

# **Ethnicity, Tribalism and the Future of 'Primitive Societies'**

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## 1- The Concept of Ethnicity

Ethnicity, tribal and sectarian conflicts became a main subject for discussion in social and political research domains, not only in the Arab world but also around the globe. However, it is still difficult to agree on a clear and comprehensive definition for ethnicity and its wide horizons.

The first mention of the concept may date back to European studies in 1787. It was used to refer to non-Christian nations or groups and mainly related to idolatry. As continuity for the use of this meaning, which referred to whatever was different and negatively distinct from the Christian community, the concept of

ethnicity developed(1). Since 1880 Western ethnographic studies started using the term to refer to societies that were viewed as primitive. It is clear that there is a strong connection between ethnicity and idolatry because it is not possible to have a civilised people who still hold idolatrous beliefs without adopting Christian and Jewish values. Thus, groups who were described as having ethnicity were considered by anthropologists as uncivilised, lacking in developed culture and inferior to European people. In addition, the standards and concepts applied to studies of European societies were not used for those 'ethnic groups'.

In the era of colonialism, this use of the concept of ethnicity, which considers non-European and non-Christian groups as primitive and their European counterparts as civilised, became deeply rooted among Europeans at that time. A strong connection was also established between ethnicity and racism. On one hand ethnicity ceased to be

used to refer to the life patterns of communities who were subject to primitive or pre-civilised rules and traditions, and on the other, it was used to distinguish between societies whose biological features qualified them for promotion to the status of being civilised, with its spiritual, civil and logical political life, and societies that would always remain at a low status, compared to the aforesaid, due to their biological and physical characteristics. This was the pretext used by Europeans to justify their dominance over 'primitive societies' and even rationalise it through both humanitarian and religious reasons. This concept was also used at the beginning of colonialism as a standard notion to analyse the nature of societies who attained independence, and to justify systems and practices imposed by Europeans, who were described as a mixture of nationally unrelated tribes and clans. In addition, they said that the political standards of national or democratic systems were not applicable to them. Europeans considered these societies merely as settlements of ethnic groups that were not

expected to live in compliance with the principles of liberty and equality. In the past this enabled colonial powers to interfere in internal affairs through destabilising national and cultural diversity, which, accordingly, prevented societies from developing a real feeling of national belonging among themselves.

These days, during which the collapse of national experiences or attempts to build stable countries that depend on values of freedom and law have been witnessed, researchers and analysts use the power of the concept of ethnicity for different purposes. It can even be said that there has never been any kind of agreement among international and local, and scientific and political parties on the use of the concept of ethnicity to analyse the situations of non-European and Western societies. Western researchers believe that this proves the uniqueness of the Western experience and justifies the traditional policies of politicians who deal with sovereign societies on a racial

and ethnic basis. This also gives a new legal framework to the return of colonial policies on the pretext of humanitarian interference to stop ethnic conflicts or to protect internal peace from the threats of these conflicts and the violence that results from them, which they believe may spread to other parts of the world. This gives national movements, which seize power in newly independent countries under the name of nationalism and the establishment of national countries, a rational explanation that excuses them from undertaking the responsibility of their failure and covers the defects of their un-national general policies. The main reason for their failure in promoting sovereignty and building constitutional countries is their ethnic reality or the negative ethnic inheritance that prevents those societies from understanding and moving forward to develop a united national will. The concept of ethnicity also represents a saviour for all despotic regimes, which try, through focusing on the ethnic and factional structures of their societies and their readiness to create conflicts and unrests among ethnicities, to justify their

exclusive possession of power and their social and political expulsion practices. Moreover, they use the concept to justify imposing rigid systems that prevent people from participating in decision making and even from criticising the unjust policies of their governments. Political regimes use force, pleading fighting ethnic division, in order to protect their positions, which they even do by spreading tribal and racial conflict within their own societies. On the pretext of defending the status of the country and the preservation of its national unity, regimes also prevent and condemn any resistance or opposing political movements, which they accuse of stimulating sectarian and tribal feuds.

