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WARFARE AND GROUP SOLIDARITY: FROM IBN KHALDUN TO ERNEST GELLNER AND BEYOND

ABSTRACT
Ibn Khaldun and Ernest Gellner have both developed comprehensive yet very different theories of social cohesion. Whereas Ibn Khaldun traces the development of intense group solidarity to the ascetic lifestyles of nomadic warriors, for Gellner social cohesion is a product of different material conditions. In contrast to Ibn Khaldun's theory, where all social ties are generated through similar social processes, in Gellner's model the patterns of collective solidarity change through time, that is, different societies produce different forms of social cohesion. While Ibn Khaldun argues that asbiyyah is the backbone of group unity in all social orders, Gellner insists that modern societies are underpinned by very different type of collective solidarity than their premodern counterparts. In this paper I offer a critique of Ibn Khaldun's and Gellner's theories of social cohesion and develop an alternative explanation, which situates the social dynamics of group solidarity in the organisational and ideological legacies of warfare.

KEYWORDS
Ibn Khaldun, Ernest Gellner, group solidarity, war, sociology of violence

Introduction

Both Gellner and Ibn Khaldun were deeply interested in the dynamics of group solidarity. While Ibn Khaldun argued that most forms of solidarity stem from similar social processes Gellner was adamant that diverse social orders generate and are sustained by different modes of solidarity. Hence for Ibn Khaldun strong group ties, which he calls *asbiyyah*, develop through shared experience of hardship and are often created and reinforced in ascetic environment of chronic conflict. In contrast Gellner argues that group solidarity is historically specific as different economic conditions engender distinct forms of group attachment. In particular Gellner differentiates sharply between the agrarian and industrial worlds. In his view the economic structure of agrarian societies fosters deep hierarchies and stratified forms of group solidarity. Thus, aristocrats deploy unique cultural practices and rituals of solidarity to reinforce the

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difference from the commoners. In contrast in industrial societies where the focus is on the continuous economic growth traditional hierarchies are dissolved and the networks of solidarity inevitably expand to encompass much larger population. In this context nationalism emerges as the dominant social glue that binds together different social strata within the industrial societies. While Ibn Khaldun identified war as playing crucial role in the development and transformation of group solidarity, for Gellner economic power was more significant than war or military power. In his only essay that explicitly discusses war and violence Gellner (1992) downplays their significance in the modern industrial era[1].

Drawing critically on both Ibn Khaldun and Gellner this paper offers an alternative explanation of the relationship between war and group solidarity. I argue that despite their obvious explanatory merits neither Ibn Khaldun nor Gellner can adequately explain the long-term dynamics of organised violence and its relationship with the small group unity. While Gellner's theory is too functionalist and economically determinist to account for the role of warfare and military power in the formation of group solidarity through time Ibn Khaldun's model does not work well outside of the North African historical experience. Building on my previous work (Malešević 2010, 2017, 2019) the paper makes a case for situating the development of group solidarity within the organisational and ideological legacies of warfare. More specifically I explore how cumulative bureaucratisation of coercion, ideological penetration, and the envelopment of micro-solidarity shape historical and social dynamics of warfare.

Group Solidarity and Organised Violence in the Pre-Modern World

The concept of solidarity looms large in sociological literature. Both the Durkhemian and Marxist approaches identify solidarity as a key variable in explaining variety of social processes. For the neo-Durkheimians such as Jeffrey Alexander (1997) or Philip Smith (2005) solidarity is a form of collective belonging defined by shared cultural values. Alexander (1997: 115) identifies solidarity with what he calls 'we-ness' which "simultaneously affirms the sanctity of the individual and these individuals" obligations to the collectivity. The solidary sphere, in principle and in practice, can be differentiated not only from markets and states but from such other noncivil spheres as religion, family and science'. In contrast for the neo-Marxists such as Erik Olin Wright (2015) or

1 This essay was later reprinted in Gellner (1995). Gellner has also discussed war in two other publications – his review of Stanislaw Andrzejewski's book *Military Organization and Society* (1954) and his view of violence as a blind spot in Marxist theory (1988b). However, neither of these two publications offers an extensive analysis of warfare and violence. While the 1954 review focuses mostly on the military organisations and the relevance of Andrzejewski's concept of 'military participation ratio' the 1988 book deals mostly with the pitfalls of Soviet Marxism in the 1970 and 1980s where the issue of war is rather a marginal topic.

Slavoj Žižek (1989) solidarity is product of shared class interests. For example, Žižek argues that the capitalist ideology alienates and distorts class solidarity: "the main point is to see how the reality itself cannot reproduce itself without this so-called ideological mystification. The mask is not simply hiding the real state of things; the ideological distortion is written into its very essence... the moment we see it 'as it really is', this being dissolves itself into nothingness or, more precisely, it changes into another kind of reality. That is why we must avoid simple metaphors of demasking, of throwing away the veils which are supposed to hide the naked reality" (Žižek 1989: 24–25).

Nevertheless, despite identifying solidarity as a central concept neither the Durkheimian nor the Marxist tradition offer an in-depth analysis of its historical origins. They also take group solidarity for granted instead of analysing its social mechanics. For one thing both of these influential perspectives tend to focus on the macro level social processes where group solidarity is understood to be a second order reality and is viewed as something defined by external forces such as shared cultural values or socio-economic interests of different class-based groups. For another thing, the neo-Durkheimian and the neo-Marxist approaches make no connections between the group solidarity and organised violence and as such cannot properly account for the long-term development and transformation of social ties.

