

ISRAELI FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS SYRIAN UPRISING: A DEFENSIVE
REALIST PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

ISRAELI FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS SYRIAN UPRISING: A DEFENSIVE REALIST PERSPECTIVE

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In this study, Israeli foreign policy response towards Syrian Uprising is examined within the context of defensive realist approach. This study aims to underline the changing context of defensive realist foreign policy, although the nature remained as defensive since the old experiences of both Lebanon interventions prevent Israel to adopt revisionist foreign policy. In this sense, although Israel adopted revisionist policies towards the region from time to time, they could not adopt this type of foreign policy towards Syria since the existed balance of power and lessons of Lebanon prevented them to adopt so. In order to reveal continuities and changes, Israeli responses are examined under three periods. As a result, since passive standing in first period and more active diplomatic interments in second period remained inadequate to secure Israeli interest; Israel started to adopt active defensive realist foreign policy. Although the operational environment is offensive; the posture is defensive as it constitutes the main ground of Israeli response towards Syrian Uprising.

Keywords: Israel, Syria, active defensive realism, foreign policy

ÖZ

İSRAİL'İN SURİYE AYAKLANMASI DIŞ POLİTİKASI: SAVUNMACI REALİST PERSPEKTİF

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Bu çalışma, İsrail'in Suriye Ayaklanması dönemi dış politikasını savunmacı realist bir perspektiften incelemektedir. Çalışmanın amacı, özellikle Lübnan müdahalelerinin İsrail'i fiziksel bir müdahale yapmaktan geri tuttuğunu; bu nedenle tonu değişse de genel politika çizgisinin savunmacı realist olduğunu ortaya çıkarmaktır. İsrail bölgeye karşı zaman zaman revizyonist bir politika benimsese de; bu durum var olan güç dengesi İsrail lehine olduğu için Suriye adına geçerli değildir. Bu düzlemdeki politika değişimlerini daha iyi incelemek adına İsrail'in Suriye Ayaklanması dış politikası üç ana bölümde incelenmiştir. Bu inceleme göstermektedir ki; ilk bölümdeki pasif tutum ve ikinci dönemdeki diplomatik çabalar İsrail çıkarını korumakta yetersiz kaldığı için İsrail aktif savunmacı realizm adı altında daha farklı bir politika benimsemiştir. Kullanılan askeri metotlar saldırgan olsa da; doğası savunmacıdır. Bu durum İsrail'in Suriye Ayaklanması dış politikasının temel çerçevesini oluşturmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İsrail, Suriye, aktif savunmacı realizm, dış politika

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DMZ	Demilitarized Zones
EU	European Union
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
IR	International Relations
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
UN	United Nations
US	United States

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Israeli foreign policy has been dominated by the realist approach since the security framework dominates the state behavior. Although every state's main priority is the preservation of its security; a secure border security means the matter of survival for Israel as a small country which is surrounded by hostile states. Among those hostile states, Syria has a significant place. These two countries are embattled neighbors since the establishment of Israel; however, their relations are governed by many unspoken pragmatic rules. As a result, both of them learn how to live together in time.

In this sense, Israel has developed a defensive realist foreign policy towards Syria since the existed status quo is in favor of their interest. Although their relations are tested from time to time, the general lines of unspoken pragmatist partnership had remained. Syrian Uprisings and the following civil war was one of these tests. It was a huge blow for Israeli security since the balance of power was under strategic challenge. This thesis aims to analyze Israeli foreign policy vis-a-vis the Syrian Uprising through defensive realist approach. It sees the Syrian uprising as a turning point in Israeli foreign policy towards the country and argues that as a result of a defensive realist reflect; Israel could not develop an active policy in Syria, and rather kept a low profile in order to secure its interest.

In this context, main ground of this thesis is accumulated under defensive realist approach. Before examining the literature on Israeli response to Arab Spring and

Syrian uprising, it will be more comprehensive to give a deep look on what defensive realism is. For Realist school, there are three basic types of power seeking foreign policy according to Hans Morgenthau (1967). There are policy of status quo, which aims to keep the power; policy of imperialism, with aiming to increase the power; and lastly policy of prestige, which aims to demonstrate the power (Morgenthau, 1967). This debate among the differences is known as offensive realism versus defensive realism.

To begin with defensive realists, also known as the neo-realists, they argue that state politics are driven by the assurance of survival. This argument is particularly associated with Kenneth Waltz (2001). Since the main motive is the assurance of survival, states will focus on what they have compared to others and preserve their existing position. Thus, they become defensive and status quo states. In order to prevent the rise of dominant powers, they play power politics as a balancing strategy (Waltz, 2001). They are likely to follow a balanced behavior if the aggressor is there to challenge the stability of the system. States are searching for doing their best to be guarded against being attacked, conquered or exploited by others. If the aggressor would appear, states either launch preemptive strikes, or form alliances in accordance to balance of threat, or bandwagon (Lawson, 2013). Forming alliances in accordance to balance of threat is the most comprehensive one. Turkish-Israeli rapprochement in 1990s against the Syrian threat is an example of that. Syria was not the most powerful state, but the aggressor. Therefore, the aggressor state would not always be the more powerful. Any attempt to change the stability will form natural alliances, regardless of the ideologies of the states. Therefore, states generally form alliances only if such cooperation will improve their capacity to protect themselves against the aggressor. The power distribution determines the positions of actors within the system.

For defensive realists, the anarchical system itself drives states to act in a certain way. As a result of the absence of any central authority to provide mutual trust; system always produces mistrust (Lawson, 2013). In order to survive within this

conjuncture, states have three options. They either maximize their power in order to protect themselves and find a place in power distribution; or make alliances, but not based on mutual trust; or launch a preemptive attack in order to prevent changes in balance of power (Lawson, 2013). More than that, every state has security-oriented foreign policy behavior, which makes them similar to each other. In this sense, every state searches for security preservation which is the source of security dilemma. Security dilemma is a zero-sum game. System itself led states to maximize their power in order to survive in anarchical conjuncture, which creates a strategic disadvantage to others so they will follow the same steps and mutual distrust has been built at the end of the day. However, this dilemma does not always lead to a war for defensive realists. If the balance would have been constructed, the conflict will be less likely. This balance might be balance of power, balance of fear, or even balance of threat. Defensive realists underlined that international politics abhors unbalanced behavior as “nature abhors a vacuum” (Waltz, 2000, p.211). There is balance equilibrium in international politics as there is in nature. Therefore, unbalanced aggressive behavior will be absorbed by the system itself to find a stable position. In this sense, Randall L. Schweller (2004) opened a debate on balancing issue. He underlined that it will not be a balanced behavior if it is made by force (Schweller, 2004). Fighting back against an attack is not a balancing behavior; but an actual defense. Balancing is long term strategy like deciding to balance to secure long term security interest even if there is no current directed threat. As a result, revisionists make alliances for profit; while relatively weak states make alliances for security. (Schweller, 2004).

Secondly, according to defensive realists, irrationality is the source of conflict which also causes security dilemma. Ideology-based foreign policies or motivational biases of foreign policy making group affects main interest of the state and causes irrational foreign policy decisions (Rynning & Guzzini, 2001). The reason of dilemma may be found in the intrastate apparatus of foreign policy making process which causes rationality and irrationality. Therefore, personal or ideological motivations should be out of the table. Also according to Jack Snyder and Keir Leiber (2008), domestic

polarization, which is the clashes between governing elite and political opposition, is a root cause of irrationality. Therefore, status quo states also must strengthen both internal communication and the diplomacy line in order to establish comprehensive communication to break the chain of security dilemma.

Therefore, neorealists are arguing that state decisions are taken in accordance with these determinants. Actors are not only interested in what they have, but also interested in what others have; so international politics is positional. Power is a relative concept. One's power would cause another's empowerment. It is the matter between absolute gain versus relative gain. Absolute gain is the insistence of states to achieve the ultimate gain compared to its counterparts. They worry about their position compared to others; so they seek to maximize both hard and soft variables of its power. The insistence of absolute gain ends up with security dilemma. According to Fred Lawson, states are generally worried about absolute gain when the war seems less likely; and relative gain when a war breaks out (Lawson, 2013).

While searching for absolute power, states endangered the balance of power within international system, which makes the war possible. Dominant power would launch an attack to the weaker without much penalty. This situation is one of the fundamental reasons of mistrust between states. Accumulation of such power would arouse suspicions about real intentions. Therefore, others also would follow the same steps and security dilemma would occur as a result. At the end of the day, war is inescapable. In order to achieve the stability, there should be some kind of balance of power among states which prevents further escalations. It is not based on cooperation like the Idealism suggested; but rather a balance of power and fear for the most of the time.

On the other hand, offensive realists, also known as the neo-classical realists, criticized neo-realists as unnecessarily biased on status quo (Rynning & Guzzini, 2001). Survival is not an aim but a *sine qua non*. Being the influencer is the main aim. According to them, neo-realists only talk about cops, not the robbers (Rynning & Guzzini, 2001). Without bringing the revisionist state, defensive realists will be

left with a world in fact no conflict. Defensive realists' respond this criticism with saying conflict may arise between status quo states because the security dilemma prevents trust between them and ends up with conflict; while offensive realist criticized them with underlining that power politics make states to search for influence, not solely instinct of survival. United States is one of the main superpowers in the international system but still search for definite influence. Therefore, assurance of survival is not the end of the game, but the very beginning. Once a state assures its survival, it starts to search for a sphere of influence to become dominant. For offensive realists, system itself makes states to search for influence; while defensive realists claimed that system makes states to search for balance. Therefore, these two camps analyze foreign policy differently.

What differentiates defensive realist from offensives is insisting on preserving power balance in international system, with eliminating irrationalities within the foreign policies. It is the matter between *survival of the strongest* versus *survival of the fittest*. Defensive realists claim that the fittest would be more likely to survive while offensive realists argue that the strongest would. In order to be fittest, states must act according to what system ask them to do. In this sense, irrational biases or ideological motivations are irrelevant. In contrast, offensive realists underline that system itself force states to be the strongest. In order to preserve or construct the balance, states should not make any intervention to each others' untouchable interests; together with constructing a common sense and act together against the threats towards international power balance (Snyder & Leiber, 2008). Especially balancing strategy is vital when the security dilemma occurred. This common act would eliminate the risk of emergence of dominant powers and reconstruct the balance again and again; since the common interest is achievable only with seeking balanced foreign policy. For offensive realists, since states are always looking for expanding their power, they would only survive through being hegemonic regional power. Different from them, defensive realists claim that states would only survive when they relatively balance their power

compared to others. Offensive realism seeks for power and influence to achieve security through dominance and hegemony; while defensive realists argue that the anarchical structure of international system encourages states to maintain moderate policies.

When it comes to Israel, although every state's main priority is preserving territorial integrity, what puts them in a unique situation is the regional conjuncture which is definitely hostile. Border security means a lot to Israelis than for instance in Canada. Therefore, defining and defending the borders of Zion constitutes the main body of Israeli foreign policy. However, whether the priority should be solely the Israeli territories or it should be expanded when the fate of Zion is threatened is another debate. In other words, whether Israel should adopt a defensive realist or offensive realist policies in order to maintain its security constitutes the main debate in Israeli foreign policy making process.

There are some scholars who advocate that Israeli foreign policy towards the region is revisionist and offensive. To begin with Avi Shalim; he clearly stated that Israeli cross-border attacks and continuation of post-1967 War occupations are the proofs of their aggression (Shalim, 2009). According to him, occupation in Gaza and West Bank has little to do with Israeli security. It is actually quite costly since it both diminishes Israeli reputation in international politics and needs extensive military spending. More than that, he regards post-1967 period as the Zionist colonial project (Shalim, 2009, p.2). Therefore, it is hard to put Israeli actions into a defensive position since the main aim is imperialist revisionism. In addition to Avi Shalim's points, Victor Kattan also sees Israel's defensive position as an illusion to cover its aggression (Kattan, 2006) Israeli military tactics in 2006 Lebanon War went beyond the limits of self defense. They even invaded Southern Lebanon to declare hegemony over Hezbollah. These actions were directly aggressive and revisionist policies which reflects how Israel views the region (Kattan, 2006)

In addition to Shalim's and Kattan's points, Gil Merom also underlined the mentality behind Israeli aggression in his article; *Israel's National Security and the Myth of Exceptionalism* (1999). *Memoirs of Holocaust and Israeli existence in definite hostile surrounding makes the Israeli survival as the most important objective and they see it is their right to take any further actions to secure this exceptional divinity.* For instance, 2006 Lebanon intervention was seen as the "image of Israel as David struggling against Arab Goliath" (Merom, 1999, p.415). Therefore, Israel has to be prepared against their nemesis to defend itself no matter what it takes.

All those factors reveal the Israeli aggression towards the region. However, although Israel's relations with region went through revisionist policies from time to time, this thesis aims to claim that this policy is not convenient with Syria. More importantly, aggressive military operations towards Gaza or West Bank are represented as the issues of internal affairs since those lands are under Israeli occupation, even though the notion of occupation itself is an offensive policy. More than that, lessons of Lebanon revealed that this type of foreign policy towards Syria may not be adequate to secure Israeli interest, or even may be the reason of insecurity. In this sense, defensive realist foreign policy is the most comprehensive policy behavior. What makes Arab Spring a turning point is the adaptation of active defensive realist foreign policy since the passive standing remained inadequate to secure Israeli interest in final setting.

To give more comprehensive look on what this thesis aims to analyze, it is important to take a deep look on what literature says on Arab Spring and Israel in general and Syrian uprising in particular to reveal the gap in literature. As a neighboring state, Arab Spring psychologically and strategically affected Israel directly. It is clear that the whole event had been received by a huge shock by Israel and their attitudes, or the possible attitude options evaluated differently by scholars. Some scholars considered it as an opportunity for Israel, while the most of them saw it as an existential threat.

