse of an Arab Homeland can be traced back to the late 1950s during the height of the pan-Arab movement. She finds that maps which depict a 'Middle East' are relatively rare, arguing that because the term is an outside imposition associated with imperial geopolitics, it has little resonance with the region's inhabitants. Culcasi argues that the prominence of an Arab Homeland (which is slightly different from common variations on the Middle East) is a form of counter-mapping or counter-cartography that subverts or even rejects Western-dominated world regional geography conceptualizations. Related to her research described above, Culcasi (2012) examines the few maps produced within the Middle East which depict a "Middle East" world region. Her findings show that popular and political discourses only make reference to a Middle East region when addressing Western geopolitical interests or the Israel/Palestine conflict.

Rouighi (2011) examines political, academic, media, and diplomatic discourses of three Maghribi countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia) to understand how the Middle East is understood within these countries. Based on this material, he observes that the term 'Middle East' is hardly ever used to refer to the Maghrib and its inhabitants rarely refer to themselves as 'Middle Easterners'. Maghribis do use the term Middle East, but use it to refer to an area east of the Maghrib. While Maghribis share religious, cultural, and linguistic links with inhabitants of the Middle East, they consider themselves to be different from Middle Easterners. The region's history as French and Spanish settler colonies along with Francophone understandings of what constitutes the Middle East region is one factor setting the Maghrib apart from the Middle East. He argues that post-colonial migration patterns of Maghribis to France and the Benelux countries (where not many Middle Eastern migrants are present) continues to set Maghribis apart from Middle Easterners. Despite these differences, Rouighi sees Maghribi links being made to the Middle East through transnational media, which refer to an Arab World and in Maghribi "non-governmental international military organizations" which refer to the Middle East in their names. This demonstrates that the idea of the Arab World and the Middle East are evolving, these changes do not guarantee the future inclusion of the Maghrib in the Middle East.

### **1.3c) Formal, Practical, and Popular Perspectives on the Middle East**

At the end of the Second World War, it was understood that the British and French would seek to maintain the Middle East within their military spheres of influence. As it became clear that the British and French empires would not survive much past the Second World War, the Truman administration developed a policy of providing military supplies directly to U.S. allies in the Middle East if the British and French were unable to do so.

During this time, the Middle East's proximity to the Soviet Union set it up to become a key Cold War battleground. By the end of 1945, France had withdrawn from its Mandate territories in the Levant and Britain focused exclusively on controlling the Suez canal and the Persian Gulf oilfields, while preparing for the creation of a Zionist state in the Palestine Mandate territory. The remainder of the Middle East was left to the United States to stave off anticipated Soviet incursions (Khalidi, 2010).

Released in 1950, the policy document NSC-68 set the framework for the U.S. policy of Soviet containment. NSC-68 understood the Soviet Union to have designs on all of Eurasia, and a Soviet offensive would surely push towards the oil deposits of the Middle East. The political boundaries of the Middle East put in place at the end of the First World War were reinforced by an agreement between Britain, France and the U.S. in which the three powers pledged to uphold the principle of territorial integrity across the region (Little, 2008).

When Britain, France, and Israel attempted to reassert control of the Suez canal in 1956, the U.S. used it as an opportunity to oust the Britain from its position as strategic leader in the region and used a number of diplomatic and financial pressures to force the British to withdraw from the Suez canal zone. By this time, Britain was only left in direct control of the Aden protectorate on the southern edge of the Red Sea, the Oman protectorate, and the Trucial States in the Persian Gulf. Essentially, the era of Britain having diplomatic and military influence in the region beyond its colonial possessions was over (Little, 2008).

From the 1960s to the mid-1970s, the U.S further entrenched itself in the region. It provided outsized military support to Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. In the case of Iran and Saudi Arabia, outside oil wealth allowed these states to buy large amounts of high tech weaponry. At the same time, the U.S. took a strategic responsibility for the Trucial States and the Persian Gulf when Britain withdrew in 1971. Support for Iran ended in 1979 with the

revolution and subsequent hostage crisis. Saudi Arabian military bases became essential to the basing requirements of US Central Command (CENTCOM) during the late 1970s. While U.S. geopolitical rhetoric often repeated Zionist claims of the right for a Jewish nation-state to exist, some scholars argue that the Israeli military was bolstered by the United States simply so that it would have proxy force in the region to take the initial blow when the inevitable Soviet invasion came (Oren, 2007).

Fred Halliday (1981) argues that the U.S. took a stand in the Persian Gulf in the late 1970s not because of oil (which only accounted for 15% of oil imports to the U.S. in 1978), but because it was seen as being situated in the middle of an 'arc of crisis' extending across the recently decolonized world. Across East Africa, and extending into Central Asia, successful revolutions or independence struggles saw American backed sides fall to communists or Islamists. Bordering the Gulf were monarchies that were not accountable to their populations and were amenable to the U.S. taking on the role of geopolitical powerbroker that Britain had vacated during the early 1970s. In this context, the Carter Doctrine was developed for the Persian Gulf. Quoting President Carter from a 1978 speech, Stork (1980), writes “any attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States” and “will be repelled by the use of any means necessary including military force”. Stork asserts that this doctrine was primarily rhetorical and served to show that the Carter administration was "doing something" during an election year. Since the U.S. already had a large military presence in the Gulf and had any opponent threatened U.S. interests in the region, the response would have been the same, doctrine or no. But the effect that the Carter Doctrine did have was to raise the profile of CENTCOM, which became the primary means through which the Persian Gulf was securitized from the 1980s onward.

During the 1980s, the Reagan administration's standoff with Libya, involvement in the Lebanese civil war, a series of hostage takings and assassinations of Americans living in Lebanon, airliner hijackings and assaults on airports across the region, the Iran-Contra affair and support for Iraq in the Iraq/Iran war cemented the Middle East's place as a dangerous and high-profile region in American geopolitical worldviews. When the Soviet Union fell, it deprived some key American adversaries in the region of funds and munitions. Partially related to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, some major armed conflicts in the region came to an end during the late 1980s. However, Iraqi invasion of Kuwait kept American geopolitical strategists focused on the region (Oren, 2007).

The First Gulf War in 1991 was the stage on which the full capabilities of CENTCOM were demonstrated. Approximately 500,000 U.S. troops along with military contributions from 34 other states were arrayed against the Iraqi Army to expel it from Kuwait. In less than 100 hours, the operation was over. It is speculated that the U.S. did not invade Iraq with ground forces during this time in order to keep Iraq as a counterweight to a belligerent Iran. The war enjoyed a great deal of support in the United States due to a tightly managed media campaign, clear goals rooted in democracy and humanitarian discourses, and it being executed in an incredibly short timeframe (Oren, 2007).

From a global strategy standpoint, Morissey (2009b; 2016) argues that the most recent American-led war in Iraq is a manifestation of the positioning of the Middle East and its oilfields as a 'geo-economic pivot' and critical to American economic health. This line of reasoning maintains that the U.S. must keep Persian Gulf shipping lanes open for the transport of oil. Otherwise, the American-led global political economy will grind to a halt due to Persian Gulf crude oil being stopped from reaching U.S. refineries and the inevitable rise in oil prices. The defense of the region has been left to the US military's CENTCOM since the

late 1970s. Much of the negative connotations surrounding the region can be attributed to these understandings of the region in American military strategy. No other United States military-geographic command has been lent more Defense Department budgetary support or had greater number of troops deployed since the early 1980s. Additionally, Morissey documents how each CENTCOM commander since the command's inception in the late 1970s has drawn direct lines between security interests in the Middle East and a US-centered global political economy. In the context of the War on Terror, the management of future risks plays a part in rationalizing CENTCOM's existence. This management of risks was most evident in Bush administration's policy of pre-emption developed immediately after the September 11 attacks. But CENTCOM's planning is always done decades ahead, in preparation for the "Long War" against terrorism. Morissey (2009b: 116) posits that what has enabled CENTCOM's rise in capabilities during the latter part of the Cold War and the post-Cold War era is "an enduring imperial register at the heart of the Western world-view has allowed for an abstracted geopolitical rationale for CENTCOM interventions in regions beyond the pale - whose histories, whose citizens, and whose cultures simply do not count."

Linked to his research described above, Morissey (2011) argues that key academic rationales for the existence of US military-geographic commands spanning the globe are created by what he terms the "military-strategic studies complex". He defines this complex as a "powerful, well-funded assemblage of policy institutes, military colleges, and university departments, all with close links to the US Department of Defense and specializing in Strategic Studies research, teaching, and policy publications." (Morissey, 2011: 436). The main issue that Morissey sees with the military strategic studies complex is that it produces knowledge which offers very reductive visions of national security and abstracted geopolitical discourses. These simplified understandings become key rationales for US military basing and

US military deployment around the world. Morissey cites literature on the history of the discipline of geography that shows how most academic geography has been and continues to serve as part of this complex. He also adds nuance to his argument by documenting how individuals within the US military and strategic studies have offered alternative visions of mainstream strategic studies in the United States. Again, he argues that the belief that the Middle East is essential to an American-led global political economy as well as underpinnings of Orientalism in American visions of geopolitics are the primary reasons why the region is the central focus of the military-strategic studies complex.

Morissey's research ties into comments made by Halliday (which I discuss above) and IR scholar Robert Vitalis regarding American views on militarism and oil in the Middle East.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the focus of American military strategy on the region and a massive military presence on the ground, the U.S. is arming its regional allies with exorbitant amounts of conventional weaponry. Academics, military, and foreign policy thinkers ranging from conservative to radical understand the militarization of the entire region is due to its outsized oil deposits.<sup>17</sup> Despite these sizeable deposits, only 10 to 15 percent of Gulf oil production makes its way to U.S. refineries at present. This is in contrast to the majority of American oil supplies, which is purchased from producers located in the Western Hemisphere.

In the end, the provenance of the oil used in the United States doesn't matter. Oil is a commodity bought and traded on the open market by corporations and private firms. It is very difficult to determine exactly where any particular barrel of crude originates. Due to the

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<sup>16</sup> Vitalis, Robert, "Oil: The Stuff of Mass Delusion", *Jadaliyya*, 9 March 2016, [http://maghreb.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/24001/-oil\\_the-stuff-of-mass-delusion](http://maghreb.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/24001/-oil_the-stuff-of-mass-delusion).

<sup>17</sup> Vitalis sees the problematic conventional understanding of the Middle East's oil deposits to be especially prominent in research based in critical geopolitics

Vitalis, Robert, "Matthew T. Huber, *Lifeflood: Oil, Freedom, and the Forces of Capital*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.", *Antipode*, May 2014, [https://radicalantipode.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/book-review\\_vitalis-on-huber.pdf](https://radicalantipode.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/book-review_vitalis-on-huber.pdf).

manner in which the global oil commodity market is structured, U.S. military control of the Persian Gulf does not translate into the ability to control the global price of petroleum or its supply. The annual cost of maintaining military forces in the Middle East exceeds the value of oil exported from the region, Vitalis asserts. The understanding that petro-states in the Gulf, along with American military might directly controlling this part of the world somehow forms the pivot of the global oil political economy is nothing more than a myth perpetuated by American petroleum "folkways". From Vitalis' perspective, oil is simply used as a strategic rationale for the heavy U.S. military presence in the region and Gulf petro-states provide a ready market for its massive capacity to manufacture military hardware.

These foreign policy and military perspectives on the Middle East have been taken up by the American media in a largely uncritical manner. In these representations of U.S./Middle East geopolitical relationships, Orientalist tropes underlie representations of the Middle East and its inhabitants (Sidaway, 1994). Said (1997) uses the concept of 'Islam' to understand how Muslims (mostly residing in the Middle East) are portrayed using Orientalist frames in American media coverage. In this context, Said (1997: xi) argues that there has been a

strange revival of canonical, though previously discredited, Orientalist ideas about Muslim, generally non-white people - ideas which have achieved a startling prominence when racial or religious misrepresentations of every other cultural group are no longer circulated with such impunity. Malicious generalizations about Islam have become the last acceptable form of denigration of foreign culture in the West; what is said about the Muslim mind, or character, or religion, or culture as a whole cannot now be said in mainstream discourse about Africans, Jews, other Orientals, or Asians

He argues that a great deal of violence and terrorism that takes place by those claiming to be Muslim is attributed to characteristics of Islam, rather than explained as rooted social and political causes.

Said understands American accounts of Islam as neither naive nor pragmatic. The tropes and frames through which Islam is delivered to American media consumers perpetuates hostility and ignorance. Often, American media coverage of places and events in the Middle East is structured like propaganda. A clear shift occurred in American media discourse in 1991 with the fall of the Soviet Union regarding American enemies in the world. From the early 1990s onward, Islam came to replace the Soviet menace. Said understands the current American obsession with Islam to be rather odd, since the U.S. lacked colonies with any sizeable Muslim populations and American ties with the Middle East, while significant, had a very low public profile.

In this respect, Said disagrees with a number of other scholars who understand the Middle East to be central to the eschatology of some evangelical Christian sects of the United States. These groups have an outsized influence in American politics and understand that the battle for the End Times will take place in Israel/Palestine. In this struggle, Israel and its Christian allies (the armies of Christ) will face the Muslim states of the Middle East (the armies of the anti-Christ). In these formulations, it is up to United States foreign policy to ensure that Israel and its allies emerge victorious. This should be achieved through overwhelming military power (Dittmer and Sturm, 2010; McAlister, 2005). In this way, evangelical Christian perspectives have had a significant influence on the American obsession with Islam.

Again, disagreeing with scholars of American evangelism, Said contends that Islam has entered the worldviews of most Americans because it is connected to newsworthy issues like petroleum, terrorism, the Iran revolution, or the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Due to news coverage focusing solely on American geopolitical interests in the Middle East, it has been equated with terms like "the crescent of crisis", or "the arc of instability". Said argues that the

proliferation of electronic media and satellite communications during the 1970s allowed events with significance to Islam like the Iran hostage and the Bosnian war to be covered in a play-by-play manner that was unprecedented prior to this time.

Another factor in the portrayal of the Middle East and Muslim populations as backward is Cold War modernization theory, according to Said. During the Cold War, the U.S. sought to contain communism through international development policies that sought to rapidly develop recently decolonized territories using American capitalist/consumerist models. In this regard, Said ties American stances to the Middle East to global Cold War battles. Despite the end of the Cold War, modernization theory continues to underlie parts of American foreign policy and retains a great deal of currency in the popular media. Islam is often portrayed as somehow immune to "modernizing" practices, and is therefore, deviant Said argues.

Talking a Foucauldian perspective on discourse, Said argues that the discourse on the Middle East and Islam in the United States encourages more of itself because it forms a ready-to-use bank of tropes that can be easily picked up by "experts" to explain the crisis of the day. These tropes are immediately recognizable to media consumers and render events and places relevant to U.S. geopolitical interests. However, they serve as very poor metaphors for how events occur from the perspectives of Muslims (and others) living in the Middle East.

Karim Karim's (2003) study *Islamic Peril: Media and Global Violence* takes a very similar perspective as Said. But Karim takes a wider view beyond the Middle East, examining how Islam in general is associated with global terrorism and violence in American and Canadian newspaper coverage. His findings show that particular themes are prevalent during his sampling frames and are consistent with problematic themes found by other scholars focusing

on the politics of the representation of Islam. For this reason Karim characterizes American and Canadian representations of Muslim societies as misrepresentation (2003).

Karim traces contemporary North American visions of Islam to the Cold War, which was fought through military posturing and proxy wars. Pointing to the massive institutional and economic infrastructures that had been built to wage this battle, Karim argues that the Cold War furthered innumerable careers and created massive wealth for North American armament producers. He argues that the end of the Cold War resulted in a 'threat vacuum' that endangered these North American Cold War power structures. In this context, many American and Canadian military and intelligence organizations sought out new enemies. For these organizations, Islam became a replacement for communism, and gave them a continued *raison d'être*. This need for a new threat to the American-led global order dovetailed well with prevalent orientalist and colonialist imaginaries of Islam.

Karim situates his empirical research in this context, arguing that North American mass media is central to discursively constructing Islam as a threat. He examines newspaper coverage from 1980 to 2000 related to media constructions of high profile international episodes - which range from the Iran-Iraq War, The Gulf War of the early 1990s, and conflicts in the Caucasus and the Balkans. His findings show that North American newspaper coverage of these events construct Islam as a global 'peril'. He points out that the construction of this threat is consistent with classical Orientalist and conventional geopolitical tropes.

#### **1.4) Questioning the Primacy of Ethno-sectarian Assumptions**

Chapter 2 builds a framework for examining how ethno-sectarian narratives are composed using geopolitical texts and images. Using critical geopolitics, this chapter understands that geopolitics refers to the "territorial dimensions of international politics" (Hazbun, 2011: 211). Therefore, geographical assumptions and labels should be the subjects of critical geopolitical investigation (Agnew, 2012). Critical geopolitics is built upon two primary assumptions. The first is that geopolitical imaginations can be interpreted from textual evidence. The second is that texts simultaneously mimic and produce geopolitical imaginations (Müller, 2013). Geopolitical discourse has been described as being "all-pervasive" in Western societies (Ó Tuathail and Dalby, 1998). Thus, everything from newspapers to military strategies can be examined to reveal their geopolitical imaginations. Popular understandings of geopolitics are intertwined with elite ones. They provide the foundation upon which "elite texts can draw in order to assert their authority and gain acceptance" (Müller, 2013). The idea that geopolitical discourse can be analyzed in popular media sources shares much in common with framing theory and analysis in communications studies. A central component of framing theory and analysis is the identification of repetitive themes, terms, and images. This is followed by the interpretation of meaning associated with these textual and visual elements (Kuypers, 2009; D'Angelo and Kuypers, 2010).

Like communication scholars, geographers understand that discourse can be presented visually. Within the discipline of geography, maps are the most common way of visualizing representations of the world. As critical cartographers argue, maps are not simply objective aggregations of spatial data. They work as visual images that favor the representation of particular realities at the expense of all others. In this way, maps have agency in shaping understanding and facilitating material action.

Within political geography and critical geopolitics, a small number of scholars recognize the commonly made link between cultural identities, territorial modes of organization, and violent conflict. In analyses that make these links, ethno-sectarian identities are taken for granted. These scholars question analyses along these lines and ask whether it is even possible to use ethno-sectarian identities in this manner. Political geography and critical geopolitics perspectives which question ethno-sectarian identities tie into discussion of International Relations and race. A small number of critical IR scholars argue that the discipline was based on maintaining the "white racial purity" of colonial metropolises. This fundamental building block of IR continues on as implicit assumption of conventional IR scholarship. By extension, most views on geopolitics are "white" because they assign ethno-sectarian identities to people of post-colonies while remaining decidedly "objective" and "non-ethnic".

This chapter concludes by reviewing a small number of studies in which American (and British) media perspectives on territorially-based ethno-sectarian identities and conflict since the end of the cold war. Through framing analysis, they conclude that much of the media coverage they examine places the roots of violence in simplistic understandings of socio-cultural identity, while overlooking more salient factors, like colonial administrative regimes or post-colonial governance systems. In some of these studies, maps play a crucial role in allowing media users to visualize ethno-sectarian groups and associated violence.

Chapter 3 articulates a conceptual framework for analyzing American geopolitical understandings of the Middle East's cultural landscape. It begins by discussing how modern modes of governance are used to render territory legible. It then reviews how colonial indirect rule systems were put into place across the region. In indirect rule systems, cartographic representations of colonial political orders were the primary means of affixing social and

cultural groups to clearly demarcated homelands (Marsden and Hopkins, 2011: 42). From this perspective, group boundaries were often reinforced (or fabricated) by colonial administrators in order to define and curate cultural and social identities. Indirect rule systems influenced Wilsonian principles of internationalism used for drawing nation-state boundaries in parts of the region after the First World War. At present, colonial indirect rule and Wilsonian-style administrative systems form the basis of governance in most parts of the Greater Middle East.

The incongruency between ethno-sectarian territories and nation-state boundaries is broadly understood to be the primary source of dysfunctional governments, violence, and unrest in the region today. Influential conservative scholars on the Middle East like Elie Kedourie and Bernard Lewis espouse this view and argue that until ethno-sectarian identities in the region are left in the past and inhabitants adopt more "modern" nation-state identities, the cycle of dysfunction, violence, and unrest will continue. Lewis was consulted by the Bush White House in the run up to the 2003 Iraq invasion as a regional expert. He was a proponent of the invasion on the grounds that an autochthonous national identity could never develop in Iraq due to its distinct ethno-sectarian communities. Lewis maintained that an American invasion and the tutelage of an American occupation would be necessary for Iraq to develop into a "non-artificial" nation-state.

Chapter 4 focuses on American cartographic representations of ethno-sectarian identities in the Middle East. The ethnographic maps that I examine attempt to show the territorial extent and spatial distribution of ethno-sectarian identities. As with any other type of map, ethnographic maps must simplify their data so that the information presented can be understood by users. Furthermore, any map's usefulness is limited to the data it can represent as well the assumptions under which this data was gathered. Perhaps the most significant of

these ethnographic maps are the series authored by the cartographer and international relations scholar Michael Izady. Izady's technical competence as a cartographer is overshadowed by the problematic data that he utilizes. Izady is relegated to using secondary data sources ranging from colonial ethnographic data, dated government census data, and obsolete anthropological studies. The end result is a series of maps based on problematic data and faulty assumptions about the nature of ethno-sectarian identities in the Middle East. American media outlets rely upon Izady's maps in their coverage of events in the region. This includes the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, which use Izady's data to draft their own maps of the Syria conflict. Since the mid-2000s, a number of American journalists and observers of the Middle East have taken Izady's assumptions about ethno-sectarian identities being fixed to clearly-bounded homelands a step further. These authors argue that until nation-state boundaries of the region are shifted to better reflect its cultural landscape, contemporary frontiers will be drivers of conflict. These authors provide their own maps with redrawn borders that purportedly reflect the "natural" boundaries of the Middle East. Like Izady's maps, they draw upon problematic or undisclosed data sources as well as faulty assumption about the nature of ethno-sectarian identities.

These sets of Middle East ethnographic maps I examine are some of the most easily accessible maps of this type representing the region to American map users. Other maps exist in library atlas volumes and government documents. However, these are not available to a widespread audience. The maps I examine are available in inexpensive, soft-bound atlases, electronically via university libraries, or through mainstream media outlets, giving them a much greater impact than maps hidden away in printed volumes in university libraries or government documents that are viewed by a very limited number of academic researchers or government officials. All of the ethnographic maps I examine are presented as technical works

of cartography that are simply aggregations of data. Their end-users rarely question how the data was gathered or how the maps were drawn. However, these maps serve as geopolitical images and can be used to explain links between ethno-sectarian identities, "national" territories, and violence throughout the region.

The Iraq Troop Surge serves as an important episode in American involvement in Iraq since 2003. Iraq's ethno-sectarian composition played an important role as the invasion was planned. The Bush administration's poorly kept secret of putting Shia-based groups in power was one of the initial goals of U.S. military planning<sup>18</sup> in order to undermine Hussein's Sunni power base that his government had been cultivating since the early 1990s. However, Iraq's cultural landscape did not widely figure into American understandings of the war until violence understood to be caused by animosity between ethno-sectarian groups came to forefront during 2005. Chapter 5 focuses on the *Times* and *Post* coverage of the Iraq Troop Surge during 2007. Reporting is concerned with three major themes: 1) the decrease in violence in early 2007, 2) whether or not increased troop numbers were responsible for this decrease in violence, and, 3) how culturally-informed military doctrine should have been in place at the beginning of the American occupation in 2003. These balanced perspectives on the Troop Surge show a great deal of nuance when compared to other mainstream American perspectives - which tout the implementation of this strategy as an unqualified success or portray it as an unmitigated disaster.

Despite this nuance, my examination of the coverage of the surge shows that these media outlets understand Iraq to be a nation-state puzzled together using pieces of various ethno-sectarian groups. The coverage also contends that without the American military

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<sup>18</sup> Nasr, Vali, "When the Shiites Rise". *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2006, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2006-07-01/when-shiites-rise>

maintaining Iraq's territorial integrity, it would be partitioned into Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish nation-states. The coverage does not address how Iraq's ethno-sectarian groups were used as an administrative strategy under the Hussein regime. Nor does the coverage acknowledge that much of the ethno-sectarian violence during the American occupation has its roots in the 2004 American-authored constitution that structured Iraq as a tripartite state. I conclude by comparing these media perspectives to military, government, and think-tank materials that take a similar approach to analyzing the troop surge.

Due to the Middle East's importance in American geopolitical worldviews, the events of the Arab Spring saw a great deal of interest from American media outlets and in American foreign policy and military circles. Chapter 6 examines *New York Times* and *Washington Post* coverage of Arab Spring from 2011 to 2013. I examine coverage on six countries: Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, and Syria. The *Times* and *Post* coverage of the uprisings is primarily concerned with struggles for democracy and battles against Islamism. Indeed, a good deal of American understandings of these events recognize unjust political systems across the Middle East and show sympathy for the protestors. Ethno-sectarian narratives are insignificant in the papers' coverage of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions. Tribal narratives form a small portion of the coverage on Yemen. Throughout the sampling period, Bahrain's revolution was framed as a battle between a ruling Sunni minority and a Shia majority population, but the coverage of Bahrain's protests is so minimal after the first month that these frames become insignificant.

In contrast to the Tunisian, Egyptian, Yemeni, and Bahraini revolts, the events in Libya and Syria are explained primarily in ethno-sectarian terms. Especially after the revolts turned into violent conflicts and a U.S.-led NATO bombing, tactical support, and training mission was undertaken in Libya, while U.S.-led military action was debated for Syria. These

operations were proposed in order to stem violence and encourage Qaddafi and Assad to relinquish power. At the beginning of Libya's revolt, it is portrayed as a nation-state divided by tribes. The country's tribal characteristics are identified as one of the primary factors leading to conflict in the early days of the war against Qaddafi. However, beginning in early 2012, the tribal narrative becomes much less prominent. The continuing violence in Libya is attributed to regional militias with no basis in tribal identities. During the sampling period, Syria is consistently portrayed as a patchwork of ethnic and religious identities. The coverage contends that since Syria's ethno-sectarian boundaries are incongruent with its state boundaries, conflict is inevitable. Furthermore these identities are framed as timeless and unchanging.

The case of Libya is an especially important counter-narrative to the Syrian case. It shows how 'tribal' narratives were prominent early in the sampling period and then were replaced by a more accurate understanding of events. This demonstrates that ethno-sectarian media narratives can and do change over time. I conclude this chapter by tying these media perspectives to government, think-tank, and academic perspectives on the uprisings that seek to situate their analyses in ethno-sectarian terms.

I conclude by describing geopolitical plans to redraw the boundaries of the Middle East by the militant group ISIS, the American neoconservative politician John R. Bolton, and the Zionist journalist and geopolitical thinker Oded Yinon. These plans are on the fringes of geopolitical thought and are deemed as unacceptable - especially in the case of ISIS. The group has undertaken extreme violence in order to create a "Sunnistan" within territory under its remit. However, the American public intellectual Robert Kaplan discusses ethno-sectarian identity, national territory, and violence in a similar manner as the ISIS, Bolton, and Yinon plans. Kaplan's writing on geopolitics are widely circulated and his ideas enjoy a great deal of

consideration within the U.S. government, military, and media. Due to his popularity, Kaplan's views on ethno-sectarian organization in the Middle East play an outsized role in American understandings of the region. His views also lend weight to ethno-sectarian narratives I examine in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. I argue that the most appropriate way to examine these views is a discourse analysis-based critical geopolitics. Ethno-sectarian narratives form a fundamental part of American metageographies of the region. These problematic metageographies have been used in part to rationalize the questionable claims of American foreign policy in the Middle East since the early 1980s. American foreign policy geared toward the region has sought to bring democracy and freedom to the Middle East through unparalleled military power. Despite the lives sacrificed in this mission and the huge monetary costs involved, these goals haven't been achieved. Therefore, American authored cartographic and textual representations of the Middle East continue to warrant critical analysis.

## Chapter 2) Geopolitical Framings of Cultural Landscapes

### 2.1) Contested Perspectives on Geopolitics

#### 2.1a) Foundations of Critical Geopolitics

The term geopolitics has conventionally been understood as "the study of the geographical representations, rhetoric and practices that underpin world politics" (Agnew, 2003: 5). Central to these formulations is the idea that geopolitics can "generate a simple model of the world, which can then be used to advise and inform foreign and security policy making" (Dodds, 2014: 4). These simple models of the world focus on 'unchanging realities' of the earth's surface, like the locations of various populations and resources, proximity between states, and the topography and climate of neighboring or imperial territories for the strategic purposes of states and empires. Conventional geopolitical theories and concepts, as developed by early 20th century thinkers like Halford MacKinder and Friedrich Ratzel promote geopolitics as an objective and value-free way of surveying global space (Ó Tuathail, 1996). This back catalog of theories continues to resonate with influential theorists and practitioners of geopolitics at present (Kearns, 2009).

Problematizing the 'view from nowhere' (Haraway, 1991: 183-201) which conventional geopolitics espouses, a critical approach to geopolitics begins from the premise that geopolitics is itself situated knowledge, rather than an objective science of geographical and political realities. Critical geopolitics examines how it is that world politics is imagined spatially or geographically, thus revealing the politics behind the representation of global space (Dodds, *et al.* 2013). An assertion of critical geopolitics is that foreign and security policy-making is central not only to how a state interacts with the rest of the world, but is also

essential to the continuous reconstruction and reaffirmation of national identities and the literal and figurative borders surrounding them (Ingram and Dodds, 2009; Campbell, 1998).

Agnew (2007: 138) takes aim at American versions of conventional geopolitics, casting doubt on the universal explanatory power that conventional geopolitics claims to possess. He argues that this version of geopolitics is a projection of "United States-originated ideas" about the nature of nation-states and the global political economy across the globe. These particular ideas about nation-state actors and the world economy are projected onto all times and places. Agnew further writes that conventional geopolitics departs a great deal from contemporary sources of American foreign policy execution. From his perspective, this type of scholarship is driven by theory which seeks out thin empirical examples to bolster it.

Within critical geopolitics scholarship, language is considered to be metaphorical, which results in representation being achieved through deferral to other concepts. Thus language is not "transparent or innocent, but is part of the process of world-making, since the choice of referents - the ideas and narratives that are quoted in order to make sense of a situation - will affect the meaning of any resultant explanation" (Sharp, 2000: 25). Agnew (2009) demonstrates Sharp's conceptualization of language and metaphor through his discussion of the re-appropriation of geographical terms or names in order to render unfamiliar geopolitical settings familiar. He reasons that many such geographical metaphors have come into common usage and presumptively explain situations far beyond their original context. Agnew sees these analogies as problematic because they project simplified imaginations of a given place onto another place, rendering two very different geographies as the same. For example, he argues that the term 'balkans' has become a clichéd metaphor which is far removed from its essentialized and ahistorical portrayal of southeastern Europe as a place of 'irrational, intractable and primordial ethnic hatreds'. American geopolitical

theorists and practitioners have subsequently pathologized all of the Middle East and North Africa, Central Asia and large portions of South and Southeast Asia by deeming it the 'Global Balkans' (Agnew, 2009). Metaphors such as these serve to render complex geographies manageable and amenable to certain types of actions. In the case of conventional geopolitics, these simple geopolitical representations are often used to rationalize diplomatic and military intervention. Thus, there is not simply a geographical (or geopolitical) order 'out there' waiting to be described. But rather through descriptions of world politics, geopolitical orders are constructed and reconstructed with the goal of producing the meaning of events (Shapiro, 2009).

Many studies falling under the rubric of critical geopolitics examine the taken-for-granted geographical, historical, and political assumptions in texts associated with elite spatializations of world politics. These elite discourses are divided between formal discourses (those put forward by theorists) and practical discourses (those generated and performed by political and military leaders) (Dittmer and Gray, 2010: 1665). For example, Ó Tuathail (1996) critically examines the theoretical work of Halford MacKinder, a project which has been continued by Kearns (2009, 2010). Similarly, practical geopolitics has been interrogated through Dodds' (1997, 2002) analyses of the militaristic, scientific, and colonial roots of geopolitical representations of Antarctica.

Many scholars limit the production of geopolitical knowledge to elite texts produced for and by practitioners of statecraft. But it has been argued that geopolitical discourses are a 'broad social and cultural phenomenon' spanning elitist and popular forms of representation (Ó Tuathail and Dalby, 1998). Because of this pervasiveness of geopolitical discourses in all aspects of society and culture, Debrix (2008: 11) makes the case for a popular geopolitics, arguing that the study of geopolitics 'perhaps ought to start with many public texts and other

narratives (many of which are pictorial and visual) that seek to present, affirm and simplify a political vision of the world'. Work in popular geopolitics is replete with instances of political officials making references to works of popular culture in order to explain, rationalize and/or popularize foreign and security policy. Like the former director of the US Department of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff paying homage to the fictional character Jack Bauer (who uses torture to save lives) of the popular serial drama *24* (Dodds, 2010).

More traditional currents of geopolitical and/or international relations scholarship emphasize the figure of the geopolitical strategist, decisive world events, and the agency of the military state (MacDonald, 2006). Breaking away from these traditional concerns, popular geopolitics does not hesitate in examining the universes of television, radio, the Internet, newspapers, postage stamps, works of art, novels, films, cartoons, video games, pop music and comic books in order to identify newly forming institutional sites where cultural representations of identity and security are continuously reconstructed and reaffirmed (Boulton, 2008; Debrix, 2003; Dittmer, 2010; Raento, 2006). It is within this context that popular geopolitics seeks to explore how popular geographies of security and identity reinforce or contest elite formulations of geopolitics (Dittmer and Dodds, 2008; Debrix, 2003).

The foundational work for popular geopolitics is Joanne Sharp's monograph *Condensing the Cold War* (2000), in which anti-communist content of Reader's Digest was followed before, during, and after the Cold War. She writes that during the Cold War, the Digest's abridged stories helped to shape American values and identities (portrayed as democracy, liberty and market capitalism) in opposition to the ideological and cultural foil of the 'communist world' (depicted as a place of repression and totalitarianism). This was achieved through the use of narratives, metaphors and caricatures. The magazine's

straightforward style of presentation of political 'realities' and its use of experts to explain dangers in accessible terms, brought simplified representations of the world to the American public through its very large base of subscribers. Digest readers were fashioned as a central part of America's cold war geopolitical structure and as such were given specific roles to play as part of this structure. The primary task of this role was to understand the world as the magazine meant to present it. Central to this is that the Digest's geopolitical representations of the Cold War fell in line with the view of the United States government and most conservative US think tanks, policy makers, and practitioners at the time.

Drawing heavily on Sharp's *Condensing the Cold War*, Francois Debrix (2003, 2008) has made the most significant theoretical extensions to Sharp's original understanding of popular geopolitics in the context of the post-9/11 United States, which he terms 'tabloid geopolitics'. He argues that tabloid geopolitics underwrites contemporary American popular culture with its emphasis on simple media punditry, sensationalism, demands for national unity, and moralizing about the right of Americans to defend themselves. Debrix (2008: 45) makes the case that contemporary tabloid narratives erase any critical potential which may have existed in prior popular geopolitical enterprises, since the representations of tabloid geopolitics provides are meant to be 'taken at face value'. The imagined geographies of tabloid geopolitics are intended to be the exact rendition of the world as it 'really' is. These imagined geographies are not supposed to be contested, nor do they require active recognition. This 'dumbing down' of geopolitical discourses gives priority to entertainment value and shapes public perceptions through a lack of knowledge (which can also be attributed to an excess of information in contemporary American culture). Thus tabloid discourses are able to remain uncontested as the authority on world politics (Debrix, 2003: 158).

The version of popular geopolitics which I have described thus far have been concerned with how geopolitical discourses circulate within popular culture, with no attention to how these discourses are interpreted by audiences or influence everyday lives - let alone foreign policy and military apparatuses. This result could be related to what has been termed an 'agency-centered' notion of discourse prevalent in critical geopolitics in which powerful actors shape discourses (or narratives) which then descend upon the masses to entrap them (Dittmer and Gray, 2010: 1665). As Müller (2008: 328) argues:

Much [critical] geopolitical writing starts from the assumption of the autonomous subject who has control over [representations], knits them into narratives, and thus turns them into a vehicle through which it exercises power. Narratives here associated with the agency of subjects as individuals. Individuals produce narratives. These narratives then become manipulated, usually by elites, as a strategic resource for pursuing certain interests.

This alleged fixation on representation has led to Thrift's (2000) oft-cited critique of critical geopolitics. In it, he lambasts this body of scholarship for its undue 'attention to texts and images' and makes the case for a more aware examination of geopolitical power. Using his framework of non-representational theory (NRT), Thrift specifically calls for an attentiveness to 'little things', like objects, the human body, and the ways in which 'little words' like 'the' and 'we' can have geopolitical importance. In more straightforward terms Thrift contends that the way in which critical geopolitics has typically been executed serves to make a caricature of geopolitical discourses, while ignoring how these discourses are performed and have an effect on everyday lives. Thrift's critique has undoubtedly reshaped critical geopolitical inquiry, which now considers the realms of perception, affect and emotion (cf. Pain and Smith, 2008).

From a wider disciplinary perspective, Cosgrove (2008) writes that the disappearance of cartographic and textual analysis from much social and cultural geography can partially be attributed to the rise of NRT. As such, ethnographic methods are now favored. Proponents of

NRT argue that human cognitive and affective ties to the world do not operate solely through representations. Accordingly, it is held that ignoring performative aspects of geographical knowledge results in research that fetishizes representations. Non-representational theorists argue that representation has overly dominated rational and scientific inquiry into social phenomena. These theorists call representational perspectives phallogentric and patriarchal. They term representational views 'The Gaze' and argue that its very nature is voyeuristic, domineering, and exploitative. Resistance to representation should be done through deprivileging The Gaze. Studying representations only reinforces their privileged position. Thus, through examining how subjectivities are performed in everyday life, representations are brought into question. From this perspective, visual and textual representations are too static, distanced, and restricted to have any real effects on everyday life. Dewesbury et al. (2002: 438) write:

If non-representational theory takes the work of representation seriously, what it does not take seriously is representationalism, or, discursive idealism. The notion that meaning is first and foremost a picture that is formed in the mind, a cause of action; the precondition of understanding of social action or identity is fundamentally misleading. Equally, the idea that the concept of culture is, somehow, immune from this critique is misplaced. When culture is conceptualised as a set of rules, as 'a resource and a constraint', as a frame and a necessary mediation, as a store house of archetypes, a collection of habits that are malleable but yet mediate in a strangely consistent, aspatial and unchanging way between eye and world, hand and thing, thought and matter, body and text, it becomes numbed to the event of life.

These authors argue that while representation is important, focusing exclusively on representation forces scholars to assume that discourses are taken up and internalized in consistent, static manners across all times and spaces. They continue by writing that 'hegemonic discourse' is an oxymoron. Discourse is taken up in such diverse ways and mutated to such a degree that each instance of its implementation is unique. Dewesbury et al.

seem to be calling for an ethnography of the self in which observations and experiences are recorded in great detail.

Other scholars take cues from Science and Technology Studies (STS) to understand how ideas and objects are made through everyday processes of production. This type of research shows that modes of production are much more complex than discourses of representation can ever hope to describe. Rather than simply looking to match fieldwork observations with pre-conceived representational frameworks, these scholars look for the exceptional and 'interesting' portions of production that don't seem to fit the code. They understand that scholars need to question fixed meanings. (Lorimer, 2005: 91).

This re-theorization of critical geopolitics has led to a body of literature that can differ significantly from what is now considered standard geopolitics literature which I have described above. The ways in which it understands how geopolitical discourses influences the world are shifted from away from representation. Some of these theoretical and conceptual advances hew very closely to Thrift's ideas of what an NRT-based critical geopolitics should look like, while others are only loosely inspired by this framework.

### **2.1b) New Directions and Their Discontents**

Dittmer (2010: 34) suggests that popular geopolitics remains methodologically conservative, despite the new directions it has recently taken. He argues that to get past this methodological conservatism, popular geopolitics must be reformulated with significant theoretical extensions. In their review paper *Popular Geopolitics 2.0*, Dittmer and Gray (2010) lay out a theoretical framework that could move popular geopolitics even closer to what Thrift (2000) has advocated with geopolitical studies based in non-representational theory. Although the authors stress that their proposed path is only one of many options. Drawing from work in

feminist political geography, non-representational theory, audience studies, and Judith Butler's theory of performativity, Dittmer and Gray conceptualize a popular geopolitics which would focus on 'the everyday intersections of the human body with places, environments, objects and discourses linked to geopolitics' (2010: 1673). In their review, they claim that they are not inventing a new field of study, but instead attempting to synthesize and extend what is already happening in popular geopolitics.

Sidaway's (2009) research on the geopolitics of walking Britain's South West Coast Path is a good example of what a 'Popular Geopolitics 2.0' would look like. Sidaway uses a stroll on the outskirts of Plymouth as a means to illustrate how landscapes are materialized by geopolitics, which affect those passing through them. As Sidaway reveals, this type of work is not easy to frame, conduct, or write. Its dependence upon non-representational literatures of walking and the emotional geographies of mourning and loss testifies to the complexity of conducting a 'Popular Geopolitics 2.0'.

The re-theorization of popular geopolitics which has widened and deepened understandings of the sub-discipline, and has implications for how critical studies of formal and practical geopolitics are carried out as well. This brings discussions in popular geopolitics to the forefront of debates in the larger project of critical geopolitics. A re-theorized critical geopolitics reflects a wider movement in geography to utilize various ideas derived from Thrift's (2000) formulation of non-representational theory (MacDonald 2010). MacDonald contends that non-representational theory is undergoing 'an almost viral' spread within the various fields of human geography, and that it was inevitable that critical geopolitics would be influenced. Although MacDonald (2006) has used non-representational theory to inspire his own work, he has fears that critical geopolitics and its changed focus to the 'little things' will make it lose sight of the 'big things' which conventional geopolitics is concerned with. Finally,

MacDonald (2010) argues that if critical geopolitics starts to neglect global military strategies, or the latest speech by US military officials, it is at risk for becoming an academic fad.

Dalby (2010: 282) has similar misgivings about these non-representational strands of critical geopolitics, arguing that Thrift wants critical geopolitics 'to do all sorts of things, but not....engage in the critique of the reasoning practices of intellectuals of statecraft'. He concedes that by focusing on the lived experiences of people and the non-representational aspects of texts and images, Thrift's approach gives voice to people not usually heard. But in doing so, critical geopolitics abandons its core mission: engagements with representations of the world that rationalize and legitimize military power and action. While Mamadouh (2010) agrees with Dalby in arguing that critical geopolitics lacks a central core, she refrains from spelling out what this core should be:

Is [critical geopolitics] a specific approach? If so, what is actually its subject, its key theoretical contribution and its core methodology? Some would like to clarify matters by introducing a more strictly delimited research agenda. Such calls for coherence are deemed to fail. First, we are not able to agree on a common, strict definition of what (critical) geopolitics is or should be. Second, even if some political geographers were able to do so, they would not be able to impose this definition among political geographers, among geographers and even less across disciplinary boundaries (2010: 320).

Thus, where does critical geopolitics go from here? Dalby's call for a re-focusing on efforts to delegitimize militaristic mappings of global space is a laudable goal, and returns critical geopolitics to its original mission (Dalby, 1990; Ó Tuathail, 1996). But how can this be done without falling into the traps that critical geopolitics has previously been prey to - namely not providing a way forward after deconstruction and its irrelevancy outside of the discipline of geography and academia (Dalby, 2010, Hyndman, 2010, Mamadouh, 2010)? The new directions that popular geopolitics has taken is one way forward, but again these many

orientations begin to pull critical geopolitics away from its central purpose and some argue that an embodied geopolitics is not really a radical analysis of geopolitics at all (Dalby, 2010).

At present, there is no clear way forward in popular or critical geopolitics without falling into the shortcomings laid out above. Some research has shown how analyses of representation can be complemented with concerns for the lived experiences of people and the non-representational aspects of texts and images. Thereby demonstrating that popular or critical geopolitics does not have to subscribe exclusively to one theoretical framework. MacDonald (2010: 318) even finds the 'big' and 'little' distinctions to be 'ridiculous'. MacDonald, et al. (2010) in their edited volume *Observant States* have assembled a series of works where the authors do not seem overly concerned about which theoretical and conceptual frameworks they are drawing from. These works, all in their own ways, challenge militaristic mappings of global space – which has been the goal of critical geopolitics from the beginning.

As for popular geopolitics, despite its shortcomings and lack of a clear path forward, it has made a significant contribution to the study of world politics. It challenges orthodox theories of geopolitics by arguing that the realms of popular culture and media are just as important to the formulation geopolitical representations as geopolitical tacticians and strategists, decisive world events, and the agency of the military state. No matter how popular geopolitics proceeds, it must continue to question and contest ordinary representations of space and territory because they help to inform and sustain post-colonial and militaristic cultures (Dodds, 2003: 149)

## 2.2) Discourse and Framing Analysis

As stated in the previous section, critical geopolitics is about questioning the geographic assumptions and reasoning practices used in world politics. Discourse analysis is the primary means by which this is undertaken. But what exactly is discourse and by what means can it be analyzed? Barnes and Duncan (1992: 6) state, "[t]o speak, read, or write, one must do so within the conceptual framework of specific discourses." In their understanding, any form of communication must take place within particular parameters in order to make it comprehensible. Mills (2003: 54) employs Foucauldian understandings of discourse to give a relatively concise explanation. She documents how Foucault defined discourse in a number of ways in his writings and lectures (like most subjects Foucault addressed). Summing up some of the most important aspect of Foucauldian perspectives on discourse, she writes "A discourse is a regulated set of statements which combine with others in predictable ways. Discourse is regulated by a set of rules which lead to the distribution and circulation of certain utterances and statements." Mills goes on to write that discourse is a linguistic system that structures the way in which reality is perceived. It should be seen as something that constrains and disciplines perceptions. Categorization and interpretation are necessary to the process of deriving meaning from perception and experience. In the process of deriving meaning, available structures must be used. These structures are lent a firmness and normalcy which can be difficult to question. It is almost impossible to think and communicate outside these structures. Mills argues that what makes Foucauldian perspectives on discourse so attractive to scholars is its explicit links to power. She writes (2003: 54)

Who is allowed to include and exclude certain aspects of discourse is central to its creation and maintenance. Some statements are circulated widely and others have restricted circulation....The notion of exclusion is very important in Foucault's thinking about discourse....Rather than thinking about discourse as simply a set of statements which have some coherence, we should.....think of a discourse as existing as a complex

set of practices which try to keep them in circulation and other practice which try to fence them off from others and keep those other statements out of circulation. Thus, those who are in positions of authority, who are seen to be experts are allowed to speak the truth. Institutions such as universities, governmental departments, publishing houses, and scientific bodies work to exclude statements they deem false and keep in circulation statements they understand to be true.

In Müller's (2013) survey of the field of discourse-analysis-based critical geopolitics, he observes that researchers rarely articulate their conceptual and methodological frameworks. Furthermore, very few studies of this type are explicit in their construction of methodologies. Discourse analysis does not have a common and established methodology. Therefore, there is a good deal of leeway that authors have in developing and articulating their methodological frameworks. Müller also recommends that a universal methodology should not be developed. Each discourse analysis should be built to suit the empirical material and theoretical assumptions underlying the research project.<sup>1</sup> A number of human geographers who study media borrow concepts and methodologies from communications studies. Most notably, the concept of "frames" or "framing analysis" has been used by some human geographers (cf. Meyers, *et al.* 1996; Adams, 2009; Potter, 2009) in order to understand how geographical themes are employed in media coverage of particular events or places.

Reese (2010: 17) defines frames as "organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world". He suggests that frames are constructed across a number of discourses, ranging from governmental policy to journalistic. Similarly, Entman (1993: 52) defines framing as process in which certain aspects of the world can be communicated "in such a way as to promote a

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<sup>1</sup> Müller's perspectives on critical geopolitics and discourse analysis echo broader understandings of discourse analysis in the discipline of human geography. Waitt (2010: 219) agrees that human geographers who undertake discourse analysis usually make their methodology implicit, rather than explicitly detailing how they undertook their research.

particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation".

Gamson and Modigliani (1989) write part of framing analysis is the identification of "framing devices". These are specific metaphors, visual icons, or catchphrases that communicate frames. Put another way, specific keywords signal when a frame is being drawn upon to explain a particular event. Reese (2010: 24) argues that in the construction of frames, master narratives are a central device that provide the rules for organizing new content. He argues that frames have a dynamic quality due to the necessity of assimilating and reconstituting new facts and concepts. Van Gorp (2010: 84) argues that frames are central to journalistic discourses because they cannot "tell stories effectively without preconceived notions about how to order story elements and about what meaning they could or should impose upon those story elements". Frames form universally understood codes that give meaning, coherence, and clear explanations to complex issues. Repetition is central to the development of frames within and between news outlets. Writers often rely on rhetorical elements or tropes to tell stories and journalists borrow elements from each others' writing. This has the effect of creating message agreement (Debrix, 2008).

Within framing scholarship on news media, Reese (2010: 17-19) discerns a line between a *how*-based perspective versus a *what*-based perspective. In the *how* version of framing analysis, researchers focus on the ways in which significant issues or episodes guide policy and opinion. *How* perspectives focus on the ways in which frames are constructed for particular ends. The *what* perspective focuses on the linguistic building blocks of frames and in turn, dissecting the content of these frames. Specifically, the narratives, concepts, and myths that gives particular frames currency. A *what*-based framing analysis emphasizes how

discourse elements articulate how frames are situated within the larger cultural, social, and historical contexts that generate them.

Writing from an American-based perspective in which communications scholars identify prominent "issues" in the media, Reese (2010) goes on to argue that frames can be examined on a number of scales. When examining frames at the macro-scale (for example Cold War worldviews) scholars would connect these discourses to cultural understandings of world politics and how proponents of these viewpoints leverage them to rationalize their policies and actions. At the micro-scale, (such as local environmental struggles), scholars would examine how specific political and canvassing decisions were used to mobilize support in order to win a policy battle. From micro-scale perspectives, frames are constructed as tools by both sides of a policy conflict. Reese states that macro-scale framing analysis usually relies on *how*-based perspectives, whereas *what*-based research relies on micro-scale perspectives. At times, macro-scale framing analysis may not lend itself to precise quantitative measures and clear codification. Despite Reese's observations of these shortcomings in how-based research, he argues that it forms the foundation of all framing analysis scholarship. Without understanding broader cultural perspectives on various issues, what-based researchers would have a difficult time defining particular frames as a starting point for how-based micro-scale analyses.

### **2.3) Geopolitics, Visuality, and Mapping**

Debrix (2003: x) writes "language in contemporary international relations is an inescapable component of life, behavior, and identity of international actors/agents, and that language is crucial in shaping the contemporary outlook of global politics". Debrix's statement is in accordance with a central tenet of critical geopolitics. Language, and in particular texts, represent and subsequently construct understandings of geopolitics. But at the same time,

images and other visual modes of representation serve as both artefacts and templates of geopolitical discourse. Indeed some scholars consider other cultural productions like paintings and maps to be forms of 'texts'. Thus, the visual can be read discursively (Barnes and Duncan, 1992; Campbell and Power, 2010: 169). Feldman (2005) calls visual discourses 'scopic regimes', writing:

.....agendas and techniques of political visualization [are] the regimens that prescribe modes of seeing and object visibility and that proscribe or render untenable other modes and objects of perception. A scopic regime is an ensemble of practices and discourses that establish truth claims, typicality and credibility of visual...objects and politically correct modes of seeing.