Both Ibn Khaldun and Gellner offer more elaborate theories of group solidarity which go beyond economic self-interest and shared cultural values. They also explore how solidarity is shaped or transformed by warfare and other forms of organised violence.

For Ibn Khaldun solidarity is forged in shared social action and especially in shared violent action. The political power stems from strong group ties that are created, maintained, and enhanced in the conditions of permanent warfare and hardship. Focusing on the experience of Maghreb tribes in 14th century he identifies group solidarity as a principal social mechanism of political power and social change. In his famous masterpiece *The Muqaddimah* (2005[1377]) Ibn Khaldun introduces the key concept of *asabiyyah* to explain the changing dynamics of power relations between urban and rural settings. In his understanding asabiyyah stands for strong group feeling that is reflected in the heightened group consciousness of individuals sharing strong interpersonal bonds. Asabiyyah is defined by group unity and sense of mutual responsibility among the members of the group[2]. Although this term has historically been associated with the close kin networks, clan ties and tribal descent for Ibn Khaldun asabiyyah is not a product of biology but of shared social action. Hence, he is very clear that the strength of group solidarity does not reside in "blood ties" but principally in the experience of protracted joint action and particularly in the shared memories of fighting. In this sense a comradeship

2 As Irwin (2018: 45) points out this term is derived from 'asaba' which means twisting a thing and 'usbah' the meaning of which is "a party of men who league together to defend one another".

resembles the strong kinship ties: "The affection everyone has for his clients and allies results from the feeling of shame that comes to a person when one of his neighbours, relatives, or blood relation is in any way humiliated" (Ibn Khaldun 2005: 98). Irwin (2018: 187) also emphasises the significance of living in close proximity as was the case with mamluk soldiers who developed close sense of comradeship by living in the same barracks: "In the Ta'rif Ibn Khaldun described how the Ayyubid sultan al-Salih Ayyub boosted the cohesion ('iaba) of his regime by purchasing and training large number of mamluks".

What is also clear in Muqaddimah is that asabiyyah is rooted in the shared emotions: a sense of collective pride, anger, and sadness when a group member dies, a feeling of shame and guilt when a comrade is exposed to humiliation and so on. These intense emotional bonds also contribute to the organisational strength of the tribes as individual members are highly committed to defend each other and even sacrifice their lives for their comrades. As Ibn Khaldun (2005: 289) points out: "Group feeling produces the ability to defend oneself, to protect oneself and to press one's claims. Whoever loses his group feeling [asabiyyah] is too weak to do any one of these things".

For Ibn Khaldun asabiyyah is largely product of shared adversity: nomadic warriors who live in the North African deserts survive through the disciplined, ascetic, and war-centred lifestyles that continuously enhance their group solidarity. Thus, their military power stems from their social cohesion: "Leadership exists only through superiority and superiority only through group feeling" (Ibn Khaldun 2005: 101). The tribal unity is forged in similar frugal lifestyles that contribute to group loyalty and obedience to the tribal chiefs and as such the nomadic tribes possess greater military capacity than the military organisations based in the cities.

This distinction between the urban and rural social conditions is a cornerstone of Ibn Khaldun's cyclical theory of social change. In his interpretation sedentary lifestyle is a precondition for the development of knowledge, skills, systematic belief systems and economic prosperity while the nomadic tribal life is a principal source of political and military might. As the state formation entails presence of both the key issue is the balance between the military strength, economic development, and ideological justification. For Ibn Khaldun the decline of civilization is linked to the periodic disbalances that occur when warriors lose their moral fibre and their martial abilities as they settle into the urban lifestyles. The defining feature of the tribal warrior solidarity is egalitarianism and communal solidarity of ascetic life. The military power of tribes rests on asabiyya that city dwellers simply do not possess. In contrast to the frugal nomadic countryside the cities are characterised by relative opulence, economic prosperity, social mobility, but also deep inequalities and sharp hierarchies. The existing urban order is legitimised by ulema, the religious Islamic authorities, who have the ultimate say on whether the political rulers govern according to the Islamic principles. Since city dwellers are mostly merchants, traders, or artisans they all (together with the religious elites) require military protection that can only be provided by the warrior tribes. Hence the warriors

are often invited to settle into the cities in order to keep them safe from other warrior groups. However once warrior tribe adjusts to the urban life, they gradually lose their ascetic practices which ultimately undermine their strong ties of solidarity. The political power combined with the access to excessive wealth corrupts the warriors and generates new social hierarchies that eventually destroy asabiyya thus making the tribe susceptible to attacks from the other invading warrior tribes. Once the tribal leaders completely succumb to decadence and start oppressing the residents of the city the ulema and the city dwellers withdraw their support while ulema also declare their rule un-Islamic and therefore illegitimate. This paves the way for social change as new tribe is invited to depose the current rulers and establish a new dynasty in power. In Ibn Khaldun's (2005: 296) view this cyclical historical process defines the rise and fall of civilisations: "The goal of civilisation is sedentary culture and luxury. When civilisation reaches that goal, it turns towards corruption and starts being senile, as happens in the natural life of living beings".