To begin with the ones who received Arab Spring as not a threat, Amnon Aran and Leoine Fleischmann (2018) opened a debate on the distinction between day-to-day security and basic security. In this sense, basic security implies the existential threats like the threat of launching full scale attacks. Israel did not receive such a threat in Arab Spring (Aran & Fleishcman, 2018). For Israel, the existential threat is coming from the nuclear power of Iran and relatively diminishing power of United State's, not the Arab Spring itself. As long as the balance was maintained with the preservation of Israeli superiority, violation of day-to-day security was tolerable. Israel had been isolated in the region since the establishment and its relations with surrounding were always in conflict. Israeli and the US's flags were burned during the protests, but such attitude was not unique to Arab Spring. Arab population has been always against the existence of Israel since its establishment (Craig, 2012).

Secondly, democratization of the region might work for Israeli interest according to the Benedetta Berti in the article; Israel and the Arab Spring: Understanding Attitudes and Responses to the New Middle East (2012). Any potential process of democratization of the region would be an opportunity for Israel to improve its relations with its neighbors. Shimon Peres also stated that "Poverty and oppression in the region have fed resentment against Israel and the better our neighbors will have it, we shall have better neighbors," (Mideast Revolutions Could Be Good for Israel, Says Peres, 2011) with arguing that regional democratization is what Israel actually needs. Arab Spring might end up with more open society and economy. As a result, some of the scholars read Arab Spring within the framework of the democratic peace theory, which underlines that democracies will hesitate to engage in armed conflict with each other, and it might end up with a unique opportunity for Israel to engage peaceful relations with its neighbors.

More than that, especially the conflict in Syria might be an opportunity to defeat Israel's arch enemies. Bashar Assad's Syria is one of the most important receivers of Iranian political and economic support; and they are at the state of war with Israel.

Removal of such leader would open a door of dialogue at the final place, together with diminishing Iranian influence in the region. Fall of Alawite regime would be a strategic blow for Iran and Hezbollah, which is quite desirable for Israel (Magen, 2015).

On the other hand, although some of the scholars received Arab Spring as an opportunity for Israel, main body of the scholars still viewed the protests as a direct threat to Israel. This threat can be analyzed in three levels. To begin with the domestic level, the wave of Arab Spring actually reached to the Israel, not in terms of the context of protests but the way of people rebel against their government. In this sense, Arab Spring also challenged Israeli domestic stability. Israel faced with the biggest protest in Israeli history in the name of demanding economic reforms. Although the contents of protests were quite different from the Arab protests and although it failed to embrace Arab components of the Israeli society since the Palestinian issue was definitely out of demand list, the methodology was quite similar. Some of the scholars, like William Craig (2015) and William Gamson (2011), underlined that Israeli movement for social justice was heavily influenced by the Arab Spring. Although the protestors did not want a regime change, existence of such a huge protest in Israeli borders within the conjuncture of Arab Spring was alarming for Israel since the embracement with Palestinian cause would have been possible.

At the regional level, a change in the balance of power against Israeli favor would be disastrous especially the rise of political Islam had been considered. For Philipp Amour, (2017), Israel is status-quo power in the region in many ways. Terrorism is down compared to previous decades. Their economy is quite strong and they are the military giant of the region. They are the democratic and liberal heaven for the West. Israeli superiority in the region comes from the underdevelopment of its rivals (Amour, 2017). Israel had seen Arab Spring as a threat to this balance. Especially the possibility of the rise of the influence of political Islam will be disastrous, since it means the increase of Iranian sphere of influence in the region. Although Israeli

relations with neighbors have been quite cold, their actions are predictable and work for preserving and maintaining the status-quo of the region. Post-Arab Spring period would have some deep effects on Israel since it would break down the balance of power in the region. New post-Arab Spring political elites might take different foreign policies which would challenge Israeli security regime. Even if the new regional order might be progressive, it would challenge Israel's dual strategy since the democratization of the region creates alternative allies for the United States. Therefore, Israel does not receive democracy as an ideological motivation.

At the international level, in addition to the threats to the Israeli dual strategy, the way that international community perceived Arab Spring also was not in favor of Israel. Several factors shaped Western leaders' thinking, according to Byman (2011). First, several leaders, like Barack Obama as the President of the United States, believed that demonstrations were writing a history, so US should embrace it. Secondly, the US seemed to recognize the limits of American power and desire to maintain alliances in region. The US's power in the region seemed to decline compared to past decades and they did not want to break the ultimate tie with the region, although the unfolding events seemed to challenge their traditional concerns. Therefore, there was a broader hope of the West to be on the right side of the history.

Although Israel had adopted wait-and-see approach towards Arab Spring in the first period between the years of 2011 to 2015, it was not in the same tunes with Western response. For Israel, ongoing events were an existential threat so all the steps have to be taken with deep analysis. Any possible Israeli interaction to the events would end up with a threat directed to Israel since the Islamist elements were dominant among the protestors. More than that, West did not solely focused on its old traditional concerns in the region anymore. Therefore, any Israeli interaction would not be welcomed and supported by the West; and without any Western support, Israel would not maintain its special status in the region.

When it comes to Syria, it is one of the most affected states by the turmoil of the Arab Spring. The uprisings had reached in Syria in March 2011. Bashar al-Assad's

disproportionate retaliation increased the tension and civil war had begun with the involvement of opposition forces. Together with the international rivalry over the civil war, Syria became more unstable than ever.

The same dilemma is also valid for Syrian case. Whether the removal of Assad would be an opportunity or not divides scholars into two camps. For the ones who advocates removal of Assad as an opportunity for Israel underlines Syria's organic ties with Iran, Hamas and Hezbollah (Byman, 2011). They are the biggest nemesis of Israel. Therefore, removal of Asad would be a huge blow to them. However, the other camp advocates that Syria remained silent for year with recognizing that any possible open clash with Israel would be disastrous for Syria and Assad's regime (Byman, 2011). More than that, any possibility of Islamist rise in Syria means disaster for Israel. The deep uncertainty within what would happen if Assad falls is the main concern. If Syria would collapse into failed-state, there will be no authority to ensure security among Israeli-Syrian border. More than that, Syrian chemical weapons might fall into other radical Islamist elements which will be disastrous for Israel.

As a result, when the protests get started, general Israeli policy was staying out of Syrian crisis, with adopting wait and see policy. Scholars analyzed this non-involvement policy within different frameworks.

For some group of scholars, Israeli foreign policy behavior towards Syrian uprising is heavily influenced by personal perceptions and ideologies. Ideology and the frames of policy makers actually matters in decision making process during Syrian Spring. Amnon Aran and Leonie Fleishman (2018) argue that Benjamin Netanyahu, as the dominant decision maker, imposed his own diagnostic frames after the outbreak of the uprising. In this sense, this framework refers the specific identification of problem and a possible solution and strategies. Therefore, Netanyahu's personal frames actually matters. The way he perceive Arab world –as a source of turmoil and animosity- was the reason of separating themselves from the turmoil of the Arab Spring. Israeli response might have been different if a dovish

leader would be at the head of the decision making process. As a result, Israeli foreign policy is dominated by diagnostic frames of Netanyahu rather than defensive realist approach. More than that, Aran and Fleishman (2018) also argue that although Israeli foreign policy was realist in Syrian uprisings, pillars of defensive realism was not there. Defensive realism offers cooperation and moderate strategies to get out of the security dilemma; however, Israel rejected opportunities for any kind of cooperation after the outbreak of the protests. According to Aran and Fleishman (2018) again, rejecting to join John Kerry's peace initiative in 2016 was a good example of that.

Together with that, Saleem Ahmat and Subhash Singh (2015) underlined that at the very beginning of the events, Israel hoped for a secular regime to emerge, but due to the limited influence, it had maintained a passive stand towards the Syrian conflict. According to Ahmad and Singh, if opposition eventually takes over the power, Israel estimates that their interests lie with friendship with Western countries, not with Iran. It would also be a huge blow to Iran-Hezbollah axis. The reason for this passive silence was they thought that the Assad regime will fall and they kind of wanted to be the right side of history. Promotion of democracy would be the key for a future peace settlement in the region. Therefore, ideology plays an important part in this foreign policy decision according to them.

However, there is another group of scholars (Magen, 2015; Jones & Milton-Edwards, 2013; Byman, 2011; Inbar, 2012, Asseburg, 2012) who contest this idea and argue that Israeli foreign policy during the Syrian uprising can be explained in defensive realist perspective. The balance of power was in danger; and in order to eliminate any possible spillover, strategic silence was adopted.

According to Daniel Byman (2011) the reason of this strategic silence is the unspoken rules of the relation between Israel and Syria. Although Bashar al-Assad's statements were quite antagonist, his real actions had shown that he is pragmatics, not ideologist when it comes to Israel. He is the devil, but the devil that Israel knows (Jones & Edwards, 2013). His actions are predictable and relatively safe for Israel.

Regime change in Syria would end up with a new government who might not know these rules and act according to public opinion rather than strategic reality. Muriel Asseburg (2012) also adding with saying Syria was some kind of a partner of Israel in the region for the preservation of the status quo. Both of them are status quo states and Syria had proved its reliability for keeping the border quite since 1973 War. She also underlined the countrywide protest within Israel in 2011 and continuation of the uprising would have been cause serious consequences in Israeli domestic politics.

Muriel Asseburg (2012) also underlined that Israel balanced non-involvement policy with deterrence. Israeli officers repeatedly had worn that any kind of violation of Israeli security will face with harsh retaliation. They enforced redlines when absolutely necessary, but tried to avoid direct confrontation. In September 2013, Defense Minister Yalalon stated that they will not get involve Syrian Civil War unless the Israeli redlines will not get harmed, which are transformation of quality weapons to terrorist organizations; transformation of chemical weapons and violation of Israeli sovereignty actually (Asseburg, 2012).

For Amichai Magen (2015), Israeli response towards Arab Spring can be summarized as “defensive, conservative, non-idealist and extensively reliant on purposefully discrete military and diplomatic instruments.” (Magen, 2015, p.128). According to her, Israeli defensive realist response can be understood via several facts. First of all, as a small, consumer driven and economically isolated country, Israeli economy is highly sensitive. Economy was highly damaged during both Intifadas, Lebanon War in 2006, and confrontations with sub-military groups. Therefore, policy makers were highly fragile to preserve the normalcy. Secondly, as it was mentioned, Israel was already superior in the region and wanted to preserve it as a strategic asset. Therefore, they adopt strategic silence and wait and see approach in order to avoid strategic blunders since the dangers are poorly understood. Thirdly, Israel is non-idealist (Magen, 2015). They do not trust public opinion since the elections are generally ends up with the rise of political Islam as what happened in Iran, Egypt and Gaza. Therefore, democratization process also would end up with

Islamization of Syrian politics. Finally, Magen (2015) also underlined the Israeli self-understanding. As it was mentioned again, Israel had known that they will not be a model of progress for its neighbors. Even the implementation of model offering would end up with strong reaction among Arab opponents. More than that, any kind of lauded preferences among sides would have been used as a tool of consolidation of power in anti-Israeli sentiments. They do not have any political aim to be a model of democracy. The only objective they sought is preserving the status quo which they are already militarily and economically superior, and survive actually.

However, although those scholars are looking at the issue in this perspective, they seemed to neglect two main issues. First one is the effect on what happened when they departed from defensive realist foreign policy behavior in the past. This thesis argues that defensive realist foreign policy was not an option, but the *sine qua non* as the most comprehensive foreign policy behavior especially when the outcomes of two Lebanon interventions have been considered. Israel's interventionist attitudes are not a new phenomenon and did not started with Lebanon interventions. However, the issues of Golan Heights, Gaza Strip and West Bank are successfully portrayed as the matters of domestic politics. However, Lebanon was a full scale state. Launching a direct intervention had some serious consequences. Rising numbers of Israeli casualties, together with Hezbollah's statements on Israeli withdrawal as a victory had created a psychological affect among Israelis which called Lebanese Syndrome. The memories of the consequences of getting involved in a foreign country and had to leave without any achievement are still fresh and leads the decision making process. Unilateral withdrawal and the empowerment of Hezbollah as a result of it bind Israel's hands when it comes to Syrian uprisings. More than that, any kind of preferences of sides would be a blow to the ones who they actually supported. Being sided with either Hezbollah and Iran or fundamental Islamist groups is neither desirable nor wanted. Therefore, wait and see approach within defensive realist framework was the most preferable foreign policy option for Israel.