It is clear that the concept of ethnicity is Latin in origin and not related to Arab culture. It was introduced into Arab political literature after the Second World War and remained in the same form as Arabs could not find any equivalent in their own language. Actually, Arabs were right because, despite the fact that

the term refers in general to particular characters and traditions of certain groups, it kept changing its meaning, like a chameleon that changes its colour according to its surroundings, and came to refer to the nature of such groups and the origins of their distinguishing features and conflicts. It might sometimes be used to refer to minorities and their relationships with majorities in certain countries but also to cultural differences, such those between the Arabs, Kurds, Barbarians and Armenians, etc.

The term is also used to distinguish between distinct religious or racial backgrounds. For example, Christians form an ethnicity in a country with Buddhist or Muslim majorities and the same applies to any religious minority when they share the same language and culture with the majority. This is particularly how Western and American researchers look at the

Middle East: a mixture of different tribes and sects who fight each other and do not have any shared background. It is also used to refer to the same tribes who belong to the same culture, speak the same language and follow the same religion, and even belong to the same sect, as is the case in most Arab countries. These standards are not fixed and might change from one situation to another.

However, the case is more complicated than it looks. For example, Arabs might be treated as an ethnicity because they form a minority in a certain country, such as in some of the African countries where the logic of ethnicity dominates society and post-colonial political regimes. However, the case is different in a country where Arabs form the majority with different prominent religious distinctions. This also applies to a religious group that is not considered a minority unless it forms a minority in a country with other religious majorities. Actually, this is the reason why I prefer to use the term ‘minorities’ in the book

dedicated to discussion on this issue(2). And at a second stage, I use the term 'racism' after I retrieved its original meaning, which is not limited to describing religious minorities but also describes any group of people who distinguish themselves from others in an obvious and continuous way(3). In my opinion, we must differentiate between ethnicity as a corporeal reality that reflects diversity among societies and ethnicity as an ideological concept that is used to describe the relationship between those diverse groups and their possible understanding, tension or conflict. Undoubtedly, in each society there are different groups of people and there are no pure societies with only one group of people. These different groups result from intermarriage among people of different races, cultures and languages; the most diverse communities are now the most advanced such as USA, Canada and Australia, which comprise immigrants of various cultural and racial backgrounds who are still entering those countries. It is not a coincidence that ethnography and ethnology were founded in

the USA by the Chicago School to study the relationships of co-existence and conflicts among various groups in different American cities. It is very important to understand the reality of the distinction between ethnicity as a practice and as a theory. The diversity of groups within different societies is a reality, however, what is most important is how we look at this reality, how we analyse it and respond to it. Ethnicity takes different scientific, ideological and political patterns, and there are many aspects that constitute the core of the ethnic research process and its discussion. Those aspects are the objectives and the way we understand social diversity and its interpretation.

The comparison between the nature of American ethnography in the 19th century and colonial ethnography during the same period provides a good example. The aim of American ethnographers was to understand the differences of emigrant groups in order to find better ways for them to co-exist in the United

States. On those grounds, a sober and serious scientific cultural ethnographic movement was founded and led to a cultural concept free from racism. On the other hand, the objective of Western ethnographers who studied the differences in African, Asian and Arabian societies was to find what could controvert the existence of their national unities or national connections to justify claims for independence, sovereignty and equality. The best way for that to occur was to emphasise their ethnic differences, as was obvious in the writings of those ethnologists and French policies in the west and east equally. Even when individuals shared the same culture, religion, history and national unity, researchers deceitfully founded ethnic origins for some of them that completely distinguished them from others in order to show the irrationality of their existing understanding and, accordingly, their obvious need for an external mediator, culture and intermediate language to enable them to live together under the umbrella of one country. Others also created fake ethnic mythologies to promote the status of separation and division

among groups of people, just like the nationalists did when they created false myths about the unity of origin and belonging of people in the same country.

Instead of talking about competing and disputed ethnicities, we should talk about ethnicising some groups of people or whole societies to convert them to unorganised ones and, moreover, creating fake contradictory histories for some people in order to make them superior to others. By doing so, they sow the seeds of division among societies and found conflicts over dominance and power, along with conflicts over recognition and identity. The idea of ethnicity is contrary to the one of nationalism. Nationalism supports writing a history that minimises the importance of differences between people either on cultural or social levels.