In this insightful account the micro-level group solidarity is identified as the key ingredient of the political and military power. Ibn Khadun makes three important points about the character of solidarity. Firstly, group solidarity is neither a cultural or biological given nor something that can be reduced to the economic self-interest of individuals or classes. His approach goes beyond the Durkhemian and Marxist accounts as it locates solidarity in shared collective action. In some respects, this is a proto-Weberian theory of group formation where social ties are not determined by one's origin but entail active involvement of group members. Ibn Khaldun is explicit in his view that asabyya is not rooted in kinship, clan, and tribe as such but is something that only develops between individuals who continuously share the same experience of hardship. He refers to the "closely knit group of common descent" but the feeling of common descent can be both "blood relationship" and "something corresponding to it" (Ibn Khaldun 2005: 98). In other words, "lineages, real or invented, served to reinforce assabiyyah" (Irwin 2018: 56).

Furthermore, almost uniquely among the classical scholars Ibn Khaldun emphasises the emotional dimension of micro-group solidarity. He persistently invokes the notion of 'group feeling' and associated solidarity with variety of collectively experienced emotional responses including pride, shame, anger, sadness, humiliation and so on. Hence asabyya is grounded in the strong emotional ties that are built and reinforced through shared collective action.

Secondly in Ibn Khaldun's theory group solidarity is a building block of organisational power. As he emphasises in the Muqaddimah: "Leadership exists only through superiority and superiority only through group feeling" (Ibn Khaldun 2005: 101). In other words, military and political might reside in the tightly knit bonds of micro-group solidarity. The shared ascetic lifestyles underpin egalitarian practices and principles that keep groups very cohesive. Although these bonds are strong, they can also change. The important point made by Ibn Khaldun here is that the micro-group solidarity changes through time – once nomadic tribal warriors shift to sedentary lifestyle in

affluence their shared social action dissipates and ultimately their solidarity erodes which in the process also undermines the organisational capacity of their military might.

Finally, Ibn Khaldun ties group solidarity to the practice of warfare. The asceticism and egalitarianism of warrior tribes is developed, maintained, and enhanced through the persistent violent conflicts with other similar groups. Hence the intensity of social cohesion is a consequence of continuous warfare and the decline of battlefield experience, which coincides with movement to the urban settings, weakens the social bonds between the group members. Hence for Ibn Khaldun the presence of violent conflicts is a precondition of strong group solidarity.

Ibn Khaldun offers a potent analytical framework of group solidarity but his theory also has some pronounced weaknesses. For one thing this model is too cyclical to account for the long- term social change. As such it leaves no room for the evolution, radical transformation, or demise of social orders. While Ibn Khaldun can explain the periodic power shifts in the context of cities and the countryside this approach has little to say about the social structures that were there before the city-countryside divide and it is also not clear at all what might replace these power structures in the future. In other words, cyclical theories of social change are inadequate at capturing the origins and temporality of long-term social change.

For another thing, Ibn Khaldun's general model of power dynamics is geographically and historically too specific. Gellner, who was a great admirer of Ibn Khaldun's analysis, recognised that this model works very well in the context of North African cities and tribes but cannot translate as well outside of this context. For Gellner (1981: 88) Ibn Khaldun was an excellent deductive sociologist but he was primarily "the sociologist of Islam; notably of Islam as manifested in the arid zone, an environment which encourages tribalism by favouring nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralism and which hinders centralising political tendencies". Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun dissects a specific moment in time of the Maghrebian world, mostly 13th and 14th century North Africa during the rise and fall of the Zayyanid, Hafsid, Marinid and other dynastic rulers who were often prone to violent overthrows. In this sense his general theory of civilisational rise and decline does not really work well in the modern conditions, which he obviously could not anticipate (Malešević 2015: 89).

Finally, while Ibn Khaldun's theory of group solidarity – unlike his general theory of social change – is highly applicable outside the late medieval North African context his superb analysis of the micro-processes does not tie well with the wider macro-organisational and ideological contexts. He focuses on the power dynamics within a city and captures well the micro and even mezzo level processes but there is little analysis of how these changes relate to the organisational capacities of states, ideological discourses and practices that underpin legitimacy strategies (i.e., the role of ulema in his case), or the broader geopolitical transformations (i.e., wars, uprisings, pandemics, and environmental disasters).

Organised Violence, Social Cohesion and Modernity

Unlike Ibn Khaldun who devoted a great deal of attention to war and violence in *The Muqaddimah* and many of his other writings Gellner has rarely studied organised violence as such. In fact, it is only in his 1992 essay 'An Anthropological View of War and Violence' that this topic is discussed extensively. However organised violence plays an important role in Gellner's opus indirectly and particularly in his account of the agrarian world. One of the defining features of his well-known Big Ditch thesis is that with the onset of modernity violence is replaced by production as the dominant organising principle of society. In his interpretation Agraria is a deeply hierarchical and Malthusian world where individuals 'starve according to rank' and where aristocracy and high clergy rely on the physical and ideological force to keep social order. In contrast Industria is characterised by economic vibrancy, social and spatial mobility, and a degree of egalitarian ethics. For Gellner (1988a: 158) this is a world where "Production replaced Predation as a central theme and value of life". Hence unlike the Agraria where rulers would engage in the periodic violent pillaging of their subjects, in the industrial world the rulers could maintain their economic and political dominance by tapping into the surpluses generated by the continuous economic growth and had no reason to abuse their citizens.