Similarly, Gregory understands that the systematic establishment of a visual field produces a 'constructed visibility that allows particular objects to be seen in determinate ways' (2003: 224). Following on Feldman and Gregory's arguments, once scopic regimes are established, it becomes incredibly difficult to see particular objects in ways outside of established discourses. In this manner, scopic regimes establish particular tropes around particular objects or images.

According to Campbell (2007), visual discourses have been important in securing scientific knowledge. Like other visual modes of knowing, geopolitics was quickly enlisted by states in efforts to control people and territories (Hughes, 2013). Critical scholars of geopolitics understand that geopolitical truths are established and enacted through processes of visual demonstration. The study of geopolitics, to some extent, has become a question of how particular episodes in world politics become constructed through aspects of visual culture (MacDonald, *et al.* 2010).

Like films or photographs, maps can convey geopolitical worldviews. A tenet of conventional cartography is the precise and permanent separation of space and territory. Thus, phenomena represented in maps are classified, ordered, controlled, and purified (Cosgrove, 1999). As Blakemore and Harley (1980) write "the similarity between maps and

words - both concerned with the expression of perceived truths - far outweighs any differences". Therefore, the clean lines of conventional cartography lend themselves well to stark divisions articulated in textual discourses of conventional geopolitics. Divisions between the first, second, and third worlds or explanations of 'global shatterbelts' become very clear when they are mapped (Cohen, 2008). Campbell and Power (2010: 170), in their examination of Western visual discourses on Africa, argue that textual representations worked hand in hand with colonial mapping and exploration efforts in order to make render subjects of interest known to colonial administrations.

The observation and description of indigenous peoples, landscapes, and territories would often involve various forms of surveillance. The 'commanding view' or 'writers eye' that many textual enactments of Africa articulated sought to take possession of African landscapes by ordering and arranging what is seen, making possible the mapping and exploration of colonial territory.

Maps serve as a graphic register of correspondence between territory as it seen by the observer(s) or electronic sensors and the map sheet or map display. Mapping is a process of measuring the world. Conventional cartography measures the world in such a way that findings can be communicated between people, places, and times. This universalizing process can serve to simplify and reduce the categories and classifications used to represent geographic data. While these processes seem straightforward on at first glance, maps are not simply transcriptions of spatial and environmental facts from field notes or remotely sensed data. They are representations of particular realities that have agency in shaping understanding and furthering material action in the world. The instrumental use of maps in daily life can obscure the epistemological and interpretive challenges that mapping presents. While cartographers and other scholars who focus on mapping have long understood these challenges, those outside of map production and academic cartography are rarely exposed to

such conundrums (Cosgrove, 1999; 2008). Most users of maps simply accept what is displayed on a map to be 'true' representations of reality. Geopolitical discourses exploit impressions of truth in cartographic representation (unknowingly, at times) to bolster their claims regarding the nature of world politics. Maps, in conjunction with textual and other visual representations, can establish and reinforce geopolitical discourses.

#### **2.4) Identity, Territory, and Violence in Political Geography**

Terms like race, ethnicity, tribe and sect are very difficult to define. Geographers shy away from defining such terms because they carry very different meanings in different contexts. While there is no agreement amongst academics as to what these terms can mean, geographers do acknowledge that these identity categories are socially constructed (Amin and Thrift, 2004). In their introductory political geography text, Glassner and Fahrer (2004), spend an entire chapter parsing the differences between these categories and how they relate to nationalism. The authors make it clear that nation-state boundaries are rarely coterminous with racial, tribal, ethnic and religious group boundaries. Glassner and Fahrer also state that territorial boundaries between groups of these types are incredibly complex and that these types of groups are so intertwined that delineating them in a cartographic sense is almost impossible.

Despite acknowledgements regarding identity and territory within geography, political geographers often take group identities for granted, assume that members of these groups inhabit distinct territories, and presume that national or political identities are inherently tied to racial, tribal, ethnic, and religious identities. For example, the political geographer Alex Murphy (2013a: 8) advocates that "sectarian" identities be used to explain armed conflict in the Middle East:

A careful, nuanced understanding of the nature and significance of sectarian divisions has also been missing in much of the public debate over the region; indeed they were almost entirely ignored in the lead-up to the US invasion of Iraq. Even after the 2003 invasion, sectarian divisions were generally acknowledged only at the level of broad differences among the country's Arab Sunnis, Arab Shiites, and Kurds. However, such differences are only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. To this day, more deep-seated, locally significant sectarian divisions are rarely given systematic consideration by most commentators—even in the face of developments such as the uprising in Syria that clearly has sectarian overtones.

Murphy asserts that a lack of knowledge regarding sectarian divisions across the Middle East is a serious problem for Western commentators focused on the region. He argues that geographical studies indexing, explaining, and mapping these divisions would prevent observers and foreign policy practitioners from having to "rediscover" them every time sectarian-fuelled tensions or violence crops up across the region. Murphy's statement reinforces a common assumption between distinct cultural categories and violence that is common in academic and journalistic analyses of conflict in places with complex cultural landscapes (Brubaker, 2002)

However, viewpoints like Murphy's do not represent the entire sub-discipline. A number of political geographers seek to upend conventional understandings of identity categories themselves, rather than use them as a starting point for analysis. These authors go beyond acknowledging that racial, tribal, ethnic, and sectarian identities are socially constructed. In their examinations of how these categories are used for political ends, they question whether or not it is even possible to undertake analyses that rely on cultural identity categories. In doing this, they problematize the alleged links between identity, territory, and violence. Political geographers take both empirical and theoretical approaches on these perspectives. Several geographers (and some media scholars) have applied this framework to the examination of how ethno-sectarian themes are understood by European and North American media outlets. These studies are discussed in Section 6 of this chapter.

From an empirical standpoint, Toal and Dahlmann (2011) use their study of Bosnian refugees to document how the ethnic cleansing of the early 1990s has been partially reversed by the UN-sanctioned refugee returns process. Situating their research in North American and European understandings and representations of the conflict, they write that the breakup of Yugoslavia was attributed to the idea of "ancient hatreds". This superficial narrative became the primary means through which foreign journalists reporting on the Bosnian war explained the conflict. European and North American politicians reluctant to intervene in the conflict used similar explanations - even when many officials knew they were inadequate.

The authors write that after Tito consolidated power and began patching the nation of Yugoslavia together following the Second World War, Soviet methodologies for managing its ethnic and religious divisions were used. These modes of governance also contributed to the idea that ethnic and religious populations inhabited discrete enclaves. The country's inhabitants were classified into a three-tiered schema - nations, nationalities, and national minorities. Nations were portions of the populations who were seen to be wholly enclosed by the Yugoslav federation. They were assigned their own republics within the country's federal structure. Nationalities were portions of the population whose ethnic roots were seen to lie elsewhere, like Hungarians and Albanians. National minorities were groups that were part of nations with their own republics, but had traits which set them off from their larger nations, like Bosnian Muslims. As in the Soviet Union, nations were nominally given the right to self-determination. When the 1974 constitution was ratified in anticipation of Tito's death, an "ethnic key" was included which reinforced this ethnic structure by creating the legal means for ethnic self-determination at an undetermined point in the future (Toal and Dahlman, 2011: 27-28).

The ancient hatred narrative was also promoted by the perpetrators of the conflict and its associated ethnic cleansing. Claims about an Albanian genocide against Serbs or the inability of Serbs to live with Croats or Muslims first came into being during the Tito years. Those responsible for the violence knew these conceptualizations of Yugoslavia's political geography were problematic. But they also knew they were provocative and employed these simplistic understandings to advance their own political and territorial goals. They used the ideas of "civilizational conflict" and "struggles of national survival" to portray the violence they were creating as inevitable. This violence was successful in polarizing Bosnia along ethnic lines, but this did not make it an ethnic war, write Toal and Dahlman. They argue that by labeling the Bosnian war as an ethnic conflict is to start at the end and work back to the beginning. A main goal of their study is to better understand how a common political creed of 1940s Yugoslavia became overshadowed by distinct nationalist discourses that produced political polarization along ethno-territorial lines (2011: 39).

Several other political geographers examine the ethno-sectarian assumptions and related violence using similar frameworks. Gregory (2008) studies how Sunni and Shia quarters in Baghdad became more static and reinforced in as a result of the 2003 American occupation of Iraq. Belcher (2014) examines how British colonial understandings of the Pakistani/Afghani cultural landscape informs American military counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine in Pashtunistan. Jones (2014) focuses on problematic ethno-sectarian assumptions in colonial Bengal. Jones maintains that these problematic assumptions were developed as part of the colonial ethnographic state and resulted in the 1947 partition of India along religious lines.

Outside of these empirical studies, some political geographers have addressed these concepts from theoretical perspectives. Agnew (2007) makes a broad critique of identity,

writing "...hard-walled territories are both relatively modern and not universal....Projecting the assumption that they are indeed both ancient and universal produces an image of the world as a of bounded "peoples," "cultures," and "societies" "(2007: 141). Farish (2005) generalizes the principle of governmentality as a condition of modernity in which groups of individuals were identified by a set of unique traits. He goes on to write "[o]nce a sufficient sample of these distinct units was assembled, generalizations became possible, and governmental interventions became practicable" (2005: 69). Murphy (1989: 412) observes that in contemporary social and political thought, there is a tendency to equate political territory with ethnic characteristics. Penrose (2002: 285), echoes these views "[i]nstead of abandoning the pursuit of an impossible ideal - namely the creation of discrete and uniform nations that fit perfectly within the territory of a state - nationalism encourages a view that a specific nation-state is faulty."

In Penrose's (1994: 162) examination of Quebec nationalism, she writes "...we seldom - if ever - stop to consider just what a nation actually is. Our acceptance of nations as *natural* divisions of the global territory and population is essential to the maintenance of the existing geopolitical order." She maintains that the concept of 'nation' came into being during the 18th century in Western Europe. Prominent thinkers saw a need for change in the dynastic state system. They proposed that the inequalities of this system could be eliminated if government was structured to serve 'the people', rather than the small minority of elites of the dynastic system. Understanding populations in this manner led to the nation becoming a foundation of geopolitical thought. In this conceptualization, the nation had three main components: 1) a distinct group of people, 2) a territory that this group occupied, and 3) a 'mystical' bond between people and their territory.

Penrose further argues that nationalism sought to create nation-states - entities defined by congruent political and cultural boundaries. In practice, the impossible task of demarcating people and territory meant that political boundaries took priority over cultural boundaries. She contends that no recognized nation-state has ever been able to fulfill the three ideal components of a nation-state. Despite the lack of fulfillment of this ideal, the nation-state came to be seen as 'natural'. By linking the natural nation-state to the right to exclusive power within its territory, the concept became legitimized as the central element of the world geopolitical order.

Juliet Fall, in a critique of the ideas of the conservative public intellectual Robert Kaplan (and other thinkers drawing from similar conceptual perspectives), observes that ethnic heterogeneity within states is repeatedly identified by Kaplan as a cause of conflict, while ethnic homogeneity is implicitly and explicitly presented as a solution.<sup>2</sup> She argues that this line of thinking overemphasizes congruency between ethno-sectarian group boundaries and state boundaries, while ignoring politico-economic and postcolonial power relations. Fall goes on to state that these conservative thinkers argue that only if nations could be formed into the 'right' shape, then conflicts would cease, since only ethnic conflicts emerge within 'artificial' states. She points out that these artificial states are perceived by Kaplan to have the incorrect shape, possess incorrect boundaries, or contain the wrong inhabitants.

Fall (2010) makes a related argument in an examination of 'natural boundaries'. She focuses on an oft-cited research paper published by a team of three American-based economists. This paper argues that boundaries derived landscape features (such as mountain

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<sup>2</sup> Fall, Juliet. "The Revenge of Geography? What the Chaps Tell Us about Coming Conflicts and Their Own Cognitive State". *Society and Space*. No Date. <https://societyandspace.com/reviews/reviews-archive/kaplan-robert-2012-revenge-of-geography-reviewed-by-juliet-fall/>.

ranges or bodies of water) are beneficial for economic reasons. According to her, this paper ignores more than two hundred years of social science research that has critiqued the appropriate shape of states and boundaries in relation to physical geography. In addition to these boundary constructions based in physical geography, Fall points out that these economists are proponents of ethnically homogenous nation-states. She states that these scholars regard former colonies or mandate territories like Iraq, India, and Pakistan as problematic because colonizers did not follow boundaries between ethnicities or religions. Fall writes that there is no discussion of the roles that colonial or post-colonial political processes played in the construction of many social identities of these post-colonial nation-states cited. In short, these scholars take ethno-sectarian categories for granted, rather than acknowledging their partial roots in the structural violence of the colonial and post-colonial era.

Agnew (2009: 427-434) asserts that the term 'ethnic conflict' is used by European and North American geopolitical commentators in a "vague and all-inclusive" manner to refer to religious, linguistic and nationalistic conflicts. He further argues that these commentators use this phrase without any allusion to external sponsors and interventions by outsiders in these conflicts. Agnew states that external actors and their actions are completely obscured by the idea of ethnic conflict because it places the causes of conflict within immediate localities and attributes the causes of conflicts classified in this manner as "primordial and atavistic". Agnew cites 'balkanization' as one of the most frequently used ideas to convey the idea of ethnic conflict. He defines balkanization as "spatial segmentation or partition along violent lines based on primordial hatreds." Agnew goes on to argue that the term is applied in a pejorative manner to convey danger from ethnic group irredentism. He further points out that the balkanization analogy is used in North American and European perspectives on world politics

to simplify geopolitical complexity into easily digestible sound bites that lend themselves to the reduction of complex issues into uncomplicated metaphors. Agnew asserts that the idea of balkanization is used widely wherever high profile geopolitical "events" seem to be unstable and out of the reach of external control.

These critiques of ethno-sectarian identities and their variants share similarities with what has become a central field of research amongst political geographers (and scholars in allied fields) since the late 1980s - problematizing territory, rather than taking it as a given (Murphy, 2010). Within political geography, the concept of the "territorial trap" is one of the most frequently used frameworks to question these geographical assumptions. Agnew (1994) developed this concept as a specific critique of U.S.-based international relations and international political economy scholarship. In his words, "[c]onventional thinking relies on three geographical assumptions - states as fixed units of sovereign space, the domestic/foreign polarity, and states as 'containers' of societies - that have led into the "territorial trap" " (Agnew, 1994: 53). Put another way, the territorial trap is based on three principles: 1) the entirety of the earth's surface should be divided into clearly bounded nation-states, 2) areas within nation-state boundaries should be free of external control, and 3) political and cultural communities should be precisely aligned and these communities should be congruent with nation-state boundaries.

Since the time of the paper's publication in the mid-1990s, the territorial trap has been extended to broadly critique what Murphy (2013b: 1213) calls "modernist political-territorial ideals".<sup>5</sup> Elden (2013) understands these ideals to have arisen in early-modern Europe and

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<sup>5</sup> In relation to academic research that takes these ideals for granted, Murphy writes "The territorial state became not only a political hegemon, but a conceptual one as well" (2010: 771). This 'methodological nationalism' is reinforced through state data gathering efforts that compile data within clearly delimited boundaries (Dalby, 2007a).

have subsequently been institutionalized by the modern state system. He further argues that these political-territorial ideals evolved as centralized authorities increased their power over larger and larger land areas using new survey techniques that made precise demarcations between various jurisdictions possible. Henry (2010: 754) echoes Elden's view, writing "ideas about the state are themselves an element of state construction".

Related to the third principle of the territorial trap (political and cultural communities should be precisely aligned and these communities should be congruent with nation-state boundaries), states comprised of ethno-sectarian patchworks are used to signal potential conflict (Agnew, 2009; Brubaker, 2002: 165; Kaufman, 2001). Political geographers (and other scholars) have long sought to question straightforward explanations of conflict which use single explanatory variables. Investigations into so-called 'resource' or 'environmental' conflicts are perhaps the most well-developed in political geography. Like ethno-sectarian fuelled conflict, the idea of wars over resources or conflicts caused by environmental degradation and/or change can essentialize and depoliticize violence. As a result, the causal factors and impacts of conflict can be misinterpreted (Le Billon, 2008: 347; O'Lear, 2004).

According to Le Billon (2001: 564) conventional takes on resource conflict can be divided into two camps - resource scarcity and resource abundance. Explanations of wars caused by resource scarcity argue that people or nations will fight for resources necessary for their survival. On the other hand, explanations of wars caused by resource abundance, primary commodities are easily taxable - thus they are attractive to ruling elites and their competitors. Le Billon (2001: 564-565) labels both of these approaches as environmentally deterministic - arguing that they fail to take into account the socially constructed nature of resources. Le Billon articulates a "political ecology of resource wars" which he sees as avoiding the pitfalls of these two conventional perspectives. Political ecology is traditionally

focused on critiquing the apolitical perspectives of mainstream environment and development research. Le Billon joins this approach with what he sees as a central concern of political science - regime security and armed conflict. While natural resources may fund violent conflict or motivate belligerents, he can find no direct links between resource shortages/resource abundance and war.

Barnett (2000: 271) makes similar arguments using the concept of *environmental security*. He locates this concept at the juncture of global environmental politics/security and conflict studies. He argues that a mainstay of scholarship focusing on environmental security is that environmental degradation will automatically lead to armed conflict. Barnett points out in the post Cold War era, realist security discourses (especially those emanating from the United States) have latched onto this idea. Despite the environmental security thesis having such a high profile, Barnett sees it as being theory driven, while there is little empirical material to back its claims. From Dalby's (2004: 242) perspective, much of the research attempting to link natural resources and war relied upon neo-Malthusian assumptions of resource scarcity in their explanations of conflict up until the late 1990s. Dalby goes on to argue that during the early 2000s these neo-Malthusian perspectives became increasingly untenable due to critical environmental security researchers becoming more vocal and scholarship in political ecology taking an interest in resource conflicts.

Based on the literature reviewed above, political geography possesses the theoretical and conceptual tools to question the assumptions underlying conventional views of ethno-sectarian mosaics and the inherent threat of conflict (and implied irredentism), political geographers have only recently begun to question these categories using empirical studies. Furthermore, a framework for investigating how civil or violent conflict is associated with ethno-sectarian identities has not been developed in a robust manner. Thus, there is a missing

link in the sub-discipline between theoretical critiques of territory and conflict and critiques of ethno-sectarian identities.

Agnew and Muscara (2012) point out that while ethno-sectarian conflicts became prominent when some Cold War boundaries began to dissolve during the 1990s, many states are increasingly accommodating ethnic and religious movements seeking secession or autonomy. Often, movements will compromise for much less than the creation of independent nation-states if issues like regional devolution and language and religious rights are addressed. They also point out that many ethno-sectarian groups manage to cooperate without large-scale violence. What is important in all these understandings of conflict is that violence is almost always political. Placing the cause of violence on purportedly inherent characteristics of physical or human geographies obscures its causes (Flint, 2005).

Political geographers examine assumptions regarding ethno-sectarian identities, territory, and violence. In doing this, they seek to de-privilege commonly held assumptions regarding these three aspects of social organization and how they relate to each other. However, research in this area that draws explicitly on critical geopolitics is rather rare (except see Agnew, 2009; Toal and Dahlman, 2011). These few examples don't examine cartographic representations of ethno-sectarian groups nor do they focus on how popular representations can reinforce practical and formal representations. In general, critical geopolitics has not focused on how ethno-sectarian identities can be used in geopolitical reasoning practices. Within the cognate discipline of critical international relations, a small number of authors have begun to examine how the examination of racial difference was and remains central to North American and European conceptions of IR. While racial, ethnic, and religious categories don't always align, critical examinations of race in IR can be extended to ethnic and religious categories. IR scholars' investigations of race shows how studies of

international relations (and geopolitics) often neglect the discipline's roots in classifying and studying racial (and by extension ethnic and religious) difference.

## 2.5) International Relations and Race

Critical and popular geopolitics have very little to say with respect to understandings of "race" in geopolitical discourse.<sup>4</sup> Within the field of international relations, a small number of critically-minded scholars have begun to investigate how racialized worldviews are an essential component of North American and European approaches to the study of international relations. Scholars of critical geopolitics understand international relations to be a form of geopolitical thinking absent of considerations of space, territory, and physical geography that occupy a good deal of classical or conventional geopolitical concerns (Agnew, 2010). This aspatial approach to theoretical and empirical research is a common critique of mainstream social science by geographers (Brown, 2007). But international relations, like geopolitics, is built on the assumptions that state interests and security can be objectively determined through evaluations of variables like material resources and military strength. Implicitly (and sometimes explicitly), a commitment to imperialism underlies these calculations (Hobson, 2012). Some historians of international relations argue that these imperialistic and situated worldviews in contemporary international relations are firmly rooted in "racial development" thinking of the early 20th century (Anievas, *et al.* 2014).

Early forms of international relations "sought to understand, explain, and improve the world stock of inferior beings" and thus avert the political and biological threat to white

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<sup>4</sup> The political geographer James Sidaway (2010) touches upon race in geopolitics by arguing that patterns of rendition in the War on Terror are reformulations of colonial violence and dispossession. He argues that racial categories are the common factor tying colonial violence to the War on Terror.

supremacy posed by "backward and dependent" non-white colonial subjects across the globe. A "global color line" was imagined lying between imperial metropolises and colonies (Vitalis, 2010: 911). Early American IR thinkers were preoccupied with maintaining white dominance and purity in colonies around the world - including their own. *Foreign Affairs*, the pre-eminent journal of the US foreign policy establishment, began in the 1920s as the *Journal of Race Development* (Vitalis, 2015).

While racial tropes have largely been expunged from mainstream discourses on world politics in the post-Second World War era, race and racism are a significant part of the underlying structure of international relations (Vitalis, 2015: 9). Anievas et al, (2014: 3) write that postcolonial scholarship has allowed scholars to make connections between orientalist/racist frameworks of analysis and practices of grand strategy formulation, interstate conflict, and war. These authors argue that contemporary international relations is very much a situated worldview rooted in its original design as a policy science created to solve problems posed by empire building and colonial administration facing Western powers expanding into and occupying what is now known as the "Global South." Some argue that the colonial *mission civilizatrice* has been simply repackaged into contemporary humanitarian and development discourses that draw heavily on IR and geopolitical theories of the colonial era (Power and Sidaway, 2004).

While race, racism, and imperialism were central to the founding principles of IR, they are a marginal part of the contemporary research concerns within the discipline. Questions on these subjects are deemed as insignificant or relics of the past by the IR establishment and have no bearing on how states vie for their self-interests in the zero-sum game of the global political order. Race, racism, and imperialism are seen to be subjects for other branches of political science, the social sciences, or the humanities (Vitalis, 2015).

The small group of scholars that critically examine race in international relations do not address how ethnic or religious categories underlie these perspectives on world politics. But it could be said that these authors are attempting to show how mainstream international relations theory is a product of privileged positions created through "whiteness" (Ware and Back, 2001). In the (non-ethnic and non-religious) white spaces of international relations, it could be said that all "non-whites" possess racial, ethnic, or religious identities and are seen as deviations from the norm. Abstract international relations theory and research (and most other academic work) has the privilege of assigning identities and attributes to the inhabitants of the post-colonial (and post-communist) world without allowing them to speak back in any significant way. In the case of ethnic and religious-based conflict, ethnic and religious identities are seen to trump the "national" identities which are central to white spaces. According to mainstream theories of IR (and geopolitics), until nationalism takes hold in multi-ethnic states afflicted by internecine conflict, racialized, ethnicized, and religio-doctrinalized identities will always be seen as deficient.

## **2.6) Media Perspectives on Ethno-sectarian Violence**

From Seaton's (1999) perspective, the emergence of ethnicity as a factor in explaining wars around the world is a new phenomenon. She argues that the media play a key role in these perspectives by providing initial and influential definitions of communities involved in conflict. In these understandings, violent conflict is a fate that is hereditary and predetermined.

Robison (2004) examines mainstream British newsprint representations of the Bosnia conflict between 1992 and 1995. She observes that during this period, hardly a day passed in which a story on Yugoslavia's dissolution did not appear in the British print media. In her

analysis, she identifies two competing representations of the conflict. The first representation was embraced by those observers who did not want to be held morally responsible for events taking place in the Balkans. This representation called the conflict an 'ethnic war' which had roots in the distant past. On the other hand, Bosnia was depicted as a civilized European space where different ethnic and religious groups had lived a peaceful coexistence. Thus, Robison argues, Bosnia should be saved from ethnic cleansing and the violent territorial expansionism that went along with it.

Both of these views use the idea of ethnicity in a similar manner. They suggest that groups share a common psychological core that sets one group apart from another. This determinist view holds that some groups are inclined to come into conflict with other groups - ignoring the fact that in the former Yugoslavia ethnic and religious, groups intermarried, shared customs, and often spoke the same language. Robison argues that the ethnic simplification led to one-dimensional reporting that served to naturalize the conflict.

Gruley and Duvall (2012) examine the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* coverage of the Darfur conflict from 2003-2009. Their findings show during the initial period of coverage, tribal stereotypes were used to explain the conflict. However, as the conflict wore on, the coverage became less reliant upon tribalistic assumptions (although they were still present) to explain the conflict and attempted to situate itself in more nuanced understandings of the war. This long-term analysis is important because it shows that the way in which frames are constructed change over time and are not monolithic - even if one perspective dominates.

Parks (2009) focuses on how the Darfur conflict was represented in Google Earth during the height of the violence in the five Sudanese states that comprise the region between 2006 and 2007. The conflict was documented using a "Global Awareness" layer that was the result of a collaboration between Google and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The rationale behind this project was to generate international awareness about widespread violence through a medium that purportedly improved upon older and more established information delivery methods. The project's implementers hoped that by bringing evidence of violence to widespread audiences, the violence could be stopped.

Despite the novel representation of conflict in Google Earth, it ends up operating in a similar manner to television news reports, Parks asserts. This is because it combines evidence from a number of sources, privatizes public information, brands conflicts, and gives a multimedia account of events. Furthermore, like other mainstream North American and European accounts of the conflict, the "Arab" janjaweed militias and their "Arab" Sudanese government sponsors were seen to be persecuting "African" tribal populations. Parks finds that the information presented by Google Earth was ahistorical, lacking any mention of the colonial and post-colonial political processes and administrative structures which led to the conflict.

Working in a manner in accordance with other cartographic software, Google Earth is a compilation of separate images of the earth's surface taken from a variety of satellite platforms. These geolocated images are tiled over a sphere in order to show the entirety of the earth's surface. The Global Awareness layer made for the Darfur conflict is fixed over the top of the satellite image base layer. The layer represents the location of more than 1,600 destroyed villages, while linking to audio and pictorial evidence. While there was much fanfare surrounding Google Earth's improved capabilities over older types of media, very little was said about the difficulties of cartographically and visually representing such a complex conflict. It was understood that the information presented through Google's software was simply "true", Parks writes.

Google Earth operates in a manner consistent with cartographic convention - to "transform space into ordered and legible territory" (Fall, 2006: 660). The point of this type of software is reproduce the world accurately on a different scale. Rarely is it understood by both map producers and users that this is an impossible goal (Harley, 1989). Google Earth's ability to compile digitized spatial data, images, and audio recordings from a diverse array of sources enhances the impression of accuracy amongst its users (Barney, 2015).

Furthermore, the software's use of satellite imagery as a base layer ties into militaristic understandings of orbital remote sensing's omniscient view from space. Satellite imagery was initially developed by powers on both sides of the Cold War to give military commanders an unconcealed view of territory and all the objects contained within it. This view from above allows it to claim objectivity (Harris, 2006.) During the Cold War, this type of imagery remained classified due to national security concerns. The scarcity of this imagery in the public sphere during this time allowed US, Soviet, and other militaries to release it in a limited manner to media outlets as a testament to military prowess. Furthermore, this type of imagery must be processed and interpreted by experts in order to make it viewable, allowing militaries and governments a great deal of control in how this imagery was received and interpreted by media outlets and readers. While this type of imagery became much more widely available at the end of the Cold War when large portions of it were declassified, the impression of its ability to represent landscapes in a powerfully transparent manner is still very much part of public perceptions of satellite remote sensing (Parks, 2006; Warf, 2012).

Culcasi (2006) examines cartographic and textual representations of Kurdistan in American print media outlets between 1945 and 2002. Notably, Kurdistan and areas Kurdish people inhabit show a great deal of variation from map to map. During the early Cold War, Kurdistan was portrayed as a territory that could potentially be allied to the Soviet Union. An

extreme example of this is a *Time* magazine map from the early 1950s which portrays Kurdish territory in a sickle shape, attempting to show a connection between Kurdistan, communism, and the Soviet Union. Culcasi (2006: 294) points out that while very few of the maps in her sample were this tabloid-esque in their representations, the boundaries of Kurdistan were drawn in a manner that reflects changing American geopolitical perspectives and foreign policy interests with respect to this portion of the Middle East. During the 1991 Gulf War, a shift occurred when Kurdistan was portrayed as a patchwork of territories needing protection from the Iraqi Army by the US-led coalition. As the case for another Iraq War was being made in the US in 2002 and early 2003, Kurdistan was shown to be geostrategically important due to its oil resources and its cultural uniqueness when contrasted with other regions of Iraq (Culcasi, 2006). In short, Kurdistan's ambiguous boundaries in these maps reflect shifting American geopolitical perspectives and foreign policy discourses and are only a distorted reflection of primary ethnographic data gathered on the ground.

All of these media studies carry the understanding that packaging ethno-sectarian groups into discrete identities and territories and reducing conflict to intractable cultural differences in media discourses is rooted in very problematic geopolitical worldviews. While finding explicit links between popular culture and world politics can be extremely difficult, these authors show that there is considerable overlap between academic and policy framings of these events (Weldes and Rowley, 2015). As Sharp (2000) argues, foreign policy elites do not exist in some type of bubble by relying on exclusive sources of information. Often, they rely upon the same media sources as the general public.

Debrix (2003) writes that tabloid geopolitics presents political realities that remain free of jargon and are in many ways caricaturally simplistic. While it might be stretch to consider the forms of media discussed above to be tabloid journalism, the ways in which they

present ethno-sectarian related violence is free of jargon and easy to understand. Ethno-sectarian perspectives enable media coverage to deploy ageographic and ahistorical means of reporting since the rules they describe are seen to be inevitable traits of post-colonial or post-communist cultural landscapes. Debrix observes that in the post-Cold War world, states consisting of ethno-sectarian patchworks compromise the rigid ideals of the nation-state, sovereignty, and the state's territorial claims. The ever-looming threat of ethno-sectarian violence contributes to a persistent discourse within popular geopolitics of danger and insecurity.

The high-profile conflicts in Bosnia and Rwanda established the tropes of ethno-sectarian violence in Western media (Myers, *et al.* 1996). References and metaphors to Bosnia and Rwanda are intended to make situations immediately comprehensible to readers. This type of media coverage indexes ethnic and religious traits of each group so that they are easily recognizable. Animosity between groups is seen to be a natural part of the cultural landscape. Political identities are assumed to be congruent with cultural identities - although it is never made clear why this is so. In these cases, this is not an intentional "dumbing down" of geopolitical discourse. Popular discourses reflect how ethno-sectarian violence is perceived and dealt with in Western foreign policy circles and in major international organization, like the UN. In addition to textual representations, the research described above demonstrates that maps and other representative imagery of the earth's surface can play a major role in illustrating the geographical aspects of ethno-sectarian identities and related violence.

## Chapter 3) Ethno-sectarian Mosaics and the Middle East

### 3.1) Rendering Territory Legible

The geographer Robert Sack uses the concept of *territoriality* to understand how territories are delimited and controlled. He defines territoriality as "*the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area*". This area will be called *territory*" (1986: 19). Put another way, territory is not some naturally occurring feature of physical geography that can be ignored in the examination of social relations. Territory is central to how modern power is deployed. It is socially constructed through constant establishment and maintenance efforts. Sack argues that while the examination spatial relationships are key to research in human geography, the examination of the processes of territoriality and resulting territory are often neglected.

Elden makes a similar point regarding territory being neglected by academic researchers. He writes "territory tends to be assumed as unproblematic. Theorists have largely neglected to define the term, taking it as obvious and not worthy of further investigation" (Elden 2005: 10). Painter (2010) writes that when territory is used as an explanatory principle, it operates under several assumptions. The first assumption is that territory is marked by clearly defined boundaries and that these boundaries do not overlap. The second assumption is that state sovereignty is coterminous with territorial boundaries. The final assumption is that state power is exercised uniformly across territory. Importantly, processes of territoriality are never complete and that the construction of an ideal territory is a promise that the state can never fulfill. Rhys Jones (2007: 4), writes "Many states, in different places and different time periods, have asserted a degree of organizational control over a defined territory but have struggled to impose this ideology of rule on the state's people and territory."

Henri Lefebvre sees territory to be constructed in similar manner through a process he terms the *production of space*. Lefebvre understands that space is produced by state administrative structures that organize and use space in a systematic manner through the deployment of particular forms of knowledge and technologies (Lefebvre, 1991: 9–30). Therefore, "national territories" are physical spaces that are mapped and subsequently transformed by networks, circuits, and flows established within them (Brenner and Elden, 2009: 225).

In order to render territory manageable, state building projects must first render it "legible". The concept of making physical and human landscapes legible underlies James C. Scott's examination of what he calls "state simplifications" necessary to the practice of modern statecraft (1998: 3). These simplifications make social interventions and the management of natural resources possible. Scott compares these simplifications to abridged maps. They do not accurately represent the reality of systems they claim to depict - they represented only a *tranche* of it that is interesting to state officials.

These simplifications are not simply cartographic. When they are allied with state power, they enable much of the reality they represent to be remade. As an example, Scott points to cadastral maps. They do not simply describe a system of land tenure. They create a tenure system through their ability to define categories on a legal basis. Furthermore, ".....the builders of the modern nation-state do not merely describe, observe, and map; they strive to shape a people and landscape that will fit the techniques of observation" (Scott, 1998: 3). Thus, entire physical and human landscapes are remade in order to fit cadastral mapping systems.

Theories of producing space or making territory legible share a great deal with Foucault's concept of government rationalities, or 'governmentality'. The sociologist Mitchell

Dean (2010) writes that studies of governmentality seek to understand how regimes of government makes certain objects visible, while at the same time obscuring and hiding others. These studies emphasize the visual and spatial dimensions of governance and thus draw attention to diagrams of power and authority. While maps are central to these examinations, schematics like architectural drawings, management flow diagrams, and charts and tables are other ways in which fields of governance can be visualized. These types of materials make it "possible to 'picture' who and what is to be governed, how relations of authority and obedience are constituted in space, how different locales and agents are to be connected with one another, what problems are to be solved and what objectives are to be sought." (Dean, 2010: 41).

Dean further argues that modern forms of governmental power should be understood as attempts to articulate a "bio-politics". Bio-politics seeks to enhance the lives of a target population through application of idealized subjectivities. Notably, these target populations are defined within a circumscribed territory and bio-political plans are given power through legal frameworks. However,

forms of identity promoted and presupposed by various practices and programs of government should not be confused with a *real* subject, subjectivity, or subject position, i.e. with a subject that is the endpoint or terminal of these practices and constituted through them. Regimes of government do not *determine* forms of subjectivity (Dean, 2010: 43).

According to Hannah (2000), projects of simplification and management which utilize territory or space to achieve their ends can be traced to Western Europe from the 16th century onwards. These rationalities and means of governance have been exported to a large proportion of the world due to colonial empires and more recently through the post-colonial set of international arrangements based on a system of sovereign states. David Scott (1995: 193) writes that examinations of "colonial governmentality":

characterizes those ways in which colonial power is organized as an activity designed to produce effects of rule. More specifically what I mean to illuminate are what I should like to call the targets of colonial power (that is, the point or points of power's application, the object or objects it aims at, and the means and instrumentalities it deploys in search of these targets, points, and objects); and the field of its operation (that is, the zone that it actively constructs for its functionality).

In Timothy Mitchell's *Colonizing Egypt*, he examines how colonial modes of governmentality attempted to target and re-order Egypt in a manner that made the country "picture-like and legible, rendered available to political and economic calculation. Colonial power required the country to be readable, like a book..." (1989: 33). The colonial projects that Mitchell examines consider space to be neutral plane upon which projects of governance are carried out. The knowledge used in these plans is rendered 'true' through governmental power. In creating models of Egyptian society, colonial projects also simplified and excluded any aspect of social relations that were not of interest to administrators. Mitchell considers the realms of Egyptian society that the Ottoman and later British-backed government were interested in transforming to be 'enframed'. Meaning that the limits of governmental goals were clearly defined, often through illustrated schematics, giving preference to visual modes of representation in the administration of Egyptian society.

In *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Technopolitics, Modernity*, Mitchell (2000) argues that the production of maps is seen by scholars as the epitome of colonial power. Maps are important to colonial governmentalities because they illustrate how territory is used to manage populations or resources within clearly defined spaces. According to Mitchell, the first systematic and continuous data gathering project undertaken by the British in Egypt was the

great land survey. Conducted between 1898 and 1907, the survey sought to create cadastral maps for the entirety of Egypt's arable land within the Nile Valley. Cadastral maps document the dimensions of each agricultural plot and make reference to land registers which contain landowner and tax assessment data. Each plot was uniquely represented on 20,000 different map sheets using a 1:2,500 scale. Even with the high resolution offered by this scale, the smallest of holdings appeared just a few millimeters square on the maps. Mitchell contends that prior to the completion of the land survey, maps played no role in Egyptian agriculture. After the survey was completed, Egypt's Nile valley and delta became one of the most closely mapped territories in the world.

Despite the project's claims, it did not produce a more accurate understanding of Egyptian landholdings than earlier forms of land registry, according to Mitchell. The effect the project had was to move expertise from local land managers to the central land office in Cairo. But unlike local land managers, the new mapping system could not keep pace with perpetually shifting river channels, the subdividing of fields, new land being brought into cultivation, and the movement of stone and steel plot markers by locals. Thus, even before the project was completed, the surveys were out of date. Administrators of the project also claimed that accurate plot measurements could be undertaken in the land office on the maps themselves, rather than sending teams of surveyors into the field when assessing a plot's value for tax purposes. But due to paper map sheets that swelled and shrank due to ambient humidity and air temperature, the inherent inaccuracy of map measurement tools, and the small size of many plots, it was almost impossible to obtain precise plot measurements from the maps themselves.

Mitchell writes that the undertaking of this cadastral survey was not simply a wish by colonial authorities to make legible and manage the Egyptian agricultural landscape. It

plugged into larger political-economic designs of increasing Egypt's foreign currency earnings to settle massive debts with the country's creditors. Cotton monocropping and land taxes were seen as one of the primary means of generating revenue in order to pay these debts. Prior to the imposition of this system, Egyptian agriculture was a mixture of high value cash crops (like cotton) and food crops (like wheat, pulses and beans, and vegetables) and fodder crops (like alfalfa). A complex system of crop rotation helped to mitigate crop diseases and crop pests. When combined with annual river flooding, rotation systems helped to address soil fertility issues.

After the British regime of land taxes was implemented, growers were forced into cotton monocrop production in order to meet higher tax requirements. Thus, villagers who were mostly self-sufficient in food production before the land survey were forced completely into a cash economy after the land tax regime was enforced. They had to purchase foodstuffs, animal feed, hybrid cotton seed, and synthetic cotton inputs with revenue generated from cotton farming. In 1902, the Aswan Dam was completed. Within several years, 80 percent of the Nile valley was converted to permanent flood irrigation systems. Riverine silt deposits that were previously a major component of soil fertility, were captured behind the dam. The elimination of annual silt deposits coupled with the massive pest and disease problem inherent with continuous monocropping made it difficult for cotton growers to produce sufficient crops year after year to meet all of the tax revenue requirements and fulfill their food purchasing needs. Thus, malnutrition and disease became acute amongst Egypt's rural population during the early 20th century (Mitchell, 2000).

Egypt was only one of many sites spanning the colonized world that suffered acute food shortages and malnutrition in the late Victorian era. Mike Davis argues that so catastrophic were the famines spurred by colonially-sponsored private land ownership

regimes and monocrop commodity agriculture that he refers to them as Holocausts (2000). Removing robustness from agricultural systems, combined with unpredictable weather patterns (triggered by severe El Niño effects) across large parts of the globe played a significant role in the underdevelopment of what is now known as the Third World. Despite serious issues with Egypt's commodity and export focused agricultural system, recent studies demonstrate that colonial-style/cash crop agricultural modes of production remain a fundamental part of the contemporary Egyptian political economy (Sowers, 2011).

In the Egyptian cadastral project, surveying and mapping were presented as straightforward fixes to what were seen as shortcomings in Egypt's agricultural productivity and the state's tax collecting abilities. Both James C. Scott and Mitchell Dean speculate that government projects to render territories and their inhabitants legible and thus manageable are utopian at their core. These projects imply that it is possible to reform physical landscapes and their human inhabitants, and that these efforts can be brought to successful conclusions (Dean, 2010; Scott, 1998). Such utopian strategies are couched in technocratic, bureaucratic, and apolitical terms. Despite their seemingly non-contentious goals, they have the potential to bring about incredibly dysfunctional secondary effects and intense disputes across all geographic scales. Thus territorial or spatial phenomena are perpetually escaping any attempt to encompass them through regulation or design (Brenner and Elden, 2009: 33). Furthermore, once governmental rationalities like these are put into place, they seem to be incredibly tenacious.

As Scott and Mitchell argue, cadastral maps - relatively straightforward property lines and ownership registeries can become complicated very quickly. How plots are delimited, how ownership is defined, and how property taxes are assessed are contentious issues. In efforts to use cultural categories to administer territory, similar challenges exist. Defining

ethno-sectarian categories, determining how individuals fit into these categories, and delimiting their territorial extent is incredibly difficult, if not impossible. Representing this type of data using standard cartographic methods is extremely reductive as rich qualitative data must be summarized in a manner that enable it to fit into quantitative modes fit for cartographic representation. Beyond data representational issues, Scott (1998: 3) argues that the oversimplification of complex social systems can lead to problems with data gathering methodology itself that can lead to data sets that are "inaccurate, fraudulent, incomplete, and politically distorted." Despite the issues inherent with using maps and their inherent territorial assumptions to represent ethno-sectarian categories, theorists of colonial governmentalities argue that this was one of the pillars of rule in twentieth century colonial administrations.

### **3.2) Administering Territory via Cultural Categories**

In Benedict Anderson's oft-cited *Imagined Communities*, he is concerned with how popular nationalist feelings were proliferated through key components of the modern state such as the mass media, the education system, and administrative policies (1983). He asserts that homogenous nation states came into being across Europe at times when print capitalism made it possible for individuals to imagine themselves as part of a larger community of people. In proposing how this model of the modern nation-state diffused globally, Anderson asserts that the nation-state spread as European colonies gained independence during the mid to late twentieth century. The new states carved out of colonial territories somehow reflected "natural" national communities. In this view, colonial power structures and governance systems had absolutely no influence on state structures in the post-colonial era. From this perspective, processes of nation building that took place in parts of Europe 200-300 years ago didn't take place in formerly colonized territories until after independence.

Later, Anderson (1991) re-examines his initial views on the global proliferation of the nation-state, and reverses his argument. He writes that colonial power structures and colonial governance systems were central to the construction of post-colonial nation-states that were carved out of formerly colonized territories. He maintains that post-colonial states can trace their nationalistic understandings to three key colonial institutions: the census, the map, and the museum. These three institutions profoundly affected the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion - by describing the characteristics of its inhabitants, indexing the characteristics and extent of its territory, and recording the legitimacy of its ancestry (Anderson, 1991). In his explanation of the colonial map and the colonial museum, Anderson is concerned with how national spaces (and imaginings of their pasts) were made visible. This visibility produced bounded spaces that could then be brought under administrative control. This theme has been investigated by a number of geographers, historians, and anthropologists.<sup>1</sup>

The colonial census focused on counting and categorizing subject populations within these newly demarcated national boundaries. In many cases they determined "traditional" identities. These traditional identities were subsequently tied to political rights. Citing sociological research on the colonial Malay state, Anderson (1991) points out that from "late nineteenth century up to the recent present show an extraordinarily rapid, superficially arbitrary, series of changes, in which categories are continuously agglomerated, disaggregated, recombined, intermixed, and reordered." He observes that politically powerful identity categories were subject to the greatest modification over the years. In the Malaysian

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<sup>1</sup> It is argued that cartographic demarcation of colonial territories made the penetration of administrative control into the interior of these territories possible. See Winichakul (1994) and Bassett (1995) for some examples of this type of work. Cosgrove (2001: 211) writes, "The map, like the scientific laboratory, could generate as well as illustrate new knowledge, creating worlds that could then be explored empirically."

colonial censuses (and post-colonial censuses) - multiple, changing, or "transvestite" identity categories are not allowed. Thus, a census carried out in this manner assumes that the entire population within a clearly-bounded territory is included and that each individual fits only into a single category.

Pels and Salemink (1999) use the concept of governmentality to describe the numerous ways in which methodologies of modern government rationalities were deployed in widely different contexts and different time periods across colonized territories. From their perspective, the practice of ethnography was another key tactic used in broader strategies of colonial governmentality<sup>2</sup>. By the mid to late 1800s, ethnography became part of a suite of methods used for colonial administration. They describe colonial ethnography as using cultural, geographical, linguistic, physical, or political criteria to create "discrete and static ethnic groups inhabiting a clearly delimited territory" (1999: 26). In order to do this, colonial administrators were required to morph fluid and multi-layered ethnic interrelations into an arrangement of static and singular identities. These identities were then formalized in statistical surveys and censuses. They describe "customary law" as the means by which formalized identities were turned into the essence of local social organization (Pels and Salemink, 1999: 28). Customary law fixed social practice and added rigid and traditional dimensions to colonial governance. Commonplace understandings about social categories such as tribes, castes, religions and modes of agricultural organization (like farmers vs. herders) continue to serve as the basis of political organization in formerly colonized

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<sup>2</sup> Pels and Salemink (1999) and Pels (1997) argue that the discipline of anthropology is a set of practices and knowledge creation systems developed explicitly to serve the colonial state. The practice of ethnography was central to formation of the discipline. Ethnography was practiced by traders, military officers, and missionaries long before professional anthropologists were employed by colonial governments or universities during the 20th century. They claim that mainstream genealogies of anthropology gloss over or outright ignore this history.

territories. These categories are essential to the ways in which former colonies are represented in North America and Europe. From Pels and Saleminck's perspective, colonial ethnographers were not concerned with honest reflections of what they encountered in their field research. Rather, the point of these undertakings was to shoehorn fluid divisions of social organization into colonially dictated classifications based on categories like tribe, caste, religion, and livelihoods.

Mamdani (2012) takes a similar view on colonial modes of rule in his attempt to understand why colonial indirect rule systems have been so tenacious in the post-colonial era. Mamdani starts by describing how the 1857 Indian mutiny caused the shift from direct rule to indirect rule. Prior to the events of 1857, the British Empire focused on culturally assimilating conquered elites. In the shift to indirect rule, the definition and management of cultural difference became the primary mode of colonial governance. Mamdani asserts that the British empire developed and adopted this mode of governance first and other European empires followed quickly followed suit (2012: 10)

Mamdani writes that the political identity of 'native' is the creation of the colonial state. In indirect rule systems, he theorizes that the "native is pinned down, localized....confined to custom, and then defined as its product" (Mamdani 2012: 4). In these formulations, the settler was modern while the native was confined to timeless customs. Examining the works of colonial era theorists, such as Henry Maine, who sought to re-establish the British Empire on more durable legal grounds following the 1857 Indian crisis, Mamdani writes that the works of these theorists were translated into policy by colonial administrators throughout the empire. He observes that the results of these policies was a mode of rule built upon two separate legal systems - civil law for settlers and customary law for natives. Customary law purportedly reflected tradition and custom. Along with this legal

system came censuses that classified the native population into "natural" groups. Customary law further divided native populations between indigenous groups and migrant groups. Indigenous groups had land rights and limited political rights within circumscribed "homelands". Migrant groups living outside of assigned homelands or left without homelands in the creation of these ethnic patchworks found themselves without rights. The effect customary law had was to conflate a cultural identity with a political identity and tie it to a particular territory (Mamdani, 2012: 7).

The architects of indirect rule claimed that it was a practical response to a shortage of resources. This made for a weak state that had a very small impact. This system was supposed to conserve custom and tradition. Mamdani's evaluation of indirect rule is the exact opposite. By the time indirect rule was implemented throughout the British colonies the early twentieth century, it developed very large ambitions. Indirect rule sought to define the very cultural and political identities of entire colonized populations. The indirect rule colonial state did this through the creation of historiographies that fit its version of the past, the creation and reinforcement of identity categories through the census, and legal and administrative systems that took these identities for granted (Mamdani, 2012). In short, the colonial state became the steward of its subjects' identities and the traditions that constituted these identities.

In a riff on "divide and rule", Mamdani terms this system "define and rule". Much colonial history understands that colonial states found pre-existing cleavages between autochthonous groups and exploited them in order to maintain control of colonies. This line of reasoning argues that if colonized populations were too preoccupied with fighting amongst themselves, then injustices imposed by the colonial order would be overlooked. Patronage was bought and punishment meted out through controlling indigenous access to the colonial political economy and the colonial administrative apparatus.

Mamdani disagrees with this perspective in that he maintains the colonial state had the power to define its very subjects on cultural and (and thus political) grounds. Individuals were only allowed to inhabit a single cultural identity. Transvestite categories were not allowed. Thus, the colonial state defined the cultural landscapes across its territory, circumscribing to an extreme degree the political power of its subjects. In the words of Dirks (2002), "The ethnographic state produced ethnographic subjects, not political ones".

In his earlier research on the Rwanda genocide, Mamdani makes a similar observation, writing "there has been a growing tendency to presume that political identities either are or should be derivative of cultural identities" (Mamdani, 1996: 21)." He continues,

If the law recognizes you as a member of an ethnicity, and state institutions treat you as a member of that ethnicity, then you become an ethnic being legally and institutionally. In contrast, if the law recognizes you as a member of a racial group, then your relationship to the state, and to other legally defined groups, is mediated through the law and the state. It is a consequence of your legally inscribed identity. If your inclusion or exclusion from a regime of rights or entitlements is based on your race or ethnicity as defined by law, then this becomes a central defining fact for you the individual and your group. From this point of view, race and ethnicity need to be understood as political - and not cultural - or even biological - identities" (Mamdani, 1996: 22).

Arguing that these formulations result in polarized identities, Mamdani writes

Whereas cultural identities tend to shade into one another, with plenty of middle ground to nurture hybridity and ambiguity, there is no middle ground, no continuum, between polarized identities. Polarized identities give rise to a kind of political difference where you must be either one or the other. You cannot partake of both. The difference becomes binary, not simply in law but in political life. It sustains no ambiguity (1996: 23).