Second one is; it would be a mistake to generalize whole Israeli response at the same level since its defensive realist foreign policy has been tested from time to time. In this sense, this thesis comes up with an approach; the active defensive realism. Adopting defensive realist measures does not mean leaving offense out of the table. Israeli foreign policy is the combination of offensive operational environment with defensive motivations. In order to reveal continuities and changes, whole Israeli response towards the crisis is divided into three in order to examine changes and continuities in foreign policy behavior more comprehensively. In the first period, between the years of 2011 to 2015, Israeli foreign policy was definitely advanced by defensive realist tradition as conservative, non idealist and reliant on diplomatic instruments to preserve existed status quo. In this sense, lessons of Lebanon interventions had played an important part in this foreign policy behavior. Israeli foreign policy was passive in order to keep the hazardous effects away. Strategic silence policy, together with wait-and-see approach is the direct application of defensive realist foreign policy since the main motive is preserving existed balance together with separating themselves from the turmoil. When it comes the second period, which starts with the intervention of Russia and ends in 2017; Israeli threat perception was started to change since Russia's back up had changed whole characteristics of the events. Russian intervention made Assad to survive and it means a definite increase of sphere of Iranian influence. In this sense, passivity proved itself as useless. Since making direct intervention is also proved itself as useless in Lebanon and since revisionism would endanger the Israeli interest in Syria; Israel started to be more active within the lines of defensive realism with adopting diplomatic measures to impose Israeli interest in final setting. Therefore, defensive realist foreign policy dominated the state behavior in conflict resolution once again; but in a more active way now. In this sense, it can be said that second period is a transition period from passive defensive realism to active defensive realism. In the final period, Astana Peace Process revealed the most undesirable outcomes for Israel and they started to be more active with officially confirming cross border attacks. However, the mentality over this transparency is actually defensive again. Israel finds the process inadequate to cover Israeli security needs; so

they try to implement that any kind of violation will face with harsh deterrence. Iran's existence that close to Israeli border is something that Israel cannot tolerate. Therefore, it is actually a balancing strategy. It is an example of preserving the balance with eliminating the irrational. What is different now is their preference to be more active as a tool of balancing strategy at this time. Although foreign policy behavior seemed to change with the Astana process; its nature remained the same. However, those attacks are considered as ordinary and a part of Israeli preemptive war strategy which has been considered as a defensive reflection in this thesis. What official confirmation tells is being more active in final setting actually since both passivity and diplomacy did not give result for Israeli favor. Although the operational environment is aggressive, the mentality behind is defensive since Israel balanced non-involvement with deterrence. However, more increase of Iranian influence will definitely not tolerated by Israel. Therefore, Israel might depart from defensive realist behavior and get involve directly to the Syrian affair in order to prevent further Iranian influence in the future. As a result, a new chapter seems to open in Syrian case; but not between regime forces and opposition at this time; but the competition of search for a sphere of influence between Israel and Iran. In this new chapter, Israel would depart from defensive realist foreign policy behavior since the rise of Iranian power will be the strategic blow to Israeli interest that they will not tolerate.

In order to come up these to two main outcomes of this thesis and reveal continuities and changes, Israeli Syrian relations were examined through the establishment of Israel to the beginning of Arab Spring, together with providing a theoretical framework with examining Israeli foreign policy. To begin with, second chapter aims to analyze the main determinants of Israeli foreign policy, together with the foreign policy making process which is peculiar to Israeli state. In this sense, Israeli foreign policy structure frames the main borders of how Israel evaluates the regional events and constitutes a final decision as a result of that. In this sense, systemic, regional and domestic determinants of Israeli foreign policy are examined. In systemic level, Israel perceives the world in realist perspective, so has security oriented foreign

policy. Having mutually beneficiary relations with a superpower to secure Israeli interest in international politics has the main priority. In regional level, prevention of unified Arab action; both in times of war and peace is the main objective. More than that, as a status quo state, Israel gives the furthestmost importance to the preservation of balance of power within the region which is in Israeli favor; since revisionism used to have some serious consequences in the past. For the domestic determinants, anxiety dominates the foreign policy decisions. The notion of self preservation is the main determinant, in terms of preservation of Jewish identity as the matter of survival; and the preservation of Israeli security. Especially when the foreign policy making process has been considered, with ability to bypass formal process when it comes to security issues; a well known motto comes up as; Israel does not have a foreign policy but a defense policy. This motto frames the mentality behind main foreign policy decisions.

In the third chapter, Israeli Syrian relation is examined from the establishment of Israel to the death of Hafez al-Assad. In this sense, it aimed to appeal redlines of the pragmatic partnership of two neighbors and the changing nature of the relationship. Animosity between Syria and Israel is not a new phenomenon. Two countries became embattled neighbors within their own nature and went into several direct and indirect conflicts throughout the time. Although Palestinian issue seems to be the root cause of disputes between them; the nature of the Israeli-Syrian relations has its own dynamics. Before June 1967 War, the main dynamic of the conflict was the competition of sovereignty over de-militarized zones which was occupied by Syria in 1948 War. With the 1967 War, Israel occupied Golan Heights and the core of the conflict had shifted. Since then, main Syrian motive is re-gaining of Golan Heights, while Israeli motive is preserving it as one of the main pillar of Israeli security assurance.

However, both sides learned how to live with the enemy throughout the time. The preservation of balance of power is the matter. Israel attempted to change it twice via launching military operations in Lebanon; but got its fingers burnt. Therefore, the

lessons of Lebanon remained in foreign policy behavior of Israel. The main foreign policy behavior of Israel towards Syria can be summed as defensive, together with the exception of Lebanon. In this sense, what this thesis aims to conclude is the pragmatic and unspoken rules that govern the relation between Israel and Syria, which makes Israel to adopt defensive realist foreign policy. Throughout the years, both Hafez al-Assad and his successor, Bashar al-Assad proved themselves as relatively reliable partners. Although both Assad's rhetoric was quite antagonist towards Israel; and although there were several direct wars and indirect conflicts between two embattled neighbors; the balance was somehow established in Israeli favor and both parties did not go further to demolish that. Israel even let Syria to intervene in Lebanon Civil War in 1976, even though they hope that Syria would bog down in Lebanon crisis. Although the scope of events went through completely different place since Syria started to establish their hegemony in Lebanon and Israel launched a direct intervention as a result; the pragmatic relationship was seen in this example.

More than that, this pragmatic relationship was preserved regardless of the ideologies of Israeli government; since ideological motivations are the source of irrationalities for defensive realists. Although personal biases or ideological motivations of leaders matters in Israeli foreign policy setting, what this thesis aims to come up with is invalidity of this situation for Syrian case. For instance, in Oslo peace process, Labor Party's dovish policies gave a progress to peace talks. However, although territorial compromises, or in other words; land for peace solution was on the table for Palestinians; the Golan Heights was definitely out of the table. Peace with Syria is considered as costly even for the Left wing government, since it means making compromises on the Golan Heights and its importance is beyond the ideological fragmentations within Israeli politics. This is one of the main reasons for Israel's reluctance to deal with Syrian track with hoping that a progress with other tracks would please the United States so Israel would not take any further step on Golan Heights. Existed status quo is working for both parties and either making peace or entering into a war is seen as a costly option; regardless of the ideological

motivations of decision makers. Another example can be Israel's strategic silence foreign policy as defensive realist reflection towards the Syrian uprising. Right wing Netanyahu government adopted non-entanglement policy to separate themselves from the ongoing turmoil and preserve the balance of power actually; rather than adopting revisionist foreign policy. As a result, what this thesis aims to reveal is that the ideological fragmentations does not have affect on Israeli foreign policy towards Syria. Israeli foreign policy objective towards Syria is preserving the existing balance of power which is in Israeli favor. What a right wing or left wing government might affect is the tools of achieving this objective. Right wing government may adopt more aggressive and active policies to ensure this aim; while left wing government may adopt more dovish policies to ensure balance of power. As a result, Israeli foreign policy towards Syria remains as offensive minded defensive postured policy as this thesis aims to conclude. What changed in Arab Spring is the adoption of active defensive foreign policy since both revisionism or passive defensive realism was inadequate to secure Israeli interest towards Syrian Civil War.

In the lights of the established pragmatic relationship which is examined in the third chapter, fourth chapter aims to analyze continuities and changes in Bashar al-Assad's period until the beginning of Arab Spring. When Hafez al-Assad died, arrival of his son, Bashar al-Assad had been received with full skepticism in Israel. Whether he would follow his father's footsteps as adopting pragmatist foreign policy towards Israel; or would try to open a new way with the ambition of becoming the leader of the Arab world was the question. However, both Bashar and Israeli politicians had little time to observe each others' actual intention. Few months after Bashar's arrival, al-Aqsa Intifada had been broke out. As a result, Israel adopted a high level of offensive minded defensive posture strategy in foreign policy once again. With the following events, like 9/11 attacks in 2001, US's Iraq intervention in 2003 and Israel-

Hezbollah war in 2006; Israeli-Syrian relations went off a completely different place that would hardly build up again. These are the important turning points in Israeli-Syrian relations and had prepared the grounds of Israeli foreign policy of Syria during the Arab Spring.

However, although Bashar al-Assad's statements were quite rough and Syria's strategic partnership with Iran and Hezbollah was a serious alarm for Israel, he remained as a stable partner. He acted according to the needs of the conjuncture. Therefore, Syrian foreign policy was predictable and stable for Israel. Although he had animosity towards Israel to the bones, his actual decisions had shown that he acted according to the preservation of balance of power at the end of the day.

In the fifth chapter, blowing effect of Arab Spring on Syrian Israeli relations and the continuities and changes in Israeli foreign policy are examined. In this sense, the whole period is divided into three to give more comprehensive look. In the first period, the years between 2011 and 2015, Israeli response can be summed as skeptical and anxious. Therefore, Israel has adopted strategic silence as a defensive realist reaction to preserve the existed balance. In the second period, Russia's intervention was a game changing event. With the Russian intervention, Bashar al-Assad seemed to remain in power; which means a definite increase in Iranian sphere of influence. In order to reduce the risk of Iranian influence, Israel once again adopt a defensive position and conduct diplomatic relations with West and Russia to make them consider Israeli interest in possible final settlement. In the final period, which starts with Astana Peace Process in 2017, Israeli defensive realist foreign policy was under most threatening test, since the Assad forces started to regain strategically important territories. As a reaction, Israel was not only launched cross border attacks as they did before; but now they officially confirm those attacks for the first time. Therefore, they become more active. Whether Israel seemed to depart from defensive realist foreign policy via launching such attacks had opened another debate. What

this thesis aims to underline is the continuation of Israel's defensive realist foreign policy, even though they seemed to adopt offensive realist behavior especially after the Astana process. Elimination of the aggressor is a balancing behavior to preserve the status quo.

CHAPTER 2

ISRAELI FOREIGN POLICY

Realist thought in international relations focused on the realist perception of human nature. They assumed that human behavior is driven by basic instincts and desires as a result of evil nature of itself. Same situation is also applicable for states in international level since the states are central actors in realist theory of International Relations (IR). In realist school of IR, there are basic assumptions to understand the nature of system. To begin with, states dominate the international system since they are the main actor. It came up with the concept of state sovereignty, with underlining that states are sovereign in domestic and foreign politics so none of the outsider actor can dictate what to do. Secondly, realist school assumed that states are unitary and rational (Rynning & Guzzini, 2001). In this sense, internal differences in domestic policies have no validity since they will unify for the sake of state interest. Thirdly, realists assumed that the international system is anarchical (Rynning & Guzzini, 2001). Without any central authority or police force, states must look after themselves to preserve their own interest. Realists claim that all states play power politics (Rynning & Guzzini, 2001). While states sought to gain more power, other states feel insecure and they respond to counter this challenge with gaining more power. This situation ends up with security dilemma. With the absence of world government, anarchy makes the mutual trust between states impossible.

In this sense, Israeli foreign policy is a good example of realist foreign policy, since the furthestmost motive on foreign policy making process is the ensuring security.

Indeed, every state's main priority is preserving territorial integrity. What puts Israel in a unique situation is the regional conjuncture which is definitely hostile. Therefore, defining and defending the borders of Zion constitutes the main body of Israeli foreign policy. However, whether the priority should be solely the Israeli territories or it should be expanded when the fate of Zion is threatened is another debate. In other words, whether Israel should adopt a defensive realist or offensive realist policies in order to maintain its security constitutes the main debate in Israeli foreign policy making process.

2.1. Israel's Foreign Policy Determinants

2.1.1. Systemic Determinants

Israeli foreign policy determinants can be analyzed in three levels. First one is the systemic determinants, which is impressed by realist tradition. Since the surrounding is hostile, diplomacy constitutes a bridge to the outside world to adopt a place in international politics. In this sense, international politics is anarchical as in realist tradition. In order to survive within the system, Israel has followed balancing strategies via constructing alliances with superpowers. In this sense, United State of America's unconditional support is vital for Israeli existence, since US is the biggest Israeli defender in international political arena. After 1967 War and Camp David Accord, Israel became number one receiver of US aid. Strategic partnership with US opened a security umbrella to Israel. However, this relationship is not like a patron-client relationship, but a strategic partnership. In order to maintain this special relationship, Israel both uses hard variables, like underlining the common security interest in the region with United States; and also soft variables, like using lobbying power or networks to force US to adopt certain policy.

On the systemic level, Israel's main concerns are generally diplomatic and political; mainly in terms of searching for acceptance in international arena, together with assuring that they will be the first choice of West in their battle against Arab states. In this sense, Israel is actually suspicious for the intense of United Nations since

Israel has not been universally accepted member of UN (Mahler, 2011). Considering the anti-Israeli dominance in UN General Assembly, together with Arab control of oil and their international influence based upon this, distrust blossomed among Israeli decision makers towards neutrality of international community. Even its capital city and borders are debatable in international community. Israel declared Jerusalem as the capital city whereas rest of the world, except United States after 2018, considered Tel Aviv as the capital city of Israel. More than that, international community repeatedly calls for the return of pre-1967 borders and stop establishing new Jewish settlements in occupied territories. Although US is the main Israeli supporter in every means; this special relationship had been challenged under Barak Obama administration with putting pressure to Israel to do more on work for peace and stop building of new settlements in occupied territories (Mahler, 2011). Therefore, Israel is quite anxious on their position in international community since the relations can be chilled even with United States from time to time.

There are also economic and cultural concerns aroused from systemic factors. Israeli economic development has been considered neither strong nor consistent (Mahler, 2011). As a result of realist foreign policy, Israel stuck on military concerns and spends much of his budget to defensive-based military activities. Since the manpower and resources are limited, Israel holds on Western support and economically tied to their economies in order to find a place to their economic system. Israel is vastly outnumbered by Arab states; which creates endless demand for immigrants for military and economic manpower. Political isolation in Middle East comes with economic isolation too, therefore Israel become quite dependent on Western markets. Continuity of this support and trade flow is quite crucial; together with ensuring the flow of Jewish immigrants became an important issue of foreign policy.