Although Gellner emphasises the economic factors as playing a central role in the organisation of all social orders he is also adamant that the economic dominance of aristocracy in the agrarian world is established and preserved with the sword: "violence became pervasive, mandatory and normative. Military skills become central to the dominant ethos" (Gellner 1992: 62). In this account Agraria differs profoundly from its predecessor, Foragia, and its successor, Industria. Although violence is present in the world of foragers these nomadic and mostly egalitarian groups possess no stored surpluses that would attract pillaging of other groups hence violence is here "contingent and optional", but it is not "the central organising principle of society" (Gellner 1992: 62). Although the industrial world is characterised by massive military organisations which can be deployed to appropriate resources from other societies Gellner (Gellner 1992: 69) insists that the balance of power combined with the continuous economic growth prevents such events from becoming a norm: "it was only sustained and unlimited expansion and innovation which finally turned the terms of balance of power away from coercers and in favour of producers. In the inter-polity conflict, no units managed to survive and to continue to compete, if their internal organisation was harsh on producers, and inhabited their activities or impelled them to emigrate". The prospect of nuclear Armageddon made the dominance of production over predation inevitable: "Now, production and trade are not merely a quicker way to enrichment than aggression: they have become the only way" (Gellner 1992: 69). In Gellner's view Agraria differs profoundly from both Foregia and Industria in a sense that violence permeates this social order. In a situation where there is a systematic production of resources which can be stored and where there

is no "technological amelioration" in sight the dominant groups are likely to value predation over production: "Those who control the means of coercion can and do decide more easily and quickly through coercion and predation than through production" (Gellner 1992:63). In other words, in this environment warfare has a larger and more secure pay off than production and trade as the storing of production surplus is likely to invite the predatory attacks.

These three ideal types of historical social orders are also characterised by different modes of group solidarity. As nomadic and egalitarian small groups foragers operate through the close kinship-based ties that are necessary for individual's survival in the hostile environment of persistent hunger and the constant threat of predatory animals. In the agrarian universe solidarity is deeply stratified with the "coercion-and-salvation-monopolising rulers" governing over the hundreds of thousands of peasant micro-worlds. Gellner recognises that there is a variety of forms of social organisation in the agrarian world including feudal and absolutist states, the polities of estates, pastoral nomadic chiefdoms, and segmentary societies. While some of these social orders have a looser structure of governance with wide military participation (i.e., nomadic chiefdoms) the more centralised and hierarchical orders have dominated the historical landscape. In this type of organisation, the patterns of solidarity are linked to one's status at birth. Hence aristocracy and top clergy that dominated the agrarian world were interwoven in networks of patronage, dynastic kinship, and marriage alliances that solidified their ties of solidarity vis-à-vis the commoners. Although aristocratic families constantly fought each other over territory, resources, and dynastic claims they nevertheless developed a strong status-based bonds that separate them clearly from the peasant masses and town dwellers. As Gellner (1992: 66) emphasises "The effectiveness of coercion depends on the cohesion of the agents of coercion" which historically has been established through shared modes of legitimacy. Hence while aristocracy provided coercive power that ensured dominance over the entire social order the clergy furnished the tools of social justification that fostered a bond between the elite groupings: "those who control the symbols of legitimacy, thereby also in some considerable measure control the crystallisation of social cohesion and loyalty, and thus exercise great power, even if they are not themselves direct possessors of weapons or practitioners of coercion" (Gellner 1992: 67). The rest of population was also part of strong networks of social ties, but these networks tended to be socially and spatially very narrow – one's village, clan, kinship, guild, or locality. Furthermore, the agrarian social orders were also characterised by presence of segmentary attachments. Drawing on Durkheim and Masqueray Gellner (1992: 64) sees segmentary forms of solidarity as playing a decisive role in everyday life of ordinary individuals inhabiting Agraria: "it is primarily by defining and controlling access to rites, brides, land and so forth in terms of group membership, that these units perpetuate themselves and make sure of the loyalties of their members". Hence the patterns of group in the agrarian world are not only deeply stratified according to one's social rank but they are also dominated by kinship, clan, tribe, or other

communal groups. In Gellner's view in Agraria one either experiences the oppression of kings and aristocrats or "tyranny of cousins".

In sharp contrast Industria offers an escape from the segmentary communities and inherited hierarchies propped up by violence. With the changed economic organisation of society, the priorities shift towards profit maximisation which fosters the continuous economic development. Gellner sees this economic change as decisive in transforming the social order which now favours investments in science, innovation and technological change which ultimately impacts on greater social and spatial mobility of individuals. While some scholars depict modernity through the prism of rampant individualism and lack of all forms of solidarity Gellner is adamant that Industria engenders new modes of social cohesion. Nevertheless, these new social ties are not, as Durkheim would argue, rooted in the functional interdependence of all members of society that create organic solidarity of shared values. Instead for Gellner new forms of solidarity stem from the changed material conditions: "modern society is not mobile because it is egalitarian; it is egalitarian because it is mobile. Moreover, it has to be mobile whether it wishes to be so or not, because this is required by the satisfaction of its terrible and overwhelming thirst for economic growth" (Gellner 1983: 24). Hence group solidarity is no longer linked to one's social origins (neither kinship nor kingship), but it is framed by one's position in the marketplace and the corresponding lifestyles shared with individuals who find themselves in the same socio-economic position. Furthermore, Industria differs from Agraria not only economically but also culturally. Whereas in the pre-modern world aristocracy and high clergy deployed cultural markers to reinforce the social difference between themselves and the rest of predominantly peasant society in the modern world culture is used to homogenise all citizens into a single network of group solidarity – the nation. In this context the standardisation of vernaculars, increased literacy rates and the introduction of compulsory state-wide education all served to mould relatively uniform cultural and consequently political identities of citizens. Thus, for Gellner the two key pillars of political and social legitimacy in the modern world are the continuous economic growth and national identity.