Using a similar line of thinking, the historical anthropologist Nicholas B. Dirks examines colonial anthropological knowledge in his study on the category of 'caste' in India. His central argument is that caste is not some unchanged artifact of ancient India, nor it is a basic expression of Indian tradition (2001: 5). At the same time Dirks is careful to point out that caste was not simply an invention of British colonial rule. Rather, it was a pre-existing category that was taken up by the colonial government in order to express, organize, and

systematize India's diverse forms of social identities and social organization. British colonial rule made caste the central symbol of Indian society, while ignoring other important social categories like gender and class (2001: 5).<sup>3</sup> He is primarily concerned with documenting the history of caste as it was understood and used by British Orientalists, administrators, and missionaries as well as Indian reformers, social thinkers, and political actors (Dirks, 2001: 8).

Dirks uses the 1857 Indian mutiny as the starting point for his exploration into the history of caste. He writes that prior to 1857, Orientalist scholars maintained that Indian society could be understood through the examination of 'ancient texts'. Alongside these Orientalist scholars, missionary accounts formed the primary means by which the British East India Company (whose rule in India came to an end after the 1857 rebellion) understood the internal workings of Indian society. In these formulations, India's feudal past and the organization of its village communities were seen as important determinants of social and economic organization alongside caste (Dirks, 2001: 42).

He observes that while the British colonial government consolidated its power in India during the 1860s, ethnographic studies began to proliferate. These studies took caste as the primary object of social classification and understanding. In this period, the colonial government saw a need to know India much better than the East India Company which preceded it. Dirks contends that if the East India company was primarily concerned with documenting India's history in order to better understand its political economy, the British colonial government was concerned with conducting ethnographic surveys. These ethnographic surveys were intended to uncover rules about social order, and therefore help to

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<sup>3</sup> In another essay on the ethnographic state, Dirks sums up his views on how caste came to forefront of British understandings of India "Caste identity... became not just the object of knowledge but the end of knowledge, eclipsing political persuasion, class position, or regional interests as the basis for state concerns about control and containment" (Dirks, 2002).

maintain colonial rule. This form of governance in which anthropological knowledge formed the conceptual basis of governance has been termed "the ethnographic state" (Dirks, 2001: 44). Summarizing the nature of colonial ethnographic materials on India from the nineteenth century, Dirks (2001: 45) observes:

throughout the nineteenth century, collection of material about castes and tribes and their customs, and the specification of what kinds of customs, kinship behaviors, ritual forms, and so on, were appropriate and necessary for ethnographic description, became increasingly formalized and canonic.

He goes on to write that ethnographic materials transitioned from exhaustive written accounts to having key traits populated into charts and tables. He argues that by systematizing data in this manner, the colonial government was seeking a method to produce uniform knowledge for use across India. Dirks' description of a comprehensive ethnographic survey of India published in 1901 shows that this formulaic view of caste resulted in encyclopedic-like volumes in which customs, manners, bodily measurements, caste origin stories, occupational histories, kinship structures, marriage and funerary conventions, and manners of dress were recorded for each caste. This work was designed as an easy reference for colonial administrators, police services, revenue agents, district-level officials, and army recruiters. By the time this comprehensive survey was published, caste lines determined how the colonial government operated. This encompassed diverse functions of the government like the recruitment of soldiers into the army, the implementation of legal codes, the criminalization of entire caste groups, and how land transactions took place. By crowning itself the keeper of Indian tradition, the colonial government could morph tradition into serving its own ends. Furthermore, Muslims were excluded from the caste system, setting the stage for the division of Bengal of 1905 under the guise of protecting the culture of the non-Muslim minority from

the Muslim majority. This directly led to the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 along religious lines (Dirks, 2001).

Despite caste's placement as the fundamental unit of India's social structure and its formalization in colonial knowledge systems like ethnographies and the census, there was no agreement about what actually constituted caste. Some ethnographers used a combination of historical speculation and body measurements, while other ethnographers relied on categories like occupation:

Caste turned out to be a very loose category; there was tremendous variation across India in the size, extent and autonomy of classificatory rubrics around caste, and despite the best efforts of British officials and ethnographers, caste was still not a uniform system of reference across India. Further, many caste groups had large internal differences in their social and economic standing (Dirks 2001: 283)

By the 1920s and 1930s, some caste groups were distributing handbills to their own members, instructing them how to answer questions about their religious and sectarian affiliations along with race and language in bids to numerically influence how colonial administration policy would affect their groups. From the early 1900s onward, prominent Indian social activists used the idea of caste to advocate for improvement for the poor social conditions of large portions of the population living in the Indian subcontinent. In India's post-independence era, government sponsored affirmative action programs use the category of caste to identify their beneficiaries (Dirks, 2001). While Dirks shows that caste is a product of the colonial era, and a highly problematic way of understanding Indian social groups, it is impossible to escape in contemporary India.

Looking past the colonial story of caste in Indian society, Dirks situates his study in the context of Western historical and anthropological research on India. He argues that caste is all-pervasive in Western academic views of the country. He points out that India's postcolonial struggles to overcome colonial-era governance structures was not helped by the

rebirth of Orientalist and colonial ethnographic frames in contemporary Western social science. Dirks argues that in post-colonial era, Western social science has successfully reinforced the authority of a colonial form of knowledge and representation. In this way, Western social science ignores the history of colonialism in India while at the same time reproducing one of its most powerful forms of knowledge (Dirks, 2001).<sup>4</sup>

Beyond indirect rule systems, similar modes of rule were employed by the Soviet Union when communist revolutionaries inherited the Russian Empire. Hirsch's (2005) study of nationalities in the Soviet Union focuses on how the Bolsheviks managed the vast, multi-ethnic Russian Empire which they had initially discounted as no better than other forms of colonialism. After taking power, the communists came to view commodities from far-flung parts of the former empire like Central Asian cotton and Caucasian oil as essential to the survival of Soviet Russia. In order to reconcile their anti-imperialist rhetoric with their desire to maintain their inherited imperial territories, the Bolsheviks built an administrative and territorial structure around the concept of "nationalities". All of the peoples of the former Russian empire were placed into a framework of nationalities, which granted these diverse groups "nationhood" within the Soviet Union (Hirsch, 2005)

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<sup>4</sup> Rogers Brubaker (2002) observes similar tendencies in contemporary academic research on ethnic, racial, and national groups. He sees a tendency within academic circles to "take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis" (Brubaker, 2002: 164). Diverse groups such as Serbs, Croats, Muslims and Albanians in the former Yugoslavia, Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, Jews and Palestinians in the Levant, Turks and Kurds in the Middle East, or Blacks, Whites, Asians, Hispanics, and Native Americans are treated as if they are homogenous, clearly bounded groups. Groups like these are then fitted into a larger mosaic of ethnic, racial, and cultural blocs. Brubaker writes that because exclusion based on group membership is the same for many categories (i.e. race "racism", nation "nationalism", and "tribe" tribalism) they should be thought of as all part of the same process: groupism (2002: 164). Wright (1999) makes the same observations by relating his academic experiences of problematizing tribal categories based upon his research in the Senegambia region of West Africa.

The production of ethnographic knowledge was key to this process of making a complex cultural landscape legible, according to Hirsch. Terming the enumeration, mapping, and surveying of populations as "cultural technologies of rule", she writes that these methodologies aided in centralizing Soviet power. Hirsch maintains that European empires used these technologies to enforce difference between colonized populations. The Soviet approach intended to use these technologies to incorporate the peoples of the empire into the Soviet whole by basing their nationalities policy upon Marxist understandings of social evolution.<sup>5</sup> In the years immediately following the revolution, they were intended to be a stopgap measure to create inclusive administration systems until material production reached sufficient levels that Soviet citizens no longer saw the idea of nations as important parts of their lives. Ethnographic knowledge influenced how the Soviet government came to see its peoples, writes Hirsch. Sometimes the Soviet government used ethnographic knowledge to rationalize what were purely political decisions. At other times, the Soviet government used this knowledge to formulate its policies. Thus, the anthropologists, archaeologists, sociologists, geographers, and local elites who conducted or aided these ethnographic studies had a very real influence on how Soviet governance was deployed<sup>6</sup> (Hirsch, 2005).

In agreement with the authors discussed above, Hirsch maintains that ethnographic knowledge is never value-free (although it can appear to be so when collected under scholarly inquiries). Ethnographic research, like other forms of social science knowledge, is informed by the assumptions and intentions of those undertaking the collecting, classifying, and

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<sup>5</sup> In the 1930s, Stalin used these methods to distinguish between 'Soviet' and 'non-Soviet' nationalities - leading to the relocation or deportation of "nations" seen as threats (Martin, 2001)

<sup>6</sup> In contrast, some anthropologists claim that no direct links between anthropology, ethnography, and European and American colonial policy have been proven (although ideological affinities have been acknowledged). From this viewpoint, colonial-era European and American ethnographers had no influence on how colonial territories were shaped and ruled (Goh, 2007: 111; King and Wilder, 2003: 25-67).

compiling. Additionally, ethnographic researchers choose particular methodologies to map populations based on their own training, institutional ties, and predetermined ideas about different peoples and regions (Hirsch, 2005). This acknowledgement is especially relevant considering that most professional social scientists in the Soviet Union at this time had received their training in other parts of Europe. In this way, Hirsch shows that Soviet ethnographers were heavily influenced by broader trends in social science research at the time.

Colonial (and Soviet) mediated identities have been tenacious in the post-colonial era. In the case of the Middle East, these identities continue to play a major role in the cultural and political identities. The next section details how define and rule systems were implemented across the region and how they continue to be relevant.

### **3.3) Define and Rule Systems of the Greater Middle East**

With several important exceptions, define and rule systems were implemented across what has become the Greater Middle East. Places like the Spanish Sahara, the Sudan, and Morocco are usually considered peripheral states to the region. American understandings of the Middle East didn't associate some of these places in North Africa with the Middle East until the 1980s. In these peripheral territories, close to ideal forms of define and rule systems were implemented for large portions of the populations. Indirect rule systems implemented in these places closely followed Mamdani's framework. Cultural identities were defined and maintained by the colonial state, tied to political identities, and then fixed to particular

territories.<sup>7</sup> In the nation-states that comprise former League of Nations mandate territories like Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, European colonial rule was much more brief and cultural modes of rule did not always fit the ideal define and rule system. As I discuss below, the implementation and end results of these systems were highly variable. Despite different outcomes across the Greater Middle East, administrative systems based on ethno-sectarian identities that were put in place during the Mandate and colonial eras have become crucial to post-independence governance systems.

The purpose of discussing the following accounts of define and rule systems is to demonstrate that one impact that colonial administrations had in the region was to make the cultural landscapes legible and thus manageable to central administrations. This made it impossible for colonial subjects to access political power without identifying with a particular (and singular) ethno-sectarian group. In many cases, violence in the Middle East during the post-colonial era has been understood to stem from intractable ethno-sectarian differences without acknowledging the processes through which these identities were ossified and politicized.

I contend that in American perspectives on the Greater Middle East, modes of administration based on ethno-sectarian identities have come to be seen as systems that accurately reflect the realities of cultural landscapes on the ground. The following discussions explicitly link identity, territory, and violence. They argue that these links are a result of colonial and post-colonial political processes. Crucially, the authors of these viewpoints show how colonial administrative systems based on cultural categories have been carried forward into the post-colonial era. While issues regarding ethno-sectarian identities, their territories,

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<sup>7</sup> The protectorates of Yemen and Oman, along with the Trucial States on the periphery of the Persian Gulf were ruled as part of India until 1947. As such, ideal forms of define and rule were implemented in these territories (Beaugrand, 2016)

and related violence are very real, American geopolitical discourse elides its causes by taking ahistorical views on how these groups came to be relevant in post-colonial political systems.

The political scientist Pablo San Martin details how the principles of define and rule were implemented in the Spanish Sahara (now know as Western Sahara) at a relatively late stage of Spanish control (2010: 57-68). This process began when the territory was politically integrated into metropolitan Spain as a province in 1958. Starting in the early 1950s rapid changes to Spanish Saharan society occurred. These changes were brought about by employment opportunities with Spanish mining firms, the Spanish military, and the Spanish civil service. These factors, combined with a multi-decadal drought that undermined the previously dominant sheep-herding economy, served to create an urbanized population that lived on salaried employment. "Traditional" tribal structures were a thing of the past for most Spanish Saharan subjects by the late 1950s.<sup>8</sup> Regardless of these changes, the Spanish administration remained faithful to an exotic, orientalist, and tribalistic view of Spanish Sahara society, according to San Martin. In his analysis, these tribalistic perspectives are most evident when examining Spanish administrative structures and the colonial censuses. In short, tribes were seen as the primary structure of social life, delineating the identities of the territory's inhabitants.

On the local level, traditional tribal chiefs (as appointed by the Francoist regime) were intended to hold absolute power over their territories and the nomadic groups inhabiting them. But in practice these structures were a convenient means for distributing favors in order to micro-manage decision making, according to San Martin. The Spanish administration maintained that these territorial units were necessary to give remaining pastoralists adequate

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<sup>8</sup> San Martin speculates as to whether or not these traditional tribal structures in the forms recorded by anthropologists even existed at any point in the past (2010: 60).

political representation. But at the same time tribal structures were the "institutions that most accurately represented the traditions and customs of the native population" according to the colonial government (San Martin, 2010: 60). He calls this a self-interested and distorted reading of Spanish Sahara society.

From San Martin's perspective, the census was designed and carried out under the same tribalistic assumptions. The first census was undertaken in the mid-1950s as large swaths of the territory's interior became subject to regular military patrols and increased administrative controls from the coastal urban enclaves. San Martin contrasts the approaches of two Spanish anthropologists, Carlos Baroja and Miguel Molina, who conducted ethnographic field research independently of each other in the territory during the early 1950s:

The approach of both works was very similar, not to say identical, but the objectives were very different. While [Baroja's research] *Estudios Sabarinos* was an academic anthropological study concerned with the systematic description and analysis of a traditional nomadic society, Molina's work was an attempt to apply such knowledge and to produce a practical guide for the registration and classification of the population of the Spanish colony. Baroja's gaze was more concerned with the past than the future; more concerned with the social stratification of the nomads, their traditions, customs, myths, values, economic practices, et cetera than with the social changes that the Sahara was at that moment starting to experience. Molina's gaze followed this approach and articulated a methodological guide for the census inspired by what he called 'the indigenous procedures', which elevated the *cabilas* [A Spanish anthropological term referring to clearly demarcated political and social zones consisting of ethnically homogenous populations] to the centre of colonial discourses of classification and identified agnation [descent from a common male ancestor] as the main principle of social solidarity and cohesion in the territory (2010: 62).

Based on Molina's studies, a detailed tribal hierarchy was created to serve as the basis of the partial census of 1960 and the first (and only) complete censuses of the territory's population, conducted in 1967 and 1974.

San Martin's main point of contention with a census conducted under these tribalistic assumptions lies in how the data was used to legitimize the absolute authority given to tribal chiefs over their territories (and in turn legitimize colonial rule). The 1974 census was especially significant for the future of the territory because it has been the sole basis for debates regarding who is eligible to vote in independence referendums. The Francoist structures of power implemented during the Spanish era have been left in place by the Moroccan government, facilitating its authoritarian rule in the territory, San Martin argues. While a colonial governmentality was implemented at a late stage in Spain's occupation of its North African territory, it has been of major significance since Spanish withdrawal in 1975.

Mamdani's book *Saviors and Survivors* (2009) applies a similar conceptual framework to events in Darfur that have been termed 'genocide'. He questions widespread assumptions within American media and policy discourses of the Darfur conflict from roughly 2006 to 2008 that pit 'Arab Muslims versus African Traditionalists' in a timeless competition for land and resources resulting in a 'genocide'. Mamdani is careful to point out that he is not denying the violence that has taken place in Darfur's three states. Rather, he seeks causes for the violence that go beyond simplistic ethnic and religious tropes.

Mamdani first addresses the categories of 'African' and 'Arab' that frame the conflict. Basing his argument on the examination of colonial archival material, he suggests that British policy followed define and rule tactics in Darfur. He writes that prior to the imposition of British colonial power, the lines between Arabs and Africans, Muslims and non-Muslims and pastoralists and farmers were not always clear. Taking cues from contemporary cultural anthropology, he argues that individuals and groups changed livelihoods and borrowed from different religious traditions based on a complex set of factors. Additionally, intermarriage

between groups was common, further blurring lines between identity categories (Mamdani, 2009: 75).

When colonial rule was imposed in the Sudan at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British administration sought to draw clear lines between ethnic and religious groups. This included efforts to resurrect group identities that had begun to fade out of existence. The colonial census was key to the define and rule process because it had the power to determine ethnic and religious categories as well as forcing respondents to classify themselves into the given categories. This process was significant in Darfur because certain groups were allocated formal land and political rights, while other groups left without formal land rights and were shut out of the indirect rule power structure established by the colonial administration. Ethno-sectarian categories from colonial censuses were further problematized by the large number of Sudanese civil servants as well as government sponsored labor migration to the massive Gezira irrigation scheme in central Sudan and the center of colony's sprawling new railway system centered in the city of Atbara. These sets of mobile populations did not easily fit into ethno-sectarian groups that were assigned to clearly delimited tribal homelands (Mamdani, 2009: 164).

The indirect rule power structure was left in place by the post-independence Sudanese government in order to maintain control over peripheral territories. From Mamdani's perspective, the marginalization of groups without formal land and political rights in the post-independence period resulted in the 1986-1989 civil war in the Darfur region. He identifies these events of the late 1980s as the root of Darfur conflict during the 2000s. The Sudanese government supported groups with land and political power in order to maintain the political status quo in the region (Mamdani, 2009: 231)

He concludes that the Darfur conflict was far from genocide - it was a counterinsurgency operation following long established patterns of the British colonial administration and the post-independence Sudanese government to maintain control of peripheral territories. Similar processes and events have taken place in other parts of the Sudan as a result of a long history of anti-guerilla operations. Western representations of the conflict are incredibly problematic and are rooted in colonial and racist ideas of Africans as well as the equally problematic idea that Africa can only modernize with a Western civilizing mission foisted upon it. These problematic representations have led to calls for an Iraq style military intervention in the conflict from some camps in the United States and some ill-conceived humanitarian aid projects from Western countries and international aid organizations. Furthermore, any international effort to bring a halt to the violence informed by mainstream conceptions of the conflict would further politicize and institutionalize these ethno-sectarian divides (Mamdani, 2009: 271).

French modes of colonial rule in North Africa share a number of similarities with Dirks' ethnographic state. Edmund Burke's (1973) historical research explores how the categories of 'Berber' and 'Arab' were understood by French colonial administrators in Morocco.<sup>9</sup> In Burke's examination of the representation of Morocco in French ethnographic literature, he concludes that prior to Morocco's inclusion into the French empire, portrayals of Moroccans by French ethnographers seemed to make honest efforts to record impressions of the everyday lives of Moroccans. Burke identifies a clear point (around 1906) in the years leading up to Morocco becoming a French protectorate (in 1912) when ethnographic research

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<sup>9</sup> Some researchers used the concept of 'define and rule' before Foucauldian understandings of colonial administration came into fashion. These include Burke's (1973) historical research on French modes of colonial administration from the early 1970s (which is discussed in the main text). Southall's (1970) work on the recent provenance of a number of ethnic groups in British East Africa during the 1940s is notable in this regard as well.

shifted its focus and became concerned with creating knowledge that would enable colonial rule. He notes that minority Berber speaking populations were perceived by French administrators as ideal candidates to rule over the majority Arabophone populations. In the early protectorate era, the colonial administration saw the Berber populations as minimally Islamized in comparison to Arab populations. Separate education systems (Catholic missionary-run, French language schools for Berbers and Arabic-language schools for Arabs) and separate legal systems (based on Berber "customary" law and Islamic law) were planned, according to Burke. Ultimately, these plans were not implemented as the colonial administration realized that Berber populations were just as Islamized as Arab populations (Burke, 1973: 198). Thus it was impossible for colonial authorities to make a clear distinction between Berbers and Arabs on religious grounds in the French portion of Morocco.<sup>10</sup>

In Burke's (2014) book, *The Ethnographic State: France and the Invention of Moroccan Islam* his main focus is on understanding of how a 'national' form of Islam came into being in Morocco during the early protectorate period. Burke notes that Morocco is the only state in world that possesses a national form of Islam. He traces the history of Moroccan Islam back to French protectorate-era efforts to legitimize the rule of the Moroccan sultan and in turn the French colonial administration that was intended to work in the background. Burke situates these events into the larger field of French colonial social science research in Morocco arguing that many 'traditional' aspects of the Moroccan state were formalized during the protectorate period in order to legitimize French rule in the colony.

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<sup>10</sup> A number of scholars (*cf.* Lorcin 2014, Silverstein, 2002) term the clear distinction between between Arab groups and Berber groups as the 'Kabyle Myth'. From their analyses, the French colonial government of Algeria developed this distinction in its attempt to fix Berber populations to particular territories. The first place colonial authorities attempted to do this was in Kabylia during the 19th century. These perspectives on the Algerian cultural landscape and their resulting policies were transferred wholesale to Morocco and used during the early protectorate period.

The French colonial administration employed social science researchers to gain a better understanding of Moroccan society. But widespread anti-colonial resistance made study missions difficult in the early protectorate years according to Burke (armed resistance continued up until 1934). Inaccurate representations of Moroccan society came to form the basis of the French colonial project. The French administration came to see the Moroccan population in stark and highly inaccurate binaries - sedentary Arab populations loyal to the sultan versus nomadic Berber populations outside of the sultan's zone of influence. Burke (2014: 187) writes that while these binaries made for very poor ethnographies, they were "skillful discursive politics." The colonial administration maintained that Morocco was being torn apart by the supposedly endless fighting between these two population groups. Anti-colonial resistance was portrayed as occasional revolts against the Sultan. Therefore, the colonial administration sought to justify its presence by arguing that only French governance and French military power could prevent Moroccans from killing one another. In this manner, colonial ethnography in Morocco became a tool of counterinsurgency.

In the early protectorate era, state structures were allegedly built on the advice of French native policy practitioners armed with the latest and greatest social science research. But as Burke argues, easily conveyed binaries which lacked the nuance of well-conducted ethnographies won out. Furthermore, complex anthropological and sociological understandings had no place in a protectorate ruled by what was in effect a military government whose job it was to pacify open resistance and quash subversion. Burke's conclusion is that ethnography did not drive the protectorate's native policy. In the case of Morocco, a scientifically-derived native policy ended up serving as a marketing device selling colonial rule than rather than as a tool of applied governance (Burke, 2014: 194).

In his studies on Libyan state formation, the political scientist Ali Ahmida (2005) argues that Maghribi studies has been dominated by scholars concerned with French and Italian colonial studies, British social anthropologists, and American modernization theories. From the perspective of French and Italian colonial studies, pre-colonial society was "traditional". Unruly tribespeople inhabited rural areas while towns were governed by corrupt indigenous states or Ottoman functionaries. Tribespeople and urban dwellers rarely cooperated. Scholars taking this perspective were usually colonial officers and administrators concerned with how North African colonial states managed native populations.

From Ahmida's view, the British social anthropology framework developed during the 1950s has been the most influential approach in Maghrib studies.<sup>11</sup> This model assumes the existence of a tribal society spanning North Africa divided into segmented, homogenous groups. In the absence of strong state control, order was kept through any individual clan having the ability to threaten to upset the delicate balance of power amongst clans. According to Ahmida, this model draws directly from the colonial literature and sees Maghribi society as an agglomeration of tribal units or tribal states isolated from urban social structures and urban-based political economies of the region. American-based modernization theorists take similar views with regards to the Maghrib's cultural landscape, with the added understanding that these tribal structures, weakened under European colonialism, can be expected to fade and replaced by modern nation-state based identities.

Ahmida writes that robust tribal structures in Libya were part of the historical cultural landscape in the precolonial era. However, these structures underwent significant changes with the commencement of Ottoman rule in 1835. Autonomous tribal chiefs saw their power

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<sup>11</sup> Ahmida attributes the development of this view to the well-known British anthropologists E.E. Evans-Pritchard and Ernest Gellner.

seriously curtailed through official policy and the recruitment of locals to staff newly established military units, courts, schools, and postal and telegraph systems. Large changes to Libya's political economy during this time period led to the formation of new urban and rural-based class structures that did not rely upon tribal structures.

In the Italian colonial region of Tripolitania, ethnographers classified the population as distinct groups along the lines of Berber, Arab, Arab-Berber, Ashraf, Jews, and Cologhli. Ahmida (2009) writes that these divisions are colonial categories that were situated in particular socio-economic conditions - not racial or ethnic bases. He writes

Whereas Jews kept their distinct character as a religious or ethnic minority, there were no "pure" Arabs or "pure" Berbers, since all were mixed and had mixed with each other for centuries.....the Cologhli were a distinct ruling group only in the nineteenth century. The Ashraf were any Muslims who claimed descent from the prophet's family (Ahmida, 2009: 114).

Due to Muammar Qaddafi taking power in 1969 and the limited availability of Italian colonial archives to researchers, very little research has been conducted on administrative structures of the Italian colonial era and the brief period of joint British/French rule from 1943 to 1951, writes Ahmida. During the 1930s, a brutal military campaign took place in the eastern region of Cyraenica. The entire civilian population was relegated to concentration camps in order to cut off local support to rebels fighting the Italian colonial government. This pacification scheme was based on the division of rebel fighters from civilians, and it does not appear that tribal structures were part of this strategy (Atkinson, 2000). Despite the gap in knowledge regarding Italian and later British/French rule in Libya (which kept the Italian colonial administration intact), patterns of define and rule in other Italian colonies (like Eritrea) during similar time periods and the records of colonial ethnographers suggests that these types of systems could have been implemented in the country (Fuller, 2005).

In seeking to understand the means by which Qaddafi managed political power prior to 2011, Ahmida (2012) sees "tribalism" as simply one part of the divide and rule methodologies used by Qaddafi. In order to weaken opposition from urban-based students, intellectuals and the middle class, Qaddafi pursued a policy that favored rural identities. This was especially so after Qaddafi eliminated rival factions within the Libyan government and consolidated power in 1976. Rural dress, music, festivals and rituals were promoted and rural-based tribal leadership councils were revived. Ahmida argues that since over 80 percent of Libya's population is urban-based and cosmopolitan in character, Ghaddafi's revival of rural-based tribal governance structures simply did not apply to the vast majority of the country's population.

Osman (2011) writes that at the end of World War I, the British Army was in control of three Ottoman *vilayets* - Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul. This military administration was short-lived and by 1920, political power was handed over to an Iraqi civilian administration that ultimately answered to British officials. This colonial arrangement served as the basis for the modern Iraqi nation-state. After Faisal was appointed as the Iraqi monarch in 1921, he sought give Iraq the trappings of a modern nation-state through the creation of a constitutional monarchy, a parliamentary form of government, a national army, and a common school curriculum. The goal of these efforts was to mold Iraq's heterogenous ethnic and sectarian populations around a strong national identity. But during this early period, Sunni officials held top posts in the government and many Shia groups held that Sunnis were overrepresented in the Iraqi government. After independence in 1932, Kurdish populations expressed misgivings about being forcibly incorporated into the Iraqi state. Shia elites were not opposed to the creation of an independent Iraqi nation-state, but sought greater

representation in the national government. Due their majority status, Shia groups would have been able to take control of political power in the country.

When the Iraqi military took control through a *coup d'état* in 1958, it sought to eliminate the bases of ethno-sectarian power in Iraq through a variety of measures, such as affirmative-action type admissions to universities and colleges and radical, populist-based land reform policies. After a turbulent 1960s in which various factions sought and gained power, the Baath party eventually took control of Iraq in 1968. On the surface, Baathist ideology was socialist and pan-Arab. Ethno-sectarianism was seen as anathema in respect to these central beliefs. In response to the power that ethno-sectarian groups (and other groups, like communists) held, the Ba'athist government sought to eliminate all challenges to its leadership. The most significant challenge came from Shi'a-based religious leaders and groups. This became especially clear after the Shia based Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 when the ruling Baathists identified a threat from Shia leaders and activists. Thousands of prominent Shia were executed and thousands more deported.

Osman writes that following the 1991 Gulf War, the Hussein regime sought to reinvent itself along Islamist lines and used Sunni-based rhetoric in order to discredit Iran. It continued its pursuit of Shia groups, and promoted Sunni-based organizations and religious teachings. In this context, Shias often gained a sense of alienation from the Iraqi state. Many old guard Baathists were unhappy with the newfound ethno-sectarian tones of the Hussein government, seeing it as a betrayal to the party's ideology. During this time, it became clear that the Hussein regime was co-opting Sunnism in Iraq as a way to maintain a hold on power.

Haddad (2011) argues that since the March 1991 Iraq uprising and the 2003 American invasion and occupation of the country, sectarianism took on a new prominence in national discourse. He argues that the sectarian lines drawn during the UN sanctions era in the

country became the template for sectarian discourse from 2003 onwards. Much Western discourse on Iraq relies on the narrative that Iraq can only survive as a state through the brute forces of a strong, centralized government. Furthermore, Iraqi nationalism is seen as a feeble construction used to patchover the unchanging reality of Iraq's sectarian character. Haddad argues that in the case of Iraq, the relevance of sectarian identities advances and recedes according to wider socio-political conditions. At times when the Sunni/Shia/Kurd divide in Iraq is aggravated, the conflict is one over cultural ownership of the nation-state. Thus sectarianism, in this case, should be seen as a thoroughly modern phenomenon. Haddad further argues that Western representations of Iraq focus entirely on elite perceptions of sectarian identities. Very little is known regarding how ordinary people understand themselves as part of this structure.

In respect to Iraqi tribes, Simon (2007) states that during the British occupation, tribes began to lose power due to increasing urbanization and the direct British involvement in activities like law enforcement, land tenure, and water distribution. When the Baathists took power in 1968, they rejected tribal power structures as a remnant of colonialism. After Hussein came to power in 1979, he used his own Sunni tribal networks to staff the army, police, and bureaucracy, while suppressing all other aspects of tribalism in the country. This changed in 1996 when a high council of tribal chiefs was established, granted some political powers, weapons, and land. In return, they were expected to satisfy the demands of Iraqi government. This initiated a process of retribalization in Iraq. Simon asserts that the American military's use of these late Hussein-era tribal-based administration systems (especially in Al Anbar province), "has systematically nourished domestic rivalries in order to maintain an illusory short-term stability" (2007: 70).

White (2011) understands that the idea of national and ethnic 'minorities' in their contemporary sense appeared in European and American discourse around the time of the First World War. National and ethnic minorities are based on the assumption that "groups defined by some aspect of their culture will permanently form a political minority because their cultural identity defines their attitudes across a wide range of political issues, especially regarding their relationship with the state" (2011: 22). The concept of minority solidified immediately after the First World War due to the maps of Central and Eastern Europe being redrawn around a patchwork of new nation-states. Each one ideally associated with one particular people or 'nationality'. In practice, ideal states rarely came to fruition in the post-war boundary drawing exercises. Thus, smaller groups, differentiated by cultural criteria, and 'marooned' within these new nation-state boundaries automatically became minorities *vis a vis* national majorities.

White states that in the case of Syria, it was not until the development of the Syrian nation-state during the mandate period that the concepts of 'minority' and 'majority' took on any meaning. Despite this relatively recent development regarding Syria's cultural landscape, the concept was projected back in many cases to bolster claims of autochthony made by most groups. White stresses while group identities in Syria were not complete fabrications, they were profoundly altered during the Mandate era. Neep (2014) largely agrees with White's evaluation of Syrian minorities during the mandate period. He understands that the process of military pacification in Syria led to profound changes in how the colonial state organized and managed the Syrian population. Ethno-sectarian groups became the primary means through which military tactics and strategy were used to secure territory. Indexed characteristics of these groups and clear divisions between them were essential for pacification operations.

Neep argues that the systems developed to do this were transferred wholesale into the administrative systems of independent Syria.

Within scholarship that focuses on minorities in Syria and the Greater Middle East, White (2011) observes a tendency to describe minorities as 'exceptional' in the ways they have related to the states in which they are located. Often, minorities are described as 'nation-denied', in which they have not been given the opportunity to develop a nation-state like other cultural groups across the region. In these formulations, it is a fundamental right of ethnic groups to have their own states. White maintains that nation-less minorities are not exceptional in the region. Furthermore, they are not ill-fitting groups that subvert the nation-state ideal. He sees minority groups as integral to the development of modern nation-states across the Middle East.

Regarding conflict in Lebanon, Makdisi (2000: 3) holds that violence taking place between 1840 and 1860 and more recent bouts of armed conflict in the country give the impression that "the Lebanese problem is fundamentally tribal, that sectarianism is a disease that prevents modernization, that Lebanon is, in the final analysis, a metaphor for a failed nationalism in the non-Western world. What has been studied...has been the geopolitics of conflict, which has always assumed inert, unchanging sectarian identities." Makdisi's historical research into the events of the mid-1800s shows that in response to intercommunal violence on Mount Lebanon, Ottoman and European peace negotiators sought to place Maronite and Druze populations into distinct territories by creating religiously homogenous administrative units. The agreement devised by these parties forced the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon into a single public identity. A person's sect defined their involvement in the public sphere and their access to political rights and power. Through this process, a non-sectarian elite culture was replaced with a sectarian one that sought to put into place a reformulated

Ottoman social order. The peace agreement placed the blame for the violence in the hands of local elites, while absolving the Ottoman imperial government and European powers of any involvement. This had the effect of limiting the conflict to Mount Lebanon's purportedly premodern tribal landscape.

While European interests in Mount Lebanon sought to use Christian populations as a foothold into Ottoman territories, Makdisi argues that sectarianism in this case was not simply the imposition of a colonial governmentality from an all-powerful colonial administration. Local elites took advantage of the presence of various imperial powers by declaring themselves to be loyal Ottoman subjects and European protégés at the same time.

Makdisi (1996) states that Ottoman political arrangements became the basis of a nationalist secularism after the Ottoman administrative territory of Mount Lebanon was enlarged and separated from Syria during the French mandate period. The 1943 National Pact (which institutionalized the independent Lebanese state) sought a "sectarian balance" based on the 1932 census. According to Makdisi, state benefits could not be obtained simply on the basis of citizenship. Things like jobs, housing, telephones and education were not guaranteed by the state. Instead they were obtained through appeals to government officials who were appointed or elected according to a sectarian legal framework. In contemporary Lebanon, it is legally impossible to be a citizen without being a member of a particular religious community. This understanding of the country's cultural and political landscape depends on a "myth of communal homogeneity - that there is such a thing as a Maronite or Druze nation that can or should be represented and on a myth of traditional religious tolerance and harmony" (Makdisi, 2000: 164).

### 3.4) Si(gh)ting Ethno-sectarian Groups in the Middle East

After the end of World War I, in an effort to resolve competing claims over territory and evade future conflict, a series of peace conferences based in or around Paris was organized by the Allied powers. Under the orders of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, a group (known as the Inquiry) was assembled in 1917 in order to collect data, compare competing claims to territory, and to map future political boundaries in anticipation of the end of the war. During the Paris conferences, the Inquiry served as negotiators due the expertise they had developed during the previous two years. The systematic survey of the Central and Eastern European cultural landscape was the first attempt by the U.S. to base foreign policy on science. The massive amount of archival materials needed to do this required three U.S. Army trucks to convey them from the American Geographical Society headquarters in Manhattan to a ship waiting to transport the Inquiry to Paris at Hoboken, New Jersey. The spectacles caused by the the transportation of these materials were scoffed at by journalists both in the U.S. and France, because it was assumed that postwar territorial agreements would rely on backroom deals amongst the Great Powers (Smith, 2003).

Map reading and cartography were seen central to the Paris peace conferences. Determining distinct racial orderings and deciding the basis of identity became one of the key tasks of the conference. Racial groups were seen to have relatively homogenous characteristics and were placed into a hierarchy. Groups nearer the top of the hierarchy were deemed fit for self governance within their own nation-states. Groups towards the bottom would be given mandate territories. Crampton understands this framework to fit what he calls a 'white socio-spatial epistemology'. Crampton (2006: 733) argues that the technical practices of cartography were well developed during the 1800s and by 1919 they offered "a rich toolbox

of techniques that could be applied to the diverse populations that integrated race, politics, and territory."

Many leading researchers within the social sciences, including geography, held racist and eugenicist views. The ethnographic experts of the postwar peace conferences divided the global population into clear phenotypes inhabiting distinct territories. The American Inquiry equated "national identity to ethnic or racial dominance, and then translat[ed] the territorial extent of this dominance into political sovereignty" (Crampton, 2006: 736). The American negotiators knew that identity could not simply be reduced to space, but they did believe that territory and its legitimate populations could be discerned if they looked closely enough and assembled the correct data. The Inquiry commissioned studies throughout Europe to gather primary data and relied upon secondary academic sources found in the U.S. and provided by other negotiating parties. Crampton writes that these ethnographic and spatial data were standardized and compiled into a format that allowed for easy reference by the American negotiators. These data were mapped using a combination of commercial maps and base maps drafted by members of the Inquiry. It is difficult to know whether or not data shown on these maps were representative of the regions they depicted. Given the large numbers of research teams, local adjustments made for the kinds of data each research team was gathering, and the extensive use of secondary sources (gathered with widely differing methodologies), it is doubtful that the information used to make the maps was representative of entire populations.

Crampton writes that the Inquiry created a "Black Book" that summarized territorial claims made by conference attendees and recommended boundaries for all of Europe. The territorial maps included in this volume showed racial and linguistic predominance. The Black Book served as an American policy document and as a reference for Wilson during conference negotiations. The boundary changes recommended by the Black Book were not some kind

hidden or secret agenda and its suggestions were greatly modified during the negotiation processes. Other factors beyond "race" were considered as well, such as trade patterns, transportation routes, and physical geography (Palsky, 2002). But ultimately the Black Book serves as an example of how the principles of Wilsonian internationalism would be ideally applied to post-war Europe.

The maps produced and used by the Inquiry were readings of landscapes. Barnes and Duncan (1992) argue that landscapes are social and cultural productions. Thus they can be read and analyzed like texts. However, the reading of texts is never neutral. The Inquiry's maps reflect the metageographies of their producers. In the case of racial and linguistic attributes of Europe, they served as classificatory devices (Cosgrove, 1999). The Inquiry believed their maps were accurate reflections of the primary and secondary data they had gathered. This belief is common amongst map users and cartographers. It is even more common at present, due to the advent of big data and the belief that the world can be decoded and known through extremely large datasets (Crampton, 2010; Taylor and Lauriault, 2014). But in its efforts to classify European populations along racial and linguistic lines, the Inquiry attempted to create clearly bounded identities from what are very ambiguous subjectivities on the ground, both in a categorical sense and a territorial sense. Pickles writes:

The world has literally been made, domesticated and ordered by drawing lines, distinctions, taxonomies, and hierarchies.....Through their gaze, gridding, and architectures, the sciences have spatialized and produce the world we inhabit. And indeed, this perhaps the crucial issue: maps provide the very conditions of possibility for the worlds we inhabit and the subjects we become" (2004: 5).

The Peace conferences also operated under the assumption that conflict arose out of competing "nationalities". It was understood that if competing territorial claims were settled, nationalities would have no reason for territorial aggrandizement because they were situated within their "natural" boundaries. This view on violence reflects conventional geopolitical

thought and contends that all national groups seek homelands consisting of particular attributes of physical geography such living space, access to the sea, and natural resources. Furthermore, it is understood that there is a natural tie between particular landscapes and particular national groups. Nation-state spaces that do not have these attributes or nation-states denied their natural landscapes will resort to armed conflict to obtain them (Ó Tuathail, 1996). Views like this essentialize and depoliticize violence by attributing it to universal laws on human behavior, and thus paint it as unavoidable - unless universal conditions of the nation-state are realized (Flint, 2005).

Like other colonial territories of the Axis powers, the fate of the former Ottoman lands of the Middle East were negotiated at the Paris peace conferences. In principle, similar processes of negotiation for European territories were intended for former Ottoman territories. But in practice, backroom dealings at the conferences played a large role in the decisions regarding which mandate territories went to Britain or France. As with European territories, a field study was authorized to gather the viewpoints and sentiments of people living in the Levant in order to gain a better understanding of "the will of the people" and the region's cultural landscapes. Known as the King-Crane Commission, this five-member team spent June, July, and August of 1919 gathering data for their report (Gelvin, 1995). Due to the commission's recommendations being disregarded in favor Great Power geopolitical maneuvering in the region, the commission hasn't received much attention from academic researchers (Patrick, 2015). It is unclear what kind of a role maps or cartography played in the commission's fieldwork or report. However, it is clear that commission operated under the same racial and territorial assumptions of Wilsonian internationalism used for Europe.

Due to the racial hierarchy imposed by the Inquiry, the inhabitants of the Levant were seen as 'lesser-developed' peoples and thus were not eligible for independent self-rule. Patrick

(2015: 14) further details the white socio-spatial epistemology of Wilsonian internationalism as it applied to the King-Crane commission:

The people of non Anglo-Saxon groups were often described as existing less advanced stages of both human evolution and historic time.....Conceptions of religion were often intertwined with race during this era, in that chosen religion somehow showed a group's relative potential for advancement. American elites saw Protestant Christianity...as the most modern of religions and as a worldwide 'vehicle for both spiritual and material development'.....In general American elites discussed religious groups in a similar manner to the way in which they discussed races and ethnicities, that is by assigning these religions enduring traits and potentials (Patrick, 2015: 14).

Through the Paris peace conferences, the political entity of "mandate" territories were created so that colonial holdings of defeated empires were not simply annexed by other imperial powers. This system was to be administered by the League of Nations. Mandate territories would be tutorial (not colonial) political entities in which 'advanced' powers would tutor the 'less advanced' people towards self government at some point in the future. The protection of minorities would be key pillars of both the mandate administrations and independent states (Patrick, 2015: 108). In practice League of Nations Mandates simply recreated colonial administration systems once they were formalized. Like in colonies, military pacification was the first step in bringing territory under control. After this was achieved to a reasonable degree, colonial administrative structures and personnel were simply shipped in from colonies and were deployed in similar (and repressive) manners (Matz, 2005). As a result, League of Nation Mandate territories were colonies that operated under an internationally-sanctioned legal regime.

The commission interviewed representatives of religious groups, municipal councils, prominent families, and nationalist societies. Patrick (2015) stresses that the region's community ties were much more complex and fluid than the clearly demarcated religious, familial, and political divisions understood as comprising social organization in the Levant.

They chose to hear from leaders who they believed served as conduits of their constituents or had the ability to influence the thoughts of their subjects. In their travels, they mostly stayed near the coast. When they did travel inland, it was to visit to the major cities of Jerusalem, Damascus, and Aleppo. The commission's sample was non-representative and it skewed towards elite members of society. In the view of King-Crane Commission, this was a valid and scientific way of surveying the opinions and desires of the entire population of the Levant. Thus, their report reflects the thoughts of urban elites. The commission's recommendations according to Patrick (2015: 108) are as follows:

- 1) A single mandatory power should be assigned to greater Syria/Lebanon. The tutorial power should be the United States.
- 2) France should not be granted a mandate in the region.
- 3) The Zionist project should be curtailed due to the strong sentiment against it.
- 4) The United States should be given a mandate for Turkey and Armenia
- 5) The Ottoman administrative territories of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul should be integrated into one mandate and should be taken over by the British.

The commission only traveled to Turkey to board their return ship back to the U.S. They did not travel to Armenia. Nor did they travel to Basra, Baghdad, or Mosul. Their recommendations for these places were based upon secondary data sources.

As stated above, the Commission had no impact on how the Mandate territories of the Middle East were distributed amongst the Great Powers. However, it demonstrates that at the end of the First World War, there was a belief that the Middle East could be divided into nation-states that somehow reflected the cultural landscapes they were drawn around. It was understood that the mandate system would help to develop national identities that would help to hold these new states together after independence. These views are very much alive in more contemporary perspectives on the region held by some prominent Middle East-focused scholars. Their views hold a great deal in common with the assumptions of the League of Nations Mandate system.

Amongst some doyens of Middle East studies, it is held that nation-states of the region cannot evolve past their current authoritarian modes because of Islam and other prenationalist-era identities. Abbas Kelidar (1993) contends that the nation-states of the Arab East (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan) live a precarious existence. While their political structures have become powerful, they have failed to create political communities with singular focus on loyalty and allegiance. Kelidar attributes this failure of nationalism in these places to a lack of precedence of the nation-state ideal in Islamic thought. In the ideal nation-state, sovereignty is drawn from the consent of the people living in its territory. The states imposed on the Arab East at the end of the First World War do not enjoy their inhabitants' consent. Disenfranchisement of ethno-sectarian minorities during the Ottoman era continued (albeit in new forms) into the mandate era. These states were largely carved out as spoils of war to the allies of Britain and France and therefore contained a broad range of ethno-sectarian identities.

Kelidar argues that a 'mosaic' model was created as the basis for these new states. Arab nationalism, which in practice excludes heterodox Muslim sects and non-Muslims transformed these groups in highly politicized communities. Arab nationalism contributed to a lack of open and pluralist political systems that has locked these communities into a 'permanent' minority status. In Kelidar's view, Arab nationalism's favoring of mainstream forms of Islam has prevented Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan from becoming 'true' nation-states.

Ellie Kedourie, the British-Iraqi historian of the Middle East, makes an argument along similar lines, writing ".....the very notion of a state is quite difficult to fit into the political thought that is traditional to the Middle East, namely, Muslim political thought" (1987: 1). Basing his discussion in part on the parsing of Arabic words related to the nation-state, Kedourie doesn't find any satisfactory lexical tools in Arabic to describe contemporary

understandings of the democratic nation-state. In surveying historical, Islamic-based political systems of the region, he finds no parallels to the nation-state form. Due to the non-democratic nature of Middle Eastern states, Kedourie calls them 'imitation' states. In short what Kedourie argues is that Arabs living in the Middle East cannot have genuine nation states because he can find no historical parallels or analogies in Islamic thought or history.

The British-American historian Bernard Lewis (2001: 1) writes the "Middle East is a region of old and deep-rooted identities. These identities run counter to contemporary conceptions of the nation-state." He understands the Middle East to be comprised of groups distinct groups based on linguistic and religious traits. In this particular analysis, Lewis' method is to index the various traits of these groups and how they have interacted at various points in history. Like Kedourie, Lewis understands the idea of the nation-state to be an incompatible addition to the Middle East's complex set of identities prior to the Mandate period. The manifestation of these incompatibilities with contemporary understandings of the nation-state have led to despotic regimes, violence between sects, and in the words of Kedourie "imitation states".

These views on the Middle East's cultural landscapes and problematic nation-state structure fundamentally disagree with my arguments made in the previous three sections of this chapter. They place the failure of the nation-state system within the cultural landscape of the region (that is, if it is assumed that nation-states in the region are failing). Thus, the region's "instability" is due to the inherent traits of inhabitants. The mandate/colonial systems simply served as means to establish nation-states in the region and the Cold War acted as confirmation that these systems are bound to fail. Kelidar, Kedourie, and Lewis' perspectives on the Middle East continue to enjoy a great deal of currency amongst conservative scholars of the Middle East and in foreign policy circles in the United States.

It may be easy to dismiss their arguments as rooted in outmoded social science, they continue to influence American foreign policy thinkers. Notably, after the September 11, 2001 attacks, when mostly all Middle Eastern experts were banned from the Bush/Cheney Whitehouse, the views of Bernard Lewis were given serious consideration.<sup>12</sup> Lewis proposed that the only way to transform Middle Eastern nation-states into secular democracies was through military invasion and occupation. Nation-states of the region would not do this on their own due to their ethno-sectarian compositions. Which, in Lewis' view, always counteract democratic and nationalist tendencies. In the context of the War on Terror, it was understood that secular, democratic states would not sponsor or harbor terrorists. A Wall Street Journal piece called this the "Lewis Doctrine".<sup>13</sup>

While Afghanistan followed this model as well, Lewis' input into the planning of the Iraq invasion showed how the Bush administration sought to make invasions/nation-state building a priority in the Greater Middle East. This was prior to the U.S. military becoming bogged down in Iraq and when it became apparent that the Coalition Provisional Authority was a poor substitute for the Iraqi government (no matter how twisted it had become under Saddam Hussein's rule). From the perspectives of Kelidar, Kedourie, and Lewis, it is not about getting the lines right on the map for self-determination. It is about discarding ethno-sectarian identities for more contemporary understandings of national identity and citizenship. Lewis' involvement with the Bush Administration shows that he saw Iraq at the time of the U.S. invasion as a territory that needed the tutelage of the United States in order to shed ethno-sectarian identities and realize its potential as a modern nation-state. The Bush

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<sup>12</sup> Hirsch, Michael, "The Lewis Doctrine", Prospect, February 20, 2005, <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/features/thelewisdoctrine>

<sup>13</sup> Walman, Peter, "A Historian's Take on Islam Steers U.S. in Terrorism Fight", The Wall Street Journal, February 3, 2004, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB107576070484918411>.

Administration's actions in Iraq have come under intense scrutiny - even amongst the most conservative of American commentators. However, Lewis emerged from his relationship with the architects of the Iraq War largely unscathed. Perhaps the reason why Lewis' work remains so popular is that it populates the gaps in American Orientalist frameworks and gives them the weight of a scholar whose career is almost eight decades long. While maps and cartography are not part of Kelidar's, Kedoury's, or Lewis' scholarship, their views are implicitly built around territorial assumptions of Wilsonian internationalism and ethnographic mapping.

As I discuss in Chapter 2, mainstream versions of International Relations sees identities outside of nation-state identities to be deficient. In this regard, these three Middle East scholars agree with mainstream IR. Said (1997) argues that Lewis simply reworks well-worn Oriental tropes. Scholars of IR and race would most likely agree with this. But they would also argue that these views are racist - especially because they see a region of the formerly colonized world to be at a different level of "social development" than places in which nationalism is purportedly well developed.

The work of boundary agreements immediately following World War I resulted in American-led boundary drawing exercises in Central and Eastern Europe. Ideally, boundaries were redrawn around racial or ethnic groups so that each "nation" would have its own state. Maps, along with other data on social organization, were used to redraw boundaries. These commissions operated under the assumption that if redrawn boundaries reflected Central and Eastern Europe's cultural landscape, then future conflict could be avoided. The King-Crane commission for the Middle East operated under the same assumptions. The commission's recommendations were never implemented and its recommendations were limited to small portions of what would become the Middle East. But in American metageographies, the idea

that political boundaries could and should be redrawn along cultural lines across the Middle East became firmly planted in American understandings of the region. A number of prominent Middle Eastern scholars maintain that the concept of the "nation-state" is essentially foreign to Middle Eastern and Islamic thought. Thus, nation-states that do not encompass ethno-sectarian boundaries are destined to fail. Based on my arguments in Chapters 1 and 2 and this chapter, contemporary American geopolitical perspectives of the Middle East's cultural landscapes are based upon the following assumptions:

- 1) The cultural landscapes of the Middle East are comprised of discrete ethnic groups inhabiting clearly demarcated territories.
- 2) Ethno-sectarian identities are static and unchanging.
- 3) The cultural landscapes of the Middle East can be visualized and represented accurately, objectively, and completely using ethnographic maps and textual descriptions.
- 4) When nation-state boundaries do not reflect ethno-sectarian group boundaries, violent conflict is inevitable.
- 5) Nation-state boundaries can (and in some cases should) be redrawn in order to better reflect Middle Eastern cultural landscapes.
- 6) These cultural landscapes and their related violence are relevant to the United States because of the Middle East's geostrategic importance.

