

**Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East Edited
by Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel, Oxford University Press, 2017.**

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The state of affairs in the Middle East has infrequently been as fluid as at the moment, the events seldom as fascinating to watch, as well as challenging to comprehend with the torrent of news reports we get from the locale consistently.

Since mid 2011, heads of state of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya have been driven to exile, put behind bars, or lynched by a mob. Yemeni leader was forced to step aside, while the Syrian administration is battling a frantic fight for uncovered survival. Other autocrats dread what the future might bring and, of course, foreign powers are closely watching the events.

The present work is first of its kind with multi-faceted debate on different dimensions of Middle East (as the Middle East's slide ever more profound into viciousness and tumult, "sectarianism" has turned into a catch-all clarification for the area's inconveniences). *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of The Middle East* has been edited by Nader Hashemi, Director of the Centre for Middle East Studies and Islamic Politics at Josef Karbel School of International Studies, University of Denver and Danny Postel, assistant director of the Middle East and North Africa Program at Northwestern University and a research Affiliate of the Centre for Middle East Studies at Josef Karbel School of International studies, University of Denver,

The book brings together political scientists, historians, anthropologists, religious scholars, specialists from diverse fields to counter the neo-Orientalist assumptions and provide a framework for analysing political sectarianism. The book presents an exceptionally comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, and historically sound explanation not only of sectarianism (or sectarianization), but, also, of why sectarianism continue to be systematically misused by people in power across the world. *Sectarianization is an unconventionally present day marvel and more often than not works inside patriot talk, it is like ethnic character, and can be thought of as ethno-religious patriotism.*

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To achieve this aim the present book (consisting of 14 chapters, grief acknowledgement followed by a detailed introduction under the title “Introduction: Sectarianization thesis”). The book is divided into two parts with two separate aims and objectives. Part 1 is under the subject matter “Sectarianization in Historical, Geopolitical and theoretical perspectives” consists of 4 chapters (1-4 contributed respectively by Ussama Makdisi, Bassel F. Salloukh, Yazid Sayigh and Adam Gaiser)

Part 2 “How Sectarianization Works: Case Studies” consisting of 10 chapters (5-14) These chapters are contributed respectively by Vali Nasr, Fanar Haddad, Paulo Gabriel, Hilu Pinto, Madawi Al-Rasheed, Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, Stacy Philbrick Yadev, Toby Mathiesen, Bassel F. Sallouk Madelikne Wells and Timothy D. Sisk.

The chapters in part 2nd, collectively re-examine, analyze and draw on examples from Pakistan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Bahrain and Kuwait, the book demonstrates how and why *sectarianization* came to be and how it functions. This part provides the reader the prosperous case studies into the mechanisms of sectarianization and its diverse and particular manifestations.

The subjects going through each of the fourteen parts of the book is that viewing conflicts in the Middle East as the result of ancient hatreds is imprecise, sluggish and flat-out wrong.

Ussama Makdisi (professor of history at Rice University) contends in his section which additionally first chapter of the book entitled “*The Problem of Sectarianism in the Middle East in an Age of Western Hegemony*”(pp.23-34) that the historical genesis of *sectarianization* began with the nineteenth century modernization of Ottoman Territories, which occurred as Western hegemony spread across the Middle East. Makdisi says that the process of *sectarianization* was in full swing. European colonialists expanded and institutionalized this *sectarianization*. Indeed, the British Mandate in Palestine (1917-1948) would use religious categories (Jews, Muslims, Christians, and Druze), in order to administer the Palestinian population. The British allocated land, power, and representation along denominational lines in Palestine and the French did the same in Lebanon and Syria.

