Title:
Lebanon: A State of Many Nations & a Menagerie of Many Modernities

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Abstract:
This essay seeks to analyze some political complexities of the country of Lebanon in light of popular literature concerned with global governance. By particularly considering some of Lebanon's demographic complexities in light of John Ikenberry's *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*, James Mittelman's *Hyperconflict: Globalization & Insecurity*, Mary Kaldor's *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* and Charles Taylor's *Modern Social Imaginaries*, conflict in Lebanon can be contextualized within a sort of global governance framework. Or rather, a global governance framework can offer an approach for explaining some complexities of conflict and the distribution of power in Lebanon. Such a framework can be extracted from the above mentioned literature, by understanding how multiple modernities bound under hegemonic power can become the fault lines for conflict and competition when hegemonic order fails and disintegrates into hyperconflict and asymmetrical warfare. This can be applied to the Lebanese context by recognizing how demographic complexities in the country fostered the construction of multiple modernities and political futures tethered to differing communitarian identities. In the face of a weak state system and failures of the government to maintain order between Lebanon's competing communities, the battle lines of the Lebanese Civil War and ongoing political conflicts today have been drawn along these confessional and communitarian lines. Such conflict has been especially asymmetrical in nature as no one faction or external actor has been able to reestablish hegemonic order in the country. Leaving Lebanon in a sort of indefinite deterritorialized global conflict.

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This essay seeks to analyze some political complexities of the country of Lebanon in light of popular literature concerned with global governance. By particularly considering some of Lebanon's demographic complexities in light of John Ikenberry's *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*, James Mittelman's *Hyperconflict: Globalization & Insecurity*, Mary Kaldor's *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* and Charles Taylor's *Modern Social Imaginaries*, conflict in Lebanon can be contextualized within a sort of global governance framework. Or rather, a global governance framework can offer an approach for explaining some complexities of conflict and the distribution of power in Lebanon. Such a framework can be extracted from the above mentioned literature, by understanding how multiple modernities bound under hegemonic power can become the fault lines for conflict and competition when hegemonic order fails and disintegrates into hyperconflict and asymmetrical warfare. This can be applied to the Lebanese context by recognizing how demographic complexities in the country fostered the construction of multiple modernities and political futures tethered to differing communitarian identities. In the face of a weak state system and failures of the government to maintain order between Lebanon's competing communities, the battle lines of the Lebanese Civil War and ongoing political conflicts today have been drawn along these confessional and communitarian lines. Such conflict has been especially asymmetrical in nature as no one faction or external actor has been able to reestablish hegemonic order in the country. Leaving Lebanon in a sort of indefinite deterritorialized global conflict.

Keywords: Global governance; demographics; distribution of power; modernity; identity; Lebanon

This essay seeks to analyze some political complexities in the country of Lebanon in light of popular literature concerned with global governance. In particularly, by considering some of Lebanon's demographic complexities in light of the following literature by John Ikenberry, James Mittelman, Mary Kaldor and Charles Taylor, conflict in Lebanon can be contextualized within global governance framework. Or rather, a global governance framework can offer an

approach for explaining the complexities of conflict and the distribution of power in Lebanon. Such a framework can be extracted from the following literature by understanding how multiple modernities bound under hegemonic power can become the fault lines for competition when hegemonic order fails and disintegrates into hyperconflict and asymmetrical warfare.