As I argue in Chapters 1, 2, 3, these assumptions are based in highly problematic views on social organization, territory, violence, and the world political order. They have been formalized through the implementation of a U.S. foreign policy and geopolitical order based in define and rule politics and Wilsonian internationalism. As I demonstrate in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, these metageographical assumptions inform contemporary American geopolitical perspectives on the Middle East. Chapter 4 examines how American-authored ethnographic maps visualize the region's cultural landscape and a series of these maps attempts to redraw boundaries in order to reflect "cultural realities" and reduce or eliminate chances of future

violence. I examine these maps from a technical cartographic perspective and how they are used as symbols. Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate how the territorial assumptions present in ethnographic maps are carried over into textual representation. Chapter 5 focuses on the Iraq Troop Surge and uses *New York Times* and *Washington Post* coverage to gain an understanding of how the Iraqi cultural landscape is understood in American geopolitical discourse. Ethno-sectarian themes from the *Times* and *Post* are then analyzed alongside more formal and practical understandings of ethno-sectarian groups in Iraq. Chapter 6 focuses on the Arab Spring and uses *New York Times* and *Washington Post* coverage to gain an understanding of how the uprisings have been constructed in American geopolitical discourse. Libya and Syria, two of the most prominent uprisings, have been explained using ethno-sectarian narratives. The themes from Libya and Syria are then analyzed alongside more formal and practical understandings of these events. The materials that I examine demonstrate that problematic ethno-sectarian territorial assumptions inform significant portions of American geopolitical discourse on the Middle East. Thus, American geopolitical discourses assume that the Middle East's cultural landscapes can be made legible through ethnographic surveys and mapping (the process of sighting) and that ethno-sectarian groups can and should be fixed to particular territories (the process of siting). In the case of scholars like Bernard Lewis, these identities are marked as sub-standard. Lewis' views align with statements made by the historian Kate Brown (2004). She asserts that since the late 1800s, the racial, tribal, ethnic, and religious definition of nation-states has become the norm throughout the world. She recalls that during the Cold War, Western commentators discussed how oppressed nationalities of the Soviet Union were deprived of the right of self-determination. She goes on to write "[t]his interpretation asserted a conception of empire as the conquerer of indigenous people who derive collectively from singular national origins linked to particular territory. Yet to accept

uncritically national origins and nativity is to accept the very radical nature of the imposition of national taxonomies as a form of rule" (2004: 10).

The concern with the intimate details of cultural landscapes across the Middle East reflects the region's prime importance in American geopolitical strategy. My research materials show that these assumptions are present in popular geopolitical discourse, but they are far from limited to it. My discussion in Chapter 1 regarding the ways in which ethno-sectarian group boundaries are conceptualized and operationalized in U.S. COIN doctrine is only one example demonstrating that these discourses have material consequences that are a matter of life and death for the inhabitants of the Middle East where this doctrine has been implemented.

## **Chapter 4) Blood Borders and Better Partitions: American Ethnographic Maps of the Middle East**

### **4.1) Territorial Solutions to Ethno-sectarian Conflict**

Between the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s and the September 11, 2001 attacks, the sociologist Andreas Wimmer (2004) argues that small-scale ethno-sectarian conflicts became the primary concern of U.S. geopolitical strategists. In these geopolitical worldviews, ethnic and religious conflicts were seen to be the main threat to global peace and stability. With the fall of communism, American-led political and economic models became the primary means of integrating former communist and developing nations into the global political economy. Ethno-sectarian conflicts were seen to be standing in the way of these countries' moves towards democracy, legal security, good governance, and market economies. During the Cold War, political and military interventions into communist satellite states and colonial and post-colonial territories held the potential for escalating into full-scale world war. When this danger passed after the fall of the Soviet Union, American political and military interventions into ethno-sectarian conflicts were seen to be less risky and at the same time desirable (Wimmer, 2004).

The political scientist Daniel Byman (2002) sees ethno-sectarian conflict as the dominant form of conflict in the world and far more violent than interstate wars. During the 1990s, conflict rooted in ethno-sectarian differences "claimed millions of lives, produced tens of millions of refugees, and caused billions of dollars in damage" (Byman, 2002: 3). He argues that these types wars tend to last longer and are more difficult to resolve than interstate wars. Furthermore, the implementation of democratic systems is stifled in the climate of fear that accompanies ethno-sectarian conflict.

While Byman identifies humanitarian concerns as one of the main reasons why the U.S. and other world powers would be interested in finding ways to stem ethno-sectarian conflict, more often than not they choose sides in order to further their own geopolitical interests (and exacerbate these conflicts). During the Cold War the United States often supported one ethnic or religious-based group over another in order to further its communist containment strategy (Westad, 2007). Similar tactics have been used by Russia in order to maintain influence in the post-Soviet sphere and by France in some of its former colonies in order to shore up the neo-colonial political economies and military relationships that it cultivates in these places (Byman, 2002).

Wimmer and Byman's understandings of the prominence of ethno-sectarian conflict in the post-Cold War geopolitical order is echoed in other academic perspectives on these types of conflict, where humanitarian concerns are intertwined with defending or expanding zones of geopolitical influence. A number of academic works seek to develop models of ethno-sectarian conflict which move beyond primordial understandings of identity, seek to identify endogenous and exogenous factors of conflict, and propose durable political solutions to solving these conflicts. These proposed solutions are characterized by recommendations of working within existing political frameworks to bring conflict to an end and subsequently address the issues and grievances that started ethno-sectarian conflict in the first place (Cordell and Wolff, 2012; Gagnon, 2013; Gurr, 2000; Harff and Gurr, 2000; Kaufman, 2001; Taras and Ganguly, 2009; Jesse and Williams, 2010).

Territorial solutions to ethno-sectarian conflict, such as the realignment of internal political boundaries, or the partition of a larger state into smaller states, are not advocated by any of these experts. Byman (2002) argues that territorial solutions are not on the agenda of the UN and powerful states at present for several reasons. These include:

- 1) The likelihood that boundaries of the new states would be disputed.
- 2) Groups that have a military advantage at partition have an incentive to seize further territory, and neighboring states may attempt to make territorial gains.
- 3) Population transfers would be inevitable due to the mixed nature of ethnic and religious groups.

If territorial solutions to ethno-sectarian conflict were to be advocated by experts in the field, the task of mapping ethnic and religious groups would prove to be very difficult. This is partially due to practicalities of gathering enough data to make accurate ethnographic maps. But even if enough representative data sets could be gathered, could the rich, complex, and locale-specific ethnographic data generated by contemporary reflexive and feminist ethnographies be shoehorned into the rigid and reductive classification schemes required by cartographic representation?

Despite serious issues with ethnographic mapping, these types of maps are prominent in the American print and web-based atlases which focus on or devote significant space to the Middle East. In addition to possessing a number of disturbing issues with their data sources and how they represent their datasets, they give the impression that it is possible to reduce the cultural landscapes of the Middle East to discrete ethnic and religious groups and fix them to territorial homelands. This relatively small number of easily accessible maps play a part in reinforcing inaccurate and outdated worldviews on social organization and conflict in the region. In other words, the maps I examine in this chapter present visual narratives, metaphors, and myths that fit into and reinforce pre-existing ethno-sectarian frames. Maps utilizing more representative data and drawn in accordance with cartographic guidelines would not help to provide greater understanding and bring more nuance to American geopolitical visions of the Middle East quite simply because American views of the region

assume that political identities should be tied to discrete cultural identities and that these conflated identities can be fixed to particular territories.

In 2006, Ralph Peters published a map and an accompanying article in which he proposes that Middle East nation-state boundaries be redrawn in order to reflect ethno-sectarian group boundaries ("blood borders" in his parlance). He goes on to argue that these boundary changes would "improve" the Middle East by minimizing or entirely eliminating conflict in the region.<sup>1</sup> In the decade since Peters' map was published, a number of American journalists have put forward their own maps that represent the cultural boundaries of the Middle East and like Peters, argue that incongruencies between ethno-sectarian group boundaries and nation-state boundaries will lead to conflict. Some of these authors argue that conflict will lead to nation-state boundaries redrawn along ethno-sectarian lines. Other authors argue that boundaries should be redrawn in order to prevent armed conflict.

While all of these writers have different takes on how the Middle East's boundaries may potentially be or should be redrawn, they all take the perspective that "natural" or "true"

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<sup>1</sup> Outside of the Middle East, Peters (2009) sees ethno-sectarian conflict as commonplace and deep-rooted most of the post-colonial and post-communist worlds, writing

"Except in North America and now and northwestern Europe, the great religious wars of the last two millennia never really ended - they were only taking naps, due to the exhaustion of one party or both. The Sunni-Shi'a contest is thirteen centuries old - as old as, but deeper than Islam's struggle with the West. The struggle between Islam and Hinduism threatens to go into nuclear overdrive. And the racial and religious jihad of Arabs against black Africans may be on the verge of exciting a startling reaction. All of these are endless wars, punctuated by stretches of phony peace and falsely divided by historians into separate struggles."

More on Peters' views of cultural landscapes and conflict can be found in the following articles:

Peters, Ralph, "The Human Terrain of Urban Operations", *Parameters*, Spring 2000, <http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/00spring/peters.htm>.

Peters, Ralph, "Broken Borders", *The New York Post*, February 19, 2008, <http://nypost.com/2008/02/19/broken-borders/>.

shapes of nation-states can be determined based on cultural criteria, and that it is desirable to reshape nation-state boundaries along these lines (Fall, 2006). Furthermore, the political scientist Daniel Neep observes that the poor prospects of economic feasibility of newly partitioned states in the Middle East is rarely referenced in these debates on the region's artificial states. This is despite the fact that struggles over political economy often underlie episodes of ethno-sectarian violence. Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq are often understood as prime examples of the Middle East artificial state. These states are considered to be composed of patchworks of ethno-sectarian groups with limited common loyalties. These arguments imply that political instability is inherent to nation-states that contain religious and ethnic diversity.<sup>2</sup> The goal of this chapter is to examine the assumptions underlying the construction of these American-authored ethnographic maps. Maps like these undergird a key part of U.S. geopolitical representations of the Middle East. Furthermore, they represent a particular type of geographical imagination that assume that cultural landscapes can be made legible through cartographic representation.

#### **4.2) Mapping Ethno-sectarian Identities**

There are only a handful of map collections authored and curated by US-based publishing houses and institutions that either focus on or possess significant numbers of Middle East maps. The *Hammond Atlas of the Middle East and Northern Africa* (2006) and the *National Geographic Atlas of the Middle East* (2008) are the two most recent traditional printed

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<sup>2</sup> Neep, Daniel, "The Middle East, Hallucination, and the Cartographic Imagination", *Discover Society*, 3 January 2015, <http://discoversociety.org/2015/01/03/focus-the-middle-east-hallucination-and-the-cartographic-imagination/>.

atlas volumes.<sup>3</sup> The web-based map collections of the Perry Castañeda Library at the University of Texas and the Gulf/2000 Project are the other two instances.

The Hammond and National Geographic Atlases are small, relatively low-cost printed volumes aimed at Middle East experts and libraries (Cole, 2010). Like atlases covering the entire world or other world regions, they are divided into thematic sections which contain maps on political boundaries, climate, land cover, demographics, urbanization, ethnic and religious groups, natural resources, development indicators, and conflicts.

The *Hammond Atlas* contains two maps which represent ethno-sectarian groups in the region. The large map in Figure 1 (Appendix 1) shows the extent and distribution of language "families" across the region using distinct blocs of color. The approximate location of groups using specific languages within each family are indicated with text labels. The atlas makes no mention of links between language and ethnicity. The small inset map in Figure 1 focuses on a much smaller area of the region and classifies inhabitants into Sunni, Shia, Jewish, and Christian categories. A hatch pattern is used to represent mixed Sunni/Shia areas in Iraq and Kuwait.

The *National Geographic Atlas of the Middle East* contains five maps representing ethnic and religious data from the region. The first is the "Religion" map (Figure 2, Appendix 1). In addition to showing the extent and distribution of major religious groups across the Middle East, it also illustrates the sources and numbers of Jewish migrants who have moved to the state of Israel since its establishment in 1947. The second map (National Geographic, 2008:

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<sup>3</sup> *The State of the Middle East: An Atlas of Conflict and Resolution* (2008) is very similar to the Hammond and National Geographic atlases. Its first edition was published by the University of California Press in 2007, but its author is British. Its most current edition (2015) is published by a British publishing house. It is excluded from this analysis based on the provenance of its most recent edition and author.

82) illustrates the distribution of language groups across the region. Ethnic group names are overlaid onto the language data to give the approximate locations of ethnicities.

The third map (National Geographic, 2008: 101) is centered on Iraq and surrounding countries and divides populations between Shiite-majority areas, Sunni-majority areas, and ethnic Kurdish areas. The accompanying text describes Iraq's internal violence, stating

"Iraq's....foreign imposed boundaries ignored local religious and ethnic groupings, and a geographic snapshot provides some insight into the struggles faced today. Internal competition for administrative control and oil fields is acting as a catalyst for much of the recent violence and animosity."

The fourth map (National Geographic, 2008: 101) shows the religiously segregated neighborhoods of Baghdad in late 2007. Most neighborhoods in the city were to a large degree mixed prior to the U.S. occupation in 2003. According to the supplemental text, the power vacuum left by the wake of the U.S.-led invasion resulted in power struggle between Sunni and Shia-based groups. This ethnic-based violence has led to the complete segregation of the city into Sunni and Shia-based districts.

The fifth map (National Geographic, 2008: 102) indirectly shows ethnic data through destroyed and damaged villages resulting from the conflict in Sudan's Darfur region. The atlas understands the roots of this conflict to lie in long-term drought and desertification which has forced Arab pastoralists onto land farmed by "Muslim African tribal groups". The government in Khartoum sought to control this conflict by employing informal, Arab group-based militias (known as Janjaweed). One of their primary tactics was to destroy and burn hundreds of "ethnic African" villages while leaving adjacent Arab villages untouched. Describing this conflict as "racially-charged" the atlas details the incredibly violent tactics used by the Janjaweed which prevent ethnic Africans from returning to their razed villages.

This has resulted in over 2.5 million displaced people that have been forced into refugee camps in Chad and Sudan.

The Perry Castañeda Library (PCL) Map Collection at the University of Texas makes almost 1/3 of its entire collection of 250,000 maps on available on its open-access website. Large map collections are commonly available at university libraries in the United States. But the PCL map collection is unique in that such a large number have been digitized and made available on its website. The majority of the PCL Middle East maps were produced by US, British, and Soviet intelligence agencies. Approximately 15 maps focus on the Middle East's ethnic and religious data in the portion of the collection available through the PCL website. All of the ethno-religious maps were authored by the Central Intelligence Agency. These maps focus on regional and national scales and represent data for Kurdish areas (Figures 3 and 4, Appendix 1), Afghanistan (Figure 5, Appendix 1), Iran (Figure 6, Appendix 1), Iraq (Figure 7, Appendix 1), Lebanon (Figure 8, Appendix 1), Libya (Figure 9, Appendix 1), and Yemen (Figure 11, Appendix 1). No accompanying text is available with these maps. Dating from between 1972 and 2002, the maps vary greatly in style, formatting, and language used in the titles and legends.

The final American authored map collection is the Gulf/2000 Project's web-based Middle East map series. The Gulf/2000 Project<sup>4</sup> is a program of the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University. According to its website, the project was started in 1993 as a resource to scholars, journalists, and businesspeople who have professional associations with the Persian Gulf or Gulf Studies. Specifically, it focuses on maintaining a network of Gulf scholars, organizing conferences, commissioning research papers on the Gulf's stability and security, and maintains web-based lists of Gulf-focused scholarly

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<sup>4</sup> <http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/index.shtml>

resources and maps. The project is funded through a number of non-profit organizations, including the John D. and Katherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The Carnegie Corporation, and The ExxonMobil Foundation.

The Gulf/2000 Project's MENA map collection is authored solely by the geographer and international relations scholar Michael Izady. Updated at relatively regular intervals, the Izady series consists of approximately 160 unique maps, with approximately 30 of these maps focused on ethno-sectarian groups. In a manner to similar to conventional printed atlases, the maps are organized by themes. These themes include: Ethnographic and Cultural, Economy, Natural Resources and Environment, Historical, Military and Strategic, Administrative and Political, and Geopolitical. Within the Ethnographic and Cultural category, four sub-themes contain maps that represent ethnic and religious group data: Ethnicity, Languages, Religion, and Tribes and Tribal Associations. While Izady does not cover the entire MENA with his ethnographic maps, he does manage to represent significant portions of the region. These include Iraq, parts of the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula/Persian Gulf, Iran/Afghanistan/Pakistan, and parts of North Africa. Out of the small set of American-based map collections and atlases that focus on the MENA region, Izady's collection by far has greatest number and proportion of maps representing ethno-sectarian groups.

According to the text inset of Izady's Middle East regional map (Figure 12, Appendix 1), he understands that conflict between Arab groups to be based in religious differences, rather than ethnic differences. He cites recent armed conflicts and protest movements in Bahrain, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Egypt as evidence of this. Izady acknowledges that the complexity of the MENA region's ethno-sectarian groups is not captured completely in this regional-scale map. Izady's map "Shia and Oil" focuses on oil and

gas deposits and religious groups in the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea Basin.<sup>5</sup> In placing these two datasets on the same map, he sees a strong correlation between the locations of fossil fuel deposits and the locations of Shia-based groups. Two maps represent Kurdish areas distributed across eight Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries. On the first map Izady writes that Kurdish populations are traditionally the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East after Arabs, Persians, and Turks.<sup>6</sup> The second map gives the approximate location of confederacies, tribes, and family clans.<sup>7</sup>

Iraq receives the most coverage out of any area represented by Izady's collection. His focus on sub-national and urban scales gives a relatively detailed picture of how his data represents the country's cultural landscape. Izady's two national scale maps of Iraq focus on the country's major ethno-sectarian groups. In the national scale map "Iraq's Federal Option" Izady proposes that Iraq's internal administrative boundaries be realigned to reflect the country's ethno-sectarian composition.<sup>8</sup> He proposes that three federal states be created in which Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish groups would have respective majorities. Three smaller federal autonomous territories would be centered around Turkomen, Assyrian, and Mandaean groups. Iraq's three largest cities, Baghdad, Mosul, and Kirkuk would be shared amongst all groups. According to the map's text inset, Izady's rationale for administrative realignment along ethno-sectarian lines is due to the continuing discord in the country and Iraq's status as an artificial state. These issues have roots in Iraq's creation by World War I-era British and French territorial agreements, he writes.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Shia\\_and\\_Oil\\_lg.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Shia_and_Oil_lg.png)

<sup>6</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Kurds\\_Distribution\\_in\\_Mid\\_East\\_lg.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Kurds_Distribution_in_Mid_East_lg.png)

<sup>7</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Kurdish\\_Tribal\\_Confederacies\\_sm.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Kurdish_Tribal_Confederacies_sm.png)

<sup>8</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Iraq\\_%20Federal\\_Option\\_lg.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Iraq_%20Federal_Option_lg.png)

The map titled "Central Iraq: Changes in Ethno-Religious Composition" represents central Iraq and changes in the area's ethno-sectarian composition between 2003 and 2014.<sup>9</sup> On this map Izady writes that while mixed population areas were relatively common in 2003 in central Iraq, they have become rare since this time. Most areas are now exclusively Sunni, Shia, or Kurd. The exception to this trend is an increase in the size of mixed areas in Kurdish majority territories due to migration from other conflict-prone areas of Iraq.

Izady's maps of Baghdad's ethno-sectarian composition from 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, and 2014 illustrate how the city's population has become increasingly segregated in the years following the Coalition invasion.<sup>10</sup> On this map he explains how Baghdad had many mixed areas in 2003. Between 2003 and 2008, interethnic violence was so severe between Shia and Sunni-based groups that mixed neighborhoods became almost non-existent. Violence in the city saw a significant decrease during 2008. But by this time, the city had become almost completely segregated along ethno-sectarian lines. The maps of Mosul<sup>11</sup> and Kirkuk<sup>12</sup> represent the cities' ethno-sectarian make-up in 2013. These maps do not illustrate population shifts the same manner as the Baghdad maps.

Izady's national-scale map of Lebanon represents the ethnic composition of the country in 2010.<sup>13</sup> With regards to ethnicity and religion in Lebanon, he writes:

Like in former Yugoslavia, in Lebanon it is religion that determines ethnicity, not language. And like former Yugoslavia, a shared language has not prevented the Lebanese from....murderous strife and civil wars. Although....95% of the [population] share Arabic as [a] language, their ethnicity, group identity, priorities, and sympathies are determined by their religion. In fact, power sharing in the nascent Lebanon under the French mandate was also based on religion....{This system] lasts to the present day.

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<sup>9</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Central\\_Iraq\\_Ethnic\\_2015\\_lg.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Central_Iraq_Ethnic_2015_lg.png)

<sup>10</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Baghdad\\_Ethnic\\_2015\\_lg.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Baghdad_Ethnic_2015_lg.png)

<sup>11</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Iraq\\_Mosul\\_Ethnic\\_lg.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Iraq_Mosul_Ethnic_lg.png)

<sup>12</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Iraq\\_Kirkuk\\_Ethnic\\_sm.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Iraq_Kirkuk_Ethnic_sm.png)

<sup>13</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Lebanon\\_Ethnic\\_lg.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Lebanon_Ethnic_lg.png)

He goes on to observe that Lebanese censuses have not reported ethnicity since 1932.

According to the Mandate-era census and Izady's estimates, Christians went from 52% of the population in 1932 (a majority) to no more than 22% in 2010. The Shia population has done the exact opposite, going from 20% of the population in 1932 to 45% of the population today. At the end of the civil war in 1989, parliamentary seats were increased for Shia (and other groups) to reflect changes in the population.

In Syria's ethnic composition map, Izady divides the country's population into 13 distinct groups.<sup>14</sup> He writes that in Syria, ethnicity can be based on language, religion, lifestyle, or a common history of suffering or persecution. Izady goes on to argue that French colonial authorities produced valuable statistics for ethnic and tribal groups prior to 1945. In his view, no trustworthy ethnic population data has been produced for Syria since this time. On the map titled "Syria's Federal Option" Izady calls Syria's borders 'completely artificial' and proposes a realignment of Syria's internal administrative boundaries to better reflect the country's ethnic make-up.<sup>15</sup> He speculates that if a political structure is set up along the lines proposed, future conflict in the country can be prevented. As the "Syria's Federal Option" map shows, Izady argues for five federal territories, numerous and dispersed autonomous districts, and six federal metropolitan areas (this includes Damascus). Sunni Arabs would be granted territory that would allow the group access to the sea.

On the map "Yemen: Ethno-Religious Composition" Izady divides Yemen's population into four distinct "ethno-religious" groups.<sup>16</sup> He writes that it is very difficult to find data on Yemen. Despite the dearth of data, Izady draws upon relatively recent government sources

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<sup>14</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Syria\\_Ethnic\\_Detailed\\_lg.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Syria_Ethnic_Detailed_lg.png)

<sup>15</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Syria\\_Federal\\_Option\\_lg.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Syria_Federal_Option_lg.png)

<sup>16</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Yemen\\_Ethno\\_Religious\\_lg.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Yemen_Ethno_Religious_lg.png)

and colonial-era sources to conclude that Yemen's population is almost equally divided along Sunni/Shia lines. On the map "Yemen: Tribes and Clans", Izady overlays tribal and clan names onto what appears to be the ethno-religious map discussed at the start of this paragraph to give approximate locations of these groups within the country.<sup>17</sup>

Izady's map of Iran layers the country's ethnic or "tribal" groups onto major environmental provinces.<sup>18</sup> He notes that the presence of a tribe on his map does not necessarily indicate a demographic predominance in a locale. Izady goes on to argue that settled farmers form a majority of any given place shown on the map. These groups are often the majority in any given locale.

On the "Ethnic Groups of Afghanistan" map Izady writes that there is not much correlation between language and ethnic identity in the country.<sup>19</sup> Tribe, religion, group memory, or lifestyle are more important markers of group identity. Urban populations usually have mixtures of all populations groups. Izady sees rural areas as mosaics of discrete tribal groups where tribal authorities seek exclusive access to grazing land and a monopoly in the application of traditional laws. In the past, this had led to warfare and ethnic cleansing. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, this model was adopted by the Taliban government which sought to segregate the country along ethnic lines and push groups out of the country who were seen to be non-natives, such as Uzbeks and Tajiks. On the map "Pashtun Tribal Confederacies in Afghanistan and Pakistan" Izady writes that confederacies spanning the two countries are relationships between groups who believe they share an ancient patriarch.<sup>20</sup> Despite longstanding rules regarding confederacies, a tribe or a portion of a tribe can leave a

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<sup>17</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Yemen\\_Tribal\\_lg.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Yemen_Tribal_lg.png)

<sup>18</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Iran\\_Tribes\\_and\\_Environment\\_lg.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Iran_Tribes_and_Environment_lg.png)

<sup>19</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Afghanistan\\_Ethnic\\_lg.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Afghanistan_Ethnic_lg.png)

<sup>20</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Pashtun\\_Confederacies\\_lg.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Pashtun_Confederacies_lg.png)

confederation and join a new one if its interests dictate. Izady sees the Afghan communist government and the Taliban as projects of the Ghilzai tribal confederation to gain power in the country.

With "Libya: Cultural-Historical Zones", Izady understands the country to be a haphazard combination of diverse cultural, historical, and environmental regions.<sup>21</sup> In detailing the features which distinguish these areas, Izady understands genetic traits, historical trade patterns, and physical geographies to be the primary factors in their delineation. He sees the disturbances in Libya since 2011 to be the revival of historical rivalries. He draw parallels between Libya's status as an artificial state to Syria and Iraq's.

#### **4.3) Remapping the Middle East**

The maps discussed in the previous section show a clear incongruency between ethno-sectarian group boundaries and nation-state boundaries. In Izady's maps of Syria and Iraq, he redraws internal administrative boundaries so that they better match the countries' ethno-sectarian group territories. From his perspective, nation-states with political structures built around ethno-sectarian groups would prevent or minimize internal strife. The six maps discussed below serve a similar purpose for broader areas of the Middle East. They seek to illustrate natural boundaries which follow the contours of the region's cultural landscape, identify points of potential conflict, or even propose improved boundaries that would make ethno-sectarian fuelled conflict less likely.

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<sup>21</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Libya\\_Cultural\\_Hist\\_Zones\\_lg.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Libya_Cultural_Hist_Zones_lg.png)

In Max Fisher's<sup>22</sup> compilation of "40 Maps that explain the Middle East", the map titled *The Dialects of Arabic Today* (Figure 1, Appendix 3) shows the Greater Middle East as divided by various Arabic dialects. Fisher uses the map to explain potential causes of conflict. The map shows that most dialectical regions do not match up with nation-state boundaries. In Fisher's brief explanation, he argues that where these mismatches occur, nation-state boundaries do not align with "actual communities". He maintains that these incongruencies could be used to predict potential conflict.

In a New York Times op-ed piece, Robin Wright makes a case for how five Middle East countries could become fourteen.<sup>23</sup> Citing the causes of this state-splitting as the "centrifugal forces of rival beliefs, tribes and ethnicities — empowered by unintended consequences of the Arab Spring — are also pulling apart a region defined by European colonial powers a century ago". She redraws boundaries along lines that she sees reflecting "geographic realities and identities". Wright argues that sectarian strife is territorializing the Sunni/Shia divide in ways that haven't been seen before. She predicts that ethnic and sectarian differences will result in Syria being split into three separate states: an Alawite minority controlling Syria's coastal areas, a Syrian Kurdistan which would be appended to an Iraqi Kurdistan, and a Sunni heartland comprising the remainder of the country's territory which would join a Sunni state in Iraq. In addition to Iraq being divided between Sunni and Kurdish populations in the North, a Shiite state will form in the Southeast of the country. Wright sees Saudi Arabia reverting to the territorial arrangement of the pre-monarchy era in which it would comprise of five separate states: North Arabia, Western Arabia, South Arabia,

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<sup>22</sup> Fisher, Max, "The dialects of Arabic today", *Vox*, 26 March 2015, <http://www.vox.com/a/maps-explain-the-middle-east>.

<sup>23</sup> Wright, Robin, "Imagining a Remapped Middle East", *New York Times*, 29 September 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/29/opinion/sunday/imagining-a-remapped-middle-east.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/29/opinion/sunday/imagining-a-remapped-middle-east.html?pagewanted=all&_r=2)

Eastern Arabia, and Wahhabistan. She writes that this structure would be a result of tribal difference, the Sunni/Shia divide, and economic challenges. Yemen would split into its pre-1990 boundaries reflecting historical cultural divisions, according to Wright. She predicts that Libya would revert to its Ottoman, Italian, British and French occupation, and pre-Qaddafi era divisions: Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and the Fezzan. Wright argues that tribal, regional, and cultural differences would be the primary causes of irredentism in this case.

In a Radio Liberty/Radio Free Europe feature, Glenn Kates, writes that violence following the Iraq War and the current Syrian civil war has caused ethnic and religious identification to become increasingly important.<sup>24</sup> In Iraq, majority rule guarantees a Shia hold on federal power. At the same time corruption and cronyism reinforce the Sunni/Shia divide. He argues that Iraq and Syria could be split into four new states along ethno-sectarian lines. As shown in Figure 2 (Appendix 2), Kates sees a Shi'ite state being created in southeastern Iraq, a Sunni state straddling most of the boundary of Iraq and Syrian, a Kurdish state in Northeastern Iraq extending along the Turkish border into Syria and an Alawite state controlling the majority of coastal Syria. He does concede that present Iraqi and Syrian political boundaries could remain intact due to regional and world powers fearing the implications of state breakups. At the same time, the Iraqi government would be very reluctant to concede any territory to breakaway states.

In Jeffrey Goldberg's map (Figure 3, Appendix 2) that accompanies his Atlantic Monthly article (and appears on the January/February 2008 cover), he predicts that Khuzestan, a majority Arab province of Iran, would become independent. Lebanon would be

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<sup>24</sup> Kates, Glenn, "Iraq And Syria: Past, Present, And (Hypothetical) Future Maps", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 16 January 2014, <http://www.rferl.org/content/iraq-syria-religious-ethnic-divides-history-future-maps/25232404.html>.

absorbed by Syria in a reflection of Ottoman territorial divisions.<sup>25</sup> Goldberg sees Bahrain being annexed by Iran due to its majority Shiite population. Kuwait absorbing portions of Sunni Iraq in order to escape a Shiite Iraqi majority. Yemen expanding its territory at Saudi Arabia's expense (Goldberg gives no explanation for this though). The creation of a Palestinian state and the incorporation of Israel into this new state. Kurdistan would be created from parts of Iraq, Turkey, and Syria. Baluchistan and Pashtunistan would be carved from Pakistan and Afghanistan. The remaining parts of Afghanistan would go to a newly created Persia, while Pakistan would continue to exist in a greatly reduced territory. He also envisions a 'New' Sudan being carved away from the country's (pre-2011 partition) southern portion.<sup>26</sup> Goldberg understands post-9/11 American security policy and military action to be a primary driver in undermining the region's nation-state system, writing:

Across the Middle East, and into south-central Asia, the intrinsically artificial qualities of several states have been brought into focus by the omnivorous American response to the attacks of 9/11; it is not just Iraq and Afghanistan that appear to be incoherent amalgamations of disparate tribes and territories. The precariousness of such states as Lebanon and Pakistan, of course, predates the invasion of Iraq. But the wars against al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and especially Saddam Hussein have made the durability of the modern Middle East state system an open question in ways that it wasn't a mere seven years ago.

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<sup>25</sup> Goldberg, Jeffrey, "After Iraq: A report from the new Middle East - and a glimpse of its possible future", *The Atlantic Monthly*, January 2008, [http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/01/after-iraq/306577/?single\\_page=true](http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/01/after-iraq/306577/?single_page=true).

<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, Mamdani sees an independent South Sudan as the result of efforts by the United States and other European peace brokers as a way to settle Sudan's civil war that had been waged almost continuously since independence in 1956. He argues that Khartoum used the agreement as bargaining tool to extricate itself from the US-led War on Terror. Mamdani calls the independence agreement "sloppy" because it lacked mechanisms to prevent further North/South conflicts and ensure a peaceful political transition in South Sudan. Furthermore, the excision of a 'black African' and Christian south from an 'Arab' and Muslim north reinforces the constructed racial divide of the colonial era. This is yet another example of American-led ethno-sectarian based partition used to solve political problems and settle violent conflict. Mamdani, Mahmood, "Who's to Blame in South Sudan", *Boston Review*, 28 June 2016, <https://bostonreview.net/world/mahmood-mamdani-south-sudan-failed-transition>.

The Middle East map (Figure 4, Appendix 2) that accompanies Cullen Murphy's *Lines in the Sand* Vanity Fair piece seeks to demonstrate how the region's nation-state boundaries are at odds with its social and cultural boundaries.<sup>27</sup> The map does away with contemporary boundaries (except for Oman's) to show a Middle East divided into at least nineteen distinct territories. Murphy's repartitioning of the region was inspired by a T.E. Lawrence map that proposes a division of the region along ethno-sectarian lines and was subsequently ignored by the British government in post-World War I territorial agreements. Murphy stresses that the boundaries shown Figure 4 are not a policy prescription or a prediction of future boundaries. Nor are they the imposition of outsiders, but a depiction of culture as it "actually exists". He argues that despite the mismatch between political and cultural boundaries, the region's current boundaries will stay in place for the foreseeable future.

Appearing in the *Armed Forces Journal*, Ralph Peters' article *Blood Borders: How a better Middle East would look*, claims that nation states in the Middle East are comprised of "the most arbitrary and distorted borders in the world."<sup>28</sup> In Peters' re-drawing of the region's boundaries (Figure 5, Appendix 2), he acknowledges that in some instances, ethnic, racial, and religious groups have intermingled and intermarried. Despite this, he still sees the region as comprising of distinct groups inhabiting ethno-sectarian homelands. Accordingly, his project seeks to address boundary "issues" with high profile minorities like the Kurds, Baluch, and Arab Shia. Peters does not specify exactly how boundary realignments would be carried out, but he does state that he is an advocate of ethnic cleansing to achieve greater congruency between ethno-sectarian boundaries and nation-state boundaries.

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<sup>27</sup> Murphy, Cullen, "Lines in the Sand", *Vanity Fair*, January 2008, <http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2008/01/middle-east-cultural-political-map>.

<sup>28</sup> Peters, Ralph, "Blood Borders: How a better Middle East would look", *Armed Forces Journal*, 1 June 2006, <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/blood-borders/>.

In Peters' extensive modifications to the region's boundaries, Israel would return to its pre-1967 borders. Free Kurdistan would be carved from parts of Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran. Northwestern Iraq would become Sunni Iraq, while the southeastern part of the country would be added to an area surrounding the Persian Gulf to form the Arab Shia State. Jordan would gain southern territory bordered by the Red Sea at the expense of Saudi Arabia. Lebanon would gain Syria's coastal strip to become Greater Lebanon. The cities of Mecca and Medina and their hinterlands would become the Islamic Sacred State. A large portion of the Southwestern Arabian peninsula would be attached to Yemen. Iran would lose territory to Unified Azerbaijan, Free Kurdistan, the Arab Shia State, and Free Baluchistan. Peters advocates that Western portions of Afghanistan should be returned to Iran due to the area's historical ties with various Persian kingdoms. Afghanistan's lost territory in the west would be compensated for in the east with Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province (currently known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province) in order to unite Pashtun populations. Pakistan would also lose its Baluch territory and populations to Free Baluchistan.

#### **4.4) Cartographic Readings of Ethnographic Maps**

Based on the maps reviewed, it can be said that ethnographic maps aren't nearly as simple and straightforward as they seem. Using a map to represent rich and complex cultural landscapes can be deceptive. An ethnographic map allows the user to view ethno-sectarian groups as if they were less complicated. There are advantages to using simplified representations, but the danger exists that unrealistic understandings of social organization can be taken from these types of maps. From a cartographic perspective, ethnographic maps can be considered *qualitative thematic maps* (Kimerling, et al., 2011). In these types of maps, basic

geographic information (like political boundaries) is conveyed to help orient the reader. But the territorial extent and spatial distribution of ethno-sectarian groups visually stands out as the primary message.

Ethno-sectarian categories are mapped as if they are homogenous within the data collection area and having no internal variation. This mode of representation is called choropleth mapping. Crampton (2010) observes that choropleth mapping remains dominant in cartographic representations of "race", despite the wide use of isarithmic mapping techniques (which are capable of showing transition zones between data categories) in many other types of maps. All of the maps I examine use choropleth techniques to represent ethnic and religious categories. A number of Izady's maps and one map from the Hammond Atlas (Hammond, 2008: 14) represent mixed population areas using hatch patterns. However, these aren't examples of isarithmic mapping because they do not use shading or contour lines. Indeed, the types and number of mapping techniques have reduced since computer-assisted cartography became ubiquitous during the 1990s. The most common GIS software packages have sets of data display techniques that tend to be standardized. Therefore, more recent efforts at ethnographic mapping would, in principle, be limited by these conventional ways of representing spatial data (Crampton, 2005).

The Hammond Atlas doesn't name any data sources for its two maps representing ethno-sectarian data. The National Geographic ethno-religious maps of the Middle East and Iraq name Michael Izady as the primary source of their data (National Geographic, 2008).<sup>29</sup> The CIA-authored maps offered on the PCL map collection website (Figures 3-11, Appendix 1) give no indication of their ethnographic data sources. Michael Izady's maps provide

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<sup>29</sup> The National Geographic ethno-religious map of destroyed and damaged villages in Darfur does not name a data source (National Geographic, 2008: 102).

bibliographies and data source descriptions for five of the sixteen maps examined. Izady draws from a range of secondary data sources, which include colonial-era ethnographic surveys, Soviet-sponsored studies, academic monographs, and government census data.

Izady is unclear how he converts ethnographic data into geographic data that can be represented cartographically. Even if Izady represents ethno-sectarian groups at the smallest administrative scale in each country or city, his maps still give the impression of internal homogeneity within political administrative units. At present, one of the primary ways to gather precise latitude and longitude coordinates are with hand-held Global Positioning System (GPS) devices. Accurate and inexpensive GPS units weren't available before the year 2000. The vast majority of Izady's data sources were published before this time. Therefore, Izady's placement of ethno-sectarian group boundaries on the maps could be called into question because it is unclear how these data are matched up to precise latitude and longitude coordinates (or other coordinate systems).

Published accounts of Izady's methodologies for ethnographic mapping using secondary sources are not available. Searches for Izady-authored publications in academic databases turn up empty. In one instance, Izady does use primary data: the ethnic composition map series of Baghdad that illustrates the city's increasing segregation from 2006 to 2015. He writes how he uses a network of voluntary informants to gather data about the city's segregated neighborhoods. No published works could be located that describe how Izady recruits informants, how often they provide updates, the kind of resolution provided by his data, or whether or not this data is georeferenced.

In the series of journalistic maps that seek to predict Middle East conflict, define the Middle East's cultural boundaries, or predict future nation-state boundaries, data sources are

not named for three of the six maps.<sup>30</sup> The other three authors cite maps examined in this chapter, the knowledge of Middle East experts, and travel to the region. Glenn Kates names Robin Wright's map, Michael Izady's Gulf/2000 Middle East map series, and the regional expertise of Kates' colleagues at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty as the primary data sources used for his map of Iraq and Syria's redrawn boundaries (Figure 2, Appendix 2). Jeffrey Goldberg bases his map (Figure 3, Appendix 2) upon "several weeks of speaking with more than 25 experts and traveling to Iraq, Jordan, the West Bank, and Israel." To draw the boundaries on his map (Figure 4, Appendix 2), Cullen Murphy arranged a meeting of four Washington D.C.-based Middle East-focused experts and researchers: the historian David Fromkin, the diplomat Dennis Ross, and the Middle East experts Daniel Byman and Kenneth Pollack. According to him they "gathered for part of a day in a room full of maps, seeking to identify regions that share certain natural bonds and commonalities - the Middle East's underlying components". Ralph Peters does not name any data sources for his map (Figure 5, Appendix 2). But he does provide the following explanation of how he constructed his map, "The art department gave me a blank map, and I took a crayon and drew on it. After it came out, people started arguing on the Internet that this border should, in fact, be 50 miles this way, and that border 50 miles that way, but the width of the crayon itself was 200 miles."<sup>31</sup>

A number of Izady's maps represent population density along with ethno-sectarian group data (for an example see "Ethnic Groups of Afghanistan").<sup>32</sup> This gives the map user an indication of not only the territorial extent of ethno-sectarian homelands, but also indicates the

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<sup>30</sup> Figures 1 and 5 (Appendix 2) along with Robin Wright's *New York Times* map.

<sup>31</sup> Goldberg, Jeffrey, "After Iraq: A report from the new Middle East - and a glimpse of its possible future", *The Atlantic Monthly*, January 2008, [http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/01/after-iraq/306577/?single\\_page=true](http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/01/after-iraq/306577/?single_page=true).

<sup>32</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Afghanistan\\_Ethnic\\_lg.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Afghanistan_Ethnic_lg.png)

number of people living within these territories. On the CIA-authored map of Libya (Figure 9, Appendix 1), ethnic groups are represented as homogenous with no internal variation. The locations of tribes and Libya's three geographical regions (Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and the Fezzan) are given approximate locations with text labels. The only way to get an understanding of the population densities of ethno-sectarian territories in Libya is to read the ethnic group map alongside a population density map. In this case, a Libya population density map is available for download with the ethnic map on the PCL website (Figure 10, Appendix 1). These two maps were printed in the same year (1974), are drawn in the same style and it appears they are presented at the same scale, using the same projection (although this is impossible to determine since the CIA-authored maps are missing scale ratios and projection information). Similar pairings are available on the PCL website for Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon. The National Geographic Atlas does present a number of population density maps. However, these are presented at different scales than the ethno-religious maps, making direct comparison between maps impossible. While these exceptions do help to indicate that population densities can vary greatly within ethno-sectarian homelands, the majority of the ethnographic maps make it difficult to read population density data alongside ethno-religious data.

Izady's ethnographic maps focus on the central areas of three Iraqi cities: Baghdad, Mosul, and Kirkuk (the National Geographic map focusing on Baghdad is derived from Izady's data). No other data from urban areas on the region's ethno-sectarian composition is available. This is rather problematic, since the majority of the Middle East's inhabitants live in urban areas (Kaplan and Holloway, 2014). National-scale maps that present ethno-sectarian territories or homelands as clearly bounded territories completely elide urban areas and can unintentionally give the impression that large ethno-religious territories can be equated with

large population groups. This issue is apparent in Izady's "Distribution of Kurds in the Middle East" map<sup>33</sup> and the National Geographic maps of the Middle East's language and ethnic groups (Figures 2, Appendix 1).

None of the maps discussed give any indication that they have been subject to ground-truthing. Within the field of cartography, ground-truthing refers to the verification of data on landscape features that has been acquired using remote sensing techniques (i.e. aerial photos, satellite images) are validated using observations conducted by researchers in the field. This can include features like vegetative land cover, land use, and ice and snow cover (Akom, et al., 2015; Carter, 2010; Pickles, 1994). While ethnographic data cannot be gathered via remote sensing methods in the same ways that physical landscape features can, the fact that the examined maps don't name data sources or use primary data makes ground-truthing essential. Since the vast majority of these maps represent ethnographic data at massive country or regional scales, it would be almost impossible to conduct any kind of ground-truthing operations that could provide a representative sample of verified data points.

The Hammond maps (Figure 1, Appendix 1) do not provide any scale, projection, or graticule information. The National Geographic maps stand in contrast to the Hammond maps. Amongst cartographers, the maps produced by National Geographic's maps division are considered to be some of the best examples of technically correct cartography that are produced for popular distribution. National Geographic's maps are understood to use georeferenced data where possible, contain critical information on technical aspects of the map (i.e. projection information, scale ratios, scale bars), present information in a manner that is easy to read and interpret (i.e. through selection of appropriate typefaces/font size, the careful selection of data), and use appropriate map projections for the scales and areas of the

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<sup>33</sup> [http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Kurds\\_Distribution\\_in\\_Mid\\_East\\_lg.png](http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Kurds_Distribution_in_Mid_East_lg.png)

world represented (Kimerling, et al., 2011, Bush, 2015). While ethnographic maps examined here do not include this information, a good number of the other maps contained in the atlas do contain this information. Despite the technical achievements evident in National Geographic's maps, worldviews presented in the society's atlases and popular magazine are understood to be unnecessarily simplistic, colonial, and racist by geographers and anthropologists alike (Malkki, 1997; Moseley, 2005). These critiques could be extended to the five National Geographic maps I examine. These maps draw directly from Izady's data. Therefore, the shortcomings in Izady's data gathering methodologies and data presentation are reproduced in the National Geographic maps. The Darfur map (Figure 5, Appendix 3) and the accompanying text on the 2006-2008 conflict reproduces incredibly problematic framings of "Arab" tribes versus "Black Africans" (Parks, 2008; Mamdani, 2009; Gruley and Duvall, 2011). Shoring up these simplistic understandings, the back cover of the atlas lists "ethnic violence" as a defining trait of the Middle East along with "geopolitical discord, and clashes over oil, water, and land".

The CIA-produced maps (Figures 1-11, Appendix 1) held in the PCL map collection were printed by the U.S. Government Publishing Office. The map librarian at the PCL was unable to produce any information on what kind of publications these maps originally appeared in (such as bound atlas or sheet formats). Subsequent Internet searches for supplementary information on these maps also came up empty. Without more detailed information on the authors or publication format of these maps, it is not possible to know how their data was gathered, whether or not these data is georeferenced, what scales are used, or

what kind of projections are used.<sup>34</sup> It is also impossible to understand who their intended audience is.

I was unable to locate recent biographical information on Michael Izady. The Gulf/2000 Project website does not provide any information on him. A 2004 edited volume in which he is a contributing author describes him as an expert in Middle Eastern Affairs with a doctorate from Columbia University. It goes on to state that he is an Adjunct Master Professor of Middle Eastern Studies and History at the Joint Special Operations University in Tampa, Florida (Simon and Tejirian, 2004). While Izady's maps adhere to cartographic standards better than most of the maps examined, they still lack essential information like naming the projections used or providing scale ratios

Max Fisher (associated with Figure 1, Appendix 2) is the Foreign Editor at the media website Vox.com. He has previously written for the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Washington Post*. Robin Wright (whose map is title "How 5 Countries Could become 14") is the author of *Rock the Casbah: Rage and Rebellion Across the Islamic World*.<sup>35</sup> According to her author biography, she has reported from 140 countries while working for prominent U.S.-based publications including the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Time*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Foreign Affairs*. Glenn Kates (Figure 2, Appendix 2) is a writer at Radio Liberty/Radio Free Europe. He is also a contributing writer at the *Atlantic Monthly*. Jeffrey Goldberg (Figure 3, Appendix 2) is a writer for the *Atlantic Monthly*. Prior to this, he was the Middle East correspondent for *New Yorker* magazine. Cullen Murphy (Figure 4, Appendix 2) is a regular contributor to *Vanity*

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<sup>34</sup> The Afghanistan map (Figure 5, Appendix 1) is an exception to this. It provides a ratio scale, a bar scale, projection information, and a graticule (in the form of meridians and parallels).

<sup>35</sup> Wright, Robin, "Imagining a Remapped Middle East", *The New York Times*, 29 September 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/29/opinion/sunday/imagining-a-remapped-middle-east.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/29/opinion/sunday/imagining-a-remapped-middle-east.html?pagewanted=all&_r=2).

*Fair* and has served as the former managing editor at the *Atlantic Monthly*. Ralph Peters is a retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel. His MacMillan Publishers profile page describes him as a military strategist, columnist, and author whose work has appeared in the *New York Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and *Armchair General* magazine.<sup>56</sup> He has authored a number of books on American military strategy, including *Endless War: Middle-Eastern Islam vs. Western Civilization* and *Wars of Blood and Faith: The Conflicts That Will Shape the Twenty-First Century*.

Nothing in these popular authors' backgrounds suggest that they have any formal training or professional experience in map making. Therefore, it is not surprising that none of these journalistic maps use systematically gathered social science data or hew closely to cartographic conventions. A partial exception to this is Murphy's article and map (Figure 4, Appendix 2). He draws upon the knowledge of Middle East experts and presents a map that is visually appealing (but still lacking in essential cartographic information).

#### **4.5) Better Maps for Better Partitions**

The printed atlas maps (National Geographic and Hammond), the PCL maps, the Izady map series, and the journalistic maps are easy to access for American (and other) audiences. They are available in inexpensive traditional atlases, can be downloaded from public websites, or viewed in mass circulation publications. These ethno-sectarian maps of the Middle East are subject to misinterpretation and misuse, just like any other map. Monmonier (1996: 1) understands that map users usually accept cartographic representation without question

Map users are generally a trusting lot.....they believe the cartographer really does know where to draw the line, figuratively as well as literally. As with many things beyond

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<sup>56</sup> <http://us.macmillan.com/author/ralphpeters>

their full understanding, they readily entrust map-making to a priesthood of technically competent designers and drafters working for government agencies and commercial firms. Yet cartographers are not licensed, and many map-makers competent in commercial art or the use of computer workstations have never studied cartography. Map users seldom, if ever, question these authorities, and they often fail to appreciate the map's power as a tool of deliberate falsification or subtle propaganda.

The cartographer Mike Foster makes a similar observation regarding maps that circulate on the web and via social media. Maps appear, are disseminated, and educate at an unprecedented scale in the United States at present. He cites the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* as leaders in producing high-quality and reputable maps. But there is another side to this use of cartography - mapmakers, journalists, and bloggers "capture" or create maps and release them onto the Internet. Often, little regard is taken in the validity or interpretation of the map and its data, or how it should be framed. 'Bad maps' are not a new phenomenon, but they are more accessible than ever before thanks to web-based media outlets and social media platforms.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, the availability of GIS software and large amounts of geospatial data can lead to maps which are poorly composed, misrepresent their data, or contain large amounts of data that have not been ground-truthed. Computer-based cartography has automated some parts of the mapmaking process. However, mapmaking continues to require skilled cartographers to verify data on the ground and to render a usable and representative end product.<sup>38</sup> Regardless of the shortcomings in cartography brought about by its digitization, computer-aided production methods and electronic media distribution reinforce the impression of authenticity and accuracy to map users (Barney, 2015).

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<sup>37</sup> Foster, Mike, "The Lost Art of Critical Map Reading", *Graphicarto*, 27 February 2014, <http://www.graphicarto.com/the-lost-art-of-critical-map-reading/>.

<sup>38</sup> Stevenson, Seth, "The Greatest Paper Map of the United States You'll Ever See", *Slate*, 2 January 2012, [http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2012/01the\\_best\\_american\\_wall\\_map\\_david\\_imus\\_the\\_essential\\_geography\\_of\\_the\\_united\\_states\\_of\\_america\\_.html?wpsrc=sh\\_all\\_dt\\_tw\\_top](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2012/01the_best_american_wall_map_david_imus_the_essential_geography_of_the_united_states_of_america_.html?wpsrc=sh_all_dt_tw_top).