Although he recognises that warfare is still part of the modern reality, Gellner argues that unlike the agrarian world Industria does not necessitate the presence of organised violence. Whereas in Agraria the patterns of group solidarity are rooted in the coercive character of its economic and political organisation in Industria social cohesion is attained through the non-coercive means, and as such group solidarity is not inherently connected to violence. In this understanding since in both Industria and Foragia violence is optional and not constitutive of the social order, it can in principle become marginal or even obsolete. Moreover, as violence is not essential to group formation and preservation of social ties warfare is not a significant constituent of group solidarity in the modern world.

Gellner (1992: 69–72) acknowledges that this situation can change either through the greater technological asymmetry between the states, through the

possible widespread access of nuclear weapons by the non-state organisations or through the neutralisation of wealth (i.e., the environmental situation or the rise of post-materialist values). If this were to happen Gellner argues Industria will revert to some form of Agraria: "If it does, systematic coercion, and hence its occasional over manifestation ('war') may once again recover its pride of place as the key institution of human society" (Gellner 1992: 72).

There is no doubt that Gellner offers a powerful and elegant theoretical model of social change. Unlike Ibn Khaldun's general approach which is geographically and historically limited Gellner's theory is truly universalist as it aims to trace the long-term transformation of social relations. Furthermore, Gellner also articulates a more historical model of social cohesion that ties the changing patterns of group solidarity to different economic foundations of social order. While Ibn Khaldun focuses almost exclusively on the micro-sociology of group cohesion and the role warfare plays in this process Gellner provides a mezzo and macro-historical approach that links solidarity to structural transformations. However, while Gellner presents a coherent and comprehensive theory that in many ways goes beyond Ibn Khaldun's model, this theory has also some pronounced shortcomings.

Firstly, the staunchly materialist understanding of social change leaves no room for understanding the role of organised violence outside of their economic contexts. Hence in Gellner's account as warfare yields no economic benefits in modernity the rulers are less likely to deploy violence. This line of reasoning cannot explain the historical reality of organised violence. Rather than gradually disappearing from the historical scene warfare has intensified over the last three centuries with the 20th century being often characterised as the 'Earth's darkest period yet' with total tally of human fatalities ranging between 187 and 203 million (Malešević 2017: 127; Braumoeller 2019). The last three centuries have witnessed continuous proliferation of wars, revolutions, genocides, and terrorism and many of these violent events had little or no economic benefits for the perpetrators. To properly understand these developments it is crucial to zoom in on the geo-political, ideological, organisational, and other factors that make organised violence possible. While Gellner recognises that the multipolarity of states that have emerged in early modern Europe has contributed to transition from Agraria to Industria this geopolitical argument suddenly disappears in his account of the modern world. The key issue here is that political power, just as economic power, is an autonomous force with its own logic and as such economics cannot replace politics in modernity (Mann 1993, 2013; Hall 2013). Gellner's theory of history cannot explain genocides of the 20th and 21st centuries as Holocaust took place not only in Industria but also was completely dependent on the technology and organisational and ideological machinery of the modern state apparatus (Bauman 1989; Mann 2005).

Secondly, despite the universalist character of his theory Gellner was also a man of his own time and that is reflected in his overemphasis on the nuclear power as the key deterrent of war in Industria. The possession of nuclear arsenal was certainly important as a geo-political curb on nuclear wars, but

this did not prevent the proliferation of conventional wars from Korea, and Vietnam, to Angola and Afghanistan and hundreds of small-scale proxy wars and military interventions which resulted in over 20 million casualties (Mann 2013: 33). Gellner's approach is also inadequate for dealing with the civil wars which have expanded in modernity and have now become the preeminent form of warfare in the contemporary world (Kalyvas 2006). While Gellner is absolutely right that the organised violence underpins the social structure of Agraria where the aristocratic warriors are the dominant stratum, he seems oblivious to the centrality of coercive power in Industria. However, the economic prosperity, the development of science and technology and continuous economic growth are only possible in the relatively stable environments where nation-states have established a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence over their territory. In this context the coercive power does not decrease in modernity, but it only becomes successfully monopolised by states which can unleash it times of war and other crises (Malešević 2010, 2017).

Thirdly, although Gellner recognises the significance of ideology in agrarian and industrial worlds (religion and nationalism respectively) it seems only in Agraria ideology is linked to war. It is rather bewildering that as the one of the founders of nationalism studies Gellner rarely made direct links between nationalism and war. In his account both nationalism and economic prosperity keep modern social orders together, but he was also adamant that in the developed industrial societies nationalism is bound to become pacified and mostly symbolic (Gellner 1995). Nevertheless, as many scholars of nationalism and war show it is only in modernity that the rulers are able to mobilise millions of individuals to fight or support the (national) war cause (Mann 2005; Malešević 2019; Hall, Malešević 2013; Wimmer 2018). Moreover, nationalism feeds of the shared collective memories and the experiences of previous wars play a pivotal role in the reproduction of nationalist discourses in modernity (Hutchinson 2017). That is one of the reasons why nationalism has not decreased in the late modern era but has proliferated and has become fully embedded in the discourses and practices of state institutions, civil society, and everyday life (Malešević 2019).