“The sectarian belongs to the peculiar, but to the particular”, (p.26) writes the historian Ussama Makdidi in “The Problems of Sectarianism in the Middle East in an Age of Western Hegemony.” Makdidi, author of the influential study the Culture of Sectarianism,

emphasizes sectarianism's specifically modern horizons. "it is not some medieval artefact but a product of modern forces and circumstances, and a history that, after 1798 or 1821 or 1858 and certainly after 1929, can no longer be thought of a purely Middle Eastern or Arab or Islamic." His chapter is an attempt to chart a research agenda that explores the dialectic between local histories of sectarian animosities (in whatever part of the Middle East) and Western intervention".

The political scientist, Bassel. F. Salloukh maps the region-wide coordinates of the Sectarianization process and their complex interplay with larger geopolitical dynamics in his chapter entitled "The Sectarianization of Geopolitics in the Middle East" (pp.35-52). The wave of sectarianism currently spreading across the region "like wildfire", he contends, is rooted not in the timeless pre-modern primordial cultural affinities, but rather in the deployment by domestic and regional actors alike. (p.34) For instance, Bassel Salloukh eloquently emphasizes the 2003 US invasion and occupation of Iraq as a crucial event that created a new regional landscape, dominated by Saudi-Iranian geopolitical confrontation "fought out not through classical realist state-to-state military battles, but rather through proxy domestic and transnational actors and in the domestic politics of a number of weak Arab states" (p. 38).

Madawi Al-Rasheed's (Saudi Arabian professor of social anthropology, currently Visiting Professor at the Middle East Centre at the London School of Economics and Political Science) concise chapter on "Sectarianization as Counter-Revolution: Saudi Responses to the Arab Spring"(pp.143-158), where she delves into sectarian narratives which regional powers, mainly Saudi Arabia and Iran, propagated as an effective way to delegitimise popular uprisings across the region and, at the same time, co-opt this mobilisation and reduce it to a sectarian binary. For instance, Al-Rasheed argues that Saudi Arabia's counter-revolutionary strategy consisted of invoking sectarian difference and hatred "to thwart the prospect of peaceful protest to demand real political reform" (p. 152). Al-Rasheed exposes the "instrumentalization of religious differences, diversity, and pluralism in political struggles of regimes against their own constituencies" (p. 154). This book underlines how authoritarian regimes in the Middle East have had decades of experience in instrumentalizing religious differences.

In her chapter, “Sectarianization, Islamist Republicanism and Inter-national Misrecognition in Yemem” (pp.185-198) The author Stacey Philbrick Yadav (Political scientist) provides a critical history of Yemen, stoutured sectarianization process and argues that there was of ‘nothing inevitable about the sectarian dimensions of the conflict that is currently destroying the country.

The book’s concluding chapter, “Peace building in Sectarianized Conflicts: Findings and Implications for Theory and Practice” (pp.259-276) authored by Timothy D.Sisk, explores the prospects for de-sectarianization or revering the sectarianization trend gripping the Middle East. Sisk’s aim is both scholarly and pragmatic. His suggestions are “designed to speak to potential peace builders-typically civil society organizations and individuals within countries, but also by outsiders such as UN, regional organisations and regional mediators, international development partners and transnational civil society seeking to build peace in a sectarianized region”(p.268.)

There are numerous different sections on Iran, Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon by exports like Fanar Haddad, Paulo Gabriel, Hilu Pinto, Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, Stacy Philbrick Yadev, Toby Mathiesen, Bassel F. Sallouk Madelikne Wells, which is of worth to examine and gives the new insights with respect to the distinctive issues in the nations.

“Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of The Middle East” puts forth the case that sectarianization is a present day process that comes to fruition in view of, and not regardless of, dictator manage, class division, geopolitical competitions, outside intercession, and the shortcoming of the state arrange. Dismissing the oversimplified clarification that sectarianism exclusively exists on account of Western Imperialism, it features how Western Imperialism collaborated with local tyrant governmental issues, neighbourhood political preparation, local geopolitical contentions, and state counter-progressive powers, which together laid the basis for sectarianization to flourish. In these ways, the book is a much welcome and required commitment to our comprehension of the unfurling and multilayered progression of the procedure of sectarianization in the Middle East.