In *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Charles Taylor poses a question early on his book, as to whether the current form of contemporary hyperglobalization has rendered a sort of singular hegemonic phenomenon or a sort of multipolarity, or rather multiple modernities (Taylor 1-3). The multiple modernities in part are constructed by the idea that there are varied social imaginaries (23-31). These imaginaries in part are fueled by and credited to Benedict Andersons pioneering concepts about Imagined communities. The way communities imagine themselves, their relationship to other communities and their expectations being the basis for the imagination of multiple modernities. However, this envisionment also tragically can be the basis for conflict as the modernities communities seek to achieve, as a product of imagined communities' social imaginaries, often might contradict one another. Such basis for conflict, often is not only over contradictory world views and engines of social imagination, but actually over real world political power, hard power, monopolizing a legitimacy of force, territorialization and natural resources. It is at this point, social imaginaries on par with G. John Ikenberry's sort of liberal hegemonic order, as explored in *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*, break down into competing imaginaries or competing modernities. This break down is very much portrayed in the sort of hyperconflict James Mittelman articulates in his book, *Hyperconflict: Globalization & Insecurity*. And moreover, the nature of such conflict is in some ways described by Mary Kaldor in her book, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. Moreover, where all these strands tie together as a neat ribbon of issues of global governance is in the case of the nation-state of Lebanon and the political landscape of the country's various imagined communities' competing modernities fueled by competing social imaginaries. That said, the framework of Ikenberry, Mittelman, Kaldor and Taylor, offer utilities for packaging a complex case with many competing forces such as Lebanon, and perhaps can help package other specific cases of hyperconflict as well.

Lebanon is a small eastern Mediterranean country located in the Middle East no bigger than roughly the size of the American state of Delaware. Comprised for twenty some odd predominant communities, 18 distinctive demographics are recognized in the Lebanese constitution as eligible to participate in the Lebanese parliamentary system. These demographic groups can in so many ways be described as ethno-religious sects. That is, socio-ethnic communities identified by a religious vocabulary, not so much religious communities. An important distinction to avoid any confusion that disagreement or conflict between these communities is based on religious or theological differences. Rather, Lebanon's various sects are communities that formed over common social, historical, territorial, political, and security concerns at times in history before modern language framed communities as nations or states. That said, these bonds were formed in eras where religious language and religious vocabulary were ways to commonly identify groups of people. Moreover, the necessity for this distinction is

to substantiate that conflicts between Lebanon's many ethno-religious sects are often over social, historical, territorial, economic, political and military matters, with religion a lesser part of the equation and rather religious identity or communities identified by a religious vocabulary the larger part of the conflict. Conflict between these differing demographics often is all too common as they represent more than just ethnic, social or religious communities, but political ones as well, by default participation within the Lebanese parliamentary system. As Lebanon's ethno-religious sects have formed political factions, which have also in turn formed political blocs, to participate in the political system, the communitarian identities of Lebanon's factions has evolved psycho-politically. With that in mind, Lebanon as a modern nation-state is a very delicate balancing act of various political actors legitimized by ethnic, religious, social, historical and territorial imaginations. Or rather, various social imaginaries have helped to construct the communitarian identities that have legitimized Lebanon's competing political factions.

That is as, Taylor's social imaginaries are concerned with the various "ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (23). The social existence in this case, is the ways in which various groups of people in Lebanon imagine their communitarian identity. And also, the ways in which people imagine the expectations of the political identity that represents their community. Moreover, social imaginary in this regard also concerns itself with national imaginary and political process. As a highly appropriate component of Taylor's imaginaries, national imaginary expands social imaginary in the way it is concerned with how people imagine their soundings as large groups of people, if not as a society as a whole (23). The social imaginary reciprocally empowers the national imaginary as it supports the construction of common understanding for whole societies that allows for common communitarian practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy (23). This is also the sort of legitimacy Benedict Anderson concerns himself with while dissecting the nation-state. Which in turn Taylor employs to stress the idea of the collective agency of nations and peoples (157).