2.2.1.1. Dual Strategy in Israeli Foreign Policy

In systemic level, representation of Israel in international politics as the villa in jungle in the region has the furthestmost priority. Adaptation of disproportionate

security arrangements has to be justifiable within this framework. In order to overcome the strategic concerns, Israel has developed a strategy to assure survival in hostile neighboring according to Shibley Telhami. Telhami (1990) explains it as the assurance of survival since there is limited economic and human resources, and the hostile tensions within the region. On the one hand, Israel sought to prevent united Arab world, both politically and militarily, because divisions within the Arab world is advantageous for them. This strategy has been based on the assumption that Arab and Israeli interests have always in conflict so a division between Arab states would work for Israeli interest, both in war time and peace time. In order to achieve that, Israel followed a strategy of providing military support to the minority groups in Arab countries; such as rebels in Sudan; Christians in Lebanon and Iraqi Kurds (Heller, 2013).

For the time for peace, Israeli view based on that the peace negotiations are better conducted in bilateral settings (Maoz, 2006), since each Arab state would follow their own interest rather than the common Arab interest. Therefore, they would be more open-minded for Israeli-favored security concessions. 1979 Egypt-Israeli peace treaty was a product of these considerations. Anwar Sadat's Egypt had leaved the notion of Arab nationalism and started to follow Egyptian national interest and entered into a peace process with Israel.

For the time of war, fear of united Arab action drives basic security concerns. Before 1967 War, one of the main Israeli concerns was the possible united-Arab attack since they saw themselves as relatively vulnerable within a hostile environment. (Telhami, 1990) When the united Arab forces had been defeated within six single days, this fear had seemed to decline. However, this calm was ended up with 1973 Yom Kippur War since Israel was too close to be defeated. Since then, Israel sought to launch preemptive strikes and deterrent attacks immediately when the risk appeared in order to prevent further full scale war.

As the second part of dual strategy, Israel always sought for the support of a great power, without consideration of their ideology, (Jones & Murphy, 2002), in order to

cover up its vulnerabilities as a geographically small country with vulnerable borders. When it was established, there were open sympathies towards Soviet Union since the Moscow fought with one of the greatest nemesis of Jewish people, the Nazi Germany (Jones & Murphy, 2002). Throughout the time, Israel has developed alliances with different states if the security needs call for it, regardless of the ideology. Most prominent example of this strategy is Israeli-Saudi cooperation in post-Arab Spring period against Shiite axis to undermine Iranian influence in the region.

With the beginning of 1950s, especially after the Korean War, Israel started to openly identify itself with West (Jones & Murphy, 2002). However, their relation with United States was under tension. Israeli cross border attacks against neighboring states was not welcomed by the United State since those attacks would undermine the attempts of the emergence of anti-Soviet block among Arab states, and even would collaborated them under Soviet-bloc further. As a result, Israel sought to make alliance especially with France to secure its military requirements. Especially France's assistance for the establishment of nuclear facility was highly crucial for Israeli security. With the provided know-how and guidance, Israel had constructed its own nuclear facility in Dimonah in 1957 (Jones & Murphy, 2002). Since then, Israel is the only country which has nuclear capability compared to Arab states. Therefore, collaboration with a great power brought one of the biggest strong hands in national security in a hostile environment to Israel.

When the 1957 Suez crisis appeared¹, Israel had recognized that power in Middle East lays in the United States, not in Europe anymore. Therefore, they started to support lobby groups on Capitol Hill that would have influence on US's foreign policy towards Middle East in Israeli favor (Jones & Murphy, 2002). Especially when the most powerful Arab states- Egypt and Syria- went under Soviet influence, Israel became one of the strongest allies of United States in the region, even though

¹ Israel invaded Sinai Peninsula in October 1956 as a part of secret plan with Britain France. However, while they were militarily successful, the operation turned into political fiasco with US started to impose financial and political pressures to withdraw.

there were several ins and outs in their special strategic partnership. Especially 1967 defeat of Arab military forces witnessed Israeli ties with US had grown closer. As Henry Kissinger stated, Israel was one of the reliable allies in the region for US for undermining Soviet influence (Jones & Murphy, 2002). Therefore, Israel has become one of the US's strategic assets in region against Moscow. However, this strategic partnership is not like patron-client relationship (Mahler, 2011). Both Israel and United States have mutual interest in the region most of the times and act accordingly. For instance, with 1979 Camp David Accords, which was signed between Israel and Egypt; one of the strongest allies of Soviets departed from Eastern block and started to have close relations with Washington. This was also a strategic political asset for US. For Israeli side, signing a peace treaty with Cairo created an ideal environment for their battle against Palestinian Liberal Organization. Now, they had a peace agreement with one of their greatest foes and strategic ties with United States had coupled. Therefore, there was an open space to deal with PLO in Lebanon. In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon without any pressure.

On the other hand, both Israel and United States has not always gone in common line in their foreign policies. For instance, Israel's decision to sell advanced aircraft radar system to China in 2000 faced with a strong criticism in Washington (Jones & Murphy, 2002). Moreover, Barak Obama administration had put pressure Israel to do more on work for peace and stop building of new settlements in occupied territories. Especially the settlement issue and the future of occupied territories increased the tensions between US and Israel from time to time.

However, this dual strategy would not work together all the time. For instance, when Israel achieved one of its regional objectives with separating Egypt from rest of the Arab world with signing a peace treaty; Egypt has become potential competitor for a reliable ally candidate for the US in the region, which directly undermines Israel's global objective actually (Telhami, 1990). Therefore, divisions within Arab world may work for the continuation of Israeli effective military deterrence; but at the same time, it may distinguish Israeli global objectives. Unconditional US support is crucial

for Israel since US is the most prominent financial and political supporter. Israeli writer Amos Kenan explains this policy with saying; “making the West always choose between us and them, and if it is not, we’ll create enough trouble to make sure that it must be us” (Amos, 1982, p.359). Therefore, a peace process has created a dilemma for Israeli foreign policy. On the one hand, it is desirable especially when it handled bilateral since Israel would both open an ideological division within Arab world and make a peace as a strategic asset. On the other hand, the process itself would cause an intimacy between United States and subjected Israeli peace partner; which would definitely undesirable for Israel since it may end up with more US pressures to Israel to make more concessions on peace setting. Therefore, outcomes of entering into a peace process are questionable for Israeli policy makers, and a peace process generally has received skeptically especially when it comes from Arab counterparts.

2.2.2. Regional Determinants

In regional level, together with preventing unified Arab action as a part of dual strategy, preserving existed situation has the highest priority since they are militarily and economically superior compared to its hostile surrounding. Therefore, whether Israel is a regional hegemonic power or status quo power opens another debate. Before getting into this debate, it is better to understand Israel’s power framework and its limits in the region.

To begin with, Israel is an obvious regional power. However, its power has some serious limitation when it comes to be influencer in Middle East. Israel has a power to block, but not power to shape the regional order (Kappel, 2014). It has the most superior military in the region and used it effectively as a coercive tool to get others to do what they would otherwise not to do. As a result, although Israel cannot shape the main dynamics of regional order; it successfully implement the limitations –even the power capability of their enemy - via using its hard powers, vertical networks, and extra-regional allies (Kappel, 2014). More than that, although Israel is not well embedded in the region, and politically and economically isolated; it takes it as an

advantage to become allies with the most important countries in the world with separating itself from the instability of region (Kappel, 2014). Both the policy makers and the majority of Israeli population described themselves as ‘villa in jungle’ as Ehud Barak once said (Benn, 2013). Israel is economically well-grown and stable state, compared to other regional counterparts. It has well-functioned democracy. This stability and relative success makes them a villa and a stable regional partner. However, Israel’s outstanding as democratic society is not seen as an alternative model for their neighbors, as a result of embedded hostile relations and ideological reasons. Israel neither has an ability to export its democratic system to the region, nor an ideological motive to do so. Already existed balance of power is working for Israeli interest and maintenance of this balance through all measures is the main objective.

Although Israeli hard power capabilities are quite adequate to become a hegemonic power; main pillars of power for realism does not make Israel a hegemonic power in the region. Military power, for instance, as the most important pillar of power in realist approach, does not make Israel as hegemonic power. Israel has the most powerful and well-equipped army in the region and won all the direct wars that they engaged, but it does not bring a hegemonic status to them, although it brings a power to have direct control of military operations within the region.

Economic power is a second power pillar according to realists, but this does not make Israel as hegemonic again. Israeli economy and technology is highly developed. However, regional market is largely closed to Israel. As a result of economic boycott in the region towards Israel, they actually cannot sell their technology (Kappel, 2014). Therefore, highly developed economy does not make them hegemonic power again. Geographical location, as the third power according to realist approach, is also problematic. Realism talks about borders, but Israeli final borders, even the capital city of Israel is debatable. More than the border issues, Israel have hostile relations with its surrounding which actually challenges its existential situation in the region.

So what would make a state a hegemonic power? Robert Kappel (2014) identifies several factors of being a hegemonic power. First off all, a hegemonic power should be active both globally and regionally in business and also developed global value chains like norms etc. Secondly, they should provide public goods; like security, fiscal stability and developmental aid. Finally, they should play a key role in the governance of the region or the globe. From this perspective again, although Israel has capacity to become a hegemonic power in Middle East; structural limitations prohibits them to become one. Israeli policy makers know that Israeli influence over their neighbors is quiet limited. Although they are militarily strong and economically advanced; it is not seen as a tool of influence for both sides. Hostile neighboring states sees it as a security threat; while Israel has been developing such capabilities since saw it as vital for Israeli survival, together with a balancing strategy of power. Also, a hegemonic power needs followers. However, Israel has no followers, neither regionally nor globally. Although United States appears as the main supporter of Israel; their relations could be unsteady from time to time and also depends on the frames of each US President. Ideological differences and the hostile attitudes both from Israel and the neighboring powers prevent leadership-follower nexus, which misleads Israel's role in the region.

Under these circumstances, although they have the capacity to become a hegemonic power in the region, structural limitations prohibits them to become one. Therefore, together with recognizing structural differences; Israel is more likely to hold on its status quo power in the region, together with recognizing they fallow revisionist foreign policy from time to time. They are already militarily and economically superior. They have somehow stable and trustworthy relations with a super power. Arab world is even more divided than ever especially after the Arab Spring. Therefore, already existed regional system seems to be in Israeli favor. Recognition of Israeli state in Israeli-defined territories and the normalization of relations with

hostile neighbors, together with preservation of their ability to deterrence are their main policy objectives. In this sense, it can be said that Israel is a status-quo state. In order to maintain the status quo, balance strategy is the furthestmost preferable option.

2.2.3. Domestic Determinants

In domestic level, hostile environment is the main determinant of Israeli foreign policy. Since the establishment of Israel, it had to involve in several major wars and ongoing low intensified conflicts. As a result, culture of preservation of national security became the main pillar of Israeli policy system. Legacy of warfare deeply rooted within the system and frames minds of decision makers; so the context of decision making process has been shaped through this security perspective legacy (Mahler, 2011). In this sense, vulnerability of Israel within hostile neighboring repeatedly reminded to its citizens, together with becoming the main ground of Israeli foreign policy preferences. Therefore, ensuring national security with adopting hard core measures became an obligatory foreign policy tool, not an option. As a result, foreign policy of Israel is characterized by surrounding hostility, suspicion and anxiety. Whether this vulnerability is self-constructed or acquired in time because of its disproportionate reprisals is another question. Maintaining powerful military, as well as ensuring strong ties with Washington has become the enduring themes of Israel's search for security since the feeling of insecurity and vulnerability dominated the mentality (Jones & Murphy, 2002). In this sense, adopting hard security measures to ensure security is also raises the problem of security dilemma. As a result of hostile relations with its neighbors, Israel feels insecure and increases its military capabilities as a realist foreign policy reaction. However, once Israel developed more sophisticated military capabilities to maintain its superiority in military capabilities, its neighbors feel more insecure than ever and adopt more hostile policies towards Israel since the threat perception has been increased. This dilemma has been deepened the hostility and animosity between Israel and its neighbors.

Second determinant is the preservation of Israeli Jewish identity as the matter of survival. Jewishness is the dominant character of the state in both domestic and foreign policy pillars. Preserving this political culture is vital for the survival of Jewish state. Therefore, they urged Alliyah as a foreign policy value rather than a foreign policy objective (Brecher, 1972). Absorbing new immigrants and the notion of self-sacrifice; which comes from the heavy taxation or long periods in military services, to build a nation constitutes the main characteristics of Jewish state. Both for the Israeli society and the policy making elite, Jewishness is the most predominant aspect political culture. As a result, there is unconditional link between the Jews living in other countries and the ones as Israeli citizens. These two groups are dependent and the Israeli security and its future depends on this world Jewry (Brecher, 1972). In this sense, lobbying power in hosting country is crucial for Israel for the implementation of foreign policy agenda. More than that, Alliyah is not only welcomed, but also encouraged to maintain Jewish majority. In this sense, territorial concessions or the future of annexed territories become the issues of security and survival of Jewish identity. However, although Jewish identity dominates the foreign policy decision making process, pragmatism predominates most since the state interest matters above all other issues (Brecher, 1972). Since the strong arm mentality ends up with security dilemma, balancing strategy through non-ideological motives and methods are generally preferable in Israeli foreign policy as it can be seen in their strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia against the threat of the aggressor; Iran.