In general, there are two approaches to ethnicity: the first one is connected to the

physical, mental and cultural characteristics that distinguish each group of people. The second approach is a relational one. The first approach supposes that the existence of differences in itself is an inevitable cause for dispute and is a source of cultural, political and social conflict. However, the idea of connecting abilities, skills and thinking patterns with biological inheritance and the size of a skull is the factor that dominated the field of anthropology in the 19th century and led to the emergence of theories of discrimination and racism. The origin of the idea of racism is connecting certain physical features of specific groups of people, their abilities and mental efficiency. On that basis, the idea that attaches white people to culture, and spiritual and mental civilisation appeared. Accordingly, anthropologists were not studying the materialistic and cultural differences that develop in societies nor promoting their understanding of its nature, but rather building pyramidal and ordinal relationships among them in order to create cultural, social and political dominance of one

over the other. Actually, they did this to justify their dominance. Their work reduces the value of others or their cultural aims to justify their dominance over societies and adds a humanitarian reason for it. This explains how the racial theoreticians of the 19th century moved from affirming racial differences to trying to improve the genetic constitution of the human species by random or systematic selection. They also exterminated or permitted the extermination of what they considered to be inferior human races.

Ethnologists who described non-European societies as combatant and discordant minorities, irrespective of the fact that they had been living together in the same place for a long time, refused to consider the status of those societies as a beginning of a modern or national and constitutional nation equal to other nations and sharing the same global rights and legitimacy. Ethnologists strove to deprive those societies from thinking for themselves as a nation or the foundation for a

nation. In an effort to affirm its identity, these groups insisted on their ethnicities, either describing themselves as an ethnic polity that denies diversity or diverse ethnic groups that differ from European societies. We Arabs believe that tribalism is an integral part of our identity and a deep-rooted cultural structure(4).

The discourse of ethnicity reflects its tendency to diminish the status and importance of the groups with whom it deals and distinguishes these national groups from others by describing them as natural cliques who deny individuality and marginalise it through sticking to their traditions and old relationships. Accordingly, they lose track of the general human modernity process. At present, this becomes obvious through the way the issue of emigrant groups is dealt with in industrialised countries. The secondary status given to these groups is always negative because they are described as incapable of mingling with 'Western' values of modernity.

Ethnicity appeared as a science out of the belief that the national feature that distinguishes Western communities and makes them political nations is not applicable to African, Latin American or Arab communities, which are viewed as coteries that did not reach a level of national bonding.

The relational comparison does not mean that differences do not exist or are only formal. As I said earlier, the cultural, religious and morphological variety is an undeniable reality. However, it means that cultural or national comparison by itself is not a source of tension or conflict and does not necessarily create partial allegiances that contradict general political allegiances. Ethnic feelings, or conflicts among different cultural groups within the same society, exist only in certain circumstances that depend on the nature of the relationship between individuals or cliques. The nature of the relationship between various groups of people is a factor that leads to many things, such as the development of ethnic

feelings or rather devotion to one's group and feeding the feeling of pride of belonging. Moreover, it makes the people of one group think that they are superior to others, and they become loyal to their group and its leadership and then, under certain circumstances, may fight them. At the same time, this may lead to dialogue and understanding between different groups.

In view of that, the way of looking at people varies according to the context. For example, an Arab living in a country of Arab majority is not viewed as an ethnicity but as a citizen in a national community or polity. However, the same person becomes a member of ethnicity or national group if he is living in a foreign country with no Arab majority. In times of peace, stability and prosperity, Arab Muslims and Christians view themselves as individuals belonging to the same Arab national community. On the other hand, in times of tension, conflict or deterioration of national confidence, individuals view themselves as

members of different religious groups. In other words, ethnicity cannot be separated from social relationships and their different statuses of cooperation and solidarity, or conflict and division.