Thus, Lebanon with its many ethno-religious sects and corresponding political factions as a modern nation-state has a collection of agencies rather than collective agency. As Anderson makes the distinction that; states in the juridical sense are typically where components of institutional, structural and hard power are positioned, and nations are psychologically imagined constructions often synced to social, religious, linguistic, historic, territorial and other elements not necessarily a part of state structures. To be more plainly put, in light of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities,* Lebanon is a state containing many imagined communities; a state of many nations. In so many ways one can organize the political situation in Lebanon to be a matter of competing nations occupying the physical space of the same state. That is as Lebanon's competing political factions' communitarian identities, fueled by social imaginaries, permeate the state imaginary and undermine state centric governance in the country. Moreover, a sort of vicious circle has ensued since the early days of state formation as Lebanon's many political actors could not agree upon the sort of nation-state they would establish. This has left

marginalized factions to refuse participation or even undermine the state itself. This has also thrown Lebanon into sorts of feudal competition where factions do not ascribe to any one central power, but rather compete to exert the products of their social imaginaries and their political expectations upon one another. This has not only disintegrated the Lebanese state and any sort Lebanese national hegemony, but also in so many ways produced many different Lebanons. Many different Lebanons with many different expectations and future agendas. Or rather as Taylor might put it, many different Lebanese modernities. And, it is at this point, where sorts of hypercompetition breakout in efforts to acquire hyperpower in order to produce a particular modernity, that Lebanon has descended into Mittelman's sort of model of hyperconflict.

However, to consider Lebanon within Mittelman's hyperconflict context, one must consider the necessary conditions of Ikenberry's liberal leviathan. More specific, the conditions of the decay of a hegemonic order that allow hyperconflict to erupt. If one synonymizes Ikeberry's hegemonic order in kind with Ibn Khaldun's concepts of a sort of political capital, 'asabiyah, or the Chinese Dynastic Cycle's "mandate of heaven" (Ching 78), for various reasons of war, famine, plague, natural disaster, economic unsustainability, inequality, and other concerns, hegemonic order or monopolies of legitimate force often wane, disintegrate or decay. In Lebanon's case, of course these components out of the equation of the lifecycle of power merit concern, but in light of Taylor, what has staunchly contributed to the disintegration of the Lebanese state and waning of a singular Lebanese national hegemony has been Lebanon's multiple modernities. Lebanon's multiple modernities very much being the product of the many competing Lebanese nations missions, goals and objectives, for not only their own community but their vision for Lebanon as a whole. That said, multiple modernities in the case of Lebanon can in so many ways not only represent multiple Lebanese nationalisms, but also multiple futures for Lebanon. These futures are what psycho-politically drive ideological rifts between various Lebanese ethno-religious political factions and exacerbate communitarian identities that exert conflicting expectations for the future direction of the state and the nationalism that should most embody it.

And though, this framework only articulates the Lebanese case within concerns of governance and legitimacy, it still does seriously capture some of the psycho-political breakdowns from a sort of Ikenberry hegomonic order to a sort of Mittelman disorder of hyperconflcit. Thus, hyperconflict first arises when the interstate balance of power is unsteady and a medley of nonstate or semi-state actors both accommodates and more assertively resists state initiatives (Mittelman 164). This is the case in Lebanon, as the country's competing nationalisms overtly challenge and contradict each other while simultaneously challenging state initiatives. Lebanon's government in this regard has become nothing more exceptional than any one other competing faction in Lebanon. If anything, the Lebanese government has become weaker than Lebanon's political factions and the ethno-religious communities they represent. This is as allegiance to ethno-religious political faction has trumped nation building and government resources have been extracted to support the efforts of political factions to usurp hyperpower from the state.

On the other side of the same coin, the Lebanese state has disintegrated not as a consequence of a sort of brain drain or poaching by political factions, but also as a result of its own failures. "Merging with local conditions, hyperconflict is given to various permutations in different locales, and globalization renders it increasingly pervasive... Expedited by technological innovations, lowered barriers across national frontiers [or intranational], and the cheapening of weapons, globalization multiplies the risks of, and enlarges the market for, coercion [of the state], even when it does not take the form of armed conflict. Consequently, hyperconflict is much more than an episodic condition" (164). But rather hyperconflict captures the conditions Lebanon has passed through in eras of imperialism, colonialism, decolonization, neo-colonialism, foreign interventionism, proxy war and contemporary hyper globalization. All of which are eras that have pervasively weathered down the Lebanese government. As a result of the Lebanese government's weaknesses, inability to provide resources for its people and failure to accommodate its citizenry inclusively as a result of factionalization, severe voids of hard and structural power have gorged the country. In turn, Lebanon's factions have south to fill the void in manners of sorts of direct democracy or the epitome of libertarianism by providing their own goods and services such as healthcare, education, sanitation, transportation, housing, food and security.