Another side of the self preservation is the preservation of Israeli security, no matter what it takes. National resources are limited but the enemies are self considerably unlimited. (Telhami, 1990) In this sense, deterrence strategy is highly required to ensure Israeli security. Israel had to act immediately and massively to prevent long scales of war since their geography and economy could not stand long against such war for a long time (Telhami, 1990). Therefore, Israel follows preemptive and offensive military strategy to cover up its limited resources. The main motive is defensive since the preservation of the existed security status is the aim. When a

threat perception appears, Israel responds immediately to both destroy the source of threat before they attack, and also impose “do not dare to attack us” mentality. They excessively use air force to make massive raids with aiming both diminishing the risk of losing manpower – since their population is also limited- and impose a fear to the hostile groups or states that the more would come if they do dare to attack Israel. (Telhami, 1990) The most prominent example of this deterrence strategy was 1967 War. United Arab forces were defeated by Israel within six single days. Although the attack had ended up with a territorial gain since Israel had occupied Golan Heights, West Bank and Gaza; they actually reacted preemptively since the offence has the advantage (Telhami, 1990). Once the united Arab forces had been defeated, now Israel’s biggest foe, Nasser of Egypt had lost his reputation among his followers, and that gave a clear message at the end that any attempt of, or even the possibility of attack will face with a massive deterrence by Israel. Therefore, Israeli security understanding can be stated as “offensive minded defensive posture” as Ehud Spinzak (1998, p.118) had underlined. This posture constitutes main body of Israeli foreign policy structure. It has a defensive strategy in theory, since there is an aim to defeat the enemy before he attacks and broke their courage with massive defeat. However, operational nature is offensive with large scales of massive attacks. “Peace through strength strategy” has strong emotional, political and cultural appeal (Jones & Edwards, 2013, p.112). Israel is superior in terms of military related to its antagonists and so ready to impose its position through hard measures when it is necessary. However, the aim is preservation of its security status, which has a defensive posture.

As the third determinant, Israel is a well functioned democracy; therefore, public opinion strongly matters. Although the foreign policy making process which is peculiar to Jewish state and the hostile environment actually helps policy makers to bypass formal processes for the name of security, democratic character is a value that they strongly want to preserve as their image. Therefore, policy makers have to

justify foreign policy actions as the matter of survival to convince the public. Otherwise, public opinion has some serious power of sanction. For instance in the aftermath of 1982 Lebanon War, countrywide protests had forced Ariel Sharon to resign and ended Begin's political career.

As the fourth determinant, Israeli geopolitical position makes the territorial integrity as the main concern. Because of the small population within narrow geographical environment, decision-makers have known that their decisions will have direct and real consequences (Mahler, 2011). Therefore, security concerns ended up with indisputable quest for defensible borders. Preemptive war strategy is a result of this *sine qua non* quest. What defensible borders means for Israel is actually different from what it might mean for Canada or United States since Israel is isolated small country in hostile neighboring. In this sense, one of the reasons for Israel's insist on preservation of the occupied territories is creating buffer zones since the geographical advantages are quite limited in a hostile environment. Preservation of Golan Heights, for instance, has become a matter of national security assurance, since its mounted position opened an aerial viewpoint to her borderline. It is strategically important as it creates a buffer zone between Syria and Israel. When the Syrian Civil War started, Israel benefited much from this buffer zone to prevent possible spillovers into its territory.

As a result, as Clive Jones mentioned; "Israel does not see its foreign policy revisionist terms but rather seeks to maintain status quo based on a strong defensive posture" (Jones, 2001, p.127). So it is better call it Israel has offensive minded defensive postured foreign policy. Israel is a status quo state, so the existed power relations and the balance actually work for them. Any change in the balance would be disastrous for Israeli security. Israel is not threatened only by the empowerment of Arab states. Weakened Arab states would also end up with the more representation of public opinion which is definitely against Israeli existence. Therefore, any attempts to change the status quo have been received highly skeptical. It doesn't mean that Israel was always followed this way. For instance, in both Lebanon Wars,

Israel had followed revisionist foreign policy and directly invaded a foreign country. This action had some serious consequences with receiving strong criticism from both Israeli public and international community, and even caused a government change. The lessons of Lebanese syndrome had been learned and Israel started to act with deliberation in following events like the Arab Spring.

2.3. Foreign Policy Making Process

When it comes to foreign policy making process, it is highly security oriented as it was mentioned. Within this framework, there are some core and unchangeable values which frames the mindset of policy making elites. The most crucial one is the need of securing Jewish state against external threat while preserving Jewish majority internally, which directly frames policy preferences of decision-makers (Jones & Murphy, 2002). The reason for highly security oriented policies is also explained by Efraim Inbar (1998). According to him, key decision makers have been "socialized in the defense establishment." (Inbar, 1998, p. 63). All former generals who at once or another occupied the portfolios of either foreign affairs or defense (Jones & Murphy, 2002). This process of socialization environment constructs Israeli foreign policy as the maintenance of military superiority. As Jones (2002) noted, Foreign Ministry have carried less weight than either the views expressed by the Prime Minister's Office or the Defense Ministry. Israeli interest is determined by security considerations and as a result security establishments become more dominant in defining state's vital interest (Jones & Murphy, 2002). Therefore, Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) has to be taken into account in foreign policy decision making process. There is no civilian institution to counter IDF's ability to influence foreign policy decisions and to present situational picture. The decisions are dominated by the analysis presented by IDF and Defense Ministry bodies. The most predominant example of this dominance is 1982 Lebanon War. Ariel Sharon was the one who pictured situational environment and the key player in decision making process with eliminating the rest of political recommendations. David Ben-Gurion used to explain

it by saying; “Defense Ministry makes policy; Foreign Ministry explains it.” (Maoz, 2006, p.518). Israel has multiple strategies for combating; but has few for making peace, which occluded nearly all peace processes, except several bilateral peace agreements like Egyptian-Israeli Peace Agreement in 1979; since the military domination within strategic considerations prevent Israel to take concessions to appease Arabs states. For the defense forces, any kind of territorial or political appeasement would have been seen as a sign of weakness. IDF officers mostly dominated the small circle of advisers of Israeli prime minister and also take a part in diplomatic missions most of the time. For instance, Golda Meir attended with several intelligence people in her meeting with King Hussein of Jordan in 1973 (Maoz, 2006). The most significant exception of this tradition was the Oslo negotiations. Although military officers were participated the meetings, Foreign Ministry had the overall responsibility and most of the negotiations was handed by diplomats under Shimon Peres (Maoz, 2006). Therefore, although there were some shifts from time to time during peace processes, Israeli old mantra has continued as Israel does not have a foreign policy but a defense policy. This mantra constitutes the general frame of Israeli perception to the outside world.

However, solely focusing on national security perception leads to miss out foreign policy making process which is peculiar to Jewish state: ability to bypass formal process via security oriented agenda. Knesset is like a cross party forum, and has little impact on final decision in foreign policy issues. Decision making process is highly dominated by security bureaucracies, intelligence services and paramilitary groups. There is a hierarchy of influence. Amichai Magen (2015) evaluated this hierarchy at three stages. First of all, National Security Council was tasked with coordinating and gathering information and intelligence; with estimates from Israel’s various security and foreign policy agencies; with conducting independent analysis. At the end of the process, they create policy briefs for Prime Minister, which discussed by him and his national security advisors. At the second stage, a separate consultation process had started between Prime Minister and the military secretary to

inform PM about the military and intelligence estimations, together with the contributions of experts and other security agencies (Magen, 2015). At the final stage, final product settled as a foreign policy decision which is guided and conferred by Prime Minister and the Ministry of Defense.

For a more depth analysis, Michael Bencher (1972) divides this political structure into three parts as inputs, process, and outputs. The input segment has the operational environment, communication and psychological environment. Under the operational environment, there are internal and external environments. Internal environment is the compose of domestic factors that would influence foreign policy decision making process, such as military capability, resources, public opinion and economic strength etc. (Brecher, 1972). In external environment, Israeli relations with Middle East, together with superpowers matters. All those relations can affect the manner in which Israel acts in given situation and formulates its foreign policy. In the process section, various actors' affect on foreign policy formulation, and strategic and tactical decisions; such as decision-making elites, mass media, the press, and most importantly the core decision making group. In this sense, individuals and their perception on the event matters (Brecher, 1972). In the output segment, there are final decisions and actions by government.

As a result, regardless of the name of the classification, the nature is always security oriented. Decision makers in foreign policy setting have generally been socialized in security environment and both their and other agencies frame is upon the maximization of security. Since the operational environment gave enough reason to be so, Israeli foreign policy became synonymous to defense policy at the end of the day.

2.4. Foreign Policy Behavior

When it comes to foreign policy behavior, together with recognizing structural differences; Israel is more likely to hold on its status quo power in the region. Although it used to follow a revisionist manner from time to time, it is clear that

revisionist foreign policy does not work for Israeli interest. The conjuncture is not convenient for this type of foreign policy behavior. Therefore, a pragmatic balanced behavior is the comprehensive way to maintain existed status quo that they already have been benefited much.

In addition to this balanced behavior, anxiety and suspicion are the characteristics of the foreign policy decisions as a result of hostile neighboring. Israel feels insecure and adopts high level security measures as a realist foreign policy reaction. Since the anxiety dominates the process, preemptive strikes have been immediately launched when the threat perception appears. In this sense, deterrence capability and superiority is the most significant measures that Israel cannot sacrifice, since their economy and geography would not stand long against full scale of war. Decision-makers know that their decisions will have direct and real consequences, so better-safe-than-sorry mentality characterized the foreign policy decisions. Especially Arab's peace offers doubled the skepticism and anxiety since Israel strongly believes that Israeli and Arab interests are always in contradiction and their neighbors only understand the language of force. (Maoz, 2006).

As it was mentioned, ensuring security is a predominant determinant of Israeli foreign policy making. Therefore, Israel seeks to preserve nation-in-arms policy. In this sense, long period in military services or high taxations have seen as the matter of national security. More than that, as a result of this motion, most of the Israeli policy makers are socialized in military environment which has a direct impact on decision making process (Brecher, 1972).

The main reason behind the endless demands of ensuring national security and security-based foreign policy is actually siege mentality (Maoz, 2006), which is driven by paranoia and become the most predominant foreign policy behavior. It is most profoundly expressed in David Ben-Gurion's notion of "small state surrounded by outnumbered enemies" (Maoz, 2006, p.482). Israel characterized its identity upon this hostility. As Edward Said underlined in his master piece of work, *Orientalism*: "the development and maintenance of every culture require the existence of

another... The construction of identity involves the opposites and ‘others’” (Said, 1978, p.331). Although the Jewish identity was appeared long before the birth of Christ, it had developed within Israeli borders and the main grounds of it accumulated under the siege mentality, because they have seen ‘others’ as hostile towards Israel to the bones.

2.5. Israel and the Middle East

Throughout the history, Israel engaged in the region through wars and conflicts. Since its establishment, Israel had to deal with several total wars with its neighbors and numberless low-intensify conflicts. Therefore, because of the conjuncture of its existential environment in the region, Israel does not have a foreign policy but a defense policy as a result of endless security concerns. Israel is geographically alienated and directly opened to external threat throughout its borders. This situation leads a need of strong military forces.

Recognition of Israeli existence on its Israeli-determined borders by its Arab neighbors is one of the main objectives of Israeli foreign policy. Therefore, they sought to sign bilateral peace agreements with Arab states, which contains two main pillars; recognition of Israel as a sovereign state, and normalization of relations in terms of removing economic and political boycott of Arab states against Israel. As a result, mutual dependence may occur between them and war would become more costly for its neighbors. Economic cooperation constitutes main component of Israeli strategy in the process of normalization. According to the Shimon Perez on his book, the New Middle East (1993), solution for ongoing conflicts in Middle East is the application of the European Union (EU) mode. The EU started with Coal and Steel Cooperation and then transforms itself throughout the years to become political union. Having an economical ground can be a key of solving disputes and have both stability and development. So, they have to promote a joint economic program in order to make Israel to become a part of Middle East. In order to do that, Israel

would invest technology and knowhow as its profession; Gulf countries would invest petrodollars, and Egypt and Jordan would provide cheap labor. With combination of all those components, Middle East can finally be stable and peaceful, according to Perez (1993).

More than that, Israel may not hold any direct attack to its borders as it was mentioned. Therefore, creating buffer zones via invading strategic locations became a defense strategy most of the time. Extensive and outrageous retaliation policy actually aims to defeat the enemy before they attacks and broke their courage with a massive defeat. Especially the strategies of regime targeting, bombing headquarter, or the specific targeting of executives has find place foreign policy objectives. Bombing the headquarters of Palestinian Liberation Organization in Tunisia in 1985 and assassination of Hezbollah's spiritual leader Abbas Musawi in 1992 were some of the examples of this strategy (Jones & Murphy, 2002). As it was mentioned, Ehud Spinzak (1998) called it as offensive-minded defense posture. Attack first mentality is directly adopted when a threat perception appears externally, with a defensive purpose but an offensive operational content.

Aside from hostile relations, Israel also developed several alliances in the region, even if the relation is tremulous from time to time. Israel had military and economic alliance with Turkey after 1990s. They also have developed technological, economic and strategic partnership with New Delhi. Most prominent example is Israeli entrance in Oslo Accords in 1993 (Jones & Murphy, 2002). With the 1993 Oslo Accords, there was a hope and expectation of Israel for the emergence of new Middle East order based on multilateralism in which people, goods and services can move freely from place to place(Jones & Murphy, 2002). Oslo would also allow Israel to build a bridge to the wider world - wider than Middle East since there was international criticism towards Israel. When the whole peace process had failed in 2000 and the Al-Aqsa Intifada had started, Israeli policy makers used it as an excuse to maintain security-minded foreign policy posture with saying that the peace in the

Middle East is far away, so Israel had to protect itself from the existential threats. Especially Islamist extremists' existence as sub military groups in neighboring states did much to focus Israel's attention upon security and led hawkish governments had been elected.

As a result, Israeli foreign policy is unconditionally based on the assurance of national security. Of course every state's main objective is assuring its security against existential threats; but the tool of achieving this aim is different from state to state. For Israel, offensive minded defensive postured foreign policy setting is a way of stability assurance. For Israel, offense has been used as a tool of defense since the conjuncture in Middle East let them to do so. Whatever occurred in Middle East, Israeli foreign policy remains always security oriented and biased on strong military. Existed security establishment and balance of power in Middle East is working for Israeli favor; so Israel is ready to use its deterrence power to eliminate possible threats to topple this balance.