Contrary to general opinion and what contemporary ethnological books say, cultural or linguistic diversity does not create disputes between ethnicities, however, conflicts create ethnicities. They turn cultural differences into esprit de corps that fight for power. Ethnic differences do not lead to conflicts between groups of people, but social fighting for various materialistic, political and moral resources makes people form allies or certain groups and generates ethnic feelings among them. It even creates these feelings from almost nothing, in other words, we become members of an ethnicity when we feel that we belong to an ethnicity or we feel others belong to a different ethnicity. This feeling grows, to the extent that we feel an announcement is necessary to achieve non-cultural or ethnic

goals, which are usually political in nature. On this basis, ethnic assemblies are separate from social and political conflicts.

Ethnic conflict takes place in a country to promote the chances of different elites seizing power and controlling it. Therefore, ethnicity is rarely referred to outside the context of conflicts that occur in national societies, and is not even a topic for discussion among researchers. Researchers and politicians scarcely find any ethnic problem in societies before the occurrence of such conflicts, as if the concept of ethnicity is unknown in times of peace and harmony. The concept appears in times of conflict either as a key to understanding conflicts or in order to uncover the deficiency of the national structure of the country in question. Ethnicity appears in this context as a theory that explains unrest and conflict in societies due to the assumption that the existence of ethnic diversity contains the seeds of conflict. Accordingly, when a conflict takes place, its cause becomes known and

comprehensible, but my point of view is that theoretical association does not help in understanding the meaning of ethnicity. It is not even *a fortiori* to understand the reasons that lead different ethnicities, if there are any, to find a kind of understanding between them, to create political unity at certain times and then, at other times, fight with each other to the extent of racial purification.

In the context of national movements that seek freedom and independence, a real dynamic convergence took place between different groups all over the world that, accordingly, led to the independence and foundation of nation states. Belonging to a recently established country that is based on promises for freedom, equality and progress to cope with the industrial and material developments of this age, made the majority mingle and interact with each other regardless of their ethnic origins, linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds in order to establish a political or semi-political united state.

Traditional racial feelings disappeared and their influence diminished, as well as the rigid feelings of tribal belonging between individuals and groups. Traditional ethnic and racial feelings disappeared or their influence declined and tribal feelings of superiority between different areas also vanished. However, this is a common rule that is proven throughout humans' long history. On the other side, the failure in creating national unity resulted in eroding the process of social convergency and, as a result, an opposite movement appeared. This movement calls for emphasis on racial and tribal differences and even generates such differences within societies of similar national and cultural backgrounds. This means that just as the national identity, which is firm and unchangeable, racial or tribal identities are the same. They are all historical sequels founded by humans' will and related to circumstances of constitution, deterioration and recession. Undoubtedly, the ethnic discourse of developing societies during pre- and post-colonialism was a significant factor in this

kind of repetition in history. The discourse also made recently independent nations suspicious about their ability to build a united political nation, especially in view of the fact that imperial circumstances of the time would financially prevent that kind of building.

## **2- Ethnicity, and Political and Democratic Recency**

In our part of the world, the East, whoever constantly reads the analyses of general political crises surrounding Arab societies finds that the most common terms used in them are sectarianism and tribalism. While some people consider sectarianism and tribalism as basic elements of the structure of Arab societies' political identity, others look at them as a result of conspiracies by foreign powers. They also consider them as a materialisation of the hidden and public desires of those powers to divide Arab countries and make them into small entities unsuitable for living. Most national

movements that were founded at the beginning of the 20th century made fighting sectarianism and tribalism one of their main slogans and feuded with any kind of sectarian actions or attitudes.

At present, analysts concentrate heavily on sectarian divisions in order to explain the reasons of the crisis that is strangling most Arab countries and societies. Analysts are doing this because the crisis is hindering the efforts of these countries and societies to establish democratic systems, or at least to avoid civil wars. Fighting sectarianism is still one of the principles promoted by national and left-wing movements that consider the existence of sectarianism as an obstacle ahead of their calls for national unity. They consider the situation in Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen, etc. as a tangible example of the negative influence of sectarianism ahead of the efforts for the establishment of national polities. On the other hand, they, sectarian feelings, pave the way for invasion and hinder the efforts of national

movements and the transference process to democratic systems.