Max Fisher's "40 Maps that Explain the Middle East" feature on the *Vox Media* website is a prime example of cartographic representation circulating widely on social media platforms and having the conclusions he draws from its maps accepted without question.<sup>39</sup> Published in May 2014, this feature uses easily available map images to aid Fisher's explanations of the Middle East's geography, history, politics, and political economies. He captures maps from a number of sources like news agencies (BBC), magazines (the *Economist*), and websites (Wikipedia). He also utilizes maps from the Izady map series, the PCL map collection, and Glenn Kates' map of a reconstructed Iraq and Syria (Figure 2). The theme of ethno-sectarian fuelled conflict figures prominently in Fisher's analyses. The geopolitician Tim Marshall (2015) cites Fisher's map feature in his book *Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps that Tell You Everything You Need to Know About Global Politics*. This map feature is one of two references listed for Marshall's chapter on the Middle East. Much of this chapter is focused on indexing and describing ethno-sectarian groups of the region and recounting or predicting what he sees as ethno-sectarian conflicts. From Marshall's perspective, this type of conflict is endogenous to the places he describes. In the New York Times Sunday Book Review, Joshua Hammer calls Marshall's map-centered approach a bit reductionist. But ultimately, Hammer lauds Marshall for "his insistence on seeing the world through the lens of geography. [It] compels a fresh way of looking at maps — not just as objects for orientation or works of art, but as guideposts to the often thorny relations between nations."<sup>40</sup> Marshall's book edged into the number 10 spot

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<sup>39</sup> Toensig, Chris, "Please Explain This Map", *Middle East Report*, 24 May 2014, <http://www.merip.org/please-explain-map>.

<sup>40</sup> Hammer, Joshua, "'Map: Exploring the World,' 'The Curious Map Book' and More", *The New York Times*, 1 December 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/06/books/review/map-exploring-the-world-the-curious-map-book-and-more.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/06/books/review/map-exploring-the-world-the-curious-map-book-and-more.html?_r=0).

on the *New York Times* Bestseller List in the "Travel" category during November 2015.<sup>41</sup>

Like other print atlases, the volumes published by Hammond and National Geographic end up in classrooms and libraries across the U.S. due to their low cost. Similarly, the CIA maps posted on the PCL map collection's website appear frequently in American classrooms and media reports due to their lack of copyright and re-use restrictions (Keshavarzian, 2007). The majority of the maps in this series were published prior to the widespread use of the Internet in the late 1990s. They likely have seen a much broader audience than their original authors ever intended.

Michael Izady's Middle East ethnographic maps and data have been used by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* a number of times as early as 2012, and have been used most frequently in 2014 and 2015. Maps which cite Izady as a source are featured in articles and blog posts with headlines and titles like "As Turkey Targets Militants, War Grips Kurdish Lands Once Again",<sup>42</sup> "Why Turkey is Fighting the Kurds Who Are Fighting ISIS",<sup>43</sup> "The Growing Role of Kurds in Syria",<sup>44</sup> "Power Struggles in the Middle East Exploit Islam's Ancient Sectarian Rift",<sup>45</sup> "The One Map That Shows Why Syria is So Complicated"<sup>46</sup> and

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<sup>41</sup> "New York Times Bestsellers - Travel", *The New York Times*, December 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/best-sellers-books/2015-12-13/travel/list.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Arango, Tim, "As Turkey Targets Militants, War Grips Kurdish Lands Once Again", *The New York Times*, 25 August 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/25/world/europe/as-turkey-targets-militants-war-grips-kurdish-lands-once-again.html>

<sup>43</sup> Almuktar, Sarah and Tim Wallace, "Why Turkey Is Fighting the Kurds Who Are Fighting ISIS", *The New York Times*, 12 August 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/08/12/world/middleeast/turkey-kurds-isis.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Peçanha, Sergio and Burgess, Joe, "The Growing Role of Kurds in Syria", *The New York Times*, 28 September 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/29/world/middleeast/the-growing-role-of-kurds-in-syria.html>.

<sup>45</sup> Kirkpatrick, David, "Power Struggles in Middle East Exploit Islam's Ancient Sectarian Rift", *The New York Times*, 5 July 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/06/world/middleeast/power-struggles-in-middle-east-exploit-islams-ancient-sectarian-rift.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Fisher, Max, "The One Map That Shows Why Syria is So Complicated", *The Washington Post*, 27 August 2013,

"Behind Stark Political Divisions, a More Complex Map of Sunnis and Shiites".<sup>47</sup> The maps accompanying these articles are visually appealing and support the authors' reporting and arguments that center around ethno-sectarian conflict. Despite this, the ethno-sectarian data they represent are based upon Izady's mostly outmoded secondary data sources that haven't been subject to any ground-truthing.

From a cartographic perspective, serious issues arise with this set of American-authored Middle East ethnographic maps. The vast majority of their potential users are not trained to question the assumptions underlying research design, data collection methodologies, nor the choices that cartographers must make when drafting maps. When proposing to use ethnographic maps to partition nation-states in order to align boundaries with ethno-sectarian groups, accurate, precise, and up-to-date cartographic representations would be absolutely essential. Academic approaches to mapping stress prescriptive methods in order to maximize the effectiveness of cartographic representation. The use of these guidelines are important when accurate and precise territorial and spatial representation is required.

In this chapter, I use textbook-derived, conventional cartographic principles to examine U.S.-authored ethnographic maps of the Middle East. Wood (2003a) calls these principles "prescriptive bullshit" since academic cartographers (trained and based in the marginal discipline of geography for the most part) do not have a monopoly on map production or map use and are increasingly irrelevant in the age of computer-based cartography and Geographic Information Systems software. Cartographic tools and spatial

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<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/08/27/the-one-map-that-shows-why-syria-is-so-complicated/>.

<sup>47</sup> Almuktar, Sarah, Sergio Peçanha, and Tim Wallace, "Behind Stark Political Divisions, a More Complex Map of Sunnis and Shiites", *The New York Times*, 4 January 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/01/04/world/middleeast/sunni-shiite-map-middle-east-iran-saudi-arabia.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/01/04/world/middleeast/sunni-shiite-map-middle-east-iran-saudi-arabia.html?_r=0).

data are available to a much broader user base than they were at any time in the past. In other words, if academic cartographers ever had monopoly on map-making, this era is long past.

Along similar lines, Cosgrove (2008: 2) writes,

Mid-twentieth-century cartography experienced its own drive to configure mapping practice and the map itself within the narrow strictures of instrumental science. A subsequent reaction has stretched the definition of a map and the practices of mapping well beyond the conventional sense of a scaled representation of measurable geographic facts located in absolute, Euclidean space....The distance between conventional usage and the metaphorical meanings of mapping as a cognitive spatial practice has shortened considerably in recent scholarship, so that all sorts of purely mental and imaginative constructs are now treated as maps, while supposedly objective and scrupulously accurate scale renderings of real-world distributions are regarded as inescapably dyed with ideological, psychological and other subjective hues.

Prescriptive, conventional, and instrumentalist methods of cartography assume that maps should represent individual data points, or aggregations of data that can be accurately and easily reproduced. But as theorists of cartography have long observed, maps work as visual images, rather than compilations of individual and layered data points. In the case of the Middle East ethnographic maps that I examine, they are expressions of a particular geopolitical imagination. The maps I examine simply do not represent territory. Instead, they produce a skewed version of reality by inscribing boundaries and reinforcing simplistic categories. In the words of Denis Wood the maps created to represent the Middle East's cultural landscapes "precede territory" (2003b: 145). Along similar lines, Barney (2015: 5) writes, "[m]aps are ideological blueprints - they frame the language of politics in a melding of signs and symbols that both reflect and create colorful and charged worldviews."

These series of ethnographic maps that I examine gives the impression that what exists on ground exists on the map. Within Western geopolitical thought, there is an understanding that "natural" boundaries of states can be determined through the examination of historical maps which contain objective data from past surveys of physical and human geographies.

Often, old maps attain an almost legendary status in the search for true and objective parameters of the nation-state (Fall, 2006). It seems that many of these ethnographic maps understand the human geography of the Middle East to be as durable as the region's physical geography and attempt to conflate them in an environmentally deterministic manner. Even if representative, up-to-date, ethnographic datasets could be generated for the entire Middle East, these types of data goes well beyond the limits of cartographic representation.

Jones (2014) writes "better maps would not make for better partitions". These problematic perspectives on the geographical aspects of social organization are then carried over into understandings of conflict through the maps of "natural" and redrawn Middle East boundaries created by high-profile American journalists and thinkers. The following examples of Albania and East Pakistan demonstrate that nation-state boundary drawing along ethno-sectarian lines is not a simple exercise.

The historian Nicola Guy (2008) details how the frontiers of Albania were fixed by six European powers as part of an agreement imposed upon the belligerents of the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. According to the agreement, the boundaries of the country were to be determined by identifying a contiguous territory inhabited by the "Albanian" ethnic category. In this case, the categories were based upon linguistic divisions. The officials charged with undertaking this project held the assumption that speakers of each language constituted a unique race and community. Therefore, they had a right to become nation-states. Officials found it very difficult to carry out this boundary-drawing exercise because the available ethnographic information showed huge variations. At the same time this data rarely indicated the distribution and density of the population. The country's mountainous terrain, along with winter weather made it difficult to produce new ethnographic data and maps. Guy argues (2008: 42) "[T]he reality was that the population was interlaced, contrary to beliefs

pre-supposing that ethnic entities are coterminous bounded entities". The result of this partition was that groups living in the newly established state of Albania that did not fit the definition of "Albanians" went about their lives as they always had." While maps were drawn delimiting Albania's frontiers, they were a very poor representation of its ethno-linguistic landscape. Not until after the Second World War did the communist government begin to militarily harden boundaries that were largely derived from post-1913 boundary drawing exercises.

Jones (2014) makes similar arguments in his research on the problematic issues surrounding the 1947 partition of the Indian state of Bengal and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). While ethnic and religious categories were well-defined in colonial censuses and administrative structures, it was impossible to clearly define Hindu and Muslim religious categories in the areas that would become the borderlands of East Pakistan and India. The colonial officials charged with drafting the partition maps assumed that census data was an exact reflection of populations on the ground and that Hindu and Muslim populations could be clearly defined. Once the boundary was in place, it became clear how problematic dividing formerly united territories and populations was using partition maps. Massive population exchanges and communal violence took place in 1947 and 1948 (Jones, 2014). In the years following partition, 198 political enclaves were created on the northern section of India/Bangladesh border (Jones, 2009). These enclaves are essentially stateless spaces where Indian and Bangladeshi populations are trapped on both sides of the border and have no access to the administrative structures and social services of their home countries. As Guy and Jones argue, it is impossible to identify discrete ethno-sectarian categories, map their geographical extent and distribution, and then partition them into homogenous nation-states. Mol and Law write "it is no longer assumed that geography and identity map onto one

another. And the resulting complexity - self, other, here, there - defies the cartographic imagination" (2005: 637).

Corner (1999) observes that many maps simply trace what is already known, and don't bring to light any new understandings of landscapes or spatial relationships. These types of maps simply serve as guides. In the case of the ethnographic maps that I examine, it seems that their goal is to trace the geographical aspects of pre-determined ethno-sectarian categories. Furthermore, these maps were produced as guides for outside observers. Corner (1999: 215) writes, "Map devices such as frame, scale, orientation, projection, indexing and naming that remain unavailable to human eyes. Maps present only one version of the earth's surface, an eidetic fiction constructed from factual observations". Corner's observation regarding the limits of cartographic representation aligns with the arguments I make in this chapter regarding the impossibility of representing ethnographic data in such a reductive manner. But in the case of the maps I examine, it would be difficult to consider the data they represent to be 'factual'. They may represent a *tranche* of social reality in the Middle East, but it is hard to see how these ethno-sectarian territorial representations could be useful in partitioning nation-states or explaining conflict in the region.

Amongst geographers (and other social science researchers), there is a growing movement to use the latest mapping techniques in order to serve indigenous communities in non-colonial and non-patriarchal ways. Researchers build ongoing and long-term connections with indigenous peoples and through these relationships and do their best to understand how their expertise can help communities document important geographical aspects of the places in which they live. In this type of research, data are gathered in a collaborative and participatory manner. The end goal is to build cartographic tools that have some kind of local impact. Often, scholars begin their projects not knowing what kind research they will be

conducting. After building relationships with communities, they can then determine how to go about conducting their research and ultimately using their skills and academic networks in ways that aid indigenous communities. Consent of study participants is central to this type of research (Taylor and Lauriault, 2014).

Ethnographic maps like the ones I discuss appear to be woefully outdated when compared to contemporary practices of community and indigenous-focused mapping. As I have stated, the maps I examine don't say much about their data sources. When they do disclose sources, they appear to rely primarily on outmoded colonial data. In order to construct ethnographic maps in which singular ethno-sectarian types are slotted into discrete territorial boundaries, it would require sending teams of researchers into the field with encyclopedic-type volumes to determine just how each individual fits into pre-determined categories. This is hardly the stuff of cutting-edge social science research. Ethnographic maps are from another era in which environmental determinism had yet to be discredited. They are holdovers from the assumption that social patterns like language, religious beliefs, agricultural practices, and diet could be related to and determined by physical geography (Diamond, 1999; 2012). These relationships between human and physical geography were determined cartographically. Mapping of climate and biologically defined human groups underpin geographic theories of race (Cosgrove, 2001).

Despite their highly problematic nature, ethnographic maps maintain a great deal of currency because they are simple to read and interpret and they conform to the ideal of discrete nations of peoples (whatever the criteria) fitting neatly into clearly demarcated territories. As Cosgrove (2008) argues, no territory or spatial phenomenon within that territory can be controlled or represented completely. But the very nature of ethnographic maps gives the illusion that complete representation of cultural landscapes is possible. As

Chapter 5 demonstrates, the ethno-sectarian territorial frames on display in ethnographic maps of the Middle East are present American textual discourse on the region. In my analysis of the Iraq Troop Surge, violence that occurred in Iraq roughly between 2005 and 2008 is framed primarily through an ethno-sectarian lens.

## Chapter 5) Preserving the Territorial Integrity of a Tripartite State: Iraq's Ethno-sectarian Groups and the U.S. Military's Troop Surge

### 5.1) The Surge: Preserving Iraq's Territorial Integrity

In 1994, Dick Cheney gave an interview in which he argued that the Coalition Forces' decision to withdraw from Iraq in 1991 was the correct path for American military strategy in the Middle East and considerations of a future invasion should be discarded.<sup>1</sup> He stated:

Once you got to Iraq and took it over, took down Saddam Hussein's government, then what are you going to put in its place? That's a very volatile part of the world, and if you take down the central government of Iraq, you could very easily end up seeing pieces of Iraq fly off: part of it, the Syrians would like to have to the west, part of it - eastern Iraq - the Iranians would like to claim, they fought over it for eight years. In the north you've got the Kurds, and if the Kurds spin loose and join with the Kurds in Turkey, then you threaten the territorial integrity of Turkey.

In this statement, Cheney argued that if a U.S. led coalition were to invade Iraq, portions of Iraqi territory would be integrated into Syria and Iran, while Kurdish portions of Iraq would join with Kurdish portions of Turkey to create an independent Kurdish state. While he made a direct reference regarding the territorial integrity of Turkey, it is clear that his main concern is with the territorial integrity of Iraq. When Cheney made this statement, he held the directorship of the Council on Foreign Relations and a research post at the American Enterprise Institute (a Washington D.C. think tank). His views on Iraq's territorial integrity largely reflect the views of the George H.W. Bush administration's views on the subject, where he served as Secretary of Defense.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lynch, Connor, "Dick Cheney's savage revisionist history: inside his disturbing campaign to twist the facts of Iraq" *Salon*, 5 September 2015, [http://www.salon.com/2015/09/05/dick\\_cheneys\\_savage\\_revisionist\\_history\\_inside\\_his\\_disturbing\\_campaign\\_to\\_twist\\_the\\_facts\\_of\\_iraq/](http://www.salon.com/2015/09/05/dick_cheneys_savage_revisionist_history_inside_his_disturbing_campaign_to_twist_the_facts_of_iraq/).

<sup>2</sup> Bush, George, H.W., Brent Snowcroft, "Why We Didn't Remove Saddam", *Time*, 2 March 1998.

The concept of territorial integrity was invoked again when preparations were being made for the second Iraq invasion in 2002. According to Elden and Williams (2009), maintaining Iraq's territorial integrity was one of the four central planning goals of US CENTCOM war strategists along with infrastructure reconstruction, the re-establishment of the Iraqi military, and a quick handover of power from a U.S. administered Iraqi government to one administered locally by elected officials. They write that as preparations for the invasion were being made, territorial integrity meant the maintenance of Iraq's existing international boundaries. Territorial preservation in this sense is different from Iraq's sovereignty, which the U.S. and its coalition partners violated in the view of international law. Elden and Williams speculate that one reason why territorial integrity was invoked in this context was to assure states neighboring Iraq that the U.S invasion would not affect their international boundaries and was solely about regime change - rather than an attempt to redraw the political map of the Middle East.

While Iraq's territorial integrity remained a central goal of the U.S. invasion and occupation, it was unclear exactly how this would be done. According to Ehrenberg *et al.* (2010) the U.S. State Department advocated for a moderate policy of "de-Saddamification" by purging those officials at the very top of the command structure, but still leaving the state's command structure mostly intact. The CIA, Department of Defense, and the Vice President's office largely agreed with State's plans, with some minor disagreements. National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice ironed out the differences in these plans and was able to finalize a scheme of de-Saddamification amongst Bush's other war cabinet members (Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Powell) with the support of the State Department. In the end, this plan was ignored by CPA head Paul L. Bremer and Rumsfeld. It was these two officials held direct power for administering Iraq after the invasion. The first two orders issued by Bremer in May

and July 2003, respectively, dissolved the Baath party, the Iraqi armed forces, and the Iraqi government. The authors write that the effect this had was to drive hundred of thousands of skilled and armed men to nascent groups opposing the American occupation. They further argue that it remains unclear why Bremer's first two orders were issued when they clearly contravened the wishes of Bush and his advisers. The effect these two orders had was to make the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) the *de facto* government of Iraq and resulted in the CPA running Iraq on an *ad hoc* basis. The CPA's improvised and authoritarian character meant that it lacked basic expertise in administering a country, even though legal frameworks and experts on state building can be found in most U.S. government departments and agencies with international remits. The foretold, fast, cheap, and inexpensive invasion and occupation never came to pass as the CPA settled in for a long-term occupation of Iraq.

Between 2003 and 2007, the U.S. military relied upon two documents to implement its military campaign in Iraq. The first was devised prior to the invasion in 2002 and is titled the "Joint Doctrine for Campaign Planning". By 2004, it was clear that the use of this doctrine led to a massive lack of planning and coordination on the ground. When General George W. Casey took command in 2004, he devised a still classified doctrine that was meant to correct the shortcomings of the earlier doctrine. But statements by retired officers and Casey himself showed this plan had serious problems due to its vagueness, lack of long-term thinking, and lack concrete guidelines for transitioning power to the Iraqi military and police. These doctrines did not take into account cultural and historical factors on the ground that could complicate tactics and strategies (Ehrenberg *et al.* 2010).

The U.S. military officer and scholar Peter Mansoor (2014) writes that by the end of 2006, it appeared that the Iraq War would be lost by U.S. and Coalition forces. At this point, more than 3,000 Iraqis were dying each month and battles between insurgent groups resembled

civil war. Mansoor understands that the violence was driven by ethno-sectarian struggles for control over state power and resources. Like other scholars of the Iraq War, he places the blame for this violence on the absence of planning after the end of major combat operations in 2003 (Allawi, 2008; Chandrasekeran, 2006; Galbraith, 2007; Momani and Lamani, 2010; Ricks, 2006; Pascual and Pollack, 2007; Simon, 2007). Tony Blair, one of Bush's primary allies in the invasion, acknowledges this as well.<sup>3</sup> In the power vacuum that followed the collapse of the Iraqi government, a complex and ever shifting network of militant groups fought a guerilla campaign to ouster Coalition forces (Byman and Pollack, 2007). Up until the end of 2006, 'kinetic' military operations were the primary means of fighting insurgent groups (Mansoor, 2008; Ricks, 2008).

While counterinsurgency tactics were employed on an ad-hoc basis by some commanders as early as 2004, a new counterinsurgency strategy for the U.S. Army and Marines was announced in early 2007. Rather than make preparations to withdraw the U.S. military from Iraq (which was the wish of opponents to the occupation), this new strategy called for the addition of approximately 30,000 more troops to give the U.S. military and its allies the ability to deploy outside of large Forward Operating Bases in order to protect the Iraqi population from insurgent violence (Romano, *et al.* 2013). The end goal of the surge was to "buy time and space for the Iraqi government to move forward with national reconciliation and improve its delivery of public services" (Sky, 2011: 119). The surge sought to remove the dependence of the Al-Maliki government upon Shia militias, convince Sunni tribes to help fight al-Qaeda, and re-engage Sunni groups with Iraq's political processes. The

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<sup>3</sup> The Associated Press, "Britain's Tony Blair apologizes for 'mistakes in planning' in Iraq", 25 October 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-britain-blair-apologize-iraq-20151025-story.html>.

implementation of this plan required a significant restructuring of U.S. military chains of command, logistics, and overall strategy (Sky, 2008).

Prior to the introduction of the surge, U.S. military doctrine for Iraq was written in a generic manner and was largely based on Cold War understandings of controlling territory. After the surge was implemented, the means to controlling territory came through parsing out members of ethno-sectarian groups and policing their boundaries. While all three U.S. military doctrines developed for Iraq up to 2007 sought to maintain the country's territorial integrity, counterinsurgency doctrine made the divisions between ethno-sectarian groups explicit. For this reason, Iraq came to be seen as a tripartite state leading up to the implementation of the surge strategy in 2007. Despite these supposedly antagonistic Iraqi identities, the U.S. remained committed to keeping Iraq together as a nation-state. This view can be seen with a January 2006 *Boston Review* piece authored by former U.S. Senator Joe Biden. He argues that military power cannot win the Iraq war alone, and advocates for a political solution designed along ethno-sectarian lines.<sup>4</sup> He writes

First, we need to build a political consensus in Iraq, starting with a constitution that gives the Kurds, Shia, and Sunnis a stake in keeping Iraq together. Iraq cannot be salvaged by military might alone. In October, Iraqis approved a version of the constitution overwhelmingly. But the vast majority of Sunni Arabs voted no. Unless changes are made by next spring, the new constitution will divide Iraqis, not unite them. Change will require compromise from all sides. Sunnis must accept the fact that they no longer rule Iraq. But unless the Shia and Kurds give them a stake in the new order, they will continue to resist it. If we fail to forge a political consensus soon, our troops will be dragged into a full-blown civil war.

Biden's statement at this time reflects the idea that violence in Iraq can be mitigated through a political structure that works along ethno-sectarian lines. Interestingly enough, the surge

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<sup>4</sup> Biden, Joe, "Iraq Exit Strategy Forum", *Boston Review*, 2 January 2006, <http://www.bostonreview.net/forum/exit-strategy/president-seems-recognize-he-has-lot-work-do>.

strategy implemented at the beginning of 2007 conceptualized Iraq's cultural landscape in a similar manner.

It is true that ethno-sectarian understandings were part of American understandings of Iraq from at least the 1991 Gulf War onwards. This began with the Northern No-Fly Zone enforced during the 1990s and early 2000s to ostensibly protect Kurdish populations. As the 2003 invasion was being planned, it was a poorly kept secret that the Bush White House sought to put Shia-based groups in power after the invasion in order to undermine Saddam Hussein's cultivated Sunni power base.<sup>5</sup>

During most of 2007, it was unclear to both proponents and critics of the surge whether or not it was having any effect on decreasing the levels of violence in Iraq, especially since most of the reinforcements didn't arrive until June (McCausland, 2008). But by the end of 2007, it was widely acknowledged that the change in strategy was a success (Celso, 2010). U.S. casualties almost halved from their peak in July 2007 and the overall level of violence was lower than it was at any point since 2005. Additionally, the internal displacement of Iraqis seems to have ceased, especially in its major urban areas (Simon, 2008). Filkins argues that the surge was so successful in reducing violence that the Iraq War went from dominating American media coverage during the Summer of 2006 to being an afterthought by the Summer of 2008.<sup>6</sup> Proponents of the surge hold that the combination of more troops and deploying them differently than in the past were the keys to reduced levels of violence (Hastings Dunn and Futter, 2010; Burton and Nagl, 2008; Biddle *et al.*, 2012; Stancati, 2010).

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<sup>5</sup> Trofimov, Yaroslav, "After Minority Rule, Iraq's Sunnis Refuse Minority Role", *Wall Street Journal*, 9 April 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/iraqs-sunnis-dont-accept-minority-role-1428571127>.

<sup>6</sup> Filkins, Dexter, "Surging and Awakening", *New Republic*, 19 May 2009, <https://newrepublic.com/article/64679/surging-and-awakening>.

After the surge was deemed a success by most American observers of the Iraq War, some dissenting views have appeared. Alex Kingsbury of the *Boston Globe* writes that very little has been written from or on Iraqi perspectives of the surge. Kingsbury states that in 2007, only four percent of Iraqis felt that the additional U.S. Army and Marine units were responsible for the decline in violence. Civilian deaths in Iraq began to decline in mid-2006 and Sunni tribes in al-Anbar province began turning against al-Qaeda as early February 2005.<sup>7</sup> Khedery (2015) understands the surge to be more about gaining continued support military operations in Iraq, rather than the actual effects it had on the everyday lives of Iraqis or Coalition service members. He sees the surge as simply another violent episode in Iraq's history since 1991 in which successive American administrations "have made a habit of substituting unpleasant realities with rosy assessments based on questionable assumptions" (Khedery, 2015: 33).

Others see the focus on the technical details of counterinsurgency as a deliberate shift in policy discourse by the Bush administration to distract from glaring failures in overall strategy. They understand the surge as simply an increased reliance on operational concepts and tactics that were previously in use. From these perspectives, the increased troop numbers had no effect on the decreased levels of violence. But two other factors did. The first was paying large sums of money (essentially bribes) to Sunni tribal leaders and putting Sunni militia members on the American payroll in order to get Sunni tribes to side with the U.S. in its fight against al-Qaeda. The second was the Mahdi Army's suspension of attacks against Coalition forces (Gentile, 2008; Amara, 2012).

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<sup>7</sup> Kingsbury, Alex, "Why the 2007 surge in Iraq actually failed", *Boston Globe*, 17 November 2014, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2014/11/17/why-surge-iraq-actually-failed-and-what-that-means-today/0NaI9JrbtSs1pAZvgzGtaL/story.html>.

Joshua Thiel (2011), a U.S. Army Special Forces Officer and researcher, attempts to find a correlation between troop number increases and decreased violence in Iraq from 2006 and 2007. Using SIGACTs (significant kinetic events) per province and the number of battalions deployed to each province, Thiel was unable to find a statistically significant relationship between these two variables. While his analysis is unable to reveal other variables accounting for the drop in violence, the increase in troop numbers can be ruled out. He speculates that unquantifiable factors like coalition policies, enemy strategy, and neighboring country assistance may have played an important role in the decreased violence.

Agnew *et al.*, (2008) question data gathering methodologies used by the U.S. military to claim that violence in Baghdad decreased as a result of the surge. They argue that reports often relied on anecdotal evidence or used a non-representative network of informants to substantiate their claims. The authors attempt to test the military's claims using remotely sensed nighttime light imagery of Baghdad and other urban areas in Iraq and correlate it with ground-based data on ethnic distributions and violence by neighborhood. They use other urban areas (which had lower levels of ethnic mixing and experienced lower levels of violence) as a baseline with which to compare Baghdad's light signatures. If the surge had worked as claimed by the U.S. government, there would be an expectation of seeing a regular increase in nighttime light output over time as electrical infrastructure is repaired.

Their analysis shows that there was no significant relationship between nighttime light output patterns and the increase of Army units in Baghdad. They argue that by the time the U.S. military arrived to stop the violence, most of it had already occurred. Neighborhoods had already been segregated along Sunni/Shia lines through forced dislocation and murder. The surge simply formalized these divisions through networks of military checkpoints and ever growing numbers of concrete blast walls (Agnew *et al.*, 2008).

The relatively large body of scholarly research conducted on the surge complicates what is often an easy narrative presented by the U.S. media, government, and military. From my reading of these materials, the categories of Sunni, Shia, and Kurd are taken for granted by most of these researchers. Gregory (2008) argues that by framing the violence as Sunni versus Shia (versus Kurd at times), the U.S. military was able to portray itself as a neutral peacekeeping force standing between warring factions. These essentialist identities deny that "constructed and conjunctural, negotiated and contested subject-positions are formed at the intersection of multiple affiliations" in Iraq (Gregory, 2008: 14).

The goal of this chapter is to gain a greater understanding of the prevalence of these essentialist categories in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* coverage of the surge during 2007. I then compare these framings to American government, military, and think tank discourses on the Iraqi cultural landscape during the surge. The map in Figure 1 (Appendix 3) represents the geographical aspects of "Sunni Arab", "Shia Arab", and Kurd groups in Iraq.<sup>8</sup> This is one of the few cartographic representations of Iraq's ethno-sectarian groups in the materials that I analyze for this chapter. While there are some exceptions, the idea that Iraq is comprised of three distinct ethno-sectarian territories is prominent in the texts I analyze. Furthermore the violence in Iraq is often understood to be an inherent product of Iraq's status as an artificial state. Despite this artificiality, the surge strategy shows that the U.S. sought to maintain Iraq's territorial integrity.

But to say that reporting during this time was entirely focused on Iraq's three major cultural groups would be inaccurate. A significant proportion of the coverage focuses on the insurgency as being led by militias without mentioning ethno-sectarian groups, the battle

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<sup>8</sup> Marsh, Evan, "The Ever-Mutating Iraq Insurgency", *The New York Times*, 6 January 2007, [http://www.nytimes.com/imagepages/2007/01/06/weekinreview/20070107\\_MARSH\\_GRAPHIC.html](http://www.nytimes.com/imagepages/2007/01/06/weekinreview/20070107_MARSH_GRAPHIC.html)

between Congress and the Bush Administration regarding the overall aims of the Iraq occupation and the danger and cost of deploying additional U.S. battalions into a very dire situation, and the technical details of the new counterinsurgency strategy.

## 5.2) *Times* and *Post* Coverage and Sampling

I have chosen the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* as source texts for a number of reasons articulated by communications scholars (Adams, 2009; D'Angelo and Kuypers, 2010; Entman, 2004) and my own requirements regarding the nature of geopolitical discourse explained in Chapters 2 and 3. These include:

- 1) Their quality and extent of international reporting.
- 2) Their status as papers of record.
- 3) The mass circulation of their print editions (even in an era when printed editions of newspapers are in drastic decline).
- 4) Their extensive use of visual supplements (discussed in Chapter 4, Section 5).
- 5) The examination of the two papers' content is considered standard practice in the field of communications studies.

According to my LexisNexis Academic<sup>9</sup> database search, 1038 articles contain the words "Iraq" and "Surge" between January 1, 2007 and December 31, 2007, for both papers. A total of 437 articles reference "Iraq" and "Surge" and either "Sunni" or "Shia/Shiite" or "Kurd" during this same time frame. It is these 437 articles which I selected for analysis.<sup>10</sup> Discussions of the surge strategy first appear in early December 2006 and continue to be mentioned well beyond the end of 2007 and into July of 2008 (when the surge officially ended). The majority of the coverage on the surge occurred during 2007, when the strategy was being debated and

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.lexisnexus.ca/en-ca/products/lexisnexus-academic.page>

<sup>10</sup> Articles are referenced by newspaper (NYT or WP) and the date they were published (DD/MM/YYYY). Papers are referenced rather than authors following Sharp's (2000, 2011) assertion that editorial policy and practice creates a singular voice.

implemented (Kurtzleben, 2010). Blog entries are counted as articles and are included as part of the analysis.<sup>11</sup>

The months of January and September receive the greatest amount of coverage, with each month receiving 18 percent of the coverage, respectively (Figure 2, Appendix 3). October sees the least amount of coverage at 2 percent (Figure 2, Appendix 3). Coding schemas are divided into two broad categories. The first focuses on political discussions of U.S. military tactics and strategy and the second covers aspects of Iraq's cultural landscape (Figure 3, Appendix 3). Figure 2 lists the appearance of each theme in the coverage, by month. Figure 4 (Appendix 3) lists the appearance of each theme in the coverage as a percentage, which is also divided by month. Coding schemas were developed from a careful reading of January's coverage in each paper.

### **5.3) Contests Over Military Tactics and Strategy**

In early January 2007, reporting is concerned with President Bush's soon to be unveiled Iraq policy. The Bush administration seeks to add between 20,000-30,000 troops to the 140,000 that are already in the country. The primary goal would be to neutralize or eliminate terrorist and insurgent groups, with the intention of leaving Iraq stable enough to build upon its new democracy. After almost four years of occupation, it is understood that Democratic lawmakers who form the party's foreign policy opinions would strongly oppose any troop increase. Opposition amongst Republican is strong as well - mainly because it is unclear whether or not this new strategy would have any effect on reducing violence.

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<sup>11</sup> Due to the limitations of the database's search function and the large number of search results, some non-articles features (such as the "Inside the Times" summaries that appears on the front page of the New York Times) were included in the article tallies. I estimate that no more than two percent of the articles consist of these types of features.

Regardless of Congressional opposition, it is understood that lawmakers can do very little to influence Bush's war strategy due to the American constitutional political system (WP, 01/01/2007; WP, 05/01/2007). Additionally, this troop increase is anticipated to stretch U.S. infantry and other ground forces to the "breaking point". By March 2007, it is expected that an additional five brigades would be on the battlefield. It is stated that because the American military is stretched so thin, the majority of the brigades will not begin operations until June (NYT, 08/03/2007). The additional funds required by this change in strategy is also seen as a serious issue (WP, 07/01/2007).

Coverage represents this strategy as no different than 2006's Operation Together Forward, which was unsuccessful in securing Baghdad. It is understood that the Iraqi government did not provide enough soldiers to hold areas of the city after joint U.S./Iraqi operations cleared them of insurgents. Additionally, it is reported that the Iraqi Army lacks a judicial system and that Iraqi commanders have no legal means of compelling their subordinates into combat. This combined with an overall shortage of Iraqi troops played a large role in the failure of Together Forward (WP, 05/01/2007; WP, 07/01/2007; WP, 08/01/2007).

Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Lt. General Raymond Odierno, commander of the U.S. Army's III Corps, see the surge as a prologue to a long-term occupation of Iraq. This occupation would be analogous to U.S. occupation forces in South Korea and would give the U.S. and Iraqi Armies enough time and resources to subdue or eliminate the vast majority of insurgent opposition (WP, 01/06/2007).

The additional military units required by Bush's new policy are central to a counterinsurgency strategy developed by U.S. military strategists, including the counterinsurgency expert, General David H. Petraeus (NYT, 02/01/2007; WP, 04/01/2007).

Along with the Iraqi Army, these units would be responsible for the military's strategy of clearing areas of insurgents, maintaining security in these cleared areas to protect the population and infrastructure, and to impose the Iraqi government's authority. Petraeus is quoted as stating that these elements comprise a traditional counterinsurgency strategy and current iteration has been derived from methods that have been known to be effective in similar military campaigns (WP, 05/01/2007; WP, 14/01/2007; NYT, 11/01/2007).

Petraeus' promotion to the commander of Multi-National Force-Iraq in January 2007 is seen to signal a more consistent approach to fighting the insurgency. His predecessor, General George W. Casey Jr., has been criticized for relying on lethal force and detention, while troops under his command were relegated to devising counterinsurgency tactics on an ad hoc basis. It is hoped that Petraeus sees quick results, since the surge's thin Congressional support is anticipated to wane within 6 to 9 months. It is also understood that the U.S. military would be unable to maintain larger unit numbers over the long term (NYT, 15/01/2007).

Prior to the implementation of the surge strategy, U.S. troops lived on large "Forward Operating Bases" and were isolated from the Iraqi population. Counterinsurgency strategy calls for large numbers of Iraqi and U.S. forces to "flood" a targeted area and thus overwhelming insurgent fighters. Once a target area is cleared, large numbers of Iraqi army and police units will remain. These Iraqi units will be backed up by U.S. infantry units stationed at battalion-level command posts. It is stressed that the increased troop numbers will be used differently than in the past. Under Petraeus' command, the top priority is protecting the Iraqi population (WP, 23/01/2007; NYT, 02/09/2007). In the case of Baghdad, the city would be divided into 10 districts. In each district, a U.S. Army battalion would be paired with an Iraqi unit. It is stated "[t]he hope is that this plan will afford more protection to the

Iraqi public and, along with political and economic moves by the government, head off further bloodletting" (NYT, 08/03/2007).

As counterinsurgency tactics are put into practice during the first three months of 2007, it is reported that insurgents are employing more lethal means of attack, including larger roadside bombs and complex ambushes that show an awareness of military operating protocol. The increased number of U.S. military injuries and fatalities has increased political opposition to the war. But at the same time, Iraqi civilian casualties are reported to be in decline (WP, 03/06/2007; NYT, 08/03/2007; NYT, 05/06/2007; NYT, 11/09/2007; NYT, 27/09/2007).

Iraq's insurgency is understood to be complex and comprised of groups and organizations maintaining ever-shifting alliances and motives (NYT, 06/01/2007). One of the primary players in the insurgency are extra-governmental Sunni and Shia-based militias. These groups are often seen to enjoy popular support due to the ineffectiveness of military and police units to protect civilian populations (NYT, 02/01/2007; WP, 05/01/2007). Senator John McCain, the surge's leading Congressional supporter, argues that U.S. forces have been effective in stopping sectarian-based violence even prior to the beginning of the surge. In al-Anbar province, where al-Qaeda affiliated groups are responsible for insurgent attacks, U.S. Marine units have helped to reduce violence. He argues that the additional troop numbers proposed by the Bush administration would increase the effectiveness of coalition forces (WP, 07/01/2007; NYT, 07/01/2007).

Often considered the most powerful militia in Iraq and blamed for much post-invasion violence, the Shiite-based Mahdi Army is seen as one of the primary targets of the surge (NYT, 08/01/2007; NYT, 05/03/2007; WP, 26/12/2007). It is reported that the U.S. government decided against disarming militias in 2004 because it would have been too

difficult and dangerous. At this time, most militias were smaller and less well-equipped and there were far fewer insurgent attacks taking place. Skeptics of the surge doubt that the increased U.S. troop numbers would make a difference in fighting and eventually dissolving militias (WP, 13/03/2007; WP, 07/06/2007).

Senior White House officials are reported to acknowledge that many Americans who are eager to see the U.S. withdraw from Iraq don't want to see increased mobilization of U.S. military units, even if it means comprising an eventual success in Iraq. The Bush Administration stresses that the fight against insurgents and militias is more than a military strategy. Political benchmarks for the Iraqi government and an economic development program are intended to provide stability and jobs for Iraqis who may be drawn to insurgent groups and militias out of economic need. Leading Democrats are said to highly doubtful of this comprehensive plan, arguing that since the Iraq War is impossible to win, the Bush Administration is simply seeking to prolong the occupation in order to pass it on to its successor (NYT, 09/01/2007; WP, 11/01/2007; NYT, 01/09/2007; NYT, 11/01/2007).

It is reported that as of September 2007, Congress is pushing for a complete U.S. withdrawal by the end of the year. It is stated that U.S. generals have often warned that the lack of political reconciliation amongst warring Iraqi factions will nullify any tactical military victories. Critics of the surge argue that since the beginning of the surge, there have not been any concrete and realistic goals for U.S. forces (NYT, 30/01/2007; WP, 09/09/2007).

During the first few months of the surge, critics point out that not much had changed, especially in Baghdad (WP, 03/06/2007; NYT, 14/06/2007; NYT, 08/09/2007). But by September, it is reported that an average of 23 car bombs were set off in Baghdad during June, July, and August. This was a significant reduction from the average of 42 over the same period in 2006. Regardless of this reduction in car bombings, aid groups report that more than

35,000 Baghdadis had left their homes since January 2007 (NYT, 02/09/2007). As more blast walls were erected in Baghdad and U.S. and Iraqi units patrolled from smaller forward operating bases, insurgents were pushed out of the city into less heavily patrolled parts of the country. For example, Diyala province (located northwest of Baghdad) saw a major increase in violence during this time, even though insurgent attacks had fallen in most other parts of the country (NYT, 08/12/2007).

Dour evaluations and predictions of the surge are prominent in reporting up to September 2007. But by December the surge is being hailed as a success. According to Petraeus,

"violence is down about 60 percent from summer's peak in every major category -- overall attacks, U.S. casualties and Iraqi civilian casualties. In Anbar province, once the epicenter of the insurgency, the number of attacks has fallen from 1,350 in October 2006 to fewer than 100 per month. Last week, there were just 12 attacks in Anbar."

Reporting states that the efforts to reduce violence have been so effective that U.S. government officials and members of Congress are pushing him to accelerate the withdrawal of American troops (WP, 21/12/2007).

#### **5.4) Essentializing and Depoliticizing Conflict in Iraq**

Reporting largely sees the violence in Iraq to be a "sectarian battle" between Arab Shiites and Arab Sunnis. Kurds are seen to be bystanders in the conflict, with exception of violence in Kirkuk (WP, 05/01/2007; NYT, 07/01/2007; WP, 11/01/2007; WP, 14/01/2007; WP, 17/01/2007; WP, 19/01/2007; NYT, 28/01/2007; NYT, 15/03/2007; NYT, 02/09/2007; WP, 26/03/2007; WP, 14/06/2007; WP, 19/12/2007; WP, 07/06/2007; WP, 14/09/2007; WP, 19/12/2007; WP, 28/12/2007; WP, 31/12/2007). It is stated that Iraq is product of colonialism and only recently began to disintegrate into its "natural" ethno-sectarian territories because of

the ouster of Saddam Hussein and the inability of its oil wealth to hold it together (NYT, 09/12/2007). Iraq's disintegration along sectarian lines is seen to be part of larger pattern of colonial-era boundaries dissolving in the Middle East (WP, 17/01/2007).

These views on sectarian violence in Iraq are echoed by a number U.S. officials. Senators Susan Collins and John E. Sununu, opponents of the surge strategy, sees the violence in Iraq to be rooted in discord between sectarian groups. Collins argues "I don't think the addition of new American troops in a situation plagued by sectarian strife is the answer" (WP, 01/01/2007). Senator John Warner opposes the surge on the grounds that U.S. military personnel are not trained to intervene in intersectarian conflict (NYT, 23/01/2007). Senator Joe Biden claims that the U.S. military lacks the ability to keep the three groups from "killing each other" and that a political solution to the violence must be found (WP, 11/01/2007). Stephen J. Hadley, Bush's national security advisor also understands the violence to be rooted in sectarian-based fighting (NYT, 01/02/2007). Army Lieutenant General Jay M. Garner, who was in charge of Baghdad immediately following the Coalition invasion, states "'You'll never find, in my lifetime, one man that all the Iraqis will coalesce around. Iraqis are too divided among sectarian, ethnic and tribal loyalties, he said, and their loyalties are regional, not national" (WP, 07/01/2007). Petraeus states "the fundamental source of the conflict in Iraq is competition among ethnic and sectarian communities for power and resources" (WP, 11/09/2007). Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice argues during a Senate hearing

We all understand that the responsibility for what kind of Iraq this will be rests with Iraqis. They are the only ones who can decide whether or not Iraq is, in fact, going to be an Iraq for all Iraqis, one that is unified, or whether they are going to allow sectarian passions to unravel that chance for a unified Iraq. We know historically that Iraq rests on the region's religious and ethnic fault line. And in many ways, the recent events in Baghdad over the last....year -- that Baghdad has become the center of that struggle. The Samarra mosque bombing provoked sectarianism and it set it aflame at a

pace that threatens to overwhelm the fragile and yet promising process of reconciliation.....Iraqis must take on the essential challenge, therefore, that threatens this process of national reconciliation, and that is the protection of their population from criminals and violent extremists who kill in the name of sectarian grievance (WP, 11/01/2007).

In contrast to these perspectives, Senator Joe Lieberman maintains that the current violence in the country cannot be attributed to "age-old conflicts among ethnic groups". He understands that rifts in Iraqi society after the American invasion can be blamed on insurgent groups attempting to gain political power (WP, 05/01/2007). Additionally, power-sharing between the three groups is reported to be built into the 2005 Iraqi constitution. Revisions to this part of the constitution have been stalled in a legislative committee (WP, 08/06/2007)

Some opponents of the surge point to the migration of Iraqis to sectarian homelands as evidence that violence is being carried out along sectarian lines and question whether or not additional troops could mitigate this process (NYT, 07/01/2007; WP, 08/01/2007; NYT, 30/03/2007). Proposals of putting an end to sectarian violence using methods developed during the Balkans conflict argue that one impartial soldier or police officer is required for every 50 people. However, reporting doubts that Iraqi security personnel are up to the task because their allegiances are with sectarian factions and do not follow orders from Iraq's central government. Therefore, any troop increase proposed by the Bush administration is predicted to be inadequate (WP, 07/01/2007). The surge is noted to have failed because it did not boost "modern" (non-sectarian and non-tribal) Iraqi political institutions (NYT, 09/04/2007).

Some reporting discusses a "soft-partition" of the country. In these plans, the central government would distribute oil revenues and issue currency. But the country would be divided into Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish areas to minimize contact and conflict between population groups. Iraq's sectarian violence is often compared to the Rwanda genocide, while

the proposed partition is compared to a post-Dayton agreement Bosnia (NYT, 02/01/2007; NYT, 05/01/2007; NYT, 07/01/2007; WP, 14/01/2007; NYT, 25/01/2007; NYT, 27/01/2007; WP, 06/09/2007; WP, 14/06/2007; WP, 10/09/2007; WP, 07/06/2007; WP, 07/09/2007; WP, 05/09/2007). In September 2007, a Senate resolution is passed which calls for the division of Iraq into three distinct Sunni, Shia, and Kurd territories. While it is not legally binding, its purpose is reported to begin a dialogue amongst members of Congress, the Bush administration, and State Department officials on the subject (WP, 27/09/2007). Some writers question the wisdom of these partition plans due to a number of reasons, like the highly mixed nature of Iraq's urban areas and the necessity of forced displacement and relocation of people on a massive scale (NYT, 27/01/2007; NYT, 05/06/2007).

Al-Anbar province is often represented as a Sunni-tribal territory suffering from al-Qaeda based violence (NYT, 05/01/2007; WP, 01/07/2007; NYT, 09/04/2007; WP, 07/09/2007; NYT, 11/01/2007). Marine units are said to be pairing with tribal leaders and militias to force insurgents out of towns and cities (WP, 06/01/2007; WP, 12/09/2007; NYT, 20/12/2007). Beginning in 2006, a number of Anbari tribal leaders who formerly sympathized with al-Qaeda groups or even fought alongside them began to cooperate with U.S. Marine units. It is understood that this change took place because tribal leaders realized that al-Qaeda groups did not share their interests and tribal leaders want to find ways of maintaining power in the future. By September of 2007, the Anbari model (or Sunni Awakening) is seen to be so successful that commentators speculate about exporting it to other parts of Iraq (NYT, 02/09/2007).

### 5.5) Coverage Patterns

Under the category of "Military Tactics and Strategy" the theme of "Insurgency/Insurgent" is most prevalent and is present in 56 percent of the sampled articles examined (Figure 4, Appendix 3). At its peak, this theme is mentioned in 77 percent of the coverage for February and drops to a minimum of 45 percent of the coverage for August. The theme of "Strategy" is present in 56 percent of the coverage examined. At its maximum, it appears in 72 percent of the coverage in July and falls to a minimum of 25 percent in December. The themes of "Counterinsurgency", "Militia", "Tactic", and "Pacifcy/Pacification" appear in 17, 18, 18, and 1 percent of the coverage respectively. There is no discernible temporal pattern in the appearance of these themes.

Under the category of "Cultural Landscapes" the theme of "Sunni" is most prevalent and appears in 90 percent of the sampled articles (Figure 4, Appendix 3). At its peak, this theme is mentioned in 100 percent of the coverage in May and drops to a minimum of 84 percent in September. Second most prevalent is the theme of "Shia/Shiite", which appears in 73 percent of the total reporting for 2007. It peaks at 100 percent of the coverage in both May and December. The theme of "Sectarian" is the third most prevalent theme, which appears in 57 percent of the coverage. It peaks in January with 71 percent of the reporting and falls to a minimum of 3 percent in December. The themes of "Ethnic", "Tribe/Tribal", and "Kurd" appear in 18, 24, and 33 percent of the overall coverage, respectively. The only discernible temporal pattern is with "Shia/Shiite" that starts of with 27 percent of the coverage in January and increases to 100 percent in May. It then drops back down to 83 percent in June and climbs back to 100 percent in December.

Based on my results shown in Figure 4 (Appendix 3), there is an absence of relevant temporal patterns in how any of the themes are used. It is also important to point out that

articles were selected for analysis if they contained "Iraq" and "Surge" and either "Sunni" or "Shia/Shiite" or "Kurd". Therefore the figures pertaining to Sunni, Shia/Shiite, and Kurd themes in my coverage examined are inflated. When these three themes' appearances are compared with all of the *Times* and *Post* in 2007 coverage in which "Iraq" and "Surge" appear (1038 articles), the proportion of the coverage which mentions them decreases. The "Sunni" theme drops from 90 percent to 38 percent; the "Shia/Shiite" theme drops from 73 percent to 30; and the Kurd theme drops from 33 percent to 14 percent. These lower numbers are a more accurate reflection of Sunni, Shia, and Kurd themes. However, these adjusted figures still indicate that ethno-sectarian frames form a significant portion of the Iraq Surge reporting during 2007.

From a global strategy perspective, the invasion of Iraq was a major component of Bush's War on Terror. During September, October, and November of 2001, the invasion of Afghanistan and massive changes to U.S. domestic policing and security policies were largely accepted without question in the American media. By December of 2001 some critical voices in the media began to question the Bush administration's militaristic stance toward global terrorism, but for the most part Bush's policies were accepted as necessities in the mainstream American media. This pattern seemed to hold until violence in Iraq could no longer be ignored in 2005 (Christie, 2006; Entmann, 2004; Kuypers, 2006). By the time the Troop Surge was proposed as a strategy, discussions of Iraq's position in the War on Terror were on the wane. Most journalistic depictions of Iraq were concerned with faltering military strategy and whether or not the U.S. military could ever hope to contain the violence (Kurtzleben, 2010). In these ways, my analysis of the Troop Surge fits with larger patterns of media coverage of the War on Terror.

The *Times* and *Post* coverage was very skeptical regarding the effectiveness of the surge up until November 2007. But by December 2007, the surge was seen to be working and the Bush Administration's Iraq strategy is looked upon favorably. As my analysis shows, ethno-sectarian territorial narratives are one of the primary ways in which violence in Iraq is framed. Regardless of the papers' evaluations of this particular American episode in Iraq, it is understood as a nation-state consisting of Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish portions. The frames I identify in the *Times* and *Post* coverage share a great deal in common with framings found in government, military, and think tank documents produced circa 2007. The message agreement between these documents reinforces American geopolitical discourses on the Iraq's ethno-sectarian nature during this time period.

