One country that suffers from everything is Lebanon - location, wrong choice of friends, corrupt and inept government, water supply, energy problems and pending social, economic and moral collapse. Many of its problems are self-inflicted, but most others are the result of the intentional policy of its neighbours and the international community to make life hell for the leadership and the population.

Various standpoint dependency publications go as far as to predict a new civil war, and that it will come quickly. Headlines such as The Next Lebanon War - it will start without warning and the consequences are likely to be enormous, are more of a veiled threat.

But Lebanon is already at war, with itself. Outsiders are not standing idly by, but lurking in the shadows creating more and more havoc.

Their motivation should be clear - Lebanon is in a tough neighbourhood, and has too cozy relations with Syria and Iran. It can’t be allowed to resolve its problems itself because other people have other problems, and Lebanon’s solutions are historically better than their own.

Yesterday’s tomorrow
Lebanon is a footnote in most people’s minds, related to something about a port blowing up, the details of that incident soon forgotten. The port explosion has become just a footnote in history, but after reading recent headlines, which have appeared by coincidence or not: Lebanon’s Unravelling Economy Could Have Major Geopolitical Impact, etc - we might conclude that the worst is yet to come.

I have written about this country several times before, about the fertilizer blowing up, and in passing about the ammonium nitrate which came from Georgia. As all the conveyors of bad news are anyways close, the ongoing gloom and doom surrounding the case and its supposed implications will inevitably drive Lebanon closer to the Islamic Republic of Iran, and perhaps Russia too. That comes with lots of potential blowback – adding insult to injury.

Still the investigation into the into the Aug. 4, 2020 explosion, one of the biggest non-nuclear blasts in history, has made little headway. This leads to even more domestic disillusion with the government, and calls for the replacement of the corrupt officials who let this happen in the first place.

As well understood, and shared in many recent articles, the country’s present problems are much like a self-fulfilling prophecy. They are the product of not being willing or able to change, with its so called elite unwilling to give up power, break the status quo and implement much needed and long overdue reforms, though as the elite of today are radically different in composition from pre-civil war days this is hardly surprising.

This “Liberia Effect” is not an uncommon phenomenon. You gain power by claiming you are being picked on, then reproduce the same society you were offended by, only the people in charge being different.

Thus, more of the same is to be expected, a deep crisis which will continue for the foreseeable future. There is the problem of the electricity grid, and power generation coming to a standstill.

There is also a fuel shortage, as in spite of close relations with Iran, sanctions prevent Lebanon from being able to legally import much needed fuel to keep the economy from recovering. What makes it in comes from Syria, and is also under sanctions, adding fuel to the proverbial fire ready to consume not only Lebanon but the region.

Such a collection of problems could suck Lebanon into another civil war, with the subsequent fallout spreading across the Middle East. This would impact oil prices at a crucial time in the global economic recovery, when there is already a justified fear for the continuity of energy in Europe and other industrial regions of the world.

Perhaps that scenario is too much doomsday for some to swallow. However it is what may have been long planned – as part of a larger scheme by outsiders to dominate the region and deny it stability.

Enemies coming off the blackboard

The Game Theorist does however need to be careful of any possible unintended consequences, as the very enemy at the top of the list will be empowered. Hezbollah, the poster child of terrorist organisations as designated by the US and its closest minions, will be given the green light in the midst of economic meltdown and political chaos, to expand its already considerable sway over Lebanese domestic affairs.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah is a mainstream political organisation with a terrorist wing. It has made the same transition Sinn Fein has in Ireland. The way to neuter it would be to make its terrorist arm a liability to its political one, but treating it as a purely terrorist group will always have exactly the opposite outcome, as long as it speaks for a significant segment of the population.

Now Lebanon has oil fires, conveniently timed in the midst of other energy-related problems. Firefighters had to struggle to extinguish a huge blaze which broke out in a storage tank at one of Lebanon’s main oil facilities in the country's south on the 12th of October after it sent orange flames and a thick black column of smoke into the sky. Where does the bad news stop?

Lebanon’s energy infrastructure extremely fragile, as fuel shortages have forced the shutdown of power plants at Zahrani and Deir Ammar in the north, depriving ordinary Lebanese of even the one to two hours a day of electricity they were receiving. The Lebanese seem to have run out of luck in all spheres, but when a situation seems to be too much to bear for any country, this is highly unlikely to be merely a succession of random misfortunes.

Crisis creates actors

Lebanon’s critical shortages of electricity and fuel, with no solution in sight, could not have come at a worse time. With the rest of the world reeling from economic crisis, energy shortages and unprecedented high prices, few would be
able to help Lebanon get its house in order, even if they had the political will to do so.