Security being an especially unique element to this case as the Lebanese government has maintained a longstanding precedent to not involve the Lebanese army in matters of internal security. Out of fear that Lebanese Armed Forces would disintegrate along sectarian lines, in the 1950's General Fouad Chehab commanded the Lebanese army with a noninterventionist posture in local affairs and conflicts between Lebanon's competing factions. This precedent has more or less been the position of the Lebanese army ever since. And, in the rare event the army has intervened in civil conflict, the army has in fact often split as was the case during the Civil War years of the 1970's and 1980's. As a consequence the Lebanese government has lost a monopoly of legitimate force and bred insecurity for the greater part of a century. As a result, forces from the "margins" (154) of Lebanese society have emerged to compete over the power relinquished by the government. Lebanon's political factions have taken up matters of security into their own jurisdiction and competing security goals have become part of Lebanon's multiple modernities.

Hence Mittleman's concerns for nontraditional threats have become all too real as Lebanon has experienced sorts of, "...transcendence of borders and the blurring of temporal and spatial boundaries... [rendering] categories of war and peace [that] are not clear-cut. They blend, calling to mind an Orwellian dystopia in which these conditions are hard to distinguish. Without completely conflating war and peace, it is possible to note a convergence of their elements. Likewise, national security and global security, often regarded as counterpoints, are becoming a single stream. This rapidly evolving configuration may be best described as postnational security" (165). Postnational security becoming all too common in Lebanon as intranational and international conflict have both become borderless deterritorialized conflicts (Falk). The borders of conflict have blurred into a sort of civil cold war, as constantly realigning blocs of political factions engage in hypercompetition to acquire the power lost by the state. Conflict in Lebanon is

further deterritorialized as foreign intervention has become normal in an era of hyperglobalization, unprecedented force projection of military power and the mass migration of whole peoples. That is as the modern nation-state of Lebanon has experienced foreign intervention, directly and indirectly, from external invasion and occupation forces as well as proxy conflict. Lebanon has even undergone a sort of demographic rebalancing undergoing major trends of immigration and emigration in the last century and a half. As a response to this sort of globalization of conflict, deterritorialization has spawned sorts of neofundamentalism (Mittelman 144) as Lebanese have further retreated away from their continually weakening state into micronationalisms and communitarian identities (Juergensmeyer). The political factions representing such communities have been able to further exploit this and further polarize Lebanese politics. Lebanese ethno-religious communities and their political representation have evolved just short of becoming state-like or microstates. Rather still somewhat beholden to the state, these ethno-religious sects, which have psycho-politically evolved into state-like actors by commanding degrees of hard and structural power, all while motivated by ethnic, religious, territorial, linguistic and social imaginaries are truly micro-nations (Falk). Such deeper entrenched political polarization has only exacerbated asymmetrical conflict.