#### **5.6) Ethno-sectarian Role Playing**

In 2004, the Department of Geography and Environmental Engineering at the U.S. Military Academy issued an unpublished geography primer on Iraq titled "Iraq: A Geography". The eleven short chapters of the volume give summaries of Iraq's physical and human geographies, in the manner of an American high school or introductory university geography textbook. The three chapters on the country's historical, cultural, and political geography catalogue Iraq's three major and a number of minor ethno-sectarian groups. It then relates how these groups were used by the Hussein regime to maintain a hold on power (Malinowski, 2004).

The Counterinsurgency Field Manual issued in late 2006 and reprinted by the University of Chicago Press in 2007, was designed for shifts in the Iraq and Afghan war strategies. Traditional ethno-sectarian group structures are seen to be one of the fundamental components of fighting insurgents:

Traditional authority...is a common type of authority in non-Western societies. In particular, tribal and religious forms of organization rely heavily on traditional authority. Traditional authority figures often wield enough power, especially in rural areas, to single-handedly drive an insurgency. Understanding the types of authority at work in the formal and informal political systems of the AO [Area of Operations] helps counterinsurgents identify agents of influence who can help or hinder achieving objectives (United States Army and Marine Corps, 2007: 97).

At the same time the manual stresses that occupying forces should avoid favoring one group over another. It does not attempt to attribute conflict to a single variable. Additionally, it often points to the disruption in local economics, politics, and social systems caused by a large-scale military invasion as important factors in fuelling insurgencies and internecine conflict.

Due to the rapidly deteriorating situation in Iraq during 2006, members of Congress (with the consent of the White House) assembled a bipartisan commission of 10 U.S. public servants to report on the current economic, political, and military situation in Iraq and recommend possible ways to reduce violence, make the political system more inclusive, and foster economic growth. Known as the Iraq Study Group, its report states that out Iraq's eighteen provinces four are "highly insecure": Baghdad, Anbar, Diyala, and Salah ad Din. The populations of these provinces comprise 40 percent of Iraq's population. In Baghdad, violence can be attributed to struggles between Sunni and Shia. In Anbar, the violence can be credited to a Sunni tribal insurgency and al-Qaeda. In Kirkuk, the fighting is between Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen. In Basra and other parts of Southern Iraq, violence is an intra-Shia power struggle. Most Iraqi cities are ethnically mixed and suffer from chronic violence (The Iraq Study Group Report, 2006: 6). An ethno-sectarian map (Figure 5, Appendix 3) included in the report shows the geographical attributes of Iraq's major and minor ethno-sectarian groups

and is very similar to the Iraq ethno-sectarian map printed by the New York Times in early 2007 (Figure 1, Appendix 3).

In July 2007, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence issued a National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq. These reports are said to represent the U.S. intelligence community's most authoritative written assessment on a national security issue and are intended to aid civilian and military leaders in designing policies to protect national security interests.<sup>12</sup> This particular document reports that political and security situations in Iraq are driven by Shia insecurity about retaining political dominance, widespread Sunni unwillingness to accept a diminished political status, factional rivalries within sects, and activities of extremists such as Al-Qaeda in Iraq and the Mahdi Army who attempt to fuel sectarian violence.

In January 2003, the National Intelligence Council issued a report titled "Principal Challenges in Post-Saddam Iraq". This report was commissioned by the State Department and written by Paul R. Pillar, the National Intelligence Officer for the Near East. Its intention was to synthesize the viewpoints of the United States' 16 intelligence agencies in order to examine the "internal dynamics" of Iraq for any government that succeeded the Hussein regime. This report sees the potential for societal fractures and violent conflict along ethno-sectarian (and tribal) lines if not prevented by an occupying military force. It sees a distinct geographical dimension to Iraq's ethno-sectarian groups that largely reflects the patterns represented in the two maps included in Appendix 3. These views are tempered with the statement that despite these fissures, Iraqi national identity is strong and the country is unlikely to split apart along ethnic and religious lines.

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<sup>12</sup> Bruno, Greg and Sharon Otterman, "Backgrounder: National Intelligence Estimate", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 14 May 2008, <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/national-intelligence-estimates/p7758>.

One of the most well-known American articulations of Sunni/Shia violence in Iraq was an article in the March 2007 issue of *Time*. This article largely echoes the military and government views discussed above - with journalistic flair thrown in. The article is titled "Why They Hate Each Other" and attempts to situate the sectarian violence in Iraq into the broader "Sunni-Shia" conflict of the Muslim World.<sup>15</sup> Author Bobby Ghosh states that the only way that sectarian violence will subside is if the troop surge is effective. Included in Ghosh's article is a map that shows the breakdown of the Sunni/Shia divide across the Muslim World (with a focus on the Middle East) which closely resembles several of the sectarian maps I examine in Chapter 4. Like those maps, data sources are not named. Also like those maps, they give the impression that Sunni and Shia populations across the Middle East inhabit colorful, jigsaw puzzle-like territories. Urban areas are not represented, and therefore the map gives the impression that large swathes of territory are continuously inhabited by uniform versions of either sect. Like the journalistic ethnographic maps that I analyze, this map is meant to serve as an image, rather than any kind of technical work in cartography. It is effective precisely because it visually distinguishes between the two primary sectarian categories that the author uses in his analysis of the violence in Iraq.

Ghosh begins by describing the events leading to the Sunni/Shia schism. He then moves on to discuss the creation of the Iraqi state as a League of Nations Mandate following World War I. In the case of Iraq, the Ghosh states that the Iraq Mandate contained a Shia majority, but was assigned a Sunni monarch. He then moves on to the Hussein era and gives a respectable rundown of Saddam's policy of favoring Sunnis to stay in power. After this, Ghosh details the violence that has afflicted Iraq since sectarian tensions came to a head in

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<sup>15</sup> Ghosh, Bobby, "Why They Hate Each Other", *Time*, 5 March 2007, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1592849,00.html>.

early 2005, when the first post-invasion elections were held. Where Ghosh goes wrong is that he completely elides the American invasion and occupation as a direct reason for the sectarian violence after the insurgency gained critical mass in 2004. Instead, the United States military is portrayed simply as a peacekeeping force working to maintain Iraq's territorial integrity. In this way, violence is rested upon the local scale. Ghosh writes:

Iraq is a country where almost every household has at least one AK-47. If there is no Sunni-Shi'ite rapprochement, a full-blown civil war would raise the daily death toll from the scores to the hundreds--to say nothing of the escalation that would come if neighboring countries became involved, Iran backing the Shi'ite militias, Arab states sponsoring the Sunnis. Such a war could continue for years, with each sectarian community splitting into smaller factions led by rival warlords. In Baghdad, the ethnic cleansing would continue to its logical conclusion, with the city split into a Shi'ite east and a Sunni west.

With this statement, he then contextualizes the violence within the broader Sunni/Shia rift across the Muslim world. Ghosh ends the article by writing that the Bush administration made a big mistake with the decision to invade Iraq by unleashing sectarian forces that were bigger than the U.S. war planners could ever envision. Again, he argues that U.S. war planners simply decided to kick a hornet's nest. Ghosh fails to recognize that the U.S. invasion and occupation created the hornet's nest itself.

The perception that Iraq is comprised of three distinct ethnic/religious territories and that this attribute of the country's cultural geography is primary source of violence has led a number of American commentators to advocate for a 'soft partition' of the country (partition plans are discussed in the *Times* and *Post* coverage that I analyze). Edward P. Joseph and Michael O'Hanlon, writing for the conservative Brookings Institution think tank, argue that the only way to stop the violence in Iraq is to divide it into three distinct ethno-sectarian

territories.<sup>14</sup> Without partition, they see the violence in Iraq spreading to other nearby states. Pauline Baker, President of the Fund for Peace, largely shares the views of Joseph and O'Hanlon.<sup>15</sup> Skeptical of the surge's effectiveness, she advocates for a European Union-style political structure. In her plan, each new state would have its own government and security forces, but would be linked to a central economic authority. Galbraith<sup>16</sup> and Gelb<sup>17</sup> take similar perspectives in their soft partition plans. Gelb portrays a very stark view of Iraq's ethno-sectarian groups, writing "Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds have been at each other's throats for centuries".

What these perspectives have in common is that they assume that individuals in Iraq can be slotted into one of three major ethno-sectarian groups (or a number of smaller ethnic or religious groups) and that these groups can be assigned to distinct territories. Furthermore, armed groups claiming an ethnic or confessional identity are assumed to be speaking for all members of the group claiming that identity. While some acknowledge that most urban areas are highly mixed and that the Iraqi insurgency is complex, most of them seem to employ colonial social science/Wilsonian assumptions on social organization and conflict. While there are calls for partition along ethno-sectarian lines by some U.S. foreign policy thinkers, American efforts in Iraq seek to maintain the country's territorial integrity. This is despite its purportedly three-part ethno-sectarian nature.

Dodge (2007) attributes the origins of the Iraqi civil war to the complete collapse of the administrative and coercive capacity of the state. He argues that the United States'

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<sup>14</sup> Joseph, Edward P., and Michael O'Hanlon, "The Case for Soft Partition in Iraq", June, 2007, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2007/06/iraq-joseph>.

<sup>15</sup> Baker, Pauline, "A Way Out: The Union of Iraqi States", *The Nation*, July 2007, <http://www.thenation.com/article/way-out-union-iraqi-states/>.

<sup>16</sup> Galbraith, Peter, W. "Make Walls, Not War", *The New York Times*, 23 October 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/23/opinion/23galbraith.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Gelb, Leslie, H., "How to Save Iraq", *Newsweek*, 1 January 2012, <http://www.newsweek.com/leslie-h-gelb-how-save-iraq-64199>.

inability to rebuild Iraqi ministries and security forces in any effective way lies at the center of Iraq's problems. Davis (2005) writes that within the Iraqi Nationalist movement there was a hope to implement a government focused on cultural pluralism, political participation, and social justice. Despite Baathist attempts to eliminate the history of these efforts and the chaos that followed the American invasion, many Iraqis continued to hope for a government that espoused these values. In part this means that they desire politicians who could transcend ethno-sectarian identities, not pander to them (Chandraeswaran, 2006; Haddad, 2011; Osman, 2014).

O'Leary (2007) writes that "soft partition" plans erroneously assume that Iraqi ethno-sectarian homelands can be cartographically delimited and there is a correct way to define and code an Iraqi partition. Bazzaz (2013) finds that this tripartite perspective on Iraq's cultural landscape can be seen in New York Times coverage of the Iraq war between 2003 and 2005. He states that the term 'Sunni Triangle' appeared 230 times during this period and much of the coverage he analyzes is concerned with parsing out Iraq's regions along ethno-sectarian lines.

Frequent American descriptions of Iraq as a three-part state reinforces its status as artificial. Pursley traces this idea to the 1920s British occupation as way to argue that Iraq was not yet coherent enough to govern itself. It was later picked up by Arab nationalists who sought to form a pan-Arab identity absent of ethno-sectarian characteristics. Following the invasion of 2003, it was favored by war hawks in the United States who used it to rationalize the

destruction of a state that had no business existing in the first place.<sup>18</sup> Along similar lines the political scientist and Middle East specialist Reidar Visser writes

I have long maintained that Western commentary on the Middle East is driven as much by trends in journalese as by realities on the ground and historical facts. For example, for much of the past decade we have been told that the country of Iraq is about to “implode”, given that it was “cobbled together” after the First World War from three “disparate” provinces whose centrifugal forces have continued to “fuel” and “stoke” conflict between “embattled” Iraqi “factions” in the period after 2003, making it quite impossible for them to justly “divvy up” the country’s revenue derived from the “oil-rich Shiite south” and the “Kurdish north”. All of this is misleading, and if these clichés hadn’t been employed by Western journos and pundits in the first place it would perhaps have been easier to understand the survival of Iraq as a nation despite pressures from the outside that can hardly be described as other than extreme.<sup>19</sup>

In the view of Visser, Western journalists can take a large degree of the blame for perpetuating ethno-sectarian clichés that reinforces Iraq's status as an artificial state. Ethno-sectarian tropes have as much to do with creating message agreement or fitting into media frames as with realities on the ground and historical facts. He argues that Iraq has maintained territorial integrity despite extreme external strains that could have led to partition at any point since the state was inaugurated in the early 1920s.

According to Dodge (2012) the violence that occurred in Iraq following the end of the American invasion in May 2003 clearly qualifies as civil war. He states that this conflict claimed at least 107,000 civilian lives between May 2003 and June 2012. U.S. government responses to such wholesale violence has been to explain it away using ethno-sectarian explanations. Dodge (2012: 475) writes:

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<sup>18</sup> Pursley, Sara, "Lines Drawn on an Empty Map: Iraq's Borders and the Legend of the Artificial State", *Jadaliyya*, 4 June 2015, [http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/21759/lines-drawn-on-an-empty-map\\_iraq](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/21759/lines-drawn-on-an-empty-map_iraq).

<sup>19</sup> Visser, Reidar, "Dammit, It Is NOT Unravelling: An Historian's Rebuke to Misrepresentations of Sykes-Picot", *Iraq and Gulf Analysis*, 30 December 2013, <https://gulfanalysis.wordpress.com/2013/12/30/dammit-it-is-not-unravelling-an-historians-rebuke-to-misrepresentations-of-sykes-picot/>.

An emphasis on the ethno-sectarian divisions in Iraqi society shifts the blame away from those who invaded the country and encouraged the bloody aftermath of regime change by their imposition of a victor's peace and an exclusive elite bargain. Such attempts at absolution are anchored in the dominant Orientalist stereotypes that provide easy, if racist, explanations of complex situations. However, a close examination of how the Iraqi civil war started decenters ethno-sectarian divisions; seeing them as at best second-order explanations. In their place, as a central cause of post-war violence was the deliberate exclusion of a section of Iraq's society.....These policies gave rise to the exclusive elite bargain imposed on the country by the United States and its formerly exiled Iraqi allies and then to the civil war that ripped the country apart after 2005.

My analysis of American geopolitical frames created around the time of the troop surge shows that they largely agree with the views of Visser and Dodge. There is considerable message agreement between popular understandings of the violence in Iraq circa 2006 and 2007 and more formal and practical understandings. As a whole, formal, practical, and popular framings largely echo the views of Bernard Lewis discussed in Chapter 3. Lewis holds that real nation-states in the Middle East cannot exist due to the presence of ethno-sectarian identities. It is up to American military power and occupational tutelage to help Iraqis transcend these primordial identities in order to build a modern nation-state. In this way, Lewis is a proponent of territorial integrity.

The territorial assumptions regarding Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish identities that Lewis maintains are visualized using ethnographic maps. These maps could be interpreted as aggregations of individual data points. But as theorists of cartography have long observed, maps are usually interpreted as images by end users. The discrete blocks of Sunni/Shia/Kurdish territories illustrated in American ethnographic maps of Iraq both reflect and reinforce the territorial assumptions present in American 'jig-saw puzzle' metageographies. Thus, these simplistic cartographies stand in for more nuanced and accurate understandings of social phenomena. Long-standing colonial and Wilsonian views on social organization in American perspectives on the Middle East naturalize such perspectives. The

ethno-sectarian *tranche* of social organization present in cartographic and textual framings of Iraq's cultural landscape are part and parcel of American geopolitical discourse and are used to great effect in order to absolve American foreign policy and military action of the violence in Iraq since the 2003 invasion and occupation. In this case, this is not a deliberate 'dumbing-down' of American geopolitical discourse - it is the primary means through which American foreign policy, military, and media discourses frame social organization and violence in Iraq. In this framing, each individual of Iraq's ethno-sectarian groups are assigned the role of belligerent in the violence circa the time of the surge.

## 6) Struggles for Democracy and Ethno-Sectarian Strife: The Exceptional Cultural Landscapes of the Arab Spring

### 6.1) Contested Visions of Governance and Exceptional Cultural Landscapes

During the first few months of 2011, the events of the Arab Spring were seen to be popular movements for democracy against authoritarian states. Throughout this time, there was a sense amongst protestors and outside observers that real and lasting democratic change could be put into place across the Arab World. Since the heady days of early 2011, it has become clear that the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, and Syria have not led to something better.<sup>1</sup> Lynch (2014: 2) writes that these movements have turned into "a gritty, desperate, and increasingly bloody set of interlocked battles for power" in which windows for true and lasting political change are closing very quickly. He compares this process to the new democratic states of the former Soviet Union drifting back into authoritarianism during the early to mid-1990s.

In some cases, Islamist and Salafist organizations compete with popular democracy movements as the primary agents for change. This "green wave" (the color associated with Islamist political parties) has been most prevalent in the form of Islamist electoral victories (as in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya) or the rise of powerful non-state Islamist-based military groups (like in Libya and Syria). Where Islamist social movements and organizations have influence, secular, liberal, leftist, artistic, female, and gay portions of the Arab World's populations have been politically marginalized at best and are usually targeted as threats to Islamist visions of governance (Benoune, 2014). The privileging of masculine and Islamist-based identities in the Middle East echo similar patterns in some parts of the United States in which a

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<sup>1</sup> While revolutions took place countries across the Arab World from the end of December 2010 onwards, the movements in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, and Syria are considered to to be the most significant due to their size, scope, and duration (Al-Sayyid, 2014).

heteronormative and fundamentalist, Christian, and masculine identity is privileged over all other identities as the basis for social and political organization (Gahman, 2015; Ghannam, 2013; Mahmoud, 2004). It has been noted that many Islamist organizations provide services that many hollowed-out states no longer provide or have never provided. While social service provision can lead to broad-based support for Islamist groups, a number of academics and activists are uneasy with these organizations because they simply serve as non-progressive alternatives to authoritarian regimes (Watts, 2007).

The durability of authoritarian rule in the Middle East along with Islamist organizations obtaining unprecedented degrees of power during the Arab Spring are understood as discouraging developments. While the Arab Spring's revolutions have failed to live up to expectations, the democracy movements they initialized are by no means finished (Momani, 2015). At the same time, these protests have challenged the claims of mainstream American scholars of International Relations who claim that the Middle East is an exceptional region where political authoritarianism and religious fundamentalism have proven resilient to the "great global liberal transformations" that have swept the world since the end of the Cold War (Salamey, 2009).

Due to the centrality of the Middle East in American geopolitical worldviews, the events of Arab Spring have been watched closely by American media outlets. Despite the American media's patchy record of describing the Middle East's inhabitants and framing events that take place there, it is clear that American media discourses show a great deal of concern for protest movements and view authoritarian governments and religious extremist as challenges to democracy in the region (Amery, 2011; Jahshan, 2011; Said, 1997).

As peaceful and non-violent protest movements developed into or had the potential to become violent conflicts, ethno-sectarian narratives have been used to explain some of these

revolts. As Gorgas and White (2016: 135) observe regarding what they term 'minorities' in the context of the Arab Spring:

In recent years, with the events of the Arab Spring and its aftermath, minorities have been figured at times as an obstacle to broader processes of democratization and liberalization, or at others as being threatened by those same processes—and the violence that has ensued as they stalled.

Illustrating this point, a *Washington Post* article from October 2012 asks "Who's Fighting Whom in Syria?". It answers this question by enumerating and describing Syria's various ethno-religious sects and their loyalties and animosities towards each other, the Assad government, and various armed groups.<sup>2</sup> Included in this Washington Post piece is a map of Syria which represents the territorial extent and spatial distribution of Syria's three major cultural groups: Alawite, Sunni, and Kurd-Sunni (Figure 1, Appendix 4). Using this map, the author relates Syria's conflict directly to the country's cultural landscape. This analysis may be correct in its evaluation of alliances and discord between groups. At the same time, through the author's use of an ethnographic map to fix groups to clearly bounded cultural homelands and using these bounded groups to explain conflict, she deems Syria's cultural landscape as "exceptional" because its nation-state boundaries are incongruent with its ethno-sectarian group boundaries. Her patchwork perspective makes problematic assumptions regarding ethno-sectarian identities, these groups' territorial attributes, and violence fueled by ethnic and religious differences. Factors like labor migration and very high rates of urbanization make it difficult to fix ethno-sectarian groups to clearly bounded territories (Ghannam, 2002; Hoffman, 2008). Ethnographic maps like the one presented by the Washington Post author

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<sup>2</sup> Khazan, Olga, "Who's Fighting Whom in Syria?" *Washington Post*, 18 October 2012, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2012/10/18/whos-fighting-who-in-syria>.

attempt to represent qualitative data in a quantitative manner, resulting in an overly simplified (but easy to interpret) representation of the country's cultural landscape.

From a cartographic perspective, this map privileges ethno-sectarian identities over class, gender, urban, and regional-based identities. The representation of Syria at the state scale completely elides the ethno-sectarian groups' composition in urban areas (where the vast majority of Syrians resided at least before the war began in 2011). Furthermore, the map gives no information on Syria's population density. Thus, sparsely populated rural territories are privileged over urban areas. As is common with journalistic maps, the author does not cite any data sources. The map covers a vast area and it is unlikely that the author gathered primary data. Was the map adapted from other maps? Were secondary data sources used? If so, what sources was the data derived from? Regardless of the data source(s), the issues inherent with using secondary data are not given mention.

While this ethnographic map of Syria and its accompanying text provides an excellent example of an ethno-sectarian-based analysis, cartographic representations like this are relatively rare in the American media coverage of the Arab Spring between 2011 and 2013. Therefore, this chapter relies upon textual representations to understand how ethno-sectarian framings are used in *New York Times* and *Washington Post* coverage of the Tunisian, Egyptian, Yemeni, Bahraini, Libyan, and Syrian uprisings between 2011 and 2013.<sup>5</sup> My analysis shows that ethno-sectarian framings are completely absent in coverage on the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings and insignificant in the reporting on the Yemeni and Bahraini revolts. In many ways, reporting aligns with academic perspectives on the uprisings that see authoritarian governments and Islamic groups as counter-progressive. It is clear that struggles for

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<sup>5</sup> Tunisia's uprising is an exception to this timeframe, where an uprising began in mid-December 2010.

democracy are the primary message of the coverage. While these accurate and sympathetic portrayals are laudable, the Libyan and Syrian uprisings are partially explained through ethno-sectarian frames. The problematic framings of events in these two countries share a great deal in common with the views of American foreign policy experts, think tanks, and academics. These views reinforce the idea that Libya and Syria are comprised of mosaics of cultural identities.

## 6.2) *Times* and *Post* Coverage and Sampling

I have chosen the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* as source texts for the same reasons explained Chapter 5, Section 2. Figure 2 (Appendix 4) lists the 24 month sampling period used for each uprising.<sup>4</sup> As Figure 2 shows, all of the uprisings began in 2011 (with the exception of Tunisia, whose uprising began in December 2010) with the six sampling periods ending between late 2011 and early 2013. For each country, articles were drawn from month-long frames within the two- year sampling period. As Figures 3 through 9 show, these month-long sampling timeframes began at the start of Months 1, 6, 12, 18, and 23. These timeframes cover five months total within the 24-month sampling period for each country.

Using the Lexis-Nexis Academic database, I downloaded articles within the month-long sampling timeframes for each country. The database's search function allowed me to locate articles in which each country's name appeared in the headline or within the body of the article. Within these search results, *New York Times* and *Washington Post* blog entries were included. These have been included in the article tallies and analysis since the majority of

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<sup>4</sup> The start dates of each uprising are generally agreed upon by both journalists and academics (Blight, et al. 2012; Sadiki, 2014).

these papers' audiences are web-based. For this reason, no distinction is made between blog entries and articles that appear in the print editions of each paper.<sup>5</sup>

Coding schemas (Figures 3-9) were developed from a pilot study in which initial themes in the coverage were identified (Struckman, 2013). These schemas are centered around themes of democracy and the cultural landscapes of the six countries. As Figure 1 (Appendix 4) shows, Syria received the greatest amount of coverage during the two year sampling period (2207 articles) followed by Egypt (2090), Libya (2057), Yemen (726), Tunisia (478), and Bahrain (405). The five month sampling periods cover 43% of reporting for Egypt, followed by Libya (37%), Bahrain (33%), Syria (23%), Yemen (21%), and Tunisia (13%) (Figures 2-8, Appendix 4). Egypt, Libya, and Bahrain's high percentage of sampled articles come from the large amount of reporting these countries received during the first month of each uprising. Tunisia's small percentage is due to the insignificant amount of coverage its uprising received during its initial month.<sup>6</sup>

### **6.3) Democratic Movements versus Anti-Democratic Forces**

The coverage on Tunisia notes that while Ben Ali was backed by the U.S. as a partner against terrorism, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton used the growing protests in Tunisia as an opportunity to criticize Ben Ali and other authoritarian and inept Arab governments and blamed them for the Middle East's political and economic stagnation (NYT, 15/01/2011; WP, 15/01/2011). The Washington Post labels Ali as the type of ruler who creates fake opposition

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<sup>5</sup> Due to the limitations of the database's search function and the large number of search results, some non-articles features (such as the "Inside the Times" summaries that appears on the front page of the New York Times) were included in the article tallies. I estimate that no more than two percent of the articles consist of these types of features.

<sup>6</sup> As in Chapter 5, articles are referenced by newspaper (NYT or WP) and the date they were published (DD/MM/YYYY). Papers are referenced rather than authors following Sharp's (2000, 2011) assertion that editorial policy and practice creates a singular voice.

parties, a phony parliament, extensive security services, arrested and assaulted dissidents, and allowed for no press freedom all in order to maintain power (WP, 17/01/2011). When Ben Ali left Tunisia for Saudi Arabia in mid-January 2015, reporting claims that smaller protests in places like Egypt, Jordan, and Algeria were inspired by Tunisian events (WP, 15/01/2011). The New York Times writes that since 2000, Tunisia's government became increasingly authoritarian because many Tunisians saw the Ben Ali regime as a bulwark against Islamists (NYT, 17/01/2011).

Six months after the protests began, reporting states that while Ben Ali was gone, not much has changed. The caretaker government still contains Ali-era bureaucrats in top posts and the visible presence of police and other security agents has Tunisians feeling uneasy. At the same time, Tunisia's economy, which was built to enrich Ben Ali's family and close associates, appears to have made it through the revolution unscathed (WP, 30/06/2011).

At the uprising's one year mark, Tunisia carried out successful parliamentary elections in which (mostly moderate) Islamist parties made strong showings (WP, 25/12/2011; WP 13/07/2012). Blame for the lack of economic growth was being placed on the Renaissance Party, that dominated the elections. Critics of the party argue that its focus on crafting an Islamic-inspired constitution has detracted from other important activities, like economic reform (NYT, 02/12/2012).

In the years prior to the beginning of Egypt's uprising, American support of Mubarak is attributed to a larger pattern of U.S. support of authoritarian rulers who were supported at the expense of promoting democratic reforms (WP, 06/02/2011). Authoritarian regimes are seen to keep Islamist groups and movements in check (WP, 27/01/2011). It is acknowledged that the alternatives to Mubarak's rule are poor due to the repression of all real political opposition (WP, 01/02/2011; WP, 28/01/2011)

By mid-February of 2011, the secular and youth-led democracy movement that brought Egypt's leading liberal and Islamist opposition groups together was being hailed as a radical new force in regional politics. Despite the Mubarak regime having riot police, a ruling party militia, and its own propaganda machine at its disposal, Egypt's democracy movement was able to withstand the challenges brought by each. Despite these successes coverage speculates what the future has in store for Egypt - a new era of democracy, continued instability, or Islamist rule (NYT, 12/02/2011; WP, 30/01/2012).

It is recognized that procedures and safeguards are needed to facilitate a genuine transition to democracy, since authoritarianism in Egypt is understood to be structural (WP, 05/02/2012; NYT, 03/01/2013). Both the military government that followed Mubarak and the Morsi government that later came to power in parliamentary elections rely upon authoritarian structures to counter protestors and maintain political power, reporting asserts (WP, 26/01/2011; NYT, 10/02/2012; WP, 27/12/2012; NYT 30/01/2012).

Only six months after Mubarak was forced to leave office, the pan-Egyptian democracy movement comprised of the military, secular activists who led the revolution, liberal, leftist and Islamist groups began to fracture. At this point Islamist groups were the only part of this coalition who were able to continue organizing on a large scale (NYT, 30/07/2011). One of their goals was to stop the military government and liberal politicians from implementing constitutional changes that would establish Egypt as a secular state (WP, 30/07/2011)

At the start of Yemen's protests, violent confrontations between pro-democracy protestors and Saleh supporters set the tone for Yemen's often violent revolution. (NYT, 28/01/2011; WP, 15/02/2011). Unlike in Tunisia and Egypt, large pro-government groups have challenged democracy activists from the very beginning (NYT 18/02/2011). Yemen's

uprising also lacked the broad coalitions that characterized the movements of Egypt and Tunisia. Student organizations call for Saleh's resignation, while established opposition groups have managed significant concessions from his government, such as a promise to leave politics at the end of 2013, raising army salaries, cutting income taxes, and implementing consumer price controls. (NYT, 17/02/2011)

Saleh is counted as an ally by the U.S. in its fight against the Yemeni branch of Al-Qaeda. As a result, his repression of opposition groups and democracy movements is overlooked by the United States. Domestic opposition to Saleh, along with outside observers are afraid that Yemen's militant groups, Al-Qaeda, and tribes would jockey for power if Saleh were to be forced from office (NYT, 28/01/2011). In June 2011, Saleh sustained injuries in a bomb attack on the presidential mosque, forcing him to reside in Saudi Arabia for approximately two months for medical treatment. Throughout this time, Saleh's government maintained that he would be returning and that political change could only come through elections (NYT, 02/08/2011; NYT, 18/08/2011). In Saleh's absence, the government is said to be fighting 'armed tribesmen' throughout the country. In the south, Islamist militants (some allied with Al-Qaeda), have taken control of a number of towns (WP, 01/02/2011; NYT, 31/07/2011). More than a year after the uprisings began, a one-candidate election was organized as a formal mechanism to remove Saleh from office. While this was hardly a democratic process, Yemenis are said to welcome the elections after a year of demonstrations and urban warfare (NYT, 20/02/2012).

From the outset of Bahrain's revolution, protestors were confronted by riot police using tear gas, rubber bullets, and "non-lethal" shotgun rounds. Police brutality resulted in casualties during the early stages of the protests (WP, 15/02/2011; NYT, 17/02/2011; NYT, 02/28/2011). Demands by protestors were both economic and political, focusing on the lack of

job opportunities for young people and calling for constitutional and democratic reform (NYT, 15/02/2011). As in Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen, the United States is torn by the need to preserve relations with Bahrain's autocratic monarchy, which backs American foreign policy interests, and the promotion of democracy (NYT, 22/02/2011).

At the height of the protests in March 2011, dozens of doctors and other medical professionals were arrested for providing emergency care to protestors. Tried in military courts, a number of doctors were forced to hold a hunger strike to secure their release as they were still being held in prison almost six months after their arrests (NYT, 08/09/2011). One year after the uprising began, protests remained violent as gasoline bombs were used to counter police water cannons and tear gas canisters (NYT, 15/02/2012; NYT, 18/02/2011). Two years after the start of the protests, activists resorted to staging scattered protests across Manama and surrounding towns in order keep police forces dispersed (NYT, 14/02/2013)

As in Yemen and Bahrain, Libyan protests turned violent almost immediately as activists set fire to security headquarters and police stations in a number of cities across the country. As a result of these events, foreign journalists are banned, and Internet connectivity has been almost completely severed (WP, 17/02/2011; NYT, 21/02/2011). Only after a few days, protests morphed into an armed rebellion set on the complete overthrow of Qaddafi and his government. Coverage speculates that the armed rebels are unlikely to succeed without "direct foreign intervention" (NYT, 10/03/2011). While the anti-Qaddafi movement includes diverse groups with secular, nationalist, monarchist, and Islamist outlooks, they are said to be united by "their common experience of standing up to a dictator" (WP, 27/02/2011; NYT, 23/08/2011). It is understood that either Al Qaeda or Libya's homegrown Islamist groups have the best organizational skills amongst opposition groups. With these skills, it is feared that Islamist groups could easily win the struggle for political power (NYT, 27/02/2011).

As armed rebel groups gained the upper hand against Qaddafi's forces at the uprising's six month mark, rebel leaders were making preparations to take full control of Tripoli. The takeover of Tripoli is seen to be a test of the rebel leadership's promises to institute a democratic government in Libya (NYT, 20/08/2011). The departure of Qaddafi from central Tripoli in August has resulted in water, fuel, and food shortages for the city's inhabitants. Rockets, missiles, land mines, and small arms lay unsecured (WP, 08/09/2011). Rivalries between brigades responsible for taking Tripoli have begun to emerge along regional, secular, and Islamist lines (NYT, 31/08/2011).

Islamist militants are reported to have razed Sufi shrines in several sites across Libya, making it clear that Islamic groups are able to operate with impunity in some cases (NYT, 29/08/2012). Abdelhakim Belhaj, a former leader of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, was deemed by the United States to be a terrorist allied with Al-Qaeda. As the commander of a prominent militia, he stands to hold a great deal of power as Libya transitions to democracy. Belhaj and other revolutionary leaders with Islamist ties like him are now in positions of authority with the blessing of the United States and NATO (NYT, 02/09/2011; NYT, 16/09/2012). As the Obama administration sought to hunt down those responsible for the American consulate attack in Benghazi and the natural gas plant attack near In Amenas, Algeria (just over Libya's western frontier), they are left to decode "a dauntingly complex jihadist landscape across North Africa that belies the easy label of "Al-Qaeda" with multiple factions operating among overlapping ethnic groups, clans and criminal networks" (WP, 18/01/2013; NYT, 20/01/2013)

Initial protests in Syrian cities, calling for reforms and political freedoms, have been met with "[b]rutal police crackdowns...leaving six people dead and scores injured". Prior to these demonstrations, anti-government demonstrations have been almost unknown in Syria, a

police state where political resistance has been violently suppressed in the past. (NYT, 19/03/2011). The uprising in Daraa is identified as the biggest domestic challenge to the Syrian government since the late 1970s and early 1980s. Police and other security forces are responding with water cannons, tear gas, rubber bullets, and live ammunition (WP, 24/03/2011; NYT, 25/03/2011). During the initial stages of the uprising, Syria's government announced a series of reforms to placate protestors, like salary increases for civil servants, fewer controls on media and political parties, and the ending of Syria's five decade old emergency laws (NYT, 25/03/2011).

Comparisons are made between Libya's revolution and events in Syria due to the harsh violence experienced by protestors. It is feared that if Assad were to fall, a radical Islamist government could take his place (NYT, 27/03/2011; NYT, 28/09/2011). At the same time, there is not much evidence that Islamists have played much of a role in the initial protests (NYT, 11/04/2011). As protests developed into an armed struggle, the United States and the EU imposed strict economic sanctions on Syria (NYT, 17/09/2011; NYT, 07/10/2011). At the uprising's one year anniversary, the U.N. was attempting stop the fighting between armed groups and government forces and urged all parties to participate in creating a political reform process that reflected the concerns of the Syrian population (WP, 22/03/2012)

As the conflict started its second year, it is said that Assad's brutality and bad judgement transformed what was once a mass pro-democracy movement into a civil war. Some marchers took up arms and joined disorganized groups of fighters. As the conflict wore on, they developed into experienced and radicalized militias. One of the most powerful militias, Al-Nusra Front, is an Al-Qaeda affiliate. Almost 1 million Syrian refugees have been forced to neighboring countries and people remaining in Syria are often short of food and basic medical care (WP, 15/03/2013). It is understood that so-called moderate armed factions

do not have any kind of long-term political vision. Islamist fighters are exploiting this and seek to impose an Islamic state after Assad is defeated (NYT, 17/09/2012; NYT, 15/02/2013; NYT, 14/03/2013).

#### **6.4) Essentializing and Depoliticizing Violence of the Arab Spring**

Ethno-sectarian narratives are absent from coverage on Tunisia. Egyptian protests are said to defy narrow sectarian identities. The democracy movement in Egypt is seen to be pan-Egyptian and include Muslims and Christians (NYT, 13/02/2011; WP, 17/02/2011) As an example of this, Muslim and Coptic Christian protestors were observed standing guard for each other while praying on each group's respective days of worship (NYT, 12/02/2011). Throughout the duration of the military's rule and after the election of Morsi, the Christian community is seen as a vital part of the political opposition, along with secularists and liberals (NYT, 30/07/2011; NYT, 27/12/2012)

Yemen's tribes are seen to be jockeying for power along with militaries, security services, and opposition political parties (WP, 27/02/2011). In the beginning, tribes are said to be split between pro and anti-Saleh camps (NYT, 05/02/2011; WP, 22/02/2011; NYT, 08/08/2011). It is speculated that Yemen's protest movement could develop into a civil war if Saleh's government could add to its already significant northern tribal power base (NYT, 18/02/2011; NYT, 26/02/2011). Saleh is seen as a master of controlling Yemen's tribes, through buying tribal leaders off, or setting leaders against each other (NYT, 27/02/2011). Al-Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula is reported to operate with relative ease in Yemen due to the country's mountainous terrain, frequent armed conflict between the government and opposition groups, and tribes sympathetic to its cause (WP, 20/02/2011; NYT, 27/07/2011). At the same time, Yemen's tribal rivalries are represented as only one challenge to democratic

reform since the country has issues with a North/South secessionist movement, and a host of humanitarian and economic problems (NYT, 05/02/2011; WP, 15/02/2012). Much of the coverage seeks to situate the protests in the make-up of Bahrain's population *vis a vis* the minority-rule government. It is stressed that "Bahrain is suffering a flare-up in old divisions between its ruling Sunni Muslim minority and restive Shiites, who constitute 70 percent of the local population" (NYT, 22/02/2011). There is discussion regarding what factors have led to the divide between the royal family and Shiites, noting that Shiites have complained of discrimination in housing, employment, education, and governance (NYT, 20/02/2011; NYT, 18/02/2012). There is also a focus on the demands made by anti-government protestors noting that the vast majority of the protestors are Shiite Muslims who are making demands for greater representation and governmental reforms focusing on inclusivity (WP, 22/02/2011; NYT, 05/09/2012).

Beyond describing the local contexts of these protests, the coverage sought to situate these events into broader regional politics, calling Bahrain a "regional powder keg" due to its sectarian ties to its neighbors (NYT, 20/02/2011; WP, 10/09/2011; NYT, 14/02/2012). Noting Saudia Arabia's long-term financial and military backing of Bahrain's government, the Washington Post writes that the goal of this support has been to keep Bahrain from falling under Iran's influence (17/02/2011). Referencing the opinions of regional experts, it is predicted that sustained protests could see a military intervention by Saudia Arabia (WP, 19/02/2011). Much is made of Bahrain's location - just off the east coast of Saudia Arabia and in very close proximity to its Eastern Province (an oil-rich region that also has a Shiite majority ruled by a Sunni government) (NYT, 20/02/2011). In referencing Bahrain's location in this manner, it is implied that Bahrain's Shiites could enlist the help of Saudia Arabia's Shiites to topple the Bahraini government. The coverage predicts that if Bahrain's protestors

are successful, the country could "emerge as Iran's first link in a "Shiite crescent" arcing through the Persian Gulf, up the heart of the Middle East and ending in Lebanon, where Hezbollah serves as Iran's proxy" (WP, 19/02/2011).

Bahrain's cultural make-up in relation to its importance in American regional military strategy is another key theme. It is stated that the United States military undermined efforts to improve relations with Bahrain's Shia community and understated abuses by the Sunni government. Additionally, it observed that in some quarters of the American military, the Shia population is seen to be a potential agent of Iran (NYT, 15/03/2011). In explanations of Libya's uprisings, its tribal composition is emphasized. It is called a "tribal society", consisting of as many as 140 tribes (WP, 25/02/2011; WP, 25/02/2011). Libya's national identity is seen to be trumped by tribal, clan, and ethnic identities (NYT, 23/02/2011). Both Berber and tribal groups are understood to be suppressed or manipulated by Qaddafi's government (WP, 22/02/2011; NYT, 21/02/2011; NYT, 23/08/2011; WP, 24/08/2011). Qaddafi is compared to a "lid" that keeps tribal rivalries in check (NYT, 20/01/2013) Citing an episode where protestors were tortured or disappeared, it is observed that "Tribes have long memories, and this is just the kind of time when a tribe might try to settle some scores" (NYT, 03/15/2011).

Libya's tribal composition was key to explaining the dynamics of the protests and fighting. Qaddafi is seen to be "dredging up century-old [tribal] rivalries" in order to set tribes against each other (NYT, 27/02/2011). Gaddafi's private army is understood to be made up of portions of the military loyal to Qaddafi's tribe as well as "African" mercenaries and "Bedouin tribesmen" (NYT, 24/02/2011; NYT, 13/03/2011). Despite the purported tribal character of the conflict "there is no clear geographical dividing line between the opponents to Colonel Qaddafi and his supporters" (NYT, 03/03/2011). Ethnic and tribal groups are seen to be further subdivided by ideological differences separating secularist from Islamists (WP,

23/08/2011; WP, 24/08/2011; NYT, 24/08/2011). Six months after the start of the revolution, the Transitional National Council is said to be working to unify tribal groups and Libya's regions (NYT, 28/08/2011; NYT, 01/09/2011). At the uprising's one year mark, tribal groups are said to be jockeying for power, along with regional and religious groups (WP, 18/02/2012).

A good deal of the reporting on Syria seeks to situate the protests in Syria's ethno-sectarian group dynamics, stating

"Syria....is a majority Sunni nation ruled by a religious minority. The ruling Assads and their circle are Alawite, a sect of Shiite Islam. Hafez al-Assad forged his power base through fear, co-optation and sect loyalty. He built an alliance with an elite Sunni business community, and created multiple security services staffed primarily by Alawites" (NYT, 27/03/2011).

In addition to these groups, the coverage mentions that there is a "restive" Kurdish minority located in the country's North. Syria's ethnic and sectarian tensions are cited as a reason for "Syria's fragile sense of national unity" (NYT, 28/03/2011). Resentment between Alawites, Christians, and Sunnis is said "to run deep" (NYT, 29/03/2011). It is observed that ethno-sectarian tensions did not initially motivate the Syrian conflict, but they became more prominent as the peaceful protest movement morphed into a civil war (NYT, 30/03/2011; WP, 26/09/2011; NYT, 28/09/2011; WP, 10/09/2011; NYT, 17/09/2012). The composition of ethno-sectarian groups in Syria has been called a "potentially explosive mix" (WP, 26/03/2011). The coverage observes that the numerous revolts across Syria have occurred in places that have been government strongholds. Reporting cites Dara'a as a "majority Sunni tribal region" that has lent key support to Assad's government. Latakia, a governorate containing an Alawite majority, has surprisingly seen a large number of protests as well (NYT, 26/03/2011; NYT, 16/03/2012).

It is speculated that Syria could experience a sectarian conflict similar to what happened in Iraq after the 2003 U.S. invasion (NYT, 21/09/2011; NYT, 25/09/2012). One Washington Post columnist claims that U.S. troops from 2003 onwards were the sole factor in keeping Iraq from descending into a full-blown ethno-sectarian war. He writes that a similar invasion is the only thing that could keep Syria from such a fate (WP, 10/10/2011). In comparing the nascent Syrian conflict with the civil wars in Bosnia and Lebanon, the coverage states that sharp ethno-sectarian divisions fuel the most violent types of conflict (WP, 18/03/2011; WP, 03/04/2012). A year into the uprising, it is reported that many urban areas and large tracts of rural land have been divided into exclusive ethno-sectarian zones and it is predicted that de facto partitioning will continue until some kind of settlement is reached between warring parties (NYT, 29/03/2012; NYT, 29/09/2012; WP, 22/02/2013).

Syria's ethnic and religious composition is brought to bear upon analyses of the country's place in regional and global politics. Assad's only two backers in the region consist of Iran and Hezbollah - who are tied to Syria through Shia Islam (WP, 30/03/2011; NYT, 29/03/2012). Other parties in the conflict are supported by competing outside powers, although not always along ethno-sectarian lines (NYT, 19/02/2013). It is argued that the Syrian conflict has exacerbated ethno-sectarian tension in neighboring Iraq and Lebanon (NYT, 29/09/2012).

## 6.5) Coverage Patterns

Thomas Friedman writes that authoritarian regimes of the Middle East dole out patronage and protection to particular groups in order maintain power.<sup>7</sup> He argues that this kind of rule is structural and moving past its legacy to institute truly democratic governments and institutions will take more than removing authoritarian figureheads. The biggest obstacles Friedman identifies are what he calls "primordial identities". In Yemen and Libya, he points to tribal structures. Bahrain and Syria are beset by sectarian divisions, while Egypt and Tunisia are troubled by Islamist groups.

My analysis of the *Times* and *Post* coverage is consistent with Friedman's argument regarding primordial identities. But my analysis also shows that ethno-sectarian narratives show temporal variation in some cases. For Yemen, tribal frames appear in significant portions of the coverage during the sampling periods of Months 1, 6, 12, 18, before disappearing in Month 23. (Figure 5, Appendix 4). Coverage of Bahrain's uprising dropped off sharply after Month 1. But, the small amount of coverage Bahrain received in during Months 6, 12, 18 and 23 continued to feature the Sunni-Shia divide as the primary factor in country's uprising (Figure 6, Appendix 4).

Tribal frames form a prominent part of the coverage during the first year of Libya's uprising. Tribal narratives become much less prominent during the coverage's second year and the continuing violence occurring in Libya is attributed to heavily armed municipal, regional, and Islamist militias who selectively cooperate with one other and only sometimes take directives from Libya's newly formed defense ministry (NYT, 24/01/2013) (Figure 7,

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<sup>7</sup> Friedman, Thomas. "Fear Takes Bloom off the Arab Spring", *The Seattle Times*, 27 June 2012, <http://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/fear-takes-bloom-off-arab-spring/>.

Appendix 4). Ethno-sectarian frames are a prominent throughout the coverage on Syria and do not vary much from sampling period to sampling period (Figure 8, Appendix 4).

The absence or insignificance of ethno-sectarian frames regarding the Tunisian, Egyptian, Yemeni and Bahraini coverage combined with frames focusing on struggles for democracy shows that the *Times* and *Post*'s reporting of the events of the Arab Spring are not all problematic. However, Libya and Syria are two of the most prominent of the Arab Spring revolts. The use of ethno-sectarian frames in the coverage of these two countries reinforces the jig-saw puzzle like nature of the Middle East's cultural landscape in American metageographies. The final section of this chapter focuses on how the conflicts in Libya and Syria are represented in a similar manner in a variety of other American-authored geopolitical representations.

### **6.6) Looking Past Ethno-sectarianism in Libya and Syria?**

The American geopolitical forecaster Jon Mitchell attempts to predict civil war in Libya along tribal lines by articulating a "tribal dynamics" of the country.<sup>8</sup> His report appears on the website for the London-based geopolitical think tank Red (Team) Analysis Society. Despite the organization's cumbersome name, it is clear that this think tank specializes in authoring reports and providing training with the end goal of assisting international business people and foreign policy practitioners to predict and react to geopolitical risk in order to produce favorable outcomes. Quoting an article run by the *Christian Science Monitor*, Mitchell asserts that Libya is the most tribal nation in the Arab World and consists of at least 140 distinct tribes. Of this number, 30 to 40 hold or have held significant political influence.

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<sup>8</sup> Mitchell, Jon, "War in Libya and its Futures - Tribal Dynamics and Civil War (1)", Red (Team) Analysis Society, 27 July 2015, <https://www.redanalysis.org/2015/04/13/war-libya-futures-tribal-dynamics-civil-war/>.

Mitchell argues that if armed factions in Libya can convince a powerful tribe or tribes to sponsor them, this could affect the outcomes of armed conflict in the country.

Mitchell begins by describing present-day tribal structures in Libya. He divides the tribes of the country into four major groups: Arabs, Berbers, Tuareg, and Toubou. He writes that it is difficult to know exactly how many of each group are living in the country due to a lack of reliable and contemporary data. Despite this lack of data, Mitchell includes a Libyan tribal map that illustrates the territorial extent and spatial distribution of the four major groups. Sub-groups under the four major groups are given approximate locations on the map using text labels. The large number of sub-group text labels overlaid onto the distinct Arab, Berber, Tuareg, and Toubou territories of Libya makes the maps difficult to interpret at first glance. This has the effect of making Libya's cultural landscape appear to be incredibly complex. Like the majority of the ethnographic maps I examine in this dissertation, data sources are not named. Also like the other maps I examine, this map suffers from issues of urban/rural scalar representation. The majority of Libya's population lives in urban areas, but representing Libya at the nation-state scale privileges rural areas. Thus, it is impossible to know the tribal composition of Libya's urban areas.

Mitchell then lays out a tribal political history in the country. In describing the effects of the Ottoman and Italian colonial eras, he writes that the Ottoman and European period failed to produce a cohesive national identity in the country. As a result tribal structures remained as the primary mode of social organization at independence in 1951. The Libyan monarchy relied on these tribal structures to maintain political power. When the Libyan military forcibly took power in 1969, Qaddafi relied on a similar system of favoritism and patronage disbursed through tribal structures. As Qaddafi attempted to bolster Libya's relations with other Arab states through pan-Arabism, particular Arab tribes began to be

avored during the 1970s. At the same time, Tuareg and Toubou were called upon in times of crisis - such as when Qaddafi's government needed military conscripts for the Libya-Chad war of the 1980s. Otherwise, these two groups faced marginalization. Berbers were actively marginalized throughout the Qaddafi era. Mitchell argues that Qaddafi's divide and rule strategy using tribal structures had a direct effect during the 2011 uprising. All but Qaddafi's closest tribal associates quickly joined the opposition when fighting broke out in February 2011.

In a February 2011 interview with National Public Radio, the American historian Ronald Bruce St. John attempts to use a similar "tribal dynamic" framework that Mitchell uses above.<sup>9</sup> In describing the details of Libya's tribal structure, Bruce St. John largely agrees with Mitchell. Bruce St. John denies that urbanization during the Qaddafi era had much effect on social structures in the country due to Qaddafi's dismantling of civil society. He states:

The limited research - field research we have suggests that even today the primary allegiance in Libya is to the family and the tribe. And the reason for that is Gadhafi, since 1969, has systemically destroyed civil society as we know it in the West.....There are no political parties in Libya. There are no independent trade unions. There's no Lions Club, Kiwanis, because Gadhafi always saw those types of independent civil organizations as potential centers of revolt or protest. That pushed then the Libyan people back on the tribal structure to be their primary social context.

For the remainder of the brief interview, Bruce St. John attempts to explain or predict how a number of particular tribes have broken with or may break with the Qaddafi government and publicly join the opposition.

Both Mitchell and Bruce St. John acknowledge that there are limited ethnographic data available on Libya. Despite this lack of data these two authors believe that analyses

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<sup>9</sup> Siegel, Robert, "How Do Libya's Tribes Impact The Country?", *National Public Radio*, 25 February 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/02/25/134065787/How-Do-Libyas-Tribes-Impact-The-Country>.

based on tribal categories can be undertaken. My analysis of the *Times* and *Post* coverage show that there is considerable message agreement amongst these disparate sources. It seems that descriptions of Libya's tribal structure were relatively common during 2011 as American media outlets sought to gain better understandings of events in the country.<sup>10</sup>

Writing in *Foreign Policy* magazine, the retired U.S. Navy Admiral and former NATO Supreme Allied Commander James Stavdiris argues that a U.N. sponsored, Dayton-like peace plan should be put in place in Syria.<sup>11</sup> Stavdiris writes:

There once was a country created by artificially drawn borders. It was dominated by an authoritarian regime that ruled with great brutality, using all of the tools of totalitarian governance — incarceration, impunity, and oppressive internal espionage. Eventually, the state blew apart in a frenzy of religious and ethnic hatred. At one point, 8,000 men and boys were executed over a few days despite the (weak) efforts of the international community. Hundreds of thousands were eventually killed and millions displaced.....Yes, it sounds like Syria. But it was the Balkans in the 1990s.