Ethnicity has changed in modern political Arabic language from a historic social phenomenon to an eternal curse and social deformity that nobody knows how to stop in order to contain its negative consequences. The fear of conflict represents an obstacle ahead of the development in political dialogue. It is a sleeping dog that should not be woken, and any kind of discussion about it will inevitably waken it and, consequently, cause many troubles. The hate that Arab political culture, with all its movements and factions, harbours against ethnicity cannot be compared to anything but the fear from objective thinking of ethnicity and the reasons for its survival and dissemination. Thus, we find a kind of schizophrenia in political behaviour towards this topic. For example, we find that some individuals continuously condemn ethnicity and disavow its evils, while the same people, in certain circumstances, may turn out

to be among the followers and supporters of ethnicity. They make this shift willingly and unwillingly just to support racial or sectarian groups to which they belong in their quest for political or economic gains.

The repeated discussion on ethnicity creates a gradual awareness among Arab societies about the dangers and disadvantages of ethnicity. These societies feel that they are victims of evil powers that enforce division between disputing groups and thus close the door on their ambitions for democratic political and national changes. As much as this kind of ethnic thinking creates doubt and mistrust among disputing groups, it creates, at the same time, similar suspicion among members of societies regarding their ability to coexist and cooperate in building a united country that supports equality, cooperation and coexistence.

In fact, the focus attributed to ethnicity and the tribal structures of Arab countries does not reflect a real awareness of the ultimate dangers of ethnicity but indolence and misery that characterise this national and local ideology. These countries focus on topics of identity, harmony and coexistence to build legitimate states instead of on the meanings of citizenship and respect of law to secure liberty and equality for its people. In order to cover the absence of citizenship-building programs, these countries founded exaggerated discussions about identity and cultural belonging. Thus, they generated fanatical national feelings of belonging that are identical to feelings of tribalism, which do not reflect the real foundation of the idea of nationalism and political personality. Accordingly, instead of looking at racial diversity as a national heritage, they made it a social deformity that is considered a divine or natural curse. The normal situation of coexistence and tolerance known about Arab and Islamic societies and upon which they founded their main ethical principles, changed and became a curse that is

dividing them and downgrading their status among other societies.

Racial diversity and the continuation of tribal structures are not the reasons for the backwardness of the foundation of Arab nation states. They are also not responsible for hindering national consolidation projects and the development of democratic transformation projects. And they actually do not represent an eternal or historical curse. All societies comprise different groups of people and they can be classified into various minorities on cultural, religious, racial, professional and sexual bases as well as lifestyle bases (urban, rural). Nowadays, industrialised countries comprise more sectarian and racial diversity than Arab countries.

China, India and other Asian countries in general are rich in ethnic diversity to incomparable extents with Arab societies, which are characterised, in this context, by

harmony and cultural unity. This huge diversity in Asian societies reflects, contradicting common propaganda, the degree of civilisational prosperity witnessed by them in the past. Prosperity and its combinations, such as tolerance, coexistence and the resulting opportunities for dialogue and cultural exchange, as well as the extent of liberty enjoyed by individuals and groups, lead to the existence of diversity. These factors become powers of attraction for suppressed people who live in 'brutal' areas. There is no need to go far to see this dynamic civilisational history because, at present, the Arab world is a centrifugal area for minorities of either religious, racial or cultural and political oppositions. All these groups head to industrialised countries where principles of tolerance and freedom of religion and thought prevail, which add to their nature of diversity. On the other hand, Arab countries, similar to other countries, close in on themselves and they fight diversity even within the same racial group. There are no signs of civilisational progress and existence of national foundation

projects in these countries. Accepting migrants and different races reflects the self-confidence these countries have in themselves, their cultures, futures and their ability to coexist and continue working. In contrast, expelling minorities, either consciously or unconsciously, reflects anxiety, suspicion and the absence of self-confidence. The contact between traveling open minorities and indigenous homogenous cultural or religious majorities, described through their feelings of stability and permanence throughout history, represented an exceptional transporter of technology, science, culture and, accordingly, of interaction and communication between different cultures and civilisations.