Asymmetrical warfare being a primary concern of for Mary Kaldor in *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era.* Lebanon fits into Kaldor's criteria for new wars as, new wars arise in the context of the erosion of the autonomy of the state and in particularly occur in the context of the erosion of the monopoly of legitimate organized violence (Kaldor 5). Not only has the Lebanese state been eroded accordingly, but also lost the monopoly on organized violence to various non-state and semi-state actors such as Lebanon's political factions. How these new methods of warfare are funded and financed have also changed (7) as exemplified by the way Lebanon's factions' asymmetrical economic activity acquiring funds from; sponsors seeking proxy benefits, foreign states, smuggling, narcotics, remittances, arms trafficking, religious organizations, lobbying and a plethora of other non-collectively productive economic activity outside of legitimate industries. Economic and political activity has blurred (22) amid crony capitalism and rentierism. What is more, that Kaldor's new wars are not even fought for traditional territorial concerns but rather new goals tethered identity politics (7). A matter which goes without saying considering Lebanon's hardened and entrenched communitarian identities, and the factions that play these identities up in efforts to mobilize popular support for military maneuvers, justify conventional weapons stockpiling and carry out gangland activity against one another. This matter has blurred the civilian and military sectors, and legitimate bearers of arms from non-combatants (22) as communities each have their security needs represented by local militias, professional security forces sponsored by political factions, foreign troops and private military firms operating within the country. There are no longer clear distinctions between public and private space (22) as Lebanon's factions participate in the government and simultaneously sponsor their own shadow state activities and micronationalist elements. To reiterate how conflict in Lebanon has become a global governance problem is in the deterritorialization of conflict and the lack of clear separation between internal and external conflict (22). This is

obvious by way of Lebanese factions roles as agents of proxy and numerous foreign interventions by state and non-state actors alike. Moreover, this substantiates the implications of Lebanon as a global conflict considering territorial sovereignty is no longer a viable objective (91) in a conflict zone occupied by various elements of foreign militaries. Lebanon becomes an even more definite case of new wars as the country has become saturated by military actors regular armed forces, the remnants of regular armies, paramilitary groups, self-defense units, foreign mercenaries and regular foreign troops (97). Such are the rudiments of the new sort of asymmetrical conflict that has become normalized in Lebanon.

Yet perhaps what is even more grievous than just this new sort of militarism or hyperconflict , are the objectives, new imaginaries and modernities all these parties participating in Lebanon's new wars seek to accomplish. Contrary to the objectives of old wars, new wars, as fought in Lebanon, in so many ways seeks territorial control through population displacement by systematic murder, ethnic cleansing, and rendering whole areas uninhabitable (103-105). Tactics that were all too common throughout the Civil War years which saw "ID card killings" and massacres of whole neighborhoods, villages and refugee camps. "ID card killings" being a pivotal case of the sorts of particularistic identity politics that have preoccupied political mobilization in Lebanon, in the face of the growing impotence of the modern state (79).

It is at this point that the conflicting communitarian identities, competing nationalisms, differing social imaginaries and incompatible multiple modernities cooccupying the same space have exacerbated one another into the very hyperconflict and new wars Mittelman and Kaldor are concerned with. Moreover, as the competing factions participating in the Lebanese geopolitical landscape fit the criterion of new wars, it is evident these factions are proecupied and motivated by identity politics and micronationalisms. Therefore, there are competing nationalisms, or rather competing narratives over the discourse of what the social imaginary is and ought to be, for each respective faction and the nation-state as a whole. Thus there are multiple futures prescribed and sought after for both Beirut and greater Lebanon. Or even better put, as per channeling Charles Taylor, Lebanon experiences multiple modernities defined, "in terms of certain institutional changes...'multiple modernities,' [are] different ways of erecting and animating the institutional forms that are becoming inescapable..." (Taylor 195).

In conclusion, Lebanon is a demographically diverse territorial space that has failed to experience a long term singular hegemony with a monopoly of legitimate force. What ensued is diverse political representations. These political factions have constructed and reinforced communitarian identities and socio-political objectives. All of which are products of social imaginaries and therefore incarnations of multiple modernities. These modernities are often contradictory and conflicting. Resulting in friction between modernities, the narratives behind those modernities, the factions producing such narratives and the ethno-religious sects comprising the constituency of these political factions. The friction that constantly arises at these points between the margins of Lebanese society can only best be described as hyperconflict. And, hyperconflict itself can fairly well be described to have the characteristics of new wars.

That all being said, under a sort of lens of global governances, Lebanon is a leviathan of hyperconflict waging new wars over multiple modernities.

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