From his perspective the parallels between present day Syria and early 1990s Bosnia are so exact that a Dayton-like peace plan would be effective when transplanted to Syria. Citing Robert Kaplan's 1993 book *Balkan Ghosts*, which sees the Bosnian conflict rooted in centuries of ethno-sectarian discord, Stavdiris understands the Syrian conflict in the same terms. He sees this peace plan as a way to partition Syria into either a federal entity or independent statelets along Alawite, Kurdish, and Sunni lines. This is to better reflect its cultural landscape and to mitigate future conflict. As in Bosnia, Stavdiris understands that a U.N. military force and U.N. administration will be needed to enforce the newly demarcated territories.

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<sup>10</sup> Kurczy, Stephen and Drew Hinshaw, "Libya Tribes: Who's Who", *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 February 2011, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Backchannels/2011/0224/Libya-tribes-Who-s-who>.

<sup>11</sup> Stavdiris, James. "Syrian Ghosts: What the Balkans can teach us about how to end the conflict in the Levant", *Foreign Policy*, 6 November 2015, [http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/11/06/lessons-from-the-balkans-for-syria/?utm\\_content=buffer8ab7b&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/11/06/lessons-from-the-balkans-for-syria/?utm_content=buffer8ab7b&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer).

Other U.S foreign policy thinkers make similar arguments with regards to a Syria peace plan. Phillip H. Gordon, who served as an Middle East expert in the Obama administration and is a Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, proposes a Bosnia-like Syria peace plan built around ethno-sectarian territorial lines.<sup>12</sup> Michael E. O'Hanlon, a foreign policy researcher at the Brookings Institution, describes the conflict as "sectarian" and argues that lessons should be drawn from the Dayton Accords in order to construct an effective Syria peace plan.<sup>13</sup> But at the same time, he stresses that very little evidence has come to light of the Assad government undertaking an ethnic cleansing campaign. O'Hanlon also cites intersectarian efforts to rebuild integrated towns and cities affected by the conflict.

In the former Yugoslavia (especially in Bosnia) armed factions used ethnic cleansing as a part of their strategies to cement territorial gains made during the conflict of the early 1990s. The Dayton Accords formalized the *de facto* ethno-sectarian territorial partitions created through the war and put the perpetrators of violence into positions of power after the conflict ended (Toal and Dahlman, 2009). By advocating a similar plan for Syria, Stavidiris, Gordon and O'Hanlon believe that territorial partition along ethno-sectarian lines is not only possible, but desirable (despite O'Hanlon's optimism regarding instances of interethno-sectarian group cooperation). Furthermore, the parallels between these plans and the League of Nations Mandate system is uncanny. These authors don't advocate for a survey of Syria's cultural landscape (most likely because it is already legible to them), but they are arguing for an

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<sup>12</sup> Home Box Office/Council on Foreign Relations, "What to do about Syria?", 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDOEySPVeZA>.

Gordon, Phillip H., "Syria: The Need for Diplomacy and De-escalation", Council on Foreign Relations, 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/syria/syria-need-diplomacy-de-escalation/p37326>.

<sup>13</sup> O'Hanlon, Michael, "Bosnia May Offer Road Map for Syria", Brookings Institute, 2013, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2013/05/23-bosnia-road-map-syria-ohanlon-joseph>.

internationally imposed peace that would enable UN tutelage. This would eventually lead to a fully independent federal Syria or independent statelets. These authors' goal in ending the violence in Syria is laudable. However, their desire to use ethno-sectarian categories to stop the violence and build revamped political systems is questionable.

These views on Libya and Syria tie into region-wide think tank perspectives regarding ethno-sectarian conflict. A report on the Sunni-Shia divide, published by the Council on Foreign Relations attempts to situate contemporary Middle Eastern conflicts into the 1,400 year old doctrinal schism between Islam's two largest sects.<sup>14</sup> According to the report, Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen are the sites of proxy battles between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Extremist violence in the region is understood to be fuelled by sectarian tensions. The "territorial integrity" of Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iraq is said to be threatened by ethnic and sectarian tensions. The report describes Hezbollah and al-Qaeda the two "most prominent" terrorist groups.<sup>15</sup> While the groups do not describe themselves as Shia or Sunni, respectively, the report designates them as the chief actors in ethno-sectarian motivated killings at present. It comes to this conclusion by highlighting al-Qaeda's targeted killings of Shia in Iraq, al-Qaeda's sponsorship of anti-Shia militias in the Syrian conflict, and Hezbollah's backing of the Assad regime.

The Washington D.C.-based think tank, Heritage Foundation, publishes the Annual Index of U.S. Military Strength.<sup>16</sup> The report bills itself as "the only non-governmental and only annual assessment of U.S. military strength". The 2016 report is organized into three

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<sup>14</sup> "The Sunni-Shia Divide", Council on Foreign Relations, No date, [http://www.cfr.org/peace-conflict-and-human-rights/sunni-shia-divide/p33176#!/?cid=otr-marketing\\_url-sunni\\_shia\\_infoguide](http://www.cfr.org/peace-conflict-and-human-rights/sunni-shia-divide/p33176#!/?cid=otr-marketing_url-sunni_shia_infoguide).

<sup>15</sup> The report doesn't specify whether or not these groups are the most prominent terrorist groups who have placed themselves under the banner of Islam, in the Middle East, or in the world.

<sup>16</sup> "Annual Index of U.S. Military Strength", The Heritage Foundation, 2016, <http://index.heritage.org/military/2016/>.

sections: U.S. Military Power, Threats to U.S. Vital Interests, and Global Operating Environment. The Global Operating Environment section designates the Middle East region (along with Europe and Asia) as one of the three most important world regions in American global strategy. The report acknowledges the region's "wide array of cultures, religions, and ethnic groups" and then describes the region as "deeply sectarian". The report acknowledges that contemporary conflicts have more to do with current extremist ideologies rather than longstanding religious divisions. At the same time, it insists that a source of conflict in the region is the incongruency between "modern day borders" and "cultural, ethnic, or religious realities". Religion is designated as the predominant fact of life in the Middle East. Historical and cultural differences between Arabs and Persians are cited as reinforcing this Sunni-Shia split. These difference manifest themselves as conflict between "Shia Iran" and powerful "Sunni Arab" states fought through proxy battles in Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria.

American understandings of the Libyan and Syrian cultural landscapes are directly contravened by the research I discuss in Chapter 3, Section 4 by Ahmida (2006, 2009), White (2011), and Neep (2014). Furthermore, situating Libya and Syria into broader regional understandings like the Council on Foreign Relation's report on "The Sunni-Shia Divide" and the Heritage Foundation's "Annual Index of U.S. Military Strength" is untenable due to the arguments laid out in Chapters 3 and 4. These broader perspectives reflect Lewis and Wigen's (1997) observation regarding the American world regional geography framework - phenomena observed in one portion of a region are applied universally across the entire region in question. This problem is compounded when the phenomena in question (in this case ethno-sectarian tensions and conflict) is highly suspect.

In a commentary piece, the American Middle East scholar Joshua Landis takes a point between my approach and the ethno-sectarian based analyses laid out in the media, think tank

and academic commentary I discuss.<sup>17</sup> He states that at the end of World War I, Central and Eastern European states were multi-ethnic and multi-religious. In the ensuing decades and especially after World War II, these states became much more homogenous due to violent conflict, ethnic cleansing, and the redrawing of nation-state boundaries. Landis doesn't mention the application of Wilsonian international principles as a major driver in this process of "tidying up boundaries and rearranging peoples according to nationality". But it seems that he is referencing Wilson's vision of a remade Europe. Landis argues that we are witnessing the same historical patterns taking place in the Middle East in relation to the events of the Arab Spring. Boundaries will be redrawn and nationalities shuffled around to manufacture ideal nation-states. He acknowledges that this process is violent in the Middle East, but the violence is analogous to violence in early to mid-twentieth century European state-making projects.

In a rebuttal to Landis, the historian Elias Muhanna takes an approach similar to mine regarding ethno-sectarian categories and the potential redrawing of nation-state boundaries in the Middle East. He maintains that ethnic and sectarian categories are not useful for understanding the violent events spurred by the Arab Spring. He writes

Are the nations of the Levant "artificial"? I suppose so, but what does that mean, nearly a century after their borders were fixed by the Mandate powers? Nationalisms do not derive their emotional and political force from subterranean wells of ethnic or historical authenticity. They have far shorter memories, being made and remade sometimes in the space of a single generation.....

When the Arab Spring roadshow rolled into Egypt, I remember reading a great deal of commentary about how the mass protests were proof that Egypt was a true nation (unlike Syria or Lebanon) with a real identity rooted in its 5,000 years of history, and so on. Two years later, we're hearing about how Egypt's travails reveal the hollowness of the Egyptian national idea, and how it's just a collection of tribes held together by an authoritarian state. Neither conclusion is correct, in my view.

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<sup>17</sup> Landis, Joshua and Elias Muhanna, "The Great Sorting Out: Ethnicity and the Future of the Levant", 18 December 2013, <http://qifanabki.com/2013/12/18/landis-ethnicity/>.

The upheaval we have seen in the region over the past couple of years is a story of politics and economics, not ethnicity. It's a story of the breakdown of certain social contracts and the emergence of new ones. The violence in Syria is not some messy centrifugal separation of an artificial state into its primordial ethnic or sectarian ingredients. Under the right economic and political conditions, there should not be anything inevitable about such affiliations. In the absence of real alternatives, however, people will revert to the most traditional networks - kinship, religious communities, etc. - to protect and organize themselves.

Interestingly, Bashar al Assad takes a similar perspective as Muhanna in regards to the Syrian conflict in Syria. In a 2015 interview with the *New Statesman*, Assad understands the uprising to be an armed insurrection.<sup>18</sup> From his (admittedly limited) perspective, ethno-sectarian modes of rule or ethno-sectarian military strategies do not play a role in the conflict.

Outside of the two viewpoints I discuss here, environmental scientist Peter Gleick (2014) takes a political ecology approach in respect to the events in Syria. The country's severe drought (beginning in 2005), exacerbated by climate change and agricultural policy that favored wealthy and well-connected landowners and farmers, forced large numbers of rural refugees into Syria's cities. The poor conditions they found themselves in after migrating to urban areas were a symptom of state power structures unable or unwilling to deal with the crisis (Gleick, 2014). While modes of rule based in ethno-sectarian identities were an integral part of Syria's state administration, drought and urbanization made them increasingly irrelevant. Thus, military strategies based in ethno-sectarian identities and territories do not seem tenable at this point.

Accurate portrayals of struggles for democracy, the absence of pejorative ethno-sectarian narratives in the coverage on Tunisia and Egypt, and the elimination of explanations

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<sup>18</sup> Bowen, Jeremy, "Bashar al-Assad interview: Jeremy Bowen meets Syria's great survivor", *The New Statesman*, 3 February 2015, <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/02/bashar-al-assad-interview-jeremy-bowen-meets-syria-s-great-survivor>.

featuring ethno-sectarian groups and their role in the Libyan revolution are positive aspects of the media coverage that I examine. However, the reliance on ethno-sectarian frames in the case of Libya and Syria aligns with other American representations that portray the nation-states of the Middle East as mosaics of competing ethnic and religious groups - often at the expense of more relevant and plausible analyses.

There is nothing exceptional about the Arab Spring's cultural landscapes. The idea that some places which experienced Arab Spring revolts are patchworks of discrete ethno-sectarian identities and territories is a product of outmoded anthropological views on social organization, Wilsonian territorial ideals, and inaccurate American geopolitical thought. The message agreement between American counterinsurgency doctrine developed for the Middle East, American ethnographic maps, American understandings of the Iraq Troop Surge, and American understandings of conflict in Libya and Syria is more than simply coincidence. They are all founded on similar histories of colonial violence that remain relevant up to the present day (Pels, 1997).

## 7) Conclusion

### 7.1) Ethno-sectarian Territorial Framings, Critical Geopolitics, and *How* versus *What*-based Approaches

In Chapters 1, 2, and 3, I build an analytical framework around how ethno-sectarian narratives inform American understandings of the Middle East's cultural landscapes. This framework is developed from research in cartography, political geography, history, anthropology, political science, and sociology. This literature maintains that six problematic assumptions regarding ethno-sectarian groups are present in American geopolitical perspectives on the Middle East:

- 1) The cultural landscapes of the Middle East are comprised of discrete ethnic groups inhabiting clearly demarcated territories.
- 2) Ethno-sectarian identities are static and unchanging.
- 3) The cultural landscapes of the Middle East can be visualized and represented accurately, objectively, and completely using ethnographic maps and related textual descriptions.
- 4) When nation-state boundaries do not reflect ethno-sectarian group boundaries, violent conflict is inevitable.
- 5) Nation-state boundaries can (and in some cases should) be redrawn in order to better reflect Middle Eastern cultural landscapes.
- 6) These cultural landscapes and their related violence are relevant to the United States because of the Middle East's geostrategic importance.

The literature reviewed in the first three chapters shows that these assumptions are drawn from colonial and Wilsonian understandings of social organization and conventional American geopolitical thought. Through discourse and framing analysis, I verify that these assumptions are present in three sets of important American texts on the region. These texts are comprised of American ethnographic maps covering the Middle East along with media, military, government, think tank, and academic views on Iraq Troop Surge and the Syrian and Libyan

civil wars. The prominence of ethno-sectarian framings and the consistent manner in which these framings are used in these texts leads me to draw several conclusions:

- 1) The subjectivities of post-colonial identities of the Middle East continue to be defined by powerful American geopolitical discourses for political ends.
- 2) Ethno-sectarian based geopolitical perspectives place causes for violence at the local scale - allowing larger questions of political economy and American military tactics and strategy to be ignored.
- 3) Ethnic and religious groups are understood to be natural parts of the Middle East's human/physical geographies – and therefore beyond politics.

The conclusions I draw are consistent with a *what*-based mode of framing analysis discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2. The strength of this kind of analysis is that it can show how framings are constructed across a series of texts. These framings are conceptual systems based in language that structure the ways in which reality is perceived. Once these conceptual systems are established, it becomes very difficult to think and act outside of them (Mills, 2003). My *what*-based framing analysis focuses on the linguistic (and visual) building blocks of narratives, concepts, and myths that constitute ethno-sectarian frames. It emphasizes how these ethno-sectarian frames are situated in larger cultural, historical, and social contexts that generate them. As new American representations of the Middle East are created, they must be made to fit existing ethno-sectarian frames (Reese, 2010).

My *what*-based analysis has a number of shortcomings inherent to this type of research. It cannot show the ways in which these framings circulate between popular, formal, and practical geopolitical registers in the United States. For example, my discussion and analysis in Chapters 1 and 4 demonstrate that ethno-sectarian framings are prevalent in popular and practical American geopolitical understandings of Iraq in relation to counterinsurgency and the Troop Surge. However, it cannot say anything about how popular and practical American geopolitical registers have influenced each other circa 2007 with

respect to Iraq. Nor can it make statements regarding the very specific mechanisms through which ethnographic maps influenced or were influenced by these other representations. Similar shortcomings are present in my Arab Spring analysis. While American think tank documents and academic commentary share the same ethno-sectarian framings on Libya and Syria that I observe in the *Times* and *Post* coverage, it is unclear exactly how these various discourses have influenced each other. My approach is unable to state with any certainty what interests are served by the circulation of ethno-sectarian framings beyond speculation that they are used because they are simple and make it easy to attribute violence to local actors. Nor can my approach make statements about how ethno-sectarian identities are used in the region by locals seeking to gain political power or further claims and projects of irredentism.

*How*-based analyses would be needed to examine the blind spots of my *what*-based analysis. However, without a study like the one I conduct, it would be impossible to know how prominent ethno-sectarian framings are in broad American geopolitical discourses on the Middle East. *What*-based analyses are limited by the fact that they must be carried out at the personal or institutional scale. There is no way to scale them up beyond these micro-scales. The debates in communications studies around the two types of framing analysis reflect debates in critical geopolitics regarding discourse-analysis based approaches and non-representational (NRT) approaches.

Much recent scholarship in critical geopolitics (especially in varieties of critical geopolitics which utilize non-representational theory and those examining popular discourses) seem to be overly concerned with asserting claims of theoretical and methodological superiority, rather than challenging oriental, colonial and militaristic mappings of global space (Dalby, 2010). Thus, it seems that many arguments about theories and methods in critical

geopolitics use the world in an instrumental way in order to promote a particular perspective on a theory or method, as Gregory (2005: 186) argues

If we do not care about the world - if we treat it as merely a screen on which to display our command of high technique or as a catalogue that serves to furnish selected examples of our high theory - then we abandon any prospect of a genuinely human geography. I do not want to be misunderstood: of course techniques are important; of course ideas are important. But it is simply wrong to encounter the world and to render it - the *mot juste* - in such exorbitantly and exclusively instrumental ways.

Representations are key to understanding how discourses are constructed and reinforced. As Agnew (2009) argues, representation is not the "dead letter" that so many human geographers have made it out to be. All theories, methods, and approaches have their shortcomings. Pretending that NRT is the end all and be all of social science research does not mean that the examinations of representations should be discounted.

Much non-representational theory involves researchers conveying their own experiences in the "field". This type of expert "witnessing", by the researcher hearkens back to the days in geographic research was largely based on privileged white geographers "decoding" landscapes for their readers. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this type of research, much of it does not acknowledge the positionality of the researcher (even in its most recent forms).

Non-representational theory-based approaches are still not immune from reifying ethno-sectarian categories and privileging ethno-sectarian identities over all other identities. Like other ethnographic-based methods, they can say a great deal about their study participants in very particular places. But they can't say much about how subjectivities are created at broader scales. Thus, non-representational theory is appropriate for studying things at the personal, or even the institutional scale. But at broader scales, this kind of theory and related methodology are just not appropriate. Critical geopolitics is about challenging the

geographical specifications of power at the global, regional, or nation-state scales (Dalby, 2003). Nigel Thrift, Rachel Pain, and other proponents of non-representational theory claim that their approach is appropriate for examining geopolitical discourse at all scales or that broader scale representations don't matter (Thrift, 2000; Pain and Smith, 2008). In doing this, they are making claims of theoretical and methodological superiority. Rather than choosing appropriate theories and methods for their research question, Thrift and others seem to think that NRT is appropriate for all research questions at any scale.

This is not to say the NRT-based research doesn't have value. The examination of representations in this dissertation could be supplemented with ethnographies of production or a Science and Technology Studies approach to give greater insight into exactly how these materials have been created. But these approaches would supplement my research - they could never work as a full-on replacement for the work I have done on representations. A sole focus on how the geopolitical discourses I examine are produced would fundamentally alter the character of this study and would answer my primary research question in a different manner. It is not my goal to examine *how* these representations are made (although these processes are important). Instead, I seek to understand *what* kinds of messages about world politics they convey.

As a product of the High Plains of Nebraska, I grew up in a landscape that was made "white" through the outright killing and violent displacement of Native Americans. The High Plains were then made legible using the United States Public Land Survey System to divide the landscape in its entirety into square-mile blocks. In a massive government subsidy, property was granted to railroads, real estate tycoons (who often acquired large tracts through fraudulent methods), and small-holder agriculturalists. This has had the effect of turning the High Plains into a highly polluted and ecologically compromised industrial

landscape focused on commodity grain and cattle production. Subsequent structural and cultural racism has made it almost impossible for non-whites to acquire land rights.

The High Plains are a settler colony *par excellence*. Like in other parts of the U.S., "ethnic" whites often shed those identities and became WASP-y "white" American subjects. Any other identities are seen as deviating from the norm, while whiteness is understood to be lacking in ethnicity. The boundaries of whiteness are constantly patrolled and it is almost as if a lack of ethnicity makes those understanding themselves to be white even more vociferous in their attacks against people not like themselves. Racism is part and parcel of daily life (especially in male only settings, where misogyny and homophobia serve as other modes of male interaction). Racial scorn usually reserved for African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans was easily transferred to the inhabitants of the Middle East after the 2001 Afghanistan invasion and 2003 Iraq invasion. Epithets like "hajji", "towelhead", "raghead", "camel jockey", and "sand nigger" have become part of everyday discourse. Islam is set up as inferior to whichever stock variety of Protestantism those using such epithets allegedly adhere to. These entrenched racial perspectives tie directly into popular understandings of American geopolitical strategy - which continues to bear the marks of Manifest Destiny and the Cold War.

While there is great distrust towards the United States government amongst those who see it appropriate to use awful racial slurs against inhabitants of the Middle East, American military action in the region goes unquestioned. If anything, it is not seen as extreme enough. The comment that the entire Middle East should be the target of massive U.S. nuclear strikes is very common. This view holds that the entire region should be attacked until there is nothing but "a burned out crater in the ground". Those adhering to this view lack basic understandings of the nature of nuclear warfare. But it also shows that they lack a basic

conception of the violence of warfare. These views go far beyond the "crazy old uncle" archetypes who have been brainwashed by Fox News. They are held by young and old alike and transcend gender boundaries. When more subtle forms of Orientalism creep into formal, practical, and popular geopolitical discourse, they are drawing on deep reserves of American contempt for people of the world who do not conform to ideal white subjectivities and massive American ignorance of its globe-spanning military apparatus. This evaluation of the place of my upbringing is admittedly harsh. But perspectives which relegate an entire portion of the globe and its inhabitants to a target for American military violence must be examined - even if uncomfortable statements need to be made.

From my perspective, discourse analysis-based critical geopolitics provides the most appropriate conceptual and methodological framework for examining the material I am interested in and the questions that I want to answer. My particular approach has been bolstered by anthropological, cartographic, and other perspectives not normally associated with critical geopolitics. I do not seek to make claims of theoretical and methodological superiority. Conducting social science research is about choosing appropriate tools for the task at hand and recognizing that all approaches come with their inherent strengths and shortcomings.

While my focus on representation may be questioned by those who are interested in understanding how texts have material effects, it can be said that ethnographic maps themselves do have agency. In the context of foreign policy, the Iraq Study Group Report (discussed in Chapter 5) includes a number of recommendations for American actions in Iraq. The ethnographic map included in an appendix of the report shows the well-known three part division of Iraq. While recommendations made by this report were ultimately never used to structure U.S. policy for the country, the inclusion of this map into a foreign policy document

commissioned by George W. Bush himself demonstrates that territorial understandings of Iraq's ethno-sectarian groups have been taken into consideration at the highest levels of American foreign policy formulation.

In the context of on-the-ground military actions, ethnographic maps played a role the tribal-based administration system established in Iraq's Al-Anbar province during mid-1990s. During the Troop Surge it is said that these same maps were used by the United States Marine Corps to implement counterinsurgency operations in the province. Tribal structures laid out in these maps were used to funnel money and weapons to tribal leaders and tribal militias in efforts to eliminate or expel Al-Qaeda insurgents. In this example, it is very clear that these abstract ethnographic maps had very real effects for military actions on the ground.

The ethno-sectarian framings I identify are representative of the parameters and rules through which American geopolitical perspectives view the Middle East's cultural landscapes. The presence of ethno-sectarian frames and the conclusions that I draw call into question fringe plans to redraw the Middle East's boundaries along ethno-sectarian lines. Tabloid geopolitical discourses put forward by prominent and influential American foreign policy intellectuals do not differ conceptually from these fringe plans. The only thing separating fringe plans from tabloid discourses is that tabloid discourses are taken seriously by the foreign policy and military establishments in the United States. In the remainder of the conclusion, I discuss these fringe and tabloid geopolitical understandings of the Middle East. I then argue that tabloid geopolitical understandings reinforce contemporary ethno-sectarian framings of the Middle East in American geopolitical discourse.

## 7.2) Breakers of Barriers: ISIS and Bolton Sunnistan and the Zionist Yinon Plan

The ISIS, Bolton, and Yinon plans to reconfigure the Middle East echo the set of American-authored journalistic maps of the Middle East that I examine in Chapter 4 and plans to divide Iraq and Syria I examine in Chapters 5 and 6. Like Ralph Peters and others, they seek to reshape the boundaries of the Middle East along ethno-sectarian lines. While the previous plans I discuss are mostly well-intentioned in their efforts to reduce or minimize conflict and foster democracy, the following plans make no such apologies. They are clear about their intentions to divide the Middle East to fit particular geopolitical aspirations and make the assumption that territorial realignment is the primary means to reach these aspirations.

Since the Islamic State declared itself a "caliphate" in June 2014, there has been considerable debate as to whether this militant group and the territory it holds constitutes a nation-state. The U.S. government argues that ISIS should be considered a militant extremist group. From this viewpoint, the territories it has gained through force and the imposition of its modes of rule on subject populations run counter to contemporary understandings of statehood in international law. Some scholars argue that ISIS should be considered a state since it controls large swaths of territory, collects taxes, and maintains military training grounds. Furthermore, in some urban areas, it provides power, water, and sanitation services. The benefits of considering it a state are many for those seeking to eliminate ISIS, since the rules of formal interstate warfare and international sanctions could be brought to bear against it.<sup>1</sup> Other scholars argue that the debates of whether or not ISIS is a state (or some kind of *nouveau* caliphate), or a terrorist organization helps to exaggerate its relatively limited power

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson, Jessica, "ISIS: State or Terrorist Group", *Small Wars Journal*, 21 June 2016; Falk, Richard, "ISIS's challenge to the statist world order", *Middle East Eye*, 11 December 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/isis-and-world-order-139021644>.

because this type of debate assigns traits of ideal-type polities to what is quite frankly an improvised and "slap-dash" organization that has brought unwarranted hardship and violence to the territories it controls. Despite its improvised nature, ISIS has sought to create a homogenized Sunni Muslim population in parts of Northern Iraq and Eastern Syria. Individuals and groups who do not fit ISIS' ideal type of Sunnism have been killed, forced to leave, or hidden their true identities. In a widely viewed YouTube video, ISIS has called itself the "Breaker of Barriers" and claims that its straddling of the Iraq/Syria border is the beginning of the dissolution of post World War I territorial configurations in the Middle East (Hamdan, 2016).

While ISIS tactics and goals have been discredited by all but its most ardent followers, it is the only one of these three plans which has made any headway into reshaping the boundaries of the Middle East. The results of ISIS' campaign at territorial realignment are horrible to say the least. As Iraq has tried to retake urban areas from ISIS, the organization has kept civilians from leaving, using them as human shields against the Iraqi Army and American airstrikes. In Syria, as of August 2016, the organization is caught up in a civil war that doesn't show signs of ending anytime soon. American airstrikes against ISIS-controlled cities, infrastructure, and oil facilities in Syria have reduced its capacity for ruling its territory, but the organization is still able to rule parts of its territory and in some cases has been able to retake areas it has lost previously. Syrians who have not been able to escape or choose to stay are caught in the middle of these battles.

In November 2015, the *New York Times* ran an op-ed piece by John R. Bolton in which he proposes that local Sunni tribes, along with the American military should be employed in the fight against ISIS in Northern Iraq and Eastern Syria. Sunni tribal leaders and their fighters would be recruited and deployed using methods of counterinsurgency developed for

the Al-Anbar "Sunni Awakening" of 2006/2007 in Iraq. This model would allow for the U.S. military to have local partners and proxies in its pacification operations. When ISIS is ultimately defeated, Bolton advocates for a new Sunni state to be created in the territories that ISIS formerly held. Due to Iraq and Syria's failure to control territories that ISIS inhabited, their claims on these territories would be forfeit. Sunni tribal leaders that had been employed in counterinsurgency battles along with former Baathist officials from Iraq and Syria would be recruited to run this new state. Its initial operating costs should be borne by wealthy Arab monarchies - until oil revenue is sufficient to make it self-sustaining. Bolton also foresees the autochthonous creation an adjoining independent Kurdish state located to the north and east of his new "Sunnistan" that would serve American interests in the Middle East in a similar capacity. These two states would indirectly check Russian and Iranian influence in the region by undermining Assad. Bolton is clear that this is not a democracy initiative. It is a state building enterprise meant to maintain American geopolitical influence in the region.

John R. Bolton has largely been discredited due to his association with some of the worst foreign policy transgressions of the George W. Bush administration. The similarities that Bolton's plan shares with Bush's invasion and occupation of Iraq suggests that Bolton still believes in the American neoconservative project to remake the Middle East. His plan seeks to create a nation-state in which stark ethno-sectarian divides are created as a mode of administration, counterinsurgency tactics would be employed to root out militants, and the new state would be financed with its own oil revenue. Given the acknowledgement of the George W. Bush administration's disastrous occupation of Iraq (even amongst the most conservative American foreign policy thinkers), it is unlikely that his plan will ever gain any traction. If ISIS were to suddenly change tack by aligning itself with the United States and

build a petro-state open to global trade, I am sure Bolton would overlook its improprieties and be satisfied that neoconservative designs on the Middle East were finally coming to fruition.

An article titled "A Strategy for Israel in the 1980s" by the Israeli journalist Oded Yinon was first published in the Jerusalem-based publication *New Directions: A Journal for Judaism and Zionism* in February 1982.<sup>2</sup> Yinon opens with a discussion of Malthusian themes of natural resource shortages and overpopulation, along with descriptions of weak Third World states spanning from Northern Africa to the Indian subcontinent. Israel is placed in the center of this maelstrom. As a result of these stark geopolitical realities, Israel must reconfigure its regional geopolitical context through the redrawing of nation-state boundaries in this "shatterbelt". Yinon advocates that Israel become an imperial regional power through the partition of the entire Middle East and North Africa into small and weak states or clients that would be unable or unwilling to mount a challenge to Israel. The criteria for division would be along ethno-sectarian lines. The Yinon Plan would greatly erode the power of the Arab state system and regional powers like Egypt and Iraq and greatly diminish threats to Israel. Yinon names Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the states of the Arabian peninsula as the biggest immediate threats to Israel. But he sees all Arab states as threats at some point in the future. Egypt would be divided into Muslim/Christian states, Iraq into its Kurdish, Sunni, and Shia components, Jordan into Palestinian/non-Palestinian sections, Lebanon and Syria into their constituent ethno-sectarian communities, and the Arabian peninsula into Sunni/Shia principalities. Yinon does not provide any details as to how these states would be realized and acknowledges that the Israeli military is already overstretched in dealing with domestic occupation. But he does point to current conflicts across the region, like

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<sup>2</sup> Chossudovsky, Michel, "'Greater Israel': The Zionist Plan for the Middle East", Centre for Research on Globalization, 23 April 2016, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/greater-israel-the-zionist-plan-for-the-middle-east/5324815>.

the Berber/Arab rift in Algeria as a means to divide populations and create new states when conflict arises. He argues that internecine conflict is inevitable across the Arab world simply because nation-state boundaries do not match up with ethno-sectarian group boundaries. Therefore, Israel must simply bide its time and wait for conflicts to erupt. Yinon insinuates that Israel could drive wedges between populations using diplomatic and military means at the height of ethno-sectarian conflicts. This would result in conditions favorable to creating weak states.

The Yinon plan was published in a relatively obscure Hebrew language journal. A version translated into English was published by the now defunct Arab-American Association of University Graduates several months after the original version appeared in order to bring to light an extreme strain of Zionist geopolitical thought. The plan only recently received renewed interest when it was discussed in a blog post by a Montreal-based think-tank in April 2016. Even if the Israeli foreign policy apparatus took the Yinon plan seriously at any time, the sheer impracticality of remaking nation-state boundaries across all of the Middle East and North Africa make it appear as nothing more than the aspirations of a realist geopolitical thinker in which the world is simply far too small for its burgeoning population. According to Yinon, a First World lifestyle will only be the privilege of nation-states which militarily secure the resources necessary for sustaining it.

The ISIS, Bolton, and Yinon plans to remake the Middle East should be classified as tabloid geopolitics due to their "dumbing down" of geopolitical discourse to fit their own narrow territorial and ideological goals. The Bolton and Yinon plans are unlikely to have any real world effects. But the implementation of ISIS' geopolitical vision, no matter the organization's slapdash character, has had serious consequences for those who have been subject to its violent, intolerant, and pilfering modes of rule. Prior to the American invasion of

Iraq in 2003, an organization that sought to remake the boundaries of the Middle East through the imposition of a Sunni-based Caliphate would have been derided as unrealistic and inconsequential. In part because it was inconceivable at this time that Iraq and Syria would be unable to control the extent of their territories. The stunning success of ISIS' Mosul invasion in 2014 demonstrates that when tabloid geopolitical visions are put into practice, violence and intolerance often follow. These three plans to break barriers are not about getting the lines right to enable self-determination in the Wilsonian manner, but to force a geopolitical vision upon the Middle East. Their redrawn or proposed boundaries do not simply reflect the reality of the region's landscape. Redrawn or imposed boundaries in these cases are extremely distorted reflections of social organization in the region. Plans like these can be easily imagined and mapped because their metageographical assumptions and ideological leanings easily lend themselves to conventional cartographic representation in which the world is broken up into discrete territories to be made legible and managed.

### **7.3) Bad Maps versus Geopolitical Images**

Much of my argument in Chapter 4 revolves around American-authored ethnographic maps that I consider "bad". They don't follow the rules of cartographic convention, they don't disclose data sources (or they use outmoded data sources), they completely ignore scalar issues regarding urban and rural areas, and they reinforce the idea that ethno-sectarian groups inhabit distinct territories. I touch on how these maps are used and understood as geopolitical images, rather than simply aggregations of data points or technical artefacts of cartographic practice. Thomas Barnett's global-scale map which divides the world into a "Functioning Core" and a "Non-integrating Gap" serves as one prominent example that is an effective geopolitical image, but at the same time a very poor example of technical

cartography.<sup>3</sup> He advocates that the Core should be protected and expanded with US military power. While Barnett's argument is almost laughable to critical scholars, his ideas have a great deal of currency outside of academia, thanks in part to the stark geographies presented on his map (Dalby, 2007b; Hazbun, 2011).

Those who believe in the tenets of Barnett's map are unlikely to be concerned with data gathering methodologies, whether or not primary or secondary data sources were used, or whether or not it was drawn using the latest and greatest cartographic techniques. What is important is how the map works as an image to illustrate geopolitical worldviews. In this way, tabloid geopolitical discourses can be linked to cartographic representation. Barnett's understanding of the world geopolitical order can be considered what Francois Debrix (2003: 162) calls "tabloid realism"

Found in texts authored by scholars like Benjamin Barber, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Samuel Huntington, Robert D. Kaplan, Michael Klare, John Mearsheimer, and many others, tabloid realism is not to be interpreted as a uniform theoretical model. Tabloid realism is not a new theory of international politics. If anything, it is composed of fragments of realist geopolitics, American nationalist ideology and cultural reactionism that are loosely put together to propagate shock effects in the public [realm].....

Barnett's popularity and goal of keeping the United States at the top of the world geopolitical order would easily qualify him to be considered on par with the scholars listed above.

Out of all the scholars employing tabloid realism named by Debrix, Robert Kaplan stands out for his reliance on ethno-sectarian narratives in order to illustrate his geopolitical divinations. Debrix (2003: 164) writes:

Kaplan declares that the map of the world has forever been altered. States and their borders are in constant flux. Flows have replaced scales. Dromography has replaced geography. Ethno-religious disturbances and ecological disasters have replaced

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<sup>3</sup> <http://thomaspmbarnett.com>

geopolitical order and security. The map of the Cold War is totally obsolete. Mapping, the very need to draw maps, to chart lands and people, needs to be reconsidered altogether in order to reflect these global insecurities.

Thus, in a post-Cold War world in which nation-states and their boundaries are constantly being redrawn, ethno-sectarian disturbances are one of the key factors contributing to an uncertain geopolitical order (along with a Malthusian understanding of overpopulation and resource shortages). It is unclear from DeBrix's statement how mapping should be reformed in Kaplan's terms. But given Kaplan's focus on ethno-sectarian identities in his analyses of the post-Cold War world order, it would hardly be surprising if he utilized and endorsed ethnographic maps like the ones I examine in this dissertation. Ethnographic maps would be key to approaches used by Kaplan because they adeptly illustrate the territorial assumptions of colonial define and rule systems and the Wilsonian international order that he seems to be wedded to.

Since the 1980s, Kaplan has authored semi-regular articles for influential East Coast U.S. publications like *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The Wall Street Journal*. In an April 2014 piece titled "In Defense of Empire"<sup>4</sup>, Kaplan (like Niall Ferguson (2012)) longs for days past when the British Empire acted as a forerunner to modern globalization patterns using steampower, telegraphs, guns, engineers, missionaries, and hordes of white settlers. He maintains that imperialism protects minorities from the "tyranny" of the majority. He writes ".....imperialism is now seen by global elites as altogether evil, despite empires' having offered the most benign form of order for thousands of years, keeping the anarchy of ethnic, tribal, and sectarian war bands to a reasonable minimum." The Hapsburg and Ottoman Empire gave more protection for their patchworks of minorities than the UN ever could, Kaplan maintains. He points to

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<sup>4</sup> Kaplan, Robert, "In Defense of Empire", *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/04/in-defense-of-empire/358645/>.

American humanitarian intervention in Bosnia that purportedly stopped ethnic cleansing and the lack of American intervention in Rwanda and Syria that allowed ethnic cleansing to proceed unabated as examples that reinforce his argument. In this context, the United States should take up some kind of empire-lite: enforcing the American-led global world order (sans the social engineering programs of European colonial empires), intervening into ethno-sectarian conflict when necessary, but steering clear of complex and populous Islamic countries which lack essential elements of civil society. He doesn't provide any details as to what constitutes a "complex and populous" Islamic country, but he must have Iraq and Afghanistan on his mind. These two places required long term occupations and resource intensive counterinsurgency operations. More than a decade on, the United States has continued Special Forces missions, air strikes, and military training. Iraq and Afghanistan also possess mosaic-like cultural landscapes that give rise to "anarchies of ethnic, tribal, and sectarian war bands" in the words of Kaplan.

In an April 2010 *Atlantic Monthly* article on U.S. military counterinsurgency operations, Kaplan writes:

Ethnic and sectarian differences in far-off corners of the world, seen in the 1990s as obstacles that good men should strive to overcome, now loomed as factors that should have warned us away from military action. The debate does not end there. In late 2006 and early 2007, as Iraq was crumbling and ethnic atrocities reached Balkan dimensions and threatened to rise to those of Rwanda, much of the Washington establishment, especially the realists, called for scaling back or withdrawing our military mission. President George W. Bush did the opposite. He did not succumb to fate. Those supporting him were few, but they included neoconservatives, who essentially argued that human agency—more troops and a new strategy—could triumph over vast impersonal forces, in this case those of sectarian madness.<sup>5</sup>

In a December 2012 *Wall Street Journal* piece on the Arab Spring, Kaplan states:

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<sup>5</sup> Kaplan, Robert, "Man versus Afghanistan", *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 2010, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/04/man-versus-afghanistan/307983/>.

Egypt and the Middle East now offer a panorama of sectarianism and religious and ethnic divides. Freedom, at least in its initial stages, unleashes not only individual identity but, more crucially, the freedom to identify with a blood-based solidarity group. Beyond that group, feelings of love and humanity do not apply. That is a signal lesson of the Arab Spring.....The disputes in Asia are not about ideology or any uplifting moral philosophy; they are about who gets to control space on the map. The same drama is being played out in Syria where Alawites, Sunnis and Kurds are in a territorial contest over power and control as much as over ideas. Syria's writhing sectarianism—in which Bashar Assad is merely the leading warlord among many—is a far cruder, chaotic and primitive version of the primate game of king of the hill.....We truly are in a battle between two epic forces: Those of integration based on civil society and human rights, and those of exclusion based on race, blood and radicalized faith..... Yet because values like minority rights are under attack the world over, the United States must put them right alongside its own exclusivist national interests, such as preserving a favorable balance of power. Without universal values in our foreign policy, we have no identity as a nation—and that is the only way we can lead with moral legitimacy in an increasingly disorderly world.<sup>6</sup>

These three pieces typify Kaplan's approach to describing how ethno-sectarian identities contribute to global anarchy and prescribing what actions U.S. military power should take to keep it at bay.<sup>7</sup> In the lexicon of Thomas Barnett, the Non-integrating Gap must not overtake the Functioning Core. Like Bernard Lewis argues for the Middle East, the Non-integrating Gap has not worked past its primordial identities. He even gives a nod to Ralph Peters describing cultural groups in the region as "blood-based solidarity groups". Kaplan asserts that the United States should intervene in places with "difficult human landscapes". But should do so with caution and determination to stem the inevitable ethno-sectarian "madness" that besets the entire Non-integrating Gap in which primordial groups are engaged "in territorial contests over power and control."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kaplan, Robert, "The Return of Toxic Nationalism", *The Wall Street Journal*, 23 December 2012, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887323297104578174932950587010>.

<sup>7</sup> Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts* (1993) and *The Revenge of Geography* (2012) along with six or so *Atlantic Monthly* articles are the primary works in which utilizes an ethno-sectarian territorial framework.

<sup>8</sup> Kaplan, Robert, "Man versus Afghanistan", *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 2010, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/04/man-versus-afghanistan/307983/>.

In light of the conceptual and empirical arguments that I make in this dissertation, Kaplan's reliance on ethno-sectarian territorial assumptions makes his arguments which rely on these assumptions dubious at best. Kaplan's views on geopolitics and ethno-sectarian identities could be considered tabloid geopolitical discourse in the same manner as the ISIS, Bolton, and Y'non plans to reshape the Middle East. Despite the tabloid realist tropes of Kaplan's writing, his ideas enjoy a great deal of currency in the United States. His personal website summarizes the influential titles he holds/has held, the accolades he has garnered, and the prominence of his ideas

[Kaplan] is a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security in Washington and a contributing editor at The Atlantic, where his work has appeared for three decades. He was chief geopolitical analyst at Stratfor, a visiting professor at the United States Naval Academy, and a member of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board, appointed by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. Foreign Policy magazine twice named him one of the world's "Top 100 Global Thinkers." New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman has called Kaplan among the four "most widely read" authors defining the post-Cold War (along with Stanford Professor Francis Fukuyama, Yale Professor Paul Kennedy, and the late Harvard Professor Samuel Huntington). Kaplan's article, "The Coming Anarchy," published in the February, 1994 *Atlantic Monthly*, about how population rise, ethnic and sectarian strife, disease, urbanization, and resource depletion is undermining the political fabric of the planet, was hotly debated in foreign-language translations around the world.<sup>9</sup>

The currency of Kaplan's ideas amongst foreign policy thinkers, military strategists, and journalists demonstrates that critical geopolitics must continue to question the geographical assumptions present in these types of discourses. A writer who describes Syria's sectarianism as "writhing" and calls the country's conflict a "far cruder, chaotic and primitive version of the primate game of king of the hill" has no business influencing any kind of understandings of world politics. This kind of language belongs in a Harlequin romance novel. It should not be used to describe one of the most brutal civil wars in recent memory that has killed or displaced a large proportion of Syria's population.

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<sup>9</sup> [http://www.robertdkaplan.com/robert\\_d\\_kaplan\\_bio.htm](http://www.robertdkaplan.com/robert_d_kaplan_bio.htm)

As I have stated, the conflict in Syria began as a pro-democracy movement that morphed into an armed conflict in which regional and global powers are using local proxies in bids to influence Middle East geopolitics. Calling it a "writhing" ethno-sectarian "king of the hill" contest places the causes for the conflict at the local scale and does an extreme disservice to those who have been killed and displaced by a conflict that has not been of their making. Based on the ways in which the ISIS, Bolton, Yinon, and Kaplan understand ethno-sectarian groups in the Middle East, I don't see any conceptual differences between them. The only thing that distinguishes Kaplan is that he enjoys a wide audience in the United States and beyond. The ISIS, Bolton, and Yinon plans are seen as fringe geopolitics by a militant organization and two hyper-nationalist authors. Kaplan's "tabloid realism" should be put into the same category.

Kaplan has not published geopolitical maps in the manner of that Thomas Barnett has. But given Kaplan's popularity, a Kaplan drafted geopolitical map would most likely circulate as widely as his other works. Amongst cartographers there is a saying that bad data makes for bad maps. In the world of geopolitical maps, there is no getting around the fact that bad geopolitical visions make for bad maps. The "epistemological violence" that is committed by the geopolitical images and stereotypes I study in this dissertation must be critically examined. These images and stereotypes of post-colonial people and places matter because they frame political action (Cosgrove, 2008).

### **7.3) The Questionable Claims of American Foreign Policy in the Middle East**

In Andrew J. Bacevich's book *America's War for the Greater Middle East: A Military History*, he provides a basic political map of the region that highlights every country/region that the U.S. has deployed military forces to since 1980. The places listed are: Saudi Arabia,

Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Lebanon, Libya Egypt, Sudan, Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Mali/Algeria/Mauritania borderlands. Also included on this list are naval operations in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Bacevich tallies 38 military operations in all. Each of these operations have been underlain by the understanding that "[t]hrough the use of superior military power....The United States was going to liberate and uplift. U.S. forces would restore peace and spread democracy. They would succor the afflicted and protect the innocent. They would promote the rule of law and advance the cause of human rights". But as experience has borne out, none of these goals have been achieved by U.S. military force in the region (Bacevich, 2016: i).

Bacevich finds the current American focus on the Middle East to be rather curious, since the region was treated as a strategic afterthought in global Cold War strategy up until the late 1970s. This occurred even though the U.S. had made significant efforts to supplant Britain as the dominant power in the region after World War II. He attributes this shift in part to an influential mid-1979 report by Paul Wolfowitz, who was at that time a lower-ranking Defense Department official. In this report, Wolfowitz cites oil reserves as the main reason for emphasizing America's vital and growing stake in the Middle East. Outside of a Soviet invasion, threats to the region included ideological rivalries, ethno-sectarian hatreds, and large amounts of petro-dollars available to very weak and ineffectual governments. Wolfowitz's views on the region share a good deal in common with the 1980 Carter Doctrine that shifted the focus of American military strategy from Eastern and Central Europe to the Middle East, Bacevich writes. Much like Morissey (2016) argues, Bacevich maintains that the 1991 and 2003 Iraq wars did not come out of nowhere. Basing, support facilities, legal agreements, defense policy, and key personalities were put into place by the U.S. government more than a decade before operation Desert Storm. Similarly, the logistical chain enabling

Rumsfeld's "Shock and Awe" campaign was arrayed in the Middle East long before George W. Bush was elected to office. In short, the blunt end of the U.S. Cold War military apparatus was shifted from West Germany's Fulda Gap to the Persian Gulf in the early 1990s. The large number of U.S. military engagements in the Middle East since this time are a direct result of this.

Bacevich (2006) asserts that Americans are enthralled with military power and the belief that the United States possesses a military capability that is second to none. This belief, when coupled with a strategic focus on the Middle East, allows U.S. military operations in this part of the world to go unquestioned. The lack of critical reflection on such matters allows tabloid geopoliticians to dictate how the Middle East is constructed in American metageographies. Part and parcel of these metageographies are ethno-sectarian territorial assumptions that help to facilitate American military strategy and action in the Middle East.

As the work critical IR scholars I review in Chapter 2 maintains, international relations/geopolitics was built on the premise of the existence of a global color line. On one side were "white" colonial powers. On the other side were colonized territories filled with mosaics of "traditional" non-white people needing the tutelage of colonial metropolises. Colonial social science and Wilsonian ethno-territorial commissions worked under the assumption that ethno-sectarian identities could be accurately, objectively, and completely represented in cartographic and textual discourses. As I have argued, this is an erroneous assumption. As I have demonstrated, American geopolitical understandings of the Middle East continue to operate under the same erroneous assumptions of colonial social science and the Wilson territorial commissions. It is not simply a matter of "divide and rule". It is define and rule as Mamdani (2012) so deftly argues.

Due to the dominant hold of colonial/Wilsonian modes of cultural-political administration across the region and the contemporary nature of the texts I analyze, I don't see American representations of the Middle East's cultural landscape changing anytime soon (despite the few positive signs in the Arab Spring media coverage). The ethno-sectarian framings that I identify in American ethnographic maps and American media coverage on the Middle East have very real consequences for American geopolitical thought and action. Similar ethno-sectarian framings are evident in the U.S. military's counterinsurgency strategy discussed in the introduction and influential tabloid geopolitical thought discussed in the conclusion.

The very subjectivities of post-colonial identities of the Middle East continue to be defined by powerful American discourses for geopolitical ends. As I have stressed multiple times throughout this work, I do not claim to speak for inhabitants of the Middle East who live these identities. As I mention in the introductory chapter, reflexive and feminist scholars have done this and continue to do this in path-breaking ways. This is not one of those projects. What I am researching is the dogged persistence of outmoded representations on social organization and territorial assumptions in American metageographies of the Middle East. Additionally, I don't seek to deny the violence that occurs under the guises of ethno-sectarianism. This violence is very real. What I am making a case for is more nuanced understandings of identity and more appropriate understandings for causes of violence that go beyond inherent animosity between ethnic and religious categories. In the representations that I examine, ethnic and confessional groups are understood to be natural parts of the Middle East's human/physical geographies - and therefore beyond politics.