In a nutshell, diversity, in all its aspects, is not an historical sin but a natural result in any civilised society that cannot limit the composition of its systematic organisation just to members of one family, clan or race. Diversity has always been present in Arab societies and will continue to exist in the

future. It also exists in many other countries under the protection of democratic systems and does not create any problems for the democratic transformation such as the Indian experience, where there are a myriad of races and languages, but where the country has succeeded in its democratic political transformation. Ethnic diversity does not turn into a problem threatening democracy and national life even in despotic countries, unless it is overwhelmed by feelings of racial belonging that supersedes the feelings of belonging to one nation irrespective of different races and cultures. Such a thing does not happen unless there is a failure or deficit in the general political system. The dominant political elites fuel racial and tribal distinction in their fight for power and authority, without which cultural and racial conflicts do not happen.

The problem occurs when racial and non-racial belonging replaces or supersedes general national belonging to the whole country. As I

said earlier, this does not happen except when there is a conflict over power. Consequently, this reflects the absence of a political system that is based on national solidarity and equality to all people in which they have the same opportunities and powers. Therefore, there is no real national framework that brings together all members and gives them the same political and legal rights. Whenever politics and law cease to exist, people will return to their traditional systems, which were based on kinship, racial and tribal solidarity.

The return to racial and tribal loyalties represents the collapse of national solidarity that unites all people in their loyalty to one superior and comprehensive reason, which is country. Mostly, the collapse of a country and its recent national organisation is a result of tribal attitudes of the political regime, which adapts such attitudes to renew its possession of power or to work without being subject to public opinion and questioning. The regime gathers all close tribes to its side so that it has

the support of the majority and, consequently, can guarantee the continuation of possession of power and avoidance of liability. So, in this case, what brought racial and tribal feelings is not there through natural existence but the state itself is represented by its political regime. By doing so, the country, which should undertake the responsibility of uniting the people and protecting them, turns out to be what divides the people and threatens their lives because of the support it gives to some allied groups. In order to restore peace and harmony between different groups, the country should play a natural role that is free from racism, tribalism and any kind of partiality(5).

These countries have to continually focus on analysing national crises instead of the racial and cultural diversities that they use as a pretext for their failure in building a real constitution. In order not to change their political systems, it is not possible to apply democracy in these countries because ethnic

diversity may lead to trouble and even racial wars. However, this situation and escape from democracy will not endure because things will definitely change. In order to revive the national spirit and help those who, out of fear, resorted to racism and tribalism, intellectuals and politicians have to focus on finding solutions for the materialistic and psychological devastation from which their countries suffer. This kind of reformation solely means changing the country from a tool that serves personal interests to a real constitutional country governed by law and ethics so that it guarantees equality and solidarity between its people regardless of their backgrounds. Retrieval of the idea of belonging to a country is the only way to get rid of racism and tribalism. However, the abolition of real national political life on the pretext of preventing racial tendencies is not the right way to go about reform as it merely fuels societies racially.

### **3- Criticism of the Ethnic Comparison**

Ethnic theories are based on a wrong hypothesis that states that the conflicts of non-European societies or, more accurately, non-industrialised countries are the result of their ethnic combination or the absence of a national political program. It also states that conflicts are not due to social, economic, political and intellectual reasons, such as in the developed countries where there is a conscious public opinion, liberty and freedom of choice. The concept of ethnicity means any group that is different from the majority on bases of culture, language, religion, sect or traditions. Such ethnicities are not discovered by researchers and politicians and are not publicly known except in times of conflict, and maybe these are not important outside the context of tension and conflict. This leads me to say that such theories do not help in understanding conflict, however, they actually provide cover for the disputes and mislead researchers from discovering the reasons for ethnic feelings and then fighting. They suppose that the existence of ethnicities is just a natural historical result, and they do not consider that they are products

of social, political and cultural circumstances. They think that ethnicity, which is about resorting to partial solidarities, automatic party spirits and fighting with other groups, is an eternal truth that controls people's behaviour before and after the establishment of the state and nothing can change it. In my view, the opposite is true. Social conflict is the reason for party spirits and leads to creation of assemblies and organisations of either a modern type, such as political parties and civil associations, or traditional, such as tribalism, racism and sectarianism. The question here is in what circumstances and for what reasons does the revival of traditional organisations or old party spirits take place? And why are modern organisations weak and marginalised? The answer is not because society is built on tribal foundations or cannot overcome tribalism or racism, but because modern countries lack the necessary resources that enable it to build modern organisations that are politically transparent. Thus, how can we imagine the establishment of strong political parties, either liberal or left wing, in a kind of

modernism that denies the rights and freedom of individuals, permanently keeps an eye on them through security apparatus and controls them dictatorially? How will modern regimes, which are based on arbitrary, irrational laws that are despised, develop the necessary requirements for rational and civil behaviour of people with no choice but to follow authority and blindly obey it?