Finally, although Gellner advances a more historical theory of group solidarity than Ibn Khaldun his model is still inadequate at capturing the full complexity of collective ties in modern context. For Gellner the traditional forms of solidarity cannot operate in a highly dynamic world of Industria where individuals are distinctly diverse and experience constant spatial and social mobility. The sheer size of modern societies also goes against any attempts to maintain the small-scale group bonds as traditional, all-participating and 'fortifying', rituals cannot include millions of individuals. In Gellner's understanding in the industrial world these traditional modes of solidarity are bound to give way to a "very distinctive and specific kind of organic solidarity" (Gellner 1981: 92) – nationalism. While Gellner is absolutely right that nationalism becomes a prominent ideological discourse in modernity this does not happen at the expense of micro-group solidarities. In fact, precisely because human beings are

emotional creatures that find their sense of ontological security and comfort in small face to face groups nationalism can tap into these micro-groups and as such can thrive in modern conditions (Malešević 2013, 2019).

War and Social Ties: Beyond Ibn Khaldun and Gellner

It is difficult to imagine a society without solidarity. Durkheim noticed long ago that social order would not be possible without the existence of durable collective ties between individuals. Even the hyper-individualised contemporary societies rely on some form of social bonding, often through the unacknowledged but shared reverence of individualist values and practices. The visibility of group solidarities is most apparent in times of profound crises and especially during war. Hence war has often been perceived as the catalyst of intense social bonds. From Simmel and Weber to Coser and many contemporary scholars of conflict it has regularly been observed that the external threat often leads to increased group cohesion. Although many analysists have explored this relationship between war and group solidarity a very few have attempted to identify the origins and social mechanisms that underpin this relationship. Ibn Khaldun was the first social thinker to recognise this link and to pinpoint the key processes involved in the creation and disintegration of asabyya. Gellner builds on Ibn Khaldun and offers a more universalist account that historicises the rise and transformation of group solidarity. In this approach solidarity never evaporates but transitions into a new and more effective forms – from the deep social ties of "coercion-and-salvation monopolising rulers" and segmentary communities of Agraria to nationalism and shared interests grounded in the continuous economic growth of Industria.

Both Ibn Khaldun and Gellner help us understand the significance of group solidarity for functioning of social orders. Nevertheless, these two models do not go far enough in accounting for the changing role of organised violence. Consequently, they cannot explain adequately the persistence of war and its relationship with group solidarity.

Gellner in particular was prone to seeing modernity in an overly sanguine way. In his theory there is little or no place for warfare and other forms of organised violence in Industria. This is often stated blatantly as in his parodying of de Maistre's thesis. Unlike de Maistre (1993) who argues that in modern world the executioner ensures the order and is also the symbol of the modern order Gellner insists that "Industrial society has refuted de Maistre: the washing machine, not the executioner stands at the basis of social order" (Gellner 1981: 93). For Gellner consumerism trumps coercion in modernity.

However, this view omits the fact that the modern social orders only exist within the framework of state structures and that the state apparatuses govern, manage, and control the economic processes (Malešević 2021). Even in societies which pursue the radical laissez-faire financialisation and other neo-liberal policies and limit government's involvement in economy the states still regulate many economic processes and maintain the monopoly on the legitimate use of

violence over their territory. For example, Mann (2013), Hall (2000) and Vogel (1996) show that de-regulation wave that started with Reagan and Thatcher in 1980s and has expended until 2008 crash did not result in the smaller state apparatus or less administrative directives. On the contrary liberalisation of markets often went hand in hand with the expansion of state's coercive apparatuses. For example, despite loud promises to shrink the state and reduce government Reagan increased federal spending which was allocated to defence, policing, state-subsidised agriculture, and high-tech industries (Mann 2013: 150). Despite relative economic prosperity Industria is just as much defined by political and military power as Agraria. Moreover, precisely because modern world fosters development of science, technology, and production it is in position to generate coercive superiority that agrarian rulers could not even dream about. It is no accident that the first scientific and technological breakthroughs were pioneered in the military sector and that the rise of modern technology was fuelled by pre-modern rulers who were principally interested in better weapons and other military equipment (Mann 1986; Giddens 1986). Industrial society has just pushed this process much further.

While Gellner and Ibn Khaldun make important insights on the historical relationship between solidarity and organised violence it is important to go beyond this analysis and zoom in on the three key processes that have framed and continue to shape the social dynamics between group solidarity and warfare: the cumulative bureaucratisation of coercion, ideological penetration, and the envelopment of micro-solidarity (Malešević 2010, 2017, 2019).

Firstly, organised violence cannot be confined to only one period in human history. Gellner is right that the nomadic bands of hunter-gathers were too small, too dispersed, and too egalitarian to rely on violence for the everyday survival. Furthermore, nomadism is not only detrimental to storage of resources but even more importantly it is highly adverse towards building a robust organisational capacity which is a precondition for protracted wars. However once nascent forms of organisation emerge, as with the chiefdoms and pristine forms of statehood, violence becomes a cornerstone of social and political life. This process, which I call the cumulative bureaucratisation of coercion, starts around 10-12,000 years ago and is still the defining feature of the contemporary global order. In this ongoing, but open-ended and reversable process, the states and many non-state entities have continued to increase their coercive organisational capacity and to internally pacify social order under their control. Historical development has for the most part been defined by the rise of complex social organisations that are rooted in well-established hierarchical division of labour, disciplined and effective systems of control and coordination and delegation of responsibility and many other organisational features. The implementation of these organisational goals often entail a degree of legitimacy but more importantly the non-compliance is associated with the clear coercive response – from 'disciplinary actions', loss of job, to financial penalties, legal disputes, imprisonments, slavery, serfdom and in some cases the loss of one's life. One can easily recognise the presence of coercive control in

the state apparatuses such as police, military, security agencies and even court systems but the identical organising principle operates in variety of complex systems that are essential for the functioning of contemporary social life: educations system, health system, business corporations, religious institutions and so on. Nearly all effective social organisations expand through the development of their coercive-organisational capacities. Throughout history the cumulative bureaucratisation of coercion was often fostered and had also fostered the proliferation of war and many other types of organised violence. Although this process is neither teleological nor even evolutionary in a strict sense it has for the most part been cumulative. Although history is littered with many failed, disintegrated and destroyed coercive organisations and some organisations have periodically or permanently experienced decline or were merged into other entities the overall trend in the bureaucratisation of coercion has largely been cumulative. This means that there is much more coercive-organisational capacity today than in any other period in human history. In the last three centuries the cumulative bureaucratisation of coercion has dramatically accelerated which is reflected in the expansion of warfare, revolutions, genocides, terrorisms, and other forms of organised violence. Rather than gradually dissipating in Industria war actually expands and become more destructive than ever before (Mann 2021; Braumoeler 2019; Malešević 2017). In addition, the states and other social organisations have managed to expand their infrastructural reach, social penetration, organisational dominance, and ability to fully control their populations. Hence to continue with the parody one could counter Gellner's claim and argue that in Industria washing machine is the executioner. The ability to produce consumerist goods is rooted in the coercive capacity of states and other organisations.

In modern social orders the cumulative bureaucratisation of coercion is so embedded in everyday life that it becomes unnoticeable and taken for granted. It is only in times of deep crises and particularly wars that this structural process becomes fully visible when millions of individuals are instantly mobilised to fight in or to support the war effort. The total wars of the 20th century were the pinnacle of this mass mobilisation where the citizens were expected and were also willing to sacrifice themselves for their nation-states. Gellner is right that this form of society-wide solidarity can only emerge in the modern contexts and that nationalist solidarity underpins modern social orders. However, he has very little to say about the coercive underbelly of the modern states. The near automatic flare up of nationalist solidarity in times of war is not generated by economic factors but by the long-term and ongoing historical processes such as the cumulative bureaucratisation of coercion.

Secondly while the coercive-organisational capacities enable group solidarities to intensify and became transparent during the wars coercion in itself is not enough to generate sustained experience of group solidarity. Instead, the organisational capacity is regularly accompanied by the process of ideologisation through which states and other social organisations link disconnected pouches of micro-level solidarity into coherent and believable macro-narratives.

Both Ibn Khaldun and Gellner acknowledge that group solidarity is defined by shared lifestyles and the corresponding common values and practices: while the former explores the micro-world of ascetic warrior tribes the latter zooms in on the entire social order. The problem with these accounts is that they do not explain how micro-level attachments are transformed into the shared macro-level narratives. To observe how this happens it is crucial to analyse the social mechanism through which organisations attain legitimacy. All durable social organisations have to deploy some normative codes to justify their existence or their preeminent position. There is a variety of doctrines that have been utilised by different social organisations throughout history to legitimise their position – from mythological tales, religious discourses, imperial creeds, dynastic claims to civilising missions and fully fledged political ideologies. However, whereas the premodern rulers tended to legitimise their actions to their peers (i.e., aristocrats, higher clergy etc) in modernity with the rise and the democratisation of the public sphere the process of justification expands across the entire society. In this new environment ideologies became a cornerstone of organisational legitimacy and nationalism in particular dominates the ideological landscape of state power. Hence to secure continuous legitimacy the states and other social organisations have to devise complex and subtle ideological mechanisms that could tap into the existing micro-worlds and try to successfully tie the inbuilt networks of micro-solidarity into the organisationally generated and institutionally sustained macro-level narratives and practices. In times of war nationalism becomes the key ideological vehicle capable of legitimising the existing social order and also mobilising public support for warfare. Moreover, the ideological penetration within society (via increased literacy rates, compulsory education, nation-centric mass media etc.) contributes to a degree of internalisation of coercive apparatuses of the state. In times of war national solidarity is often attained through undercutting and papering over the existing social divisions within society ('we are all in this together'). In modernity the states also have to compete with the civil society organisations and oppositional forces in terms of who speaks for the nation. In this context national solidarity becomes an object of constant outbidding thus entrenching the nationalist discourses within the public sphere.

Finally, although coercive and ideological powers make group solidarity into a society-wide phenomenon these structural forces cannot create group ties out of nothing. Ibn Khaldun shows convincingly that the small group bonding entails a great deal of protracted collective work. Hence solidarity is never automatic but something that transpires and is maintained in the context of shared collective action. Even small, face to face, groups require continuous social activity that will transform detached individuals into a cohesive unit. The shared experience of fighting together and of being exposed to the constant danger of death and injury has historically played a central role in enhancing group solidarity on the micro level. The scholarship on the behaviour of combatants in wars, revolutions, and insurgencies clearly shows that the continuous threat of violence contributes greatly to the rise and heightening of group

solidarities. Individuals are more likely to fight if they understand their actions in terms of emotional commitments and ethical responsibilities towards the people they care about, such as their comrades in arms, or their close friends and family members (Malešević 2017; della Porta 2013; Sageman 2004). What this research indicates is that even for the very small groups solidarity does not come naturally but entails continuous social action and commitment.

Hence if social cohesion is not automatic even in the face-to-face groups how can one generate solidarity networks that involve millions of individuals? Gellner shows convincingly that such social ties cannot be created at will through simple propagation of shared values or some giant brainwashing exercise. Instead Gellner emphasises rightly that the transformations in the patterns of collective solidarities are rooted in structural changes. Our agrarian predecessors could not create nor sustain society-wide nationalist attachments as the pre-modern world lacked all the socio-economic infrastructure for development of nationalist worldviews. In addition, the large-scale social changes involve the expansion of coercive organisational capacity and greater ideological penetration within society. However, since the all-encompassing social organisations cannot easily generate strong ties between individuals, they have to utilise their organisational power and ideological know how to fuse the already existing pockets of micro-solidarity into the society-wide narratives of belonging. Since humans are emotional beings in search for meaning they are receptive to the macro-narratives that are couched in the language of personalised small group bonds. Thus, modern social organisations regularly deploy the language and practices of micro-level solidarities and project these images onto the macro plain. It is no accident that all modern ideologies use the discourse of kinship and friendship when addressing millions of individuals who now become 'our Romanian brothers and sisters', 'our Muslim brethren', or 'our proletarian sons and daughters'. In times of war these personalised appeals contribute to society-wide social cohesion not only because of the language they use but also because the structural conditions have changed, and all human beings now inhabit the world of nation-states. Hence the large-scale social organisations such as the nation-state are capable of tapping into the micro-worlds only because they already possess the coercive-organisational and ideological capacities to penetrate this micro-world. In this way they become capable of blending the macro-organisational goals (i.e., defeating the competing organisation/nation-state in war) with the micro-personal aims (i.e., defending my family from the merciless enemy). In other words, the micro-solidarities have to be enveloped by the macro-forces of organisation and ideology. Consequently, the pouches of micro-solidarity became transformed into the shared, society-wide, bond of macro-level solidarity. Rather than simply creating these bonds the wars crystallise and foster this process of interconnection and future wars often build on top of already forged structures of social cohesion.

Hence wars do not by themselves create intense experiences of group solidarity. Rather this is a long-term historical process that only culminates in

modernity. Both Ibn Khaldun and Gellner show violence is often central to development of solidarity. Nevertheless, the macro-level solidarity can fully materialise only when variety of structural processes are in motion and most of all the cumulative bureaucratisation of coercion, ideological penetration, and the envelopment of micro-solidarity.

Conclusion

Ibn Khaldun and Ernest Gellner have both developed a powerful and comprehensive theories of group solidarity. While in *The Muqaddimah* Ibn Khaldun understands the rise and decline of group ties through the prism of shared war experiences and the decadence of urban affluence in many of his books Gellner historicises group solidarity by linking it to different economic foundations of agrarian and industrial worlds. Moreover, Gellner associates the pre-modern stratified solidarities with the violent structural conditions of Agraria. Although both of these social theorists have significantly advanced our knowledge on the historical dynamics and social mechanics of solidarity formation, these approaches still cannot account for the historical trajectories of group solidarity and its continuous link with organised violence. In this chapter I have argued that the patterns of group cohesion have historically been and remain shaped by the three long-term processes: the cumulative bureaucratisation of coercion, ideological penetration, and the envelopment of micro-solidarity.

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Siniša Malešević

Rat i grupna solidarnost: od Ibn Halduna do Ernesta Gelnera i dalje

Apstrakt

Ibn Haldun i Ernest Gelner razvili su sveobuhvatne, ali vrlo različite teorije socijalne kohezije. Dok je Ibn Haldun razvoj intenzivne grupne solidarnosti pronašao u asketskom načinu života nomadskih ratnika, za Gelnera socijalna kohezija predstavlja proizvod različitih materijalnih uslova. Za razliku od teorije Ibn Halduna gde se sve društvene veze generišu kroz slične društvene procese, u Gelnerovom modelu obrasci kolektivne solidarnosti menjaju se tokom vremena pri čemu različita društva stvaraju različite oblike socijalne kohezije. Dok Ibn Haldun tvrdi da je *asbija* kičma jedinstva grupa u svim društvenim poretcima, Gelner insistira na tome da su moderna društva oblikovana sasvim drugačijom vrstom kolektivne solidarnosti u odnosu na tradicionalne poretke. U ovom radu nudim kritiku Ibn Haldunove i Gelnerove teorije socijalne kohezije i razvijam alternativno objašnjenje koje postavlja socijalnu dinamiku grupne solidarnosti u organizaciono i ideološko nasleđe ratovanja.

Ključne reči: Ibn Haldun, Ernest Gelner, grupna solidarnost, rat, sociologija nasilja