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## Appendix 1

	Title	Year	Author	Page Number/URL
Figure 1	Middle East and Northern Africa - Culture [Languages]	2006	Hammond	14/15
	Middle East and Northern Africa - Culture [Religions]			
Figure 2	Religion [Middle East]	2008	Nat'l Geographic	80
Figure 3	Kurdish Lands	1992	CIA	<a href="http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/kurdish_lands_92.jpg">www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/kurdish_lands_92.jpg</a>
Figure 4	Kurdish areas in the Middle East and Soviet Union	1986	CIA	<a href="http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/kurdish_86.jpg">www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/kurdish_86.jpg</a>
Figure 5	Ethnolinguistic Groups in Afghanistan	1997	CIA	<a href="http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/afghanistan_ethnoling_97.jpg">www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/afghanistan_ethnoling_97.jpg</a>
Figure 6	Ethnoreligious Distribution [Iran]	2004	CIA	<a href="http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/iran_ethnoreligious_distribution_2004.jpg">www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/iran_ethnoreligious_distribution_2004.jpg</a>
Figure 7	Ethnoreligious Groups [Iraq]	1992	CIA	<a href="http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/iraq_ethnoreligious_1992.jpg">www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/iraq_ethnoreligious_1992.jpg</a>
Figure 8	Distribution of Religious Groups [Lebanon]	1983	CIA	<a href="http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/lebanon_religions_83.jpg">www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/lebanon_religions_83.jpg</a>
Figure 9	Ethnic Groups [Libya]	1974	CIA	<a href="http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/libya_ethnic_1974.jpg">www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/libya_ethnic_1974.jpg</a>
Figure 10	Population Density [Libya]	1974	CIA	<a href="http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/libya_pop_1974.jpg">www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/libya_pop_1974.jpg</a>
Figure 11	Distribution of Ethnic Groups and Key Tribal Areas [Yemen]	2002	CIA	<a href="http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/yemen_ethno_2002.jpg">www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/yemen_ethno_2002.jpg</a>
Figure 12	Ethnic Groups of The Middle East	2015	Izady, Michael	<a href="http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Mid_East_Ethnic_lg.png">gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Mid_East_Ethnic_lg.png</a>

**Table 1:** Appendix 1 map information.

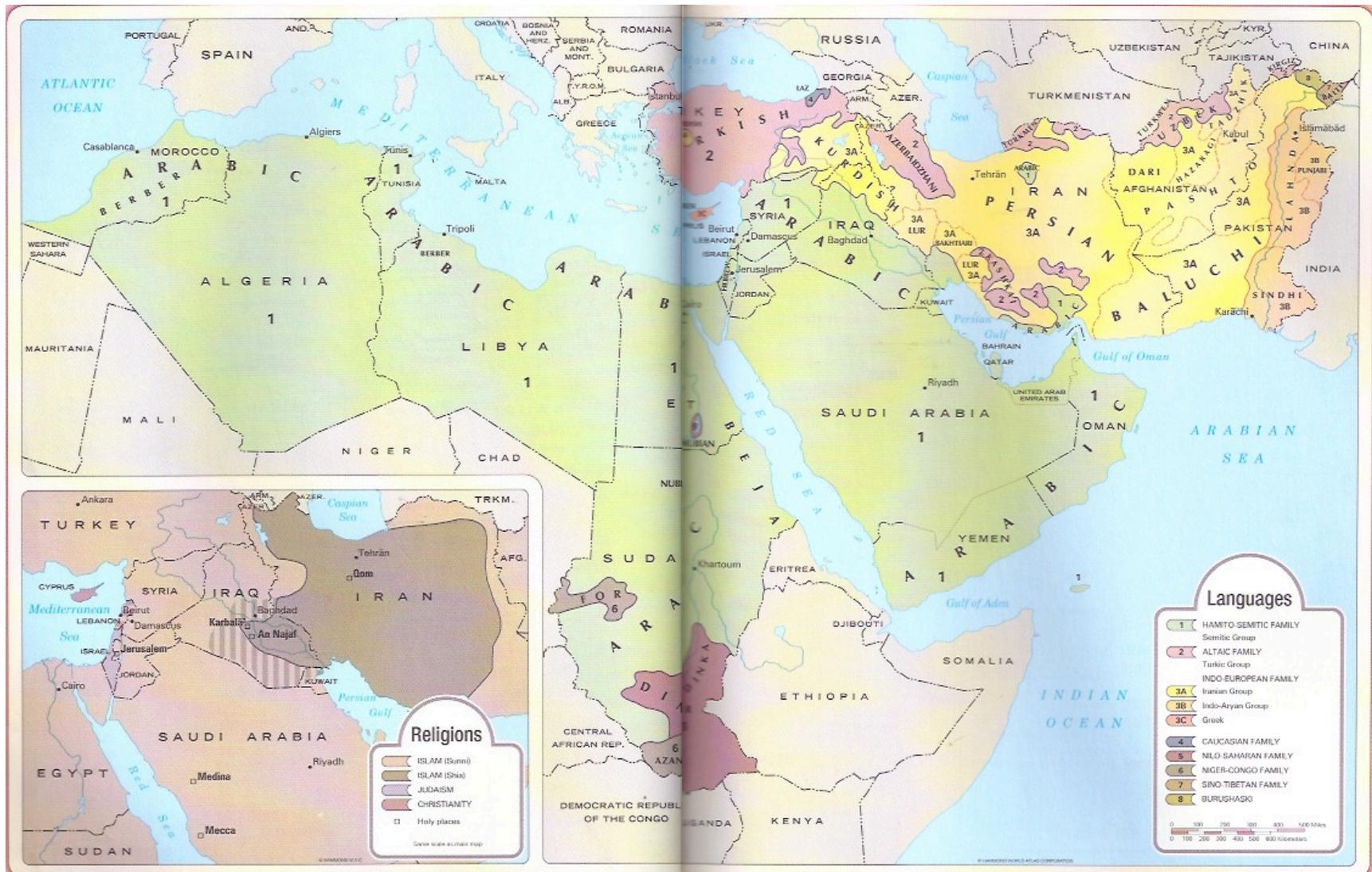


Figure 1: "Middle East and Northern Africa - Culture" [Languages, Religions] (Hammond, 2006).

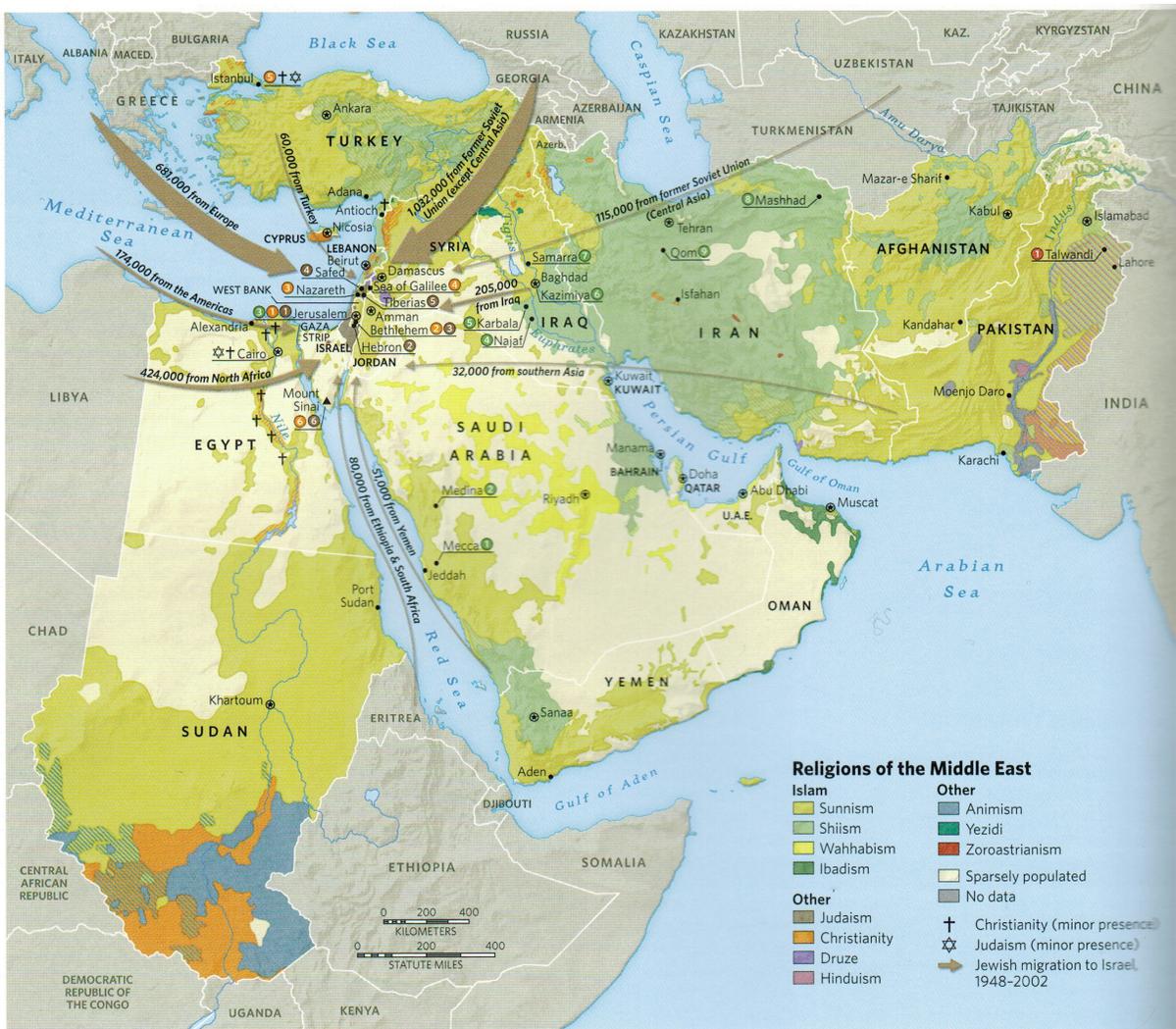


Figure 2: "Religions" [Middle East] (National Geographic, 2008).



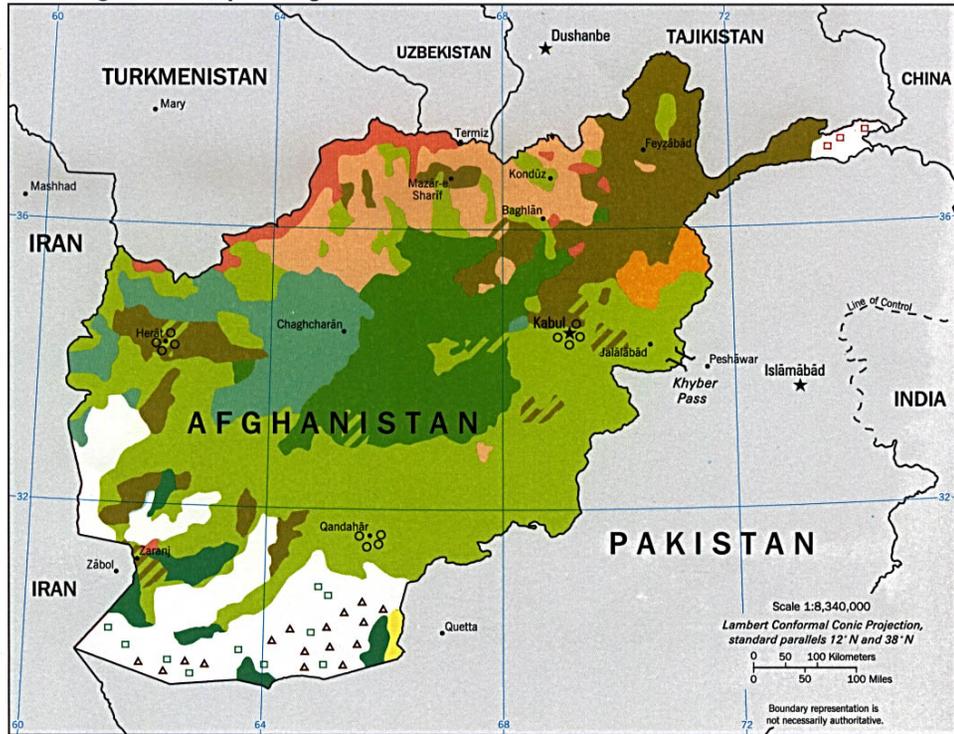
Figure 3: "Kurdish Lands" (CIA, 1992).

**Kurdish Areas in the Middle East and the Soviet Union**



**Figure 4:** "Kurdish Areas in the Middle East and Soviet Union" (CIA, 1996).

**Ethnolinguistic Groups in Afghanistan**



- | Iranian                              | Turkic    | Other                               |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| □ Baloch                             | □ Kirghiz | △ Brahui                            |
| ■ Aimak                              | ■ Turkmen | ■ Nuristani                         |
| ■ Hazara                             | ■ Uzbek   | □ Sparsely populated or uninhabited |
| ■ Pashtun<br><i>Durrani, Ghilzai</i> |           |                                     |
| ○ Qizilbash                          |           |                                     |
| ■ Tajik                              |           |                                     |

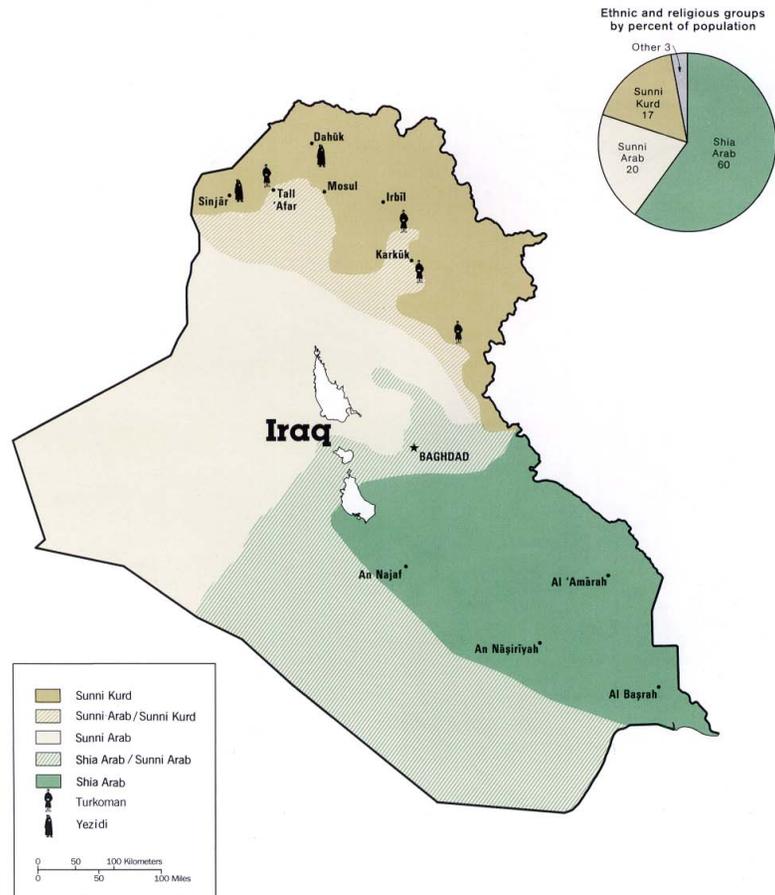
802551 (R00434) 6-97

Figure 5: "Ethnolinguistic Groups in Afghanistan" (CIA, 1997).



Figure 6: "Ethnoreligious Distribution" [Iran] (2004).

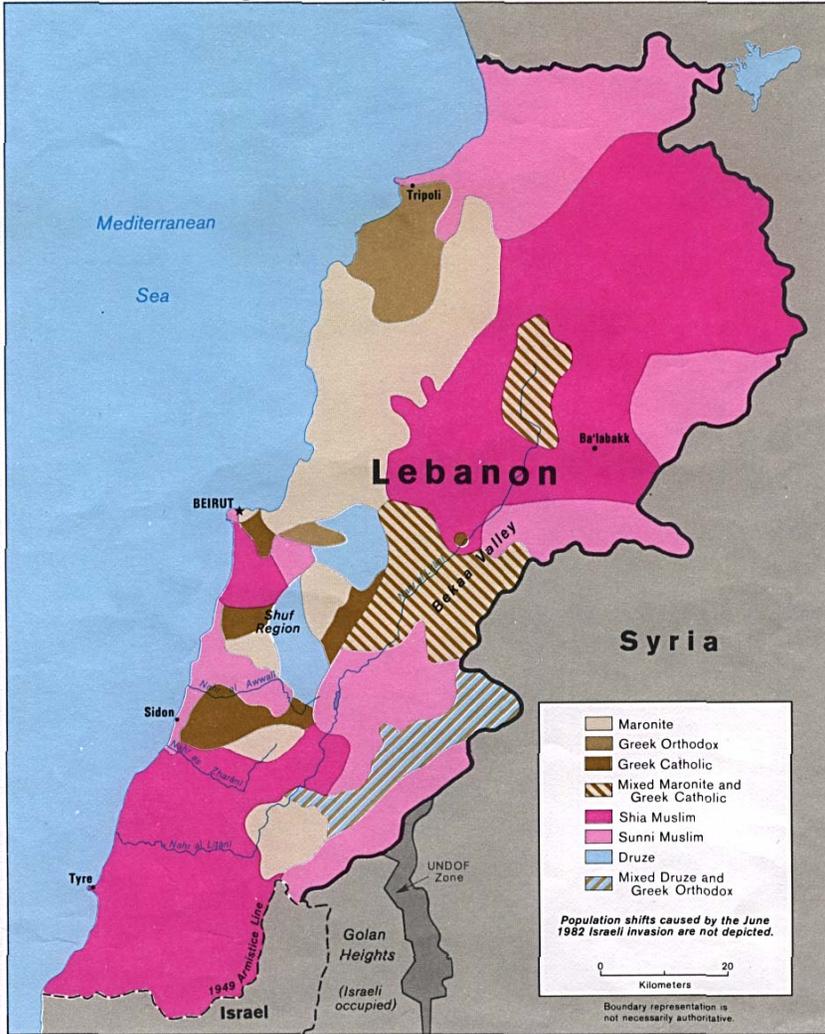
### Ethnoreligious Groups



725881 (801274) 8-92

Figure 7: "Ethnoreligious Groups" [Iraq] (CIA, 1992).

**Distribution of Religious Groups**



700780 12-83

**Figure 8:** "Distribution of Religious Groups" [Lebanon] (CIA, 1983).

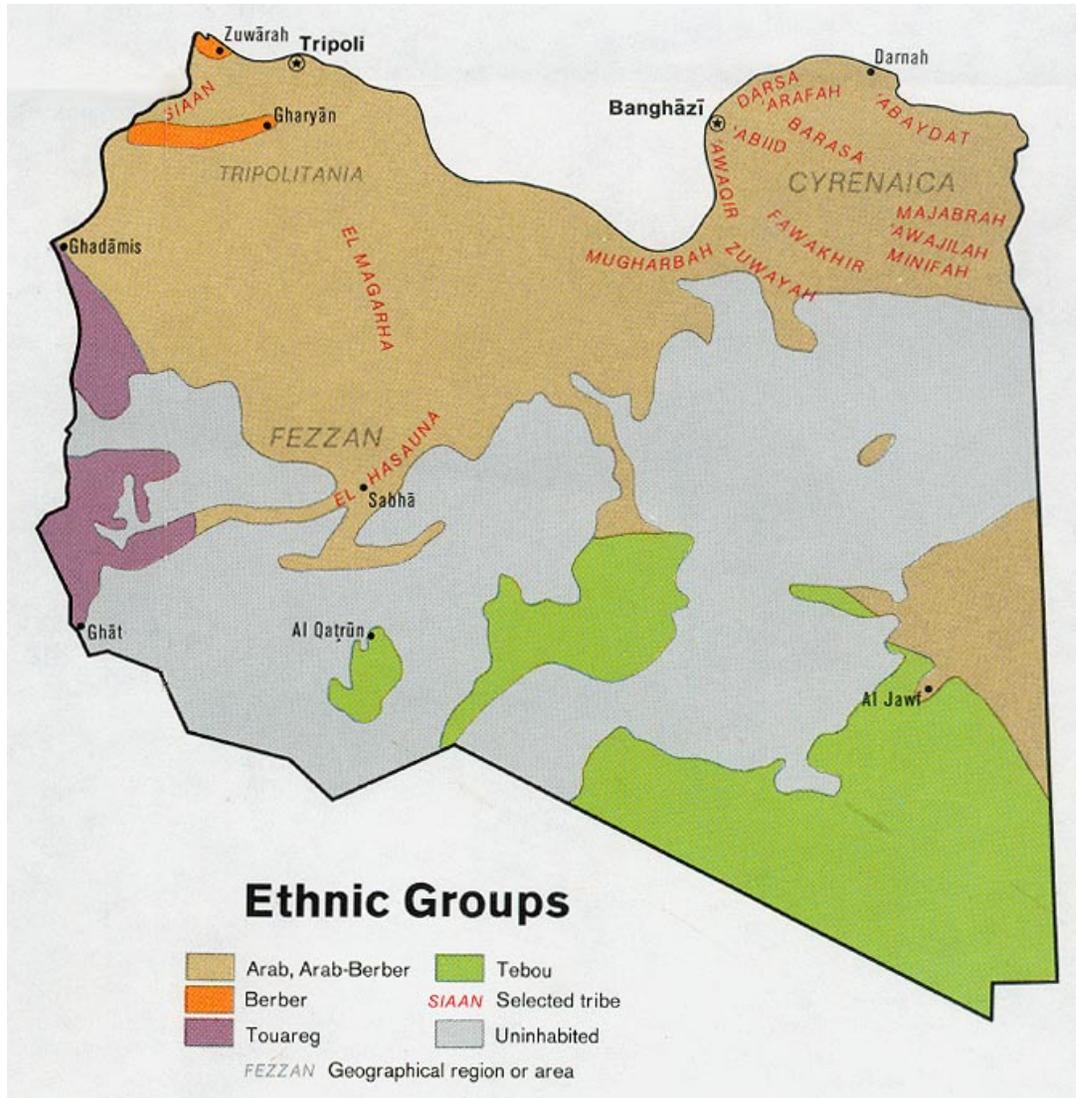


Figure 9: "Ethnic Groups" [Libya] (CIA, 1974).

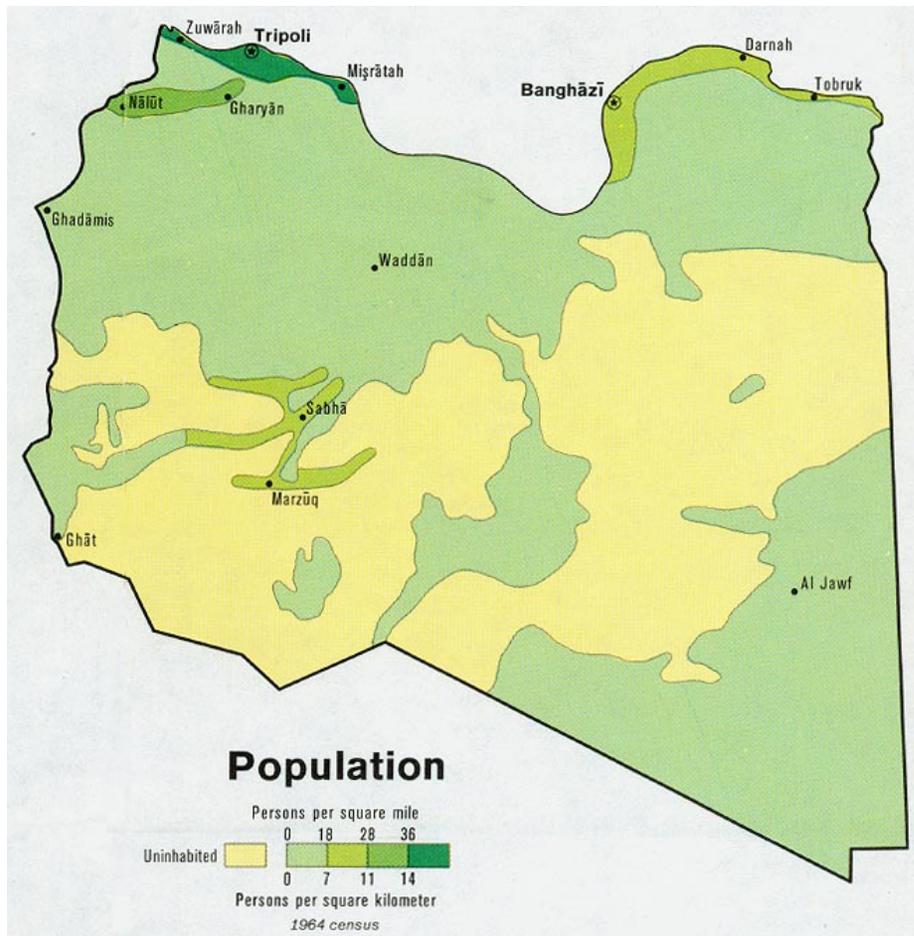
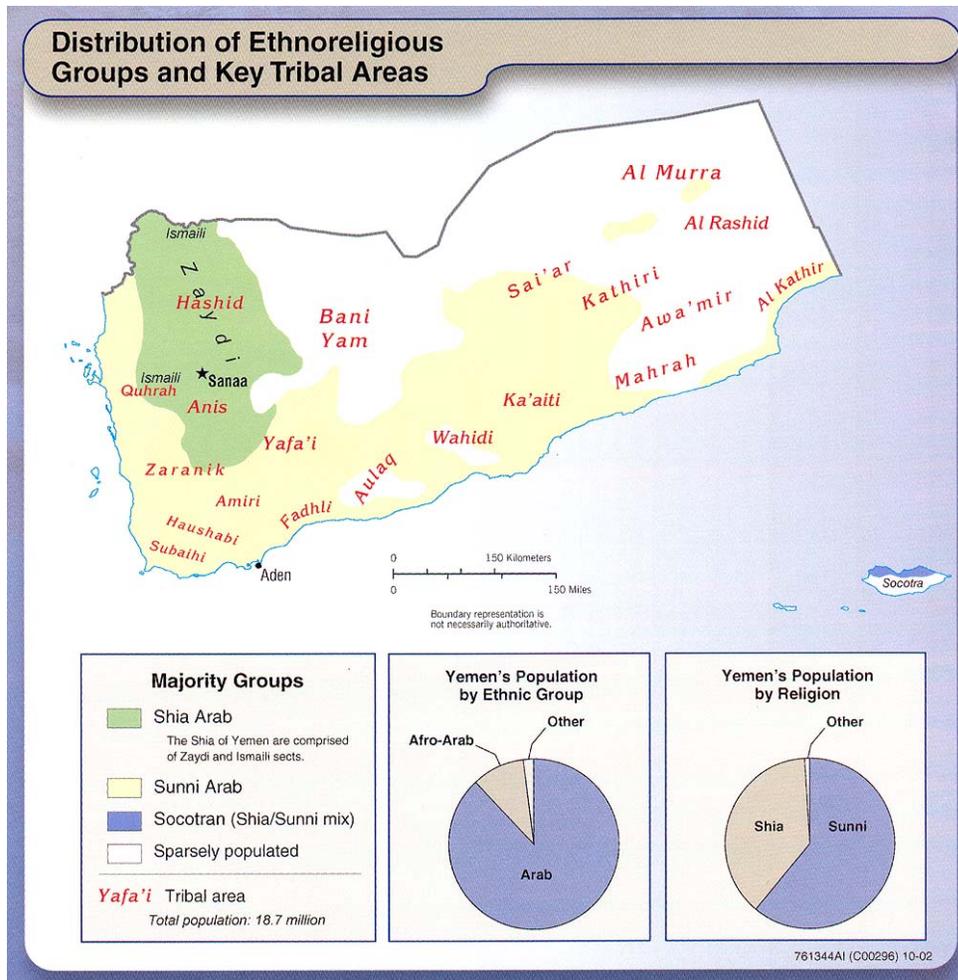


Figure 10: "Population Density" [Libya] (CIA, 1974).



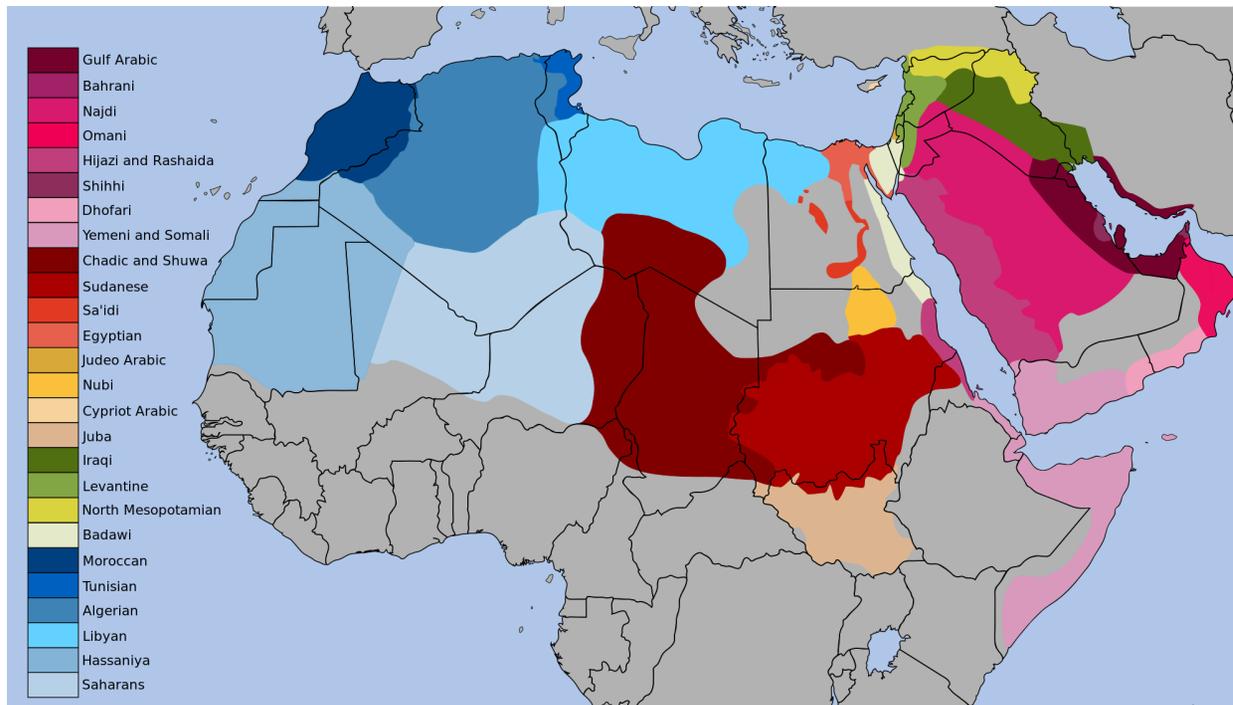
**Figure 11:** "Distribution of Ethnoreligious Groups and Key Tribal Areas" [Yemen] (CIA, 2002).



## Appendix 2

	Title	Year	Author	URL
Figure 1	The Dialects of Arabic Today	2014	Unknown	<a href="http://www.vox.com/a/maps-explain-the-middle-east">www.vox.com/a/maps-explain-the-middle-east</a>
Figure 2	Hypothetical Future [Iraq and Syria]	2014	Kates, Glenn	<a href="http://www.rferl.org/content/iraq-syria-religious-ethnic-divides-history-future-maps/25232404">www.rferl.org/content/iraq-syria-religious-ethnic-divides-history-future-maps/25232404</a>
Figure 3	A Glimpse of the Middle East's Possible Future	2008	Goldberg, Jeffrey	<a href="http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/01/after-iraq/306577/?single_page=true">www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/01/after-iraq/306577/?single_page=true</a>
Figure 4	Lines in the Sand	2007	Murphy, Cullen	<a href="http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2008/01/middle-east-cultural-political-map">www.vanityfair.com/news/2008/01/middle-east-cultural-political-map</a>
Figure 5	Blood Borders: How a Better Middle East Would Look	2006	Peters, Ralph	<a href="http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/blood-borders/">www.armedforcesjournal.com/blood-borders/</a>

**Table 1:** Appendix 2 map information.



**Figure 1:** "The Dialects of Arabic Today" (Fisher, 2014).

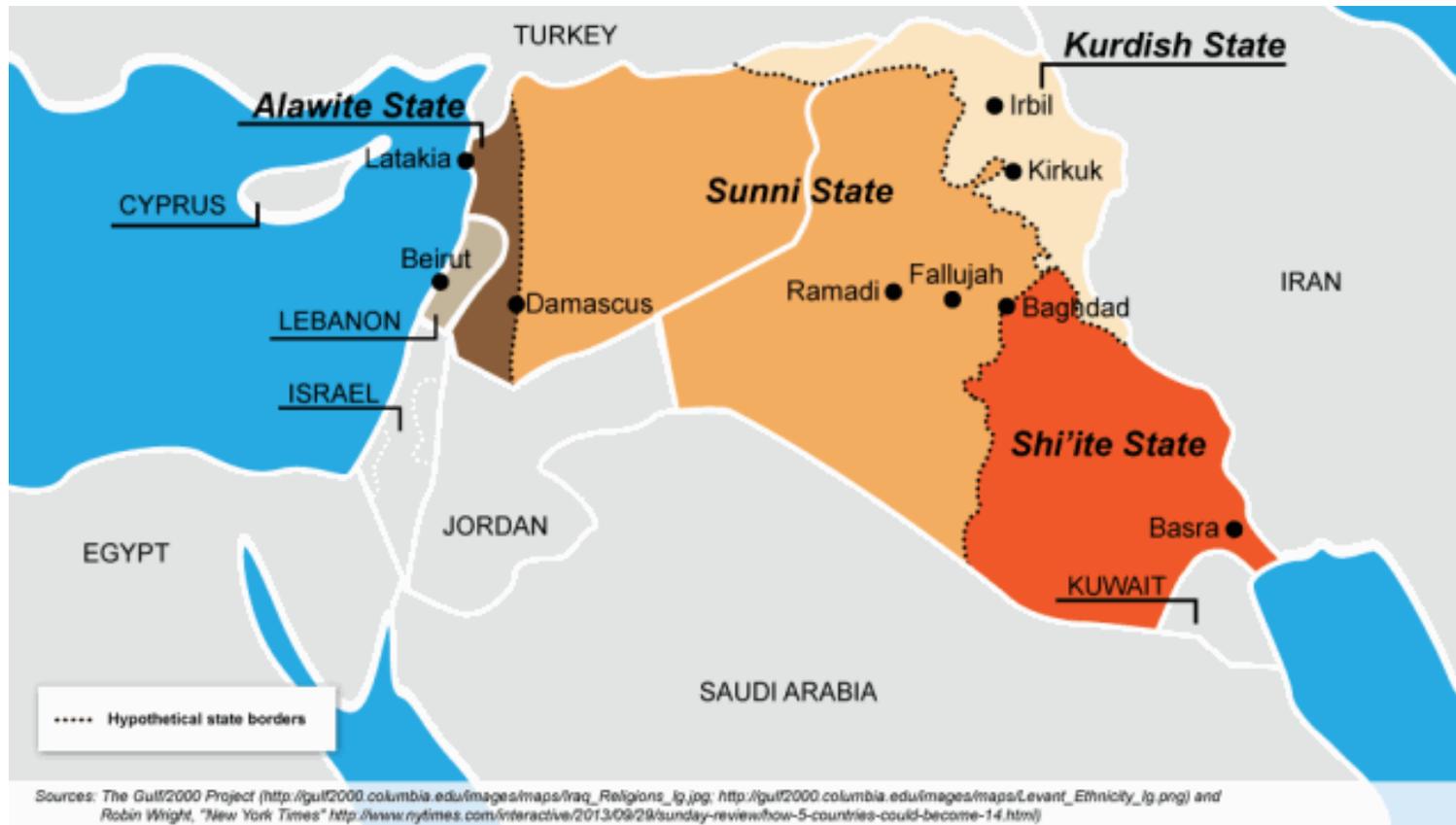


Figure 2: "Hypothetical Future" (Iraq and Syria) (Kates, 2014).



Figure 3: "A Glimpse of the Middle East's Possible Future" (Goldberg, 2008).



Figure 4: "Lines in the Sand" (Murphy, 2008).



Figure 5: "Blood Borders: How a Better Middle East Would Look" (Peters, 2006).

### Appendix 3



**Figure 1:** The territorial extent and spatial distribution of Iraq's three major ethno-sectarian groups.

				<b>% of Total</b>
	<b>NY Times</b>	<b>W. Post</b>	<b>Total (Sum)</b>	<b>Coverage</b>
<b>January</b>	19	59	78	18
<b>February</b>	19	11	30	7
<b>March</b>	11	10	21	5
<b>April</b>	8	22	30	7
<b>May</b>	14	22	36	8
<b>June</b>	13	15	28	6
<b>July</b>	16	28	44	10
<b>August</b>	12	28	40	9
<b>September</b>	25	54	79	18
<b>October</b>	3	9	12	2
<b>November</b>	11	12	23	5
<b>December</b>	5	11	16	4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>437</b>	

**Figure 2:** Number of articles containing the words "Iraq" and "Surge" and either "Sunni" or "Shia/Shiite" or "Kurd" in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* during 2007.

Number of Articles Containing Listed Themes													
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Totals
<b>Tactics and Strategy</b>													
Insurgency/insurgent	43	23	12	16	17	15	25	18	37	7	16	8	237
Counterinsurgency	12	5	4	6	6	7	6	5	16	3	4	0	74
Militia	41	13	12	12	14	14	18	13	40	8	15	9	209
Tactic	18	5	0	8	1	3	5	3	22	3	8	2	78
Strategy	52	16	7	16	19	12	26	21	51	7	13	4	244
Pacify/Pacification	5	1	2	1	3	0	2	4	2	1	2	0	23
<b>Cultural Landscape</b>													
Sect/Sectarian	55	18	12	16	21	14	28	21	44	5	14	3	251
Ethnic	13	4	2	3	3	2	11	4	21	4	4	6	77
Tribe/Tribal	6	3	2	8	12	7	4	11	43	3	6	1	106
Sunni	70	28	19	21	39	26	41	36	66	11	22	14	393
Shia/Shiite	17	6	16	25	36	30	40	34	69	10	21	17	321
Kurd	21	9	6	12	14	13	11	12	19	8	10	8	143

Figure 3: Coding schema and articles tallies in which listed themes appear, by month.

Percentage of Articles Containing Listed Themes		January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Totals
		<b>Tactics and Strategy</b>												
Insurgency/Insurgent	55	77	57	53	47	54	57	45	47	59	70	50	54	57
Counterinsurgency	15	17	19	20	13	19	14	13	20	25	17	0	0	17
Militia	53	43	57	40	39	39	50	33	50	66	65	56	56	18
Tactic	23	17	0	27	4	1	14	1	28	25	35	13	13	18
Strategy	67	53	30	53	53	33	72	53	65	58	57	25	25	56
Pacify/Pacification	6	3	10	3	1	0	1	10	0	10	10	0	0	1
<b>Cultural Landscape</b>														
Sectarian	71	60	57	53	58	39	63	53	56	42	60	3	3	57
Ethnic	17	13	10	10	0	1	25	10	27	33	17	19	19	18
Tribe/Tribal	8	10	10	27	33	20	11	13	54	25	26	0	0	24
Sunni	90	93	90	70	100	72	93	90	84	92	96	88	88	90
Shia/Shiite	22	20	76	83	100	83	90	85	87	83	91	100	100	73
Kurd	27	30	29	40	39	36	25	30	24	75	43	50	50	33

Figure 4: Coding schema and article percentage in which listed themes appear, by month.

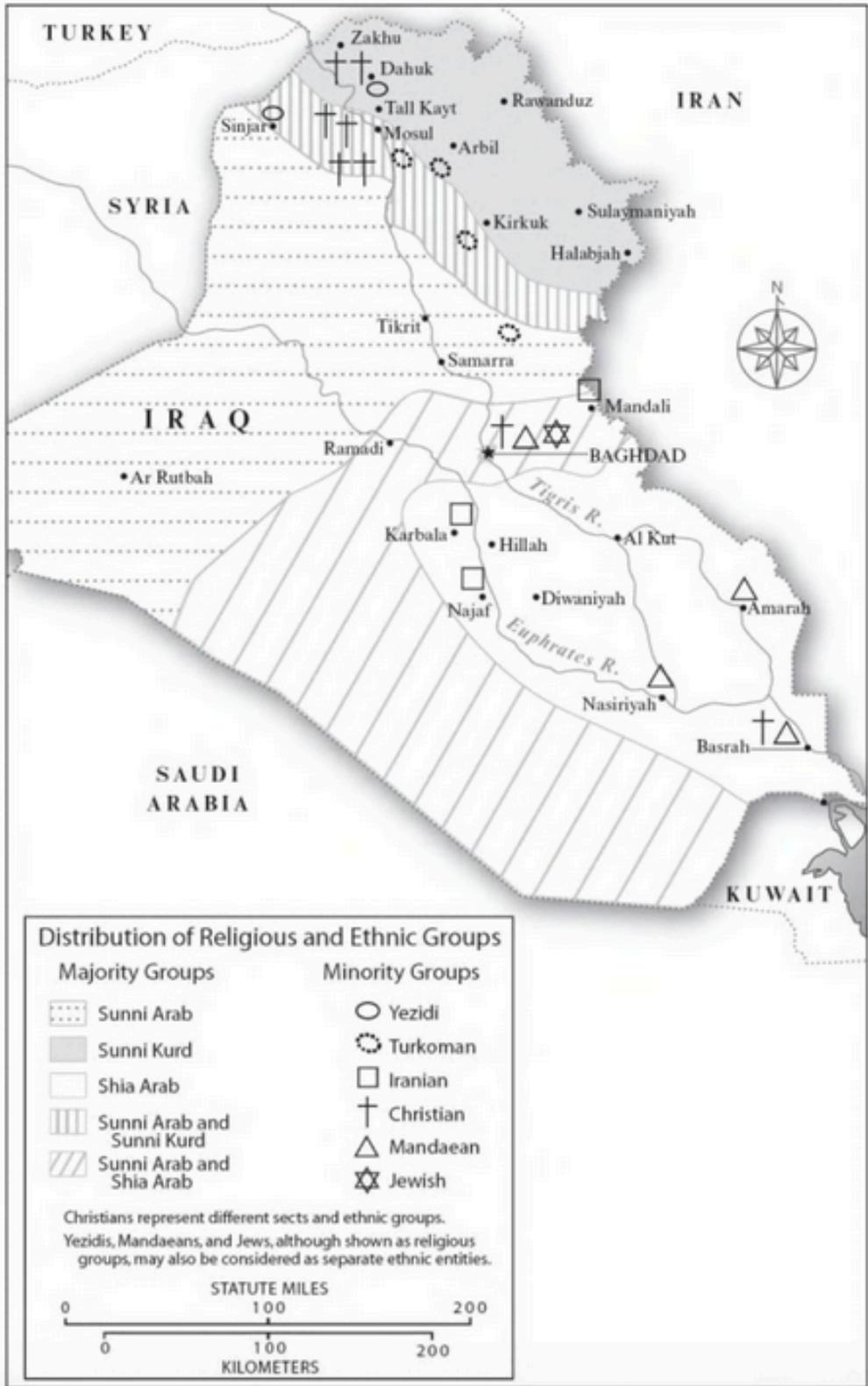


Figure 5: "Distribution of Religious and Ethnic Groups [Iraq]" (Iraq Study Group Report, 2006).

## Appendix 4



**Figure 1:** The territorial extent and spatial distribution of Syria's three major ethno-sectarian groups.

Country	Start Date	End Date	NYT	WP	Article Total	% Sampled
Tunisia	17 Dec. 2010	17 Dec. 2012	310	168	478	13
Egypt	25 Jan. 2011	25 Jan. 2013	1206	884	2090	43
Yemen	27 Jan. 2011	27 Jan. 2013	407	319	726	21
Bahrain	14 Feb. 2011	14 Feb. 2013	268	137	405	33
Libya	17 Feb. 2011	17 Feb. 2013	1094	961	2057	37
Syria	15 Mar. 2011	15 Mar. 2013	1363	844	2207	23

**Figure 2:** *New York Times* and *Washington Post* article tally summary.

Country	Start Date	End Date	Total Articles	% of Coverage Sampled		
Tunisia	17 Dec. 2010	17 Dec. 2012	478	13		
	Start Date	End Date	Article Count			
<b>Month 1</b>	17 Dec. 2010	17 Jan. 2011	26			
<b>Month 6</b>	17 Jun. 2011	17 Jul. 2011	11			
<b>Month 12</b>	17 Dec. 2011	17 Jan. 2012	8			
<b>Month 18</b>	17 Jun. 2012	17 Jul. 2012	11			
<b>Month 23</b>	17 Nov. 2012	17 Dec. 2012	8			
		<b>Total</b>	64			
Coding Themes/Subthemes & # of Occurrences						
	Month 1	Month 6	Month 12	Month 18	Month 23	Totals
<b>(Anti-)Democracy</b>						
Authoritarian	6	2	0	0	0	8
Democracy	12	4	2	3	2	23
Dictator	8	1	0	1	1	11
Elections	10	2	1	0	0	13
Islamist	9	0	0	8	4	18
Reform	2	2	0	0	0	4
Regime	6	1	0	0	1	8
Repression	3	0	0	0	1	4
<b>Ethno-sectarian</b>						
Berber/Amazigh	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ethnic	0	0	1	0	0	1
Jew	0	0	2	0	0	2
Minorities	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sectarian	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sunni-Shiite	1	0	0	0	0	0
Tribal	0	0	0	0	0	0

Figure 3: Tunisia - sampling periods, article tallies, and coding schema.

Country	Start Date	End Date	Article Total	% of Coverage Sampled		
Egypt	25 Jan. 2011	25 Jan. 2013	2090	43		
	Start Date	End Date	Article Count			
<b>Month 1</b>	25 Jan. 2011	25 Feb. 2011	570			
<b>Month 6</b>	25 July 2011	25 Aug. 2011	70			
<b>Month 12</b>	25 Jan. 2012	25 Feb. 2012	91			
<b>Month 18</b>	25 Jul. 2012	25 Aug. 2012	84			
<b>Month 23</b>	25 Dec. 2012	25 Jan. 2013	74			
		<b>Total</b>	<b>889</b>			
<b>Coding Themes/Subthemes &amp; # of Occurrences</b>						
	Month 1	Month 6	Month 12	Month 18	Month 23	Totals
<b>(Anti-)Democracy</b>						
Authoritarian	56	3	3	8	3	73
Democracy	262	11	45	23	11	352
Dictator	85	4	5	1	3	98
Islamist	89	8	24	45	30	196
Reform	133	4	15	3	12	167
Regime	179	5	17	10	9	220
Repression	27	1	2	1	1	32
Salafi	4	4	4	4	6	22
<b>Ethno-sectarian</b>						
Christian	34	3	3	12	5	57
Ethnic	1	1	0	0	0	2
Jew	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minorities	6	2	2	1	5	16
Sectarian	3	2	2	4	1	12
Shiite	1	0	0	0	0	1
Sunni	7	0	1	1	0	9
Tribe	1	3	4	4	0	12

Figure 4: Egypt - sampling periods, article tallies, and coding schema.

Country	Start Date	End Date	Article Total	% of Coverage Sampled		
Yemen	27 Jan. 2011	27 Jan. 2013	726	21		
	Start Date	End Date	Article Count			
<b>Month 1</b>	27 Jan. 2011	27 Feb. 2011	70			
<b>Month 6</b>	27 Jul. 2011	27 Aug. 2011	20			
<b>Month 12</b>	27 Jan. 2012	27 Feb. 2012	27			
<b>Month 18</b>	27 Jul. 2012	27 Aug. 2012	18			
<b>Month 23</b>	27 Dec. 2012	27 Jan. 2013	15			
		<b>Total</b>	150			
Coding Themes/Subthemes & # of Occurrences						
	Month 1	Month 6	Month 12	Month 18	Month 23	Totals
<b>(Anti-)Democracy</b>						
Authoritarian	7	0	1	0	0	8
Democracy	7	0	1	0	0	8
Dictator	7	0	1	0	0	8
Elections	5	2	5	0	0	12
Islamist	10	2	10	2	1	25
Reforms	16	0	1	0	0	17
Regime	22	1	4	2	0	29
Repression	0	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Ethno-sectarian</b>						
Ethnic	1	1	0	0	0	2
Jew	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minority	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sectarian	0	1	0	0	0	1
Shiite	2	0	1	0	0	3
Sunni	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tribe	9	7	8	7	0	31
<b>Regional</b>						
North	12	1	4	2	0	19
Rebellion	7	0	1	0	0	8
Secession	8	0	6	2	0	16
South	16	1	10	3	0	30

Figure 5: Yemen - sampling periods, article tallies, and coding schema.

Country	Start Date	End Date	Article Total	% of Coverage Sampled		
Bahrain	14 Feb. 2011	14 Feb. 2013	405	33		
	Start Date	End Date	Article Count			
<b>Month 1</b>	14 Feb. 2011	14 Mar. 2011	103			
<b>Month 6</b>	14 Aug. 2011	14 Sep. 2011	6			
<b>Month 12</b>	14 Feb. 2012	14 Mar. 2012	8			
<b>Month 18</b>	14 Aug. 2012	14 Sep. 2012	10			
<b>Month 23</b>	14 Jan. 2013	14 Feb. 2013	7			
		<b>Total</b>	134			
<b>Coding Themes/Subthemes &amp; # of Occurrences</b>						
	Month 1	Month 6	Month 12	Month 18	Month 23	Totals
<b>(Anti-)Democracy</b>						
Authoritarian	6	0	0	0	1	7
Democracy	57	2	3	2	0	64
Reform	45	1	2	1	1	50
Regime	13	1	0	1	2	17
Repression	10	0	0	1	0	11
<b>Ethno-Sectarian</b>						
Minorities	21	1	0	0	0	22
Sectarian	13	1	0	0	0	14
Shiite	72	4	8	6	0	90
Sunni	53	3	4	4	0	64

Figure 6: Bahrain - sampling periods, article tallies, and coding schema.

Country	Start Date	End Date	Article Total	% of Coverage Sampled		
Libya	17 Feb. 2011	17 Feb. 2013	2057	37		
	Start Date	End Date	Article Count			
<b>Month 1</b>	17 Feb. 2011	17 Mar. 2011	348			
<b>Month 6</b>	17 Aug. 2011	17 Sep. 2011	208			
<b>Month 12</b>	17 Feb. 2012	17 Mar. 2012	37			
<b>Month 18</b>	17 Aug. 2012	17 Sep. 2012	121			
<b>Month 23</b>	17 Jan. 2013	17 Feb. 2013	54			
		<b>Total</b>	768			
<b>Coding Themes/Subthemes &amp; # of Occurrences</b>						
	Month 1	Month 6	Month 12	Month 18	Month 23	Totals
<b>(Anti-)Democracy</b>						
Authoritarian	9	7	0	0	1	17
Democracy	23	54	2	14	2	95
Dictator	47	38	2	7	5	99
Islamist	15	32	1	16	10	74
Militia	39	27	12	13	10	101
Reforms	7	0	0	0	0	7
Regime	100	73	3	2	2	180
Repression	16	6	1	0	0	23
Salafi	1	1	1	4	0	7
<b>Ethno-Sectarian</b>						
Berber-Amazigh	1	7	0	0	0	8
Ethnic	2	6	1	0	1	10
African Mercenari	17	22	2	0	0	41
Minorities	0	2	0	0	0	2
Tribal	27	32	7	3	2	71

Figure 7: Libya - sampling periods, article tallies, and coding schema.

Country	Start Date	End Date	Article Total	% of Coverage Sampled		
Syria	15 Mar. 2011	15 Mar. 2013	2207	23		
	Start Date	End Date	Article Count			
<b>Month 1</b>	15 Mar. 2011	15 Apr. 2011	83			
<b>Month 6</b>	15 Sep. 2011	15 Oct. 2011	70			
<b>Month 12</b>	15 Mar. 2012	15 Apr. 2012	115			
<b>Month 18</b>	15 Sep. 2012	15 Oct. 2012	142			
<b>Month 23</b>	15 Feb. 2013	15 Mar. 2013	104			
		<b>Total</b>	514			
Coding Themes/Subthemes & # of Occurrences						
	Month 1	Month 6	Month 12	Month 18	Month 23	Totals
<b>(Anti-)Democracy</b>						
Authoritarian	10	1	1	1	0	13
Democracy	28	13	8	13	6	68
Dictator	7	9	7	9	4	36
Islamist	10	8	5	19	17	59
Reform	42	14	8	12	6	82
Regime	37	34	59	41	39	210
Repression	14	8	11	2	1	36
<b>Ethno-sectarian</b>						
Alawite	19	10	19	12	12	72
Christian	7	7	11	10	4	39
Druze	2	1	3	2	1	9
Ethnic	7	5	9	7	3	31
Turk	1	0	0	0	0	1
Kurd	12	5	6	13	6	42
Minority	17	8	15	14	5	59
Sectarian	12	17	21	22	23	95
Shiite	6	5	9	13	12	45
Sunni	24	12	15	23	22	96
Tribal	1	0	2	1	1	5
<b>Environment</b>						
Climate Change	0	0	1	0	0	1
Drought	1	1	1	0	0	3
Global Warming	0	0	0	0	0	0

Figure 8: Syria - sampling periods, article tallies, and coding schema.