In short, ethnicity is not a number of fixed social structures that owe their existence to tribalism but rather one that reflects the failure of modern national policy. It is the use of old means in social mobilisation that is explained by the absence of modern means and prevention of public opinion. Ethnicity does not represent the continuation from the past to the present but the need of the current political situation for the past and its sleeping dogs so that it can wake them in times of need. What our societies are experiencing is not only the fueling of tribal feelings and their revival, which is an old thing, but exceeding that by

creating and generating those feelings, even from nothing. Nowadays, the revival of sectarianism, racism and tribalism is similar to the time when different religious sects appeared within one religion, such as Shia, Sunni, Durziah, Alawiyah and Ismailiyah, etc, and they now represent what we call old or traditional groups. With the passing of time, there is nothing that can prevent these new groups, which are experiencing the suppression and injustice of authorities that are not so different from the ones of the past, from being isolated and introverted groups who harbour feelings of hatred and dislike against the other groups. The Muslim Brotherhood movement, which was first started as a political party that was inspired by Islamic ideologies and is growing among religious people of the middle social class, is about to change to a group that has established a kind of thinking and reactions that distinguish it from the other Islamic movements. This also applies to so many religious and non-religious organisations.

This means that outside the context of social conflict there are no political indications for any differences resulting from origin, culture or place that lead to the formation of tribal parties or, in other words, participation in the fight for power and consequently sectarian or tribal conflicts. For example, a Sunni person is not considered a member of certain tribal group just because he is a follower of the Sunni religious sect. However, there must be 'political' circumstances that lead all members of each group to form sectarian allies, be followers of a certain leadership and give up their rights and freedom of choice. The followers of similar religious sects form groups in a difficult, long and complicated process that is not spontaneous and not related to racial and tribal inheritance. In Lebanon it took the Shi'ites, who for decades constituted the reservoir of left-wing liberal and national movements, two bitter civil wars, exceptional Israeli aggressive policies and unlimited political failure from the state in order to

become a real sectarian group ie. a special ethnicity. Its aim is to promote the status of the group regardless of any religious or national measures and they follow a rule which says, 'Help your brother whether he is oppressed or an oppressor.' This also applies to Sunni people who did not form a group before they were defeated so many times and witnessed many failures until the time of the late Rafeeq Al-Hariri, who succeeded in building a system of regional and international allies that gave him the chance to constitute a Sunni leadership and bring together divided Sunni followers under one umbrella. Sectarian and racial similarity in itself cannot be enough reason to form allies or groups. Difference, if not used for political reasons and not fueled by external principles such as the fight for social resources, does not represent a source of conflict. Actually, it represents a condition for exchange and interaction between individuals and societies. Without difference there is no exchange, interaction or innovation, but only dead societies. Thus, difference should not be referred to when we investigate the reasons for

the conflicts that take place in societies and countries. Also, it should not be used to explain the failure in building states and modern national societies. The one who should be blamed for all of these things is the political regime that is responsible for serving the public interest and controlling all social matters, among which is the difference itself and its positive and negative applications. Political regimes with their responsibilities to establish rules and regulations for human and different powers' interaction are the ones who decide whether to consider difference as an enriching factor or a reason for conflict. Racial and tribal conflicts reflect the existence of the spoil and war's logic in societies and make this logic prevail over that of interaction, exchange and enrichment, which currently has to be supported by regulations built on justice, equality and the law. The fate of these regimes is not separate from the position they occupy in geopolitical and civilisational systems that are controlled by the great powers and which, until recently, were denominated by Western powers, who determine the opportunities for

the foundation of new countries or the chances of their collapse.

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