CHAPTER 3

SYRIAN-ISRAELI RELATIONS (1948-2000)

Hostility between Syria and Israel is not a new phenomenon. Since the establishment of Israel in 1948, two countries became embattled neighbors within their own nature and went into several direct and indirect conflicts throughout the time. Although Palestinian issue seems to be the root cause of disputes between them; the nature of the Israeli-Syrian relations has its own dynamics. According to Itamar Rabinovich, Israeli-Syrian conflict can be regarded under four main sub-conflicts, which are; sovereignty over Golan Heights; Syria's leading role on Arab nationalism and its insist on any kind of settlement be shaped on Syria's perspective; Palestinian issue; and the competition over Lebanon (Rabinovich, 1990). Since both parties blamed each other for having a secret agenda, any kind of settlement is less likely to become. Israel gets suspicious on Syria's main interest as establishing the Greater Syria which includes the lands of Israel and Lebanon; and also Syria is doubtful on the same thing as Israel to establish Greater Israel (Rabinovich, 1990).

3.1. The period of animosity 1948 – 1967

1948 War was a watershed event of Middle East history. Israel was able to defeat Arab armies and expended its territories beyond 1947 UN Partition Plan (Rabil, 2003). As a result of an absolute military success, Israel had enjoyed its victory throughout the armistice process. In 1949, parties gathered on the Rhodes and signed separate armistice agreements with Israel. However, those armistices did not involve normalization of relations or establishing comprehensive peace between parties. It

was just an ‘absence of war’ regulation and solely had a military character. Under the Article 7 of agreement, supervision of the application of armistices was left to Mixed Armistice Commission (MAC) which included the members of the parties and chaired by UN (Rabil, 2003).

3.1.1. Sovereignty over Demilitarized Zones and Jordan River

Different from Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon; Syria had succeeded to occupy three small areas within the international border of Palestine which was awarded to Israel by UN. These were small, but strategically significant areas; and became the core of the first phase of the Israeli-Syrian conflict until the June 1967 War, together with the competition on sharing Jordan River’s water.

Nearly all Arab forces occupied areas outside of Palestinian territory which were not awarded to Israel by UN according to 1947 plan. Therefore, it could have seen as the achievement of war. However, Syria’s situation was quite different for Israeli policy makers. Syria claimed those territories as its own, although Israel saw it as a violation of both 1947 Partition Plan and 1923 international borders of Mandatory Palestine (Rabil, 2003).

At the end of negotiations, since Israel was the victor of the war and since all parties had signed armistices somehow and left Syria alone; Syria had to accept the demilitarization of the areas. Agreement created three small zones (Neff, 1994). Smallest zone located in north near Baniyas Spring and used for farming. There was no Jewish settlement in this zone. The central zone reaches from northern part of Lake Tiberias to southern part of Lake Huleh; with four Palestinian villages and one Jewish village. The third and largest zone located in south, started from eastern part of Lake Tiberias and meet with Yarmuk River (Neff, 1994). There was also one Jewish and three Palestinian settlements located in there. Especially central and northern parts are strategically significant since they located near the Jordan River and gave access to water resources.

In order to prevent military escalation, armistice sought to maintain ordinary life in demilitarized zones (DMZs) and so military projects was prohibited (Neff, 1994). More than that, Israeli-Syrian armistice allowed each party to create their own defensive areas with limited forces between their border and DMZs. Therefore, possible military escalation would have been prevented since their military presence was limited. Donald Neff explained it with saying; “DMZs... demilitarized inner core, and outer shell limited defensive forces” (1994, p.28). Together with that, like the other armistices, Mixed Armed Commissions (MACs) were under charge for the supervision of the implementation of the agreement.

However, since there was no agreement on sovereignty over the DMZs, efforts of prevention of military escalation remained inadequate. Despite the armistice called for nonaggressive attitude, the high tension between two countries did not diminished. Israel continuously sought to establish settlements within DMZs via farmer soldiers. Palestinian farmers were watching these efforts with increasing anger. This tension had increased day by day cross border escalations had started. Muhammad Muslih (1993) listed several main pillars of Israeli policy makers’ perception over DMZs. First of all, Israel and Syria signed an armistice, which included demilitarization of these zones. Agreement had military nature and deal with use of force, not the issues of sovereignty or use of land (Muslih, 1993). Israel was the successor of 1949 War, and although Syria occupied those lands and agreed on to withdrawn under demilitarization conditions; those lands were not Syrian land according to 1923 Agreement between Britain and France over the international boundary between Syria, Lebanon and Palestine (Rabil, 2003) ; and also 1947 UN Partition Plan. Therefore, demilitarization of the zones might have seen as an enough sacrifice for Israeli policy makers. Secondly, since the Israel was the sovereign, Israeli law was also valid over DMZs; so Israel had a right to enjoy non-military duties in the area (Muslih, 1993), which includes cultivation of land and most

importantly, enjoying canal projects over the watercourse. Therefore, since the agreement was not adequate enough to regulate whole issues between Israel and Syria over DMZs; both parties insisted on the implementation of their own policies in the issues of sovereignty.

Since the Israeli territory was quite narrow and water resources were quite limited, Jordan River had a strategic importance. On the behalf of providing water to Israel, Jewish National Fund agreed on to finance Israel's Natural Water Carrier project on January 1951, which aimed to divert water from the northern part of the River to the south (Neff, 1994). However, drainage channels violated the Syrian parts of central DMZ. Due to Syrian grievances, Israeli-Syrian MAC gathered to examine the situation and decided that the project is a total violation of the armistice (Neff, 1994). However, Israel continued the construction and faced with Syrian retaliations. On June 1951, Israel announced that they will not attend MAC meetings as long as the sovereignty issue over DMZs was on the agend (Neff, 1994). Since Israel was the sovereign, Syria did not have right to attend such meetings, according to Israel. In reply, Syria announced that they would also not attend the MAC meetings with addressing the same reasons with Israel.

To conclude, there were three main questions over DMZs; which were farming, water resources and legal status. For Israeli side, armistices issued solely military issues, so Israel had a right to enjoy sovereignty over DMZs. However, Syria claimed that no one had the sovereignty since MAC was there to regulate legal issues. Whether Israel had conceptualized its annexation under offensive or defensive means is questionable; it's clearly seen that offense is the best defense strategy was there at the very beginning; whether it has legal status or not. These areas were both buffer zones against Syria and a water resource for Israel. Therefore, insist on claiming sovereignty over those areas was coming from the notion of defense.

In order to solve the ongoing dispute, President Eisenhower of United States was involved diplomatically as a part of their strategy to build comprehensive peace in the Middle East, in which water share occupied the core (Neff, 1994). Israeli project

had been seen as a violation of Eisenhower plan for regional water sharing. Therefore, on September 1953, Secretary of State of the US underlined that Israel would not receive the US aid if they would not stop the construction (Neff, 1994). It did not stop Israel in the first place; but when the US actually withholds the aid,

Israel finally announced that they suspended the work. However, mutual suspicion between the parties prohibited a final settlement. The issue became a rush competition over water between Israel, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon; which ended up with a total war on June 1967.

3.1.2. Syria's Peace Offers

Syria was formally recognized as independent in 1941, but their sovereignty continuously violated by France. Syrian full independence was gained only in 1946. In 1949, Colonel Husni al-Zaim came into power with a coup. According to Patrick Seale (1965), this intervention has an important place in Middle East history since it was the first involvement of army to the politics. Once he seized the power, he informally offered a peace and cooperation to Israel, included the resettlement of Palestinian refugees (Rabil, 2003). Although Zaim and Ben Gurion secretly exchanged their messages; Gurion had refused Zaim's offer at the final place.

David Ben Gurion's rejection of such peace offer that would give a full peace with one of their biggest foes had opened a debate in Israel. On the one hand, scholars like Avi Shlaim considered it as a huge mistake. According to him, Ben Gurion had a chance to make full peace with Syria without considering refugee problem (Shlaim, 1995). Israel did not find such a change even in Oslo Peace Process in 1991. Since the Ba'ath party seized power in 1963 in Syria, any kind of settlement between Israel and Syria had to include Palestinian issue. More than that, there were armistice agreements with other neighbors, and a full peace with Syria would transform them a final peace settlement too which was highly desirable for Israel. For Shlaim (1995),

Ben Gurion was aware that full peace with Syria would include several territorial concessions that he could not sacrifice. It is good to remind that Israel was the victor of 1948 War and concession was not on their agenda since they had been proved themselves in their perspective.

Benny Moris (1994) also agreed with Avi Shalim, with underlining that armistices were satisfactory for Israeli politicians, and they did not see territorial concessions indispensable or allowing some sort of Palestinians to return their land was not something worth to sacrifice. However, it was not solely as result of having a superiority mentality. According to him, Ben Gurion was actually not trusted Zaim (Morris, 1994). If any kind of settlement would include territorial concessions, Israel wanted to see more reliable partner in table. Together with Moris, Moshe Ma'oz (1995) also agreed on that Ben Gurion was not ready to make territorial concessions to a dictator who seized power with a coup and had a questionable future in his rule. His suspicions were actually right. A few months later, Sami Hinnawi had overthrown Husni Zaim with a coup; and he also had overthrown again by Adib Shishakli within few months (Rabil, 2003). Although Shishakli made a peace offer to Israel as Zaim did once, Israel did not accept it again. Seizing power with a coup seemed ordinary in Syrian politics which made their ruler not stable to make peace in the eyes of Israeli policy makers. Any kind of territorial compromises would blow Israel's hand of if another antagonist dictator seized power with a coup. Any kind of territorial concession would turn against Israeli interest in the future if the new ruler would have different attitudes against Israel.

More than that, peace offers were seem to improve relations with West, especially with the United States, rather than Israel. Syria would receive \$200 million aid in return of accepting large scale of Palestinian refugees if the agreement would have been settled (Rabil, 2003). Since the Arab nationalism increasingly embedded in Israel's another greatest foe, Egypt; Syria's possible receive of such amount of money and possible close relations with the US did not welcomed by Israel. Especially Syria's possible close relation with United States was quite undesirable as

a part of dual strategy in Israeli foreign policy. As Amon Kenan underlined; “making the West always choose us between us and them, and if it is not, we’ll create enough trouble to make sure that it must be us” (1982, p.359). Therefore for Israel, any kind of close relations would be hazardous for their interest. Any kind of rapprochement would end up with the US’s possible pressure to Israel in Palestinian issue. Also, when it comes to Israeli concerns of possible spread of Arab nationalism into Syrian politics; it turned out to be right on 1960 when Ba’ath party seized power with a coup.

Israel’s unconditional rejections to the Syrian peace offers actually revealed the first signs of Israeli skepticism towards Syria’s intention. Ever since the establishment of Israel, two neighbors had been skeptical to each other over their intentions. This situation did not start with nationalist Ba’ath’s seizure of power or Hafez al-Assad’s period. The origins of hostility between two neighbors grounded on their founding ideology. Newly established state of Israel was an achievement of Jewish nationalism and quickly accumulated itself under its achievements of its founding ideology (Rabil, 2003). On contrary, newly formed Syria increasingly embed itself into Arab nationalist structure. Accumulating themselves under the flag of Arab nationalism was not an option actually. They regained their sovereignty from French mandate via nationalist struggle. After two main World Wars, imperialistic mandates, and several inter-state wars; the conjuncture of the region was strongly nationalism. Zionism vs. Arab nationalism issue was the main core of the conflicts until 1973 War, when the Egypt as the leader of Arab nationalism made a peace with Israel with adopting the Egypt first policy.

3.1.3. 1967 June War

Israeli annexation of DMZs and Jordan River’s water escalated the tension day by day and ended up with June 1967 War. Israel, Jordan and Syria sought to build their own water diversion projects which triggered series of clashes. In 1956, Israel silently continued to construct National Water Carrier projects without consulting Syria and Jordan. In return, Jordan started to work on East Gahor Canal project to

separate parts of water from Yarmuk River (Neff, 1994). Israel insisted that Arabs were not allowed to use Lake Tiberias water without an upper permission. The conflicts over the usage of water gave a way to a open clashes and ended up with a total war.

There were three main clashes over water issues that peak the tension. The first one was March 1962 incident over the fishing rights in Lake Tiberias (Neff, 1994). There was harassment fires from both sides and ended up with harsh Israeli raid into central DMZ. Thirty Syrians and five Israelis were killed. UN accused Israel to violate the Armistice Agreement (Neff, 1994). The pattern of action and reaction had continued.

Second one was on November 1964, when Israel started construction in Ayn Tal (Rabil, 2003). This construction was not solely violation of armistice, but also violated littorals rights via claiming River Dan as their own. United Nations asked Israel to stop construction again, so did Israel rejected again (Rabil, 2003). As a result, Syria opened a fire and corresponded with retaliation attacks by Israel. It is important to remind that Ba'ath party seized power in Syria with a coup in 1963, so sovereignty over a territory or water were out of table since they started to have more strict tone under the flag of Arab nationalism. The period of peace offers was definitely ended for Syria.

As the final incident before June 1967 War, Syria sought to resume the work on diversion canals in 1966. Syria and Lebanon actually started this project in February 1964, but had to pause as a result of Israeli attacks. Once again, Israeli planes crashed engineering works and prevented the construction. Same as before, UN Security Council regulated a resolution with urged Syria to develop measures to prevent the violation of Armistice and invite Israel to cooperate with MAC (Neff, 1994). Soviet Union vetoed the resolution.

It was clear that Israel's National Water Project were near to finish. In order to take an action, Arab states gathered for a summit in Cairo in 1967 (Telhami, 1990). They aimed to find a solution to prevent the operation of Israel's project. Constructing

dams on Hasbani and Baniyas Rivers to prevent water flow from Lake Tiberias was on the table (Telhami, 1990). Most importantly, Arab summit called for the liberation of Palestine and establishment of separate Palestinian organization to sabotage Israeli water constructs. As a result, Palestinian Liberation Organization was established in 1964. This is remarkably important since PLO became an umbrella organization to gather up fragmented Palestinian organizations and leveled up the Palestinian-Israeli dispute to another round. Especially when Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, PLO became the most predominant candidate as the leader of Arab nationalism and Palestinian cause, together with its competitor Syria. Therefore, Israel's insist on unjust water projects without consulting the other riparian states, together with violating Armistice Agreement over DMZs gave a birth to one of their greatest foe; the PLO.