Apparently even Qatar is powerless to ease the global energy crisis, as it is unable to keep up with demand for liquefied natural gas. As British steelmakers said they could be forced to halt output in the face of soaring costs, Qatar told consumers it was powerless to cool energy prices, despite being the world’s leading supplier of LNG.

Naturally there are those who benefit from such chaos, and the recriminations are already starting, as reported by the trusted source of American media spin, Voice of America. Professor Habib Malik of the Lebanese American University told VOA that the situation is untenable, and urged the US and European allies to help Lebanon. But as this was in a VOA broadcast, all you are supposed to hear is the “untenable situation in Lebanon”, not “the US can help”.

Help but with strings attached

Naturally this situation can be used by many actors, and the Americans can try to rally those close to help. However, such help would be conditional on changing the relationship with Iran.

The problem with this is that the US knows Lebanon has nowhere else to turn. If it really wanted Lebanon to loosen ties, it would invest in the country and its energy security.

However it is happy to see it fall into dependency on Iran and Syria, because they are then all the same, and the US is both powerless to change anything and empowered to do whatever it takes to achieve exactly that. The self-styled global purveyors of human rights are perfectly happy to make institutional racism of the highest order the standard of world affairs.

Professor Habib Malik sums the situation up well, apparently speaking to an American audience:

"Fuel, diesel oil, these are absolutely vital for a country. Lebanon will either totally collapse or fall into the wrong hands," he said. "It seems now to be falling deeper and deeper into the wrong hands. This comes after a year and a half of total neglect, and none of this is comprehensible. It doesn’t cost much to make a difference in Lebanon. Just get the monkey of the mafia-militia cartel off our back."

Only Western and proxy state hands are the right hands, in their own estimation, but also in practical terms if Lebanon is to have a future. But the fingers of those hands are firmly in the West’s collective ears, if progress equals not having anything to use against your neighbour.

Some are now working to better position Egypt and Jordan to make up for some of the Lebanese energy deficiency, but that alone will not be enough. Syria could be brought further into this picture, but only if the West thinks it has won there, and that isn’t happening right now.

This leaves Lebanon in the dark, and on the horns of a dilemma, dammed if it does and dammed if it doesn’t. But to resolve its problems it is aware that nothing, whether it is assistance from international banking organisations or direct aid comes without some expectation of something in return.

Beirut’s Nidaa Al-Watan newspaper explains how the costs of accepting the needed assistance would be many. They would include, but not be limited to, “the threat of forfeiting the country’s independence, sovereignty, and the ability to conduct normal relations, so that some in-kind aid is not a cover for dominating Lebanon and undermining its identity.”

The only game in town

Ultimately, this is what every intervention in Lebanon is actually about. When left to do things its own way, it adopts different models to the West and does it successfully. It has to play someone else’s games to justify those games, not because either the donors or Lebanon itself are better off as a result.

Nothing should come as a surprise in Lebanon. The Lebanese Civil War of the early 90s was fought by many forces which are the antithesis of Western orientation and outlook, but they were still used by West to increase its footprint and influence in that troubled country, the traditional ruling Maronites having done too well for the West’s liking.

We have all seen many examples of false flags being used as an excuse to launch an invasion or start a war which was planned well in advance. Invading for conquest or destabilising a country are frowned upon in the modern era, so some other reason needs to be manufactured for achieving the same thing.
According to Western thinking, the Lebanese political system is inherently problematic, its political parties and structures divided along religious and other fault lines. Such a system is very similar to that imposed on Bosnia, and in other places where “power sharing” is considered a virtue, and it is created by identifying different communities and ensuring their representatives work together, within a common framework, with distinct rights and responsibilities.

But thanks to this Western outlook things have a habit of blowing up in Lebanon when they don’t elsewhere. Just think back to 2005, when Rafik Hariri, the former Prime Minister, was blown up along with his motorcade, about 20 people in total. Think too of the subsequent problems between his son and Saudi intelligence, which made his stay in Saudi Arabia longer than planned, though at least he didn’t come back in pieces.

**Crash and burn in nice log fires**

All the problems of Lebanon, from economic meltdown and political assassination to the role of Hezbollah in the country and region, are too complicated to discuss in full detail. However, there are some deeds, such as the cutting off US military funding to the fledgling Lebanese Army by Donald Trump, which need to be mentioned to understand the situation better.

As has been mentioned in this journal, “There are certain consistent patterns to US foreign policy.” Nothing happens in the Middle East without some outside meddling, and the list of usual suspects and their sordid history is well-known to regional observers.

As earlier predicated, Lebanon is a country collapsing, crashing and burning, and its banking system with it. The country is supposedly about to hit rock bottom—but it can’t get much lower than it is now, as time is running out, and no easy fixes or stop gap solutions in sight.

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