Comparing Sectarian Hegemonies in Lebanon and Iraq

What explains variations in sectarianisms across different contexts? How come identity-based appeals take precedence over interest-based ones in some deeply-divided places but not others? And, consequently, why do sectarian identities serve as the main markers of political identification and mobilization despite the existence of other types of cleavages – socioeconomic, regional, or gender – in some contexts but not others? Taking Lebanon and Iraq as case studies, I argue that a historicized comparative examination of the timing, pattern of the institutionalization of sectarian identities, and the ensemble of practices undergirding sectarianism in both countries explains why these identities have assumed an almost hegemonic appeal in Lebanon while, by contrast, in Iraq alternative – class or regional – identities still serve as powerful modes of political mobilization. Moreover, this argument has direct implications to the theoretical literature on ethnic and sectarian conflict. Rather than cast the theoretical debate in terms of alternative explanatory choices, it demonstrates how constructivist, instrumentalist, Foucauldian, Gramscian, and Bourdieusian explanations are only important parts of a much more complicated theoretical story.

Suggested Readings and Podcast


SEPADPod with Fanar Haddad, 19 November 2018, at: https://castbox.fm/episode/SEPADPod-Fanar-Haddad-id1449804-id101339140?country=us