3.1.4. Aftermath of 1967 War

Before 1967 War, the biggest nightmare of Israel was the unified Arab attack. They saw themselves as relatively vulnerable since they are surrounded by enemies and their territory was quite narrow. More than that, Israeli population was outnumbered by Arab population. Israeli army had defeated Arab armies once at War of Independence in 1948; but in those days all their adversaries had dressed their wounds especially with Soviet support. Therefore, Israel would not have a chance overcome unified attack from Arabs. Those security and military concerns was driven Israeli foreign policy to launch a preemptive attack to destroy unified Arab forces before they launched an attack; because if they would not, Israel would not have a chance to survive. As it is seen, offense is the best defense understanding has found an important place in Israeli strategy on war.

When the united Arab forces had been defeated within six single days, this fear seemed declined and the witness mentality ended up. Arab nationalism received a huge blow and Nasser of Egypt had lost his reputation among his followers.

Although the attack ended up with a territorial gain, which Israel had occupied Golan Heights from Syria, West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and Gaza from Egypt; they actually reacted preemptively since the offense had the advantage (Telhami, 1990). Israel follows preemptive and offensive military strategy to cover up its limited resources to defeat pan-Arab forces. When a threat perception appears, Israel responds immediately to both destroy the risk before they attack, and also impose 'do not dare to attack us' mentality. Pan-Arab forces were launched a war with hoping to honor Arab nationalism. However, loss of the territories within six single days caused a deep trauma.

At the end of the War, United Security Council issued the Resolution 242, to regulate post War arrangements in order to reduce the tension. However, the resolution had some serious problems. In the first place, according to Resolution, acquisition of a territory throughout war is inadmissible (Rabil, 2003). Therefore, Israel was called to withdraw from the territories that they occupied. However, this article is quietly open-ended since Israel had been not considered some territories they had as under occupation. Secondly, it was recommended to both Israel and Palestine to settle up refugee problem, but without mentioning which measures had to be taken to settle the issue. Therefore, the resolution remained solely as a request for a good will.

While Egypt and Jordan accepted the Resolution, Israel was partly accept it with saying full withdrawal and the allowing refugees to settle would be done right after the recognition of international borders of Israel and formulation of proper peace plan (Rabil, 2003). Since then, Israeli withdrawal was the preconditions of negotiations in any kind of peace for both Egypt and Jordan; and Israel used the antagonist conjuncture as their excuse to not withdraw.

Different from Egypt and France, PLO criticized the Resolution since they saw it as undermining Palestinian cause with reducing it solely to refugee problem. Also, Syria directly rejected the Resolution and declared that this acceptance will be a

contradiction to the “three big no’s”; no negotiation, no recognition, and no peace with Israel. (Rabil, 2003). Diplomatic solution was not on the table for Syria. As it is seen, fragmentation had begun in pan-Arab camp and finally blow out aftermath of 1973 War.

3.2.Golan Heights and 1973 War

3.2.1. Importance of Golan Heights

With 1967 War, Israel occupied 1.250 square kilometers from Syrian territory, which is Golan Heights (Telhami, 1990). It is a strategic location for both countries. For Israel, its mounted position opens an aerial viewpoint to its borderline. Also, it is strategically important as it creates a buffer zone between Syria and Israel. It also provides most of the Israeli water supplies. For Syria, besides from its strategic geographic location as a mounted position for Israeli metropolitans; it became a matter of honor since Israel occupied a part of Syrian territorial integrity. Retrieving lost territory was a central tent of Syrian foreign policy under Hafez al-Assad (Ahmad & Singh, 2015). Hafez had structured all Syrian efforts to regain that territory. Since the occupation, Golan had become the arena of Israeli-Syrian military escalations with considering Syrian army is located 250 km away from Tel Aviv while Israeli army located 35 km away from Damascus (Muslih, 1993). Once Israel occupied Golan, the completion over DMZs ended and Golan became the core of the dispute.

3.2.2. Israeli Perspective

As Muhammad Muslih underlined in his article, “The Golan: Israel, Syria and Strategic Calculations” (1993), Israeli politics and society fragmented under three views on Golan. One side had total ambivalent feelings on withdrawal from the area and its potential consequences. Undeniable number also insists on full withdrawal in

return of peace. They assumed that it would not be possible to convince Syria to enter a peace process without giving Golan back. There are also many ways to ensure security, such as demilitarization of zone, creating buffer zones, and simply normalization of relations. Golan would give that.

There were also the ones who directly rejected any kind of territorial compromises; with saying that Israel needs to hold Golan for security needs above all since it is quite a strategic location for defensive measures. A good timing is quite critical for Israel since it is quite a small country. An early warning would accelerate the mobilization process for the army. Golan gives those opportunities and becomes an unbearable part of Israeli defense strategy, since security is the territory.

In addition to that, Itmar Rabinovich as the Israel's ambassador to the US, also outlined the official Israeli position under four points according to these ambivalences, as it was mentioned by Muhammad Muslih (1993). In the first place, Syria has to declare its good will on peace before dealing with the extent of any kind of withdrawal. As it was underlined, mutual suspicion between parties is engraved to the hilt. As Rabin himself underlined, Golan has such strategic value that cannot be compared with the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza or West Bank (Muslih, 1993). Therefore, it simply cannot be given back to Syria, especially when Ba'ath's and especially Hafez al-Assad's antagonistic behaviors are considered. Secondly, there should be a security regime between parties that is based upon mutuality. Thirdly, Syria must loudly declare its readiness to make peace with Israel to the Israeli and Arab public, and must work for the convenience of other Arabs about making peace with Israel. At the final place, any kind of peace has to include normalization of relations in economic, social, cultural and diplomatic terms (Muslih, 1993). As a result, since Golan is strategically significant for Israeli national security, the preconditions for full withdrawal are quite harsh.

There were also many Jewish settlers in Golan. A territorial compromise would mean a dismantling of those settlements or made them to live under Arab rule. Whether it was something worth to sacrifice is another question. Only few supported a total

dismantling of Jewish settlements. The majority of those who advocates land for peace policy supported that there are many Arabs living under Jewish rule, so it would be quite normal for Jewish people to live under Arab rule (Muslih, 1993). However, debate on leaving those settlements under Arab rule opened another ethical debate within Israeli politics. Majority of Likud hold on this dilemma with also saying that Syria is not ready for peace (Muslih, 1993). These are great compromises and Syria's unstable regime and antagonist Ba'ath ideology simply cannot guarantee that they would honor peace in the future.

More than that, as it was mentioned, Israel have dual strategy in its foreign policy. This strategy has been based on the assumption that Arab and Israeli interests have always be in contradiction so a division between Arab states would work for Israeli interest, both in war time and peace time. Since each Arab state would follow their own interest rather than a common will of Arabs, peace negotiations would better conducted in bilateral settings (Maoz, 2006). They would be more open-minded for Israeli-favored security concessions. Therefore, Golan's geopolitics made Syrian Israeli track disengaged from failure or success of other Arab delegations. As Rabin underlined, Golan somehow constructs a 'bilateral bridge' between Israel and Syria (Muslih, 1993).

3.2.3. Syrian Perspective

Muhammad Muslih explained Syria's dilemma on Golan as the "interaction between capabilities and ambitions" (1993, p.625). On the one hand, Syria is quite powerless compared to Israel in economic and military terms. Israel is well functioned economy even though there is boycott to its products in the region. Their military is highly advanced, well-equipped with cutting edge technologies, and most importantly, have a nuclear power. It has strategic partnership with United States, moreover not like patron-client relationship as Syria had with Soviets once. Therefore, Syria's chance to survive in face-to-face military escalation with Israel would quite low.

On the other hand, Golan represents something more than a land of territory for Syria. Besides its crucial position as a national defense strategy since it gives a bird view access to Israeli metropolitans; it occupied a great place for Syria's role in the region as the leader of Arab nationalism. Especially when Israel signed a peace treaty with Egypt in 1979; Syria shined as the main defender of Arab interest. Egypt successfully took Sinai Peninsula back from Israel. Therefore, accepting anything less than that both in time of war and peace would undermine Syria's reputation among other Arab states as the leader of Arab nationalism.

More than that, Hafez al-Assad was the Minister of Defense in 1967 War. Therefore, it became a matter of honor for him especially to suppress the opposition voices domestic politics (Rabinovich, 2004). However, Assad was a pragmatist person. Although Syrian foreign policy seemed to be under impact of ideology, Assad actually had seen it as secondary when it comes to state interest. Therefore, he was aware of the risks of direct military confrontation, so continuously avoid it.

3.2.4. 1973 War

Right after the annexation of Golan, Israel established settlements due to preservation security and keep water resources under its control (Rabil, 2003). Meanwhile, Syrian politics were also divided on a solution for their battle against Israel. Defense Minister Hafez al-Assad was on the side whose line up with military struggle against Israel with empowered Syrian army. Syrian politics was so fragmented that breaks of the relations between Ba'ath's military and civilian wings (Rabil, 2003). Israeli attacks also had deepened the fragmentation much further. The event that breaks the last bone occurred in 1970. Syria had intervened Jordan's civil war to back Palestinians. With the support of US and Israel, Jordanian forces counterattacked Syrian forces which had changed the scope of the war (Rabil, 2003). As a strategic maneuver, Assad did not send Syrian troops to help forces in there. The motivation behind this was the possible outcome of direct military escalation with Israel. Syria might not bear that kind of face to face escalation by themselves.

In response, Assad was called for resignation; however he seized power with a coup at the end in November 1970. Right after the seizure of power, Assad looked up the ways to regain his reputation since Golan was lost under his rule as a Defense Minister. He improved relations with Soviets to receive aids to improve Syria's military capabilities for its battle against Israel.

Both Assad and Egypt's new president Anwar Sadat had mutual benefits to get into alliance against Israel. Both of them looked forward to whitewash the consequences of 1967 War. For Syria, it was obvious that Assad wanted to prove himself with regaining Golan. For Egypt on the other hand, territorial gain was a secondary plan. In 1970, charismatic Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Nasser died and Anwar Sadat came into power as former vice president. Sadat also wanted to prove himself, since Nasser left a power vacuum and Sadat was relatively weak figure compared to Egypt's former president. However, his main motive was normalization of relations with Israel and he knew that he had to strengthen Egypt's hand after 1967 loss to sit on table with them as equals (Rabinovich, 2004).

Israel observed Assad and Sadat's statements with high concerns and might know that the war was inevitable (Rabil, 2003). However, 1967 victory created complacency among both policy makers and military officials, and relied on Israel's military superiority. As a result, Israel misread the signals. As Moshe Dayan as Defense Minister in 1973 War stated in his memories, Israeli intelligence had received same messages before, however no attack followed (Rabil, 2003). Therefore, they received them as ordinary statements made by Arab leaders to cover up their reputation among their public; and relied on that they do not dare to attack Israel after the hazardous defeat of 1967 War.

However, Syria and Egypt launched a surprise attack to Israel at Yom Kippur Day. For the first time, Arab forces broke through Israeli defense lines and caused a huge damage. Israel was even so close to face with a huge defeat. However, as Robert Rabil stated, mixed aims of Syria and Egypt worked for Israel to resolve battle in favor of itself (2003). Sadat sought a limited success to force Israel to sit on

negotiation table as equals with changing the balance of power. However, Assad had sought for military success and regain Golan Heights. The contradictions within aims of Syria and Egypt worked for Israeli favor as the pillar of dual strategy. As a part of this strategy, Israel successfully made an agreement with Egypt and isolate Syria out of the process.

What changed the scope of war was Egypt's position in Sinai Peninsula. They needed to press Israeli forces in Sinai Peninsula; but instead, they took a defensive posture and Israeli Defense Forces found a chance to focus on Syrian front. (Rabil, 2003). IDF was so close to regain main parts of Golan. Assad was furious, but had nothing to do but ask for Egyptian help. Although Sadat took offensive measures in Sinai after all, he was too late and IDF crossed the Suez Canal.

3.2.5. Aftermath of the War

Aftermath of the War, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger worked for a settlement. For him, neither victory of Israel nor defeat or vice versa for Arab armies was desirable for comprehensive peace (Rabinovich, 2004). 1973 War actually opened the deadlock of 1967 War. The absence of defined outcome of war gave a way for diplomatic solution. Each party got wounded so would ready to make several compromises for peace. UN regulated Resolution 338 to call for a ceasefire. Syria officially announced that they would accept the resolution if Israel withdraw its forces to pre-1967 borders. At the end, Syria achieved to regain 100 square kilometers in Golan. Even though Assad believed that diplomacy is useless to resolve the conflict with Israel, he had to accept US mediation for post-War diplomacy for possible peace establishment in order to preserve Syrian territorial gain (Rabinovich, 2004). On May 1974, Israel and Syria signed Israeli-Syrian Disengagement Agreement. It was not close to a peace treaty, but a cease fire agreement. Nonetheless, it was the first agreement that officially signed by Syria and Israel

under US mediation. Different from Egyptian-Israeli Agreement on 1974 which was a prelude of peace negotiations, Syrian disengagement did not end with a formal peace agreement. Unlike Egypt, Assad refused to abandon Soviet orbit, although they maintained negotiations with US.

For the Israeli side, 1973 War had a significant psychological impact on both politics and society. 1967 victory blurred policy makers' eyes and seen Israel as invincible. However, they were so close to a total loss. Israel had a belief that it would confront Arab forces without US aid if US successfully deterred the Soviet Union (Rabinovich, 2004). However, it became clear that US supplies were crucially needed. Therefore, Israel started to adopt more constructive tone towards possible peace settlements to preserve good relations with US.

