

In Patribus Fidelium Leftist Discourses on Political Violence in Lebanon and Algeria: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract : The dramatic events of the 11 September, and their tragic repercussions, catapulted issues of the political violence in and from the 'Muslim world' onto the political discourse, be it in patriotic speeches of campaigning politicians or the TV and news punditry. Depending on what end of the political spectrum the politician/pundit pledges fealty to, the overall analyses of political violence in the West Asia and North Africa (WANA) tends towards two overarching categories: on the Right, the diagnosis has unanimously been, 'they must hate our freedom.' On the Left, however, there is the contention that the West has to be counted as the primary cause of such rage, for the years of plundering of lives and resources, through colonialism, the Cold War, coups, etc. All these analyses are premised on at least two presuppositions: the violence in and from the WANA region a) is always reactionary, in the sense that it happens only in response to something the West is or does; and b) must always already be condemned, as it is essentially immoral and wrong. It is the aim of this paper to challenge such viewpoints. Through a rigorous study of the historical discourses on political violence in the Leftist organizations active in Algeria and Lebanon, we claim there is a myriad of diverse reasons and justifications presented for advocating political violence in these countries that defy facile categorization. Inspecting such rhetoric for inciting political violence in Leftist discourses, and how some of these reasonings have percolated into other movements in the region (e.g., Islamist ones), will reveal a wealth of indigenous discourses on the subject that has been largely neglected by the Western Media punditry and even by the academia. The indigenous discourses on political violence, much of which overlaps with emancipatory projects in the region, partly follow grammar and logic, which may be different from those developed in the West, even by its more critical theories. Understanding so different epistemology of violence, and the diverse contexts in which political violence might be justifiable in the mind of 'the other,' necessitates a historical, materialist, and genealogical study of the discourse already in practice in the WANA region. In that regard, both critical terrorism studies and critical discourse analysis provide exemplary tools of analysis. Capitalizing on such tools, this project will focus on unearthing a history of thought that renders moot the reduction of all instances of violence in the region to an Islamic culture or imperialism/colonialism. The main argument in our research is that by studying the indigenous discourses on political violence, we will be far more equipped in understanding the reasons and the possible solutions for acts of terrorism in and from the region.

Keywords : political violence, terrorism, leftist organizations, West Asia/North Africa

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