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journalism, radicalization of ethnic groups, xenophobia, conspiracy... everything that has contributed to the triumph of populism, has also led to today's Islamism. Who's talking about the future now? The populists. Who promises salvation and answers? The populists. Who assumes the right to talk about the status of women, procreation, abortion, migration, otherness? The populists. We need to recover the right to speak.

Faced with political lockdown in many parts of the Arab world, how optimistic are you about the prospects for change?

I trust humanity more than history. From a logical point of view, we have every reason to despair. We have rent-seeking economies, a population pushed back towards ignorance and resignation, towards belief rather than citizenship. We have elites without autonomy, legitimacy or power to make real change. I am optimistic only out of anger, out of a sense of dignity. It's better to be defeated at the end than at the beginning. I hope to deserve, in my children's memory, the idea that I fought a little, that I defended the idea of freedom. When I read fabulous novels like Marguerite Yourcenar's *The Abyss*, I tell myself that we are between two epochs, in those median times which are painful, mysterious, enigmatic, unjust, and inquisitorial, but which are the first fruits of a new society. It may not come soon – on the scale of a lifetime, one despairs – but in a century or two. You have to believe it. ■

FIND OUT MORE

A selection of Kamel's articles for *Le Quotidien d'Oran* have been translated into English in *Chroniques: Selected Columns, 2010-2016*.

See www.nytimes.com/column/kamel-daoud

Militancy among minorities

• SAURABH PANT •
EXPLAINING POLITICAL VIOLENCE

When does militancy arise among marginalized minorities? How can states suppress such violence? Working at the intersection of international relations and comparative politics, IAST's Saurabh Pant uses quantitative methods and game theory to study the conditions that lead to the outbreak of armed struggle in divided societies.

Drawing on fieldwork in India, Saurabh's 2018 working paper entitled 'Explaining Militancy among Minorities' reveals an interesting empirical puzzle regarding the different levels of militant mobilization in minority groups and illustrates an important, overlooked dynamic. *"Minorities often face the threat of indiscriminate retaliation if any violent transgressions occur from within their community. Low levels of protection from this threat would incentivize minority members to police their group to prevent militancy emerging in their community. The strategic tensions involved in this protection-group policing dynamic occur within the minority group and between the minority group and the state."*



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"Counterintuitively, a low-capacity state can be less conducive to the emergence of militant minorities than a high-capacity state"

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Saurabh's game-theoretic model investigates how state capacity and state willingness can influence minority militancy.

Counterintuitively, his model shows how a low-capacity state can be less conducive to the emergence of militant minorities than a high-capacity state. Insights from the model can help to explain differences in militant mobilization between Muslims in India and Western Europe and across minority groups within India.

While the above research establishes the conditions for the onset of militancy among marginalized minorities, another

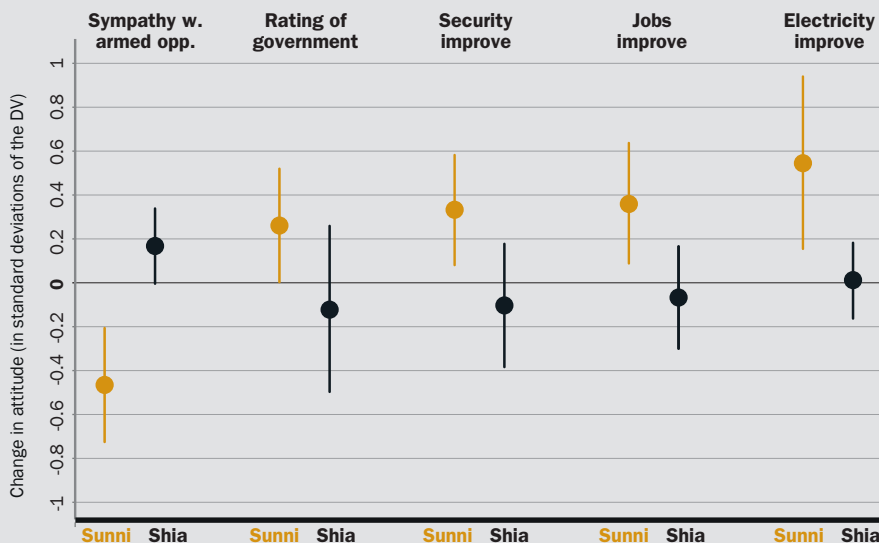


paper explains how the state can then suppress militancy if such conditions are present in a country. In 'Winning Hearts and Minds in Civil Wars: Governance, Leadership Change, and Support for Violent Groups in

Iraq', Saurabh and his coauthors show how support for militancy in Iraq is not explained by primordial sectarian animosity but by perceptions of governance. Their research takes advantage of a natural experiment

that arose when Iraq's divisive prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, suddenly announced his resignation in 2014, during a period in which a nationwide survey was being conducted.

CHANGING ATTITUDES IN IRAQ AFTER NOURI AL-MALIKI'S RESIGNATION



Leadership change led Iraq's disgruntled Sunni Arab minority to shift support from militants to the government. This realignment was due to their rising optimism that the new government would provide services and public goods.

"We demonstrate that the leadership transition led the aggrieved minority Sunni population to switch support away from armed groups and towards the new (but still) Shia-led regime. In line with our argument, this realignment was due to rising optimism among Iraqi Sunnis that the new government would provide basic services and public goods – specifically security, electricity, and jobs."

FIND OUT MORE

Saurabh and his team have also conducted the first list experiments in Iraq that measure attitudes about ISIS, the government, and US airstrikes across multiple ethnic groups. Working with Mercy Corps, a humanitarian NGO, they surveyed a large national sample at the height of the insurgency in 2015.

See www.iast.fr/people/saurabh-pant