On 1974, Egypt and Israel signed several agreements for the sake of normalization of relations between two countries which would end up with a comprehensive peace settlement. Egypt's solution was simple. They would accept full peace in every term, in return of taking Sinai Peninsula back. As a final settlement, negotiations opened a way to Camp David Accords in 1978, and ended up with Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty in 1979. Right after the agreement, most Arab states cut off their diplomatic relations with Egypt, and they were expelled from the Arab League (Rabinovich, 2004). Most importantly, Egyptian-Israeli rapprochement triggered Islamist groups, especially Muslim Brotherhood's operations in the region. Egypt's abandonment of Palestinian cause actually worked for Muslim Brotherhood to spread its ideology especially in Gaza. Egypt was the champion of pan-Arabism and the protector of Palestinians, and became the first Arab state that officially recognized Israel. It is important to note that according to Muslim Brotherhood, jihad was the only way to liberate Palestinians from foreign occupation. They had seen Egypt-Israel intimacy as betrayal of infidel Sadat (Mandaville, 2014). Therefore, jihad was the only solution for Palestinian liberation and Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine was quite popular, especially among the young students. Until the first Intifada in 1987, they had a different agenda, which was based on social formation of Palestinian society

under the bases of Islam (Mandaville, 2014). However, with the emergence of Intifada, Hamas was established and Muslim Brotherhood announced it as their strong arm. Therefore, although peace with Egypt had broken Arab nationalist front, a new front were near to open against Israel under Islamist flag for this time.

At the final stage, Egypt's request was accepted by Israel in return of normalization of relations in economy, diplomacy, tourism and social life. Sinai Peninsula had been left to Egypt with several security arrangements. However, this compromise opened a new debate in Israel about the price they paid in return of peace (Rabinovich, 2004). Once Israel did put full withdrawal in return of full peace card on negotiation table with Egypt, now other antagonists would seek for same compromise for a peace agreement, as Syria did. Assad definitely underlined that Syria would not accept less than Egypt has.

Camp David Accords was a successful product of Kissinger's famous 'step-by-step diplomacy', which sought for bilateral settlements since taking the issue as whole would both deadlocks the process and prevents Arabs to make compromises (Stein, 1999). Therefore, Kissinger's diplomacy actually worked for Israeli dual strategy in foreign policy. Separate bilateral agreement especially with the prominent leader of Arab nationalism; Egypt, would break the resistance among Arabs. For instance, with losing such partner, Syria sought to prevent direct confrontation with Israel by itself. However, Syria's new allies like Hezbollah and Islamic Republic of Iran especially after Lebanon intervention, together with rise of Muslim Brotherhood's influence in Gaza opened a new phase of Israeli-Arab dispute, but now had more religious tone rather than nationalist.

3.3. Invasion of Lebanon

3.3.1. Civil War in Lebanon and Red Line Agreement

Jordan's Civil War in 1970 ended up with the expulsion of Palestinian Liberation Organization to the Lebanon. Their existence in there deepened the already existed divisions within Lebanese society as by product of problematically designed Confessional System. Involvements of third parties, like Israel, Syria, United States and Soviet Union, and even UN, caused much more fragmentation and made the civil war lasted a long time. As Itamar Rabinovich stated, "Lebanese system could have survive all domestic challenges, but it collapsed under the impact of Arab Israeli conflict." (Rabinovich, 1990, p.538).

Although both Israel and Syria intervened directly to Lebanon, they somehow found a way to avoid direct escalation. Indeed, conspiracy theories blossomed with saying that there was some kind of secret Israeli-Syrian cooperation at work (Rabinovich, 1990).

Both Israel and Syria observed the ongoing dispute in Lebanon with strategic care. Each of them had their own motivation on Lebanon. For Syria, although full recognition of Palestinian rights and liberation was crucial, Arafat was not Assad's first choice as the one who achieved that. He did not want PLO to come into prominence as main defender of Palestinians. In this sense, Egypt already developed relations with Israel and left the protector-of-Palestinians seat to Syria (Rabinovich, 1990). Assad had seen Arafat as the competitor of this seat.

When the fight heated up in 1974 and PLO was so close to take upper hand, Assad faced with a new dilemma. (Cleveland & Bunton, 2016). On the one hand, any kind of victory of PLO would trigger Israel to intervene Lebanon on behalf of Maronites. Israel did not accept any kind of PLO's establishment near to its borders. More than that, Assad himself did not want PLO to take absolute victory (Cleveland & Bunton, 2016). Syria's intervention seemed inevitable. Therefore, Assad's decision to intervene Lebanon was totally pragmatist, rather than ideologist. However, that kind

of intervention would also provoke Israel to intervene, which would mean possible direct military escalation between Israel and Syria. Israel would easily receive Syrian attempt as seeking to establish Greater Syria.

It was US who convinced Israel on Syrian intervention. By this way, “benefits of US and Israel were great indeed: Palestinians would be humbled, the left reined in, Moscow thwarted, and Assad himself tarnished by a deed heinous in Arab eyes” as Robert Rabil stated (2003, p.52). It actually worked and Israel had shot its eyes to Syrian intervention.

For Israel, Lebanon was a potential ally. It had low profile on Arab-Israeli dispute. It also had critical and strategic importance for defense measures. Therefore, stability in Lebanon was crucial for Israeli interest. It was stable actually from the time until 1970; when PLO was established its headquarter in there. Since then, Lebanese state became weaker in face of demographic change, and struggle of seizing power among the fragmented groups had started.

Once the Civil War had break out in 1975, Israel faced with a dilemma, according to Itamar Rabinovich (1990). On the one hand, taking a defensive posture would be an option with observing scope of the war silently. Any kind of direct or indirect Israeli intervention would awake Arab nationalism and change the scope of the war against Israel. On the other hand, Lebanon was considerably important for Israeli security. Especially PLO’s existence in Lebanon constructed a bridge for the Palestinians in West Bank. According to Menachem Begin, once they could remove PLO from Lebanon, then it would be easier to isolate Palestinians in West Bank (Cleveland & Bunton, 2016). Weakening state system allowed PLO to extend its facilities throughout the Lebanon.

In order to reverse it, Israel first allowed Syrian armies to intervene Lebanon on behalf of Maronites. By this way, Rabin government had resolved the dilemma. With consented Syrian intervention, Israel found a way to shape Lebanese politics indirectly. In order to preserve Israeli interest and regulate Israeli-Syrian rivalry on

Lebanon, Red Line Agreement had signed on 1976 (Rabil, 2003). The agreement had three key components. First of all, Syrian army would not pass over Southern Lebanon. Secondly, surface-to-air missiles were forbidden; and finally, Syrian army would not use air force against Maronites. Therefore, Syrian military activity was restricted. They were not allowed to use air force. This agreement actually underlined the pragmatic relationship between Israel and Syria. Two antagonists could work together for their interest as long as the balance of power had maintained. Therefore, it could be seen as a product of defensive realist foreign policy, since the role of ideology was limited and ambitions left behind for the sake of preserving the power balance.

However, Israel's second attempt had shown that its foreign policy towards Lebanese crisis departed from defensive tradition. According to Begin, existed policy seemed inadequate to resolve crisis in Israeli favor (Rabinovich, 1990). More than that, Syria's intervention went beyond its purpose and seemed to establish its own hegemony over Lebanese politics. Israel launched its first attack on 1978, with invading Lebanon to dislodge PLO; however, had failed. Israel had to withdraw its troops under pressure of UN and US. In order to avoid possible escalation, UN located its troops in Southern Lebanon to create a buffer between PLO and Israel.

3.3.2. Israel's 1982 Lebanon Invasion

Considering the lessons of 1978 withdrawal, Begin government prepared a plan to settle up ongoing crisis in Lebanon for Israeli favor (Cleveland & Bunton, 2016). He aimed to find not only comprehensive solution for Lebanese problem in Israeli, but also sought to prohibit Syria to accumulate its power more on Lebanese politics with restructuring the order (Cleveland & Bunton, 2016). With direct invasion, PLO's base would completely be destroyed.

Also according to Itamar Rabinovich on his book *Wagging Peace* (2004), Begin government had two main motivations in Lebanon invasion. First of all, they would save Lebanese state to collapse and rebuild it in cooperation with Bashir Jumayil.

Secondly, Sharon and Begin had ambitions on changing the regional order for good with inflicting serious blows to PLO and Syria, and installing good relations with Jumayil's regime in Lebanon. Therefore, it was an attempt to change regional order, rather than preserving it.

Soon after, it became clear that Israel's Lebanon invasion had failed to meet with its actual aims. Different from what was expected, Syria consolidated its power in Lebanon. Moreover, Islamic Revolution occurred in Iran on 1979 and Assad had constructed a strategic alliance with Tehran and had able to access Shiite community in Lebanon (Rabinovich, 2004). Confrontation of PLO left its place to confrontation with Iran-backed Shiite militias; Hezbollah.

Israeli invasion caused a serious opposition both in international society and among Israeli citizens. The main motivation was far more ambitious that Israeli government had announced to their public. Peace of Galilee operation had sought to clear PLO bases in Lebanon; not completely destroy whole PLO structure and ensure Bashir Jumayil to win the election (Cleveland & Bunton, 2016). Therefore, Begin government intentionally misleads the public for the intentions of operation. Once the expansionist nature was understood, strong reaction blossomed both within Israel and from international community. Especially the massacres in Sabra and Shatilla, and Israeli Defense Forces direct role as playing blind eye had cost expensive to Begin government. Even the members of IDF started to spoke out against the invasion (Cleveland & Bunton, 2016). It is good to remind that nearly all Israeli wars were seen as a matter of survival from the establishment until the Lebanon invasion. In former Arab-Israeli wars, there was an attack and Israel defended itself as a natural reaction. The measures taken in those wars could have been justifiable for Israelis as the matter of survival. However, Israeli existence was not directly threatened in Lebanon War. It was done to reshape regional order for Israeli favor. Therefore, it was hard to convince Israeli public on that war has a just cause.

Golda Meir, the former Israeli Prime Minister, stated once; "We can forgive the Arabs for killing our children. We cannot forgive them for forcing us to kill their

children” (Yadid, 2015), which actually would summarize the mainstream of Israeli public opinion. According to the mainstream understanding, Arabs were the ones who attack Israel, and Israel had a right to protect itself from existential threat. The main framework of wars was always within this framework. However, Lebanon was not an existential threat, or fights against PLO would not be an excuse for operating in such goriness. In response to strong opposition, government created a commission named Khan to investigate what happened in Sabra and Shatilla. Kahan Commission investigated that Israeli officials were responsible indirectly for the massacres (Cleveland & Bunton, 2016). As a result, Ariel Sharon was forced to resign and Begin’s political career was ended. He lost the elections in 1983 and withdrawn from Israeli political life until his death.

In 1983, Israel finally decided to withdrawn from Lebanon. However, evacuation period was so long. They took nearly 10% of whole Lebanese territory for security concerns on South Lebanon. Full withdrawal was finalized in 2000.

3.3.4. Birth of Shiite Radicalism

Right after the withdrawal of PLO from Beirut, Amal emerged as the strongest arm in Muslim community in West Beirut. When Israel intervene South Lebanon in 1978, waves of Shiite immigration to West Beirut had started (Rabil, 2003). The power vacuum left by PLO was fulfilled by them and Israel had become their main focus of battle. At the beginning, Israeli invasion in 1982 was actually welcomed by Shiite community in Lebanon as a way to end PLO activities. However, when Israel’s actual motives was understood, the climate had changed and Amal emerged as strong arm of Shiite’s against Israel (Rabil, 2003).

It is good to remind that especially after 1973 War and losing its biggest ally, Syria sought to avoid direct confrontation with Israel. Shiite militias’ close relations with Syrian army actually worked for Assad. For Shiite militias, Assad’s policy to break down Maronite political hegemony would work for them (Cleveland & Bunton, 2016). Iran also joined them as a matter of exporting the Islamic Revolution. Chaotic

Lebanon would be a good base to expand revolutionary ideas. Iranian-backed revolutionary spirit spread with the rewards of military and financial supports. Therefore; Iran, Syria and Shiite militias constructed a natural alliance against Israel. Their antagonism constructed the main course of alliance. Hezbollah was established under this climate (Rabil, 2003). Several Islamist from Amal gathered together and established Hezbollah as a result of divisions over the methodology for fighting against Israel. Since then, both Syria and Iran saw Hezbollah as the instrument to put direct military pressure on Israel. It had more religious tone and saw the destruction of Israel as the divine duty (Rabil, 2003).

When Israel withdrawn its forces to Southern Lebanon, the political vacuum they created was fulfilled by those Shiite radicals. Israeli existence in their territories provoked them and continuously launched attacks to IDF forces in Southern Lebanon. Even though Israel did finalize full withdrawal in 2000, cross border attacks was continued from both sides.

As a result, Israel's Lebanon adventure was a catastrophe. They abandoned defensive realist foreign policy for once for the sake of reshaping regional order for Israeli benefit with making a direct invasion to Lebanon. However, the outcome was totally different. Syria consolidated its power as the legitimate actor in Lebanon. The crises did not end for Israeli favor. The massacres and high numbers of casualties provoked a huge opposition in Israeli public and caused both international and domestic outcry. More than that, Israeli invasion also provoked Shiite radicalism and birth of its contemporary nemesis, Hezbollah. All those consequences had engraved in Israeli policy makers' and public's mind. Especially when civil war erupted in Syria on 2011, Israel blow on cold water and adopt strategic silence policy with the memories of their intervention on Lebanon crisis.

3.4. Peace Negotiations

3.4.1. Road to Peace: 1991 Madrid Conference

1990s started with high hopes. With the end of Gulf War, President of United States announced the 'new world order' in order to secure the military victory with crowning political success (Herrmann, 1991). It aimed to provide sustainable peace and protection of