The Rise and Fall of the City

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Nearly every urban setting in the world is fraught with conflicts between groups, so much so that political commentators can speak of votes and candidates mostly in terms of the demographic composition and impact of the vote. It is not only in Baghad were people struggle over the levers of Power. Rather, every election turns on the "religious vote," the black vote," the business vote, the women's vote, etc.. This is a sad commentary on the modern city, founded in the middle ages as a place of peace and commerce and which became the very foundation of civilization.

Why do these conflicts exist and why does the city — the cultural center of commecial civilization characterized by peace and prosperity — attract them? The Marxists say that that urban conflict is rooted in the war between capital and labor, the racialists says its root is in the exploition of one race by another, and feminists view it as a working out of a perpetual struggle over sex. Religion evidentally plays a role as well, as the case of Iraq demonstrates.

And yet none of these factors speaks to the root cause of urban conflict. For the answer, I offer this reflection from my book *Democracy: The God that Failed*. It is the state and no other institution or social force that turns peaceful urban civilization into a war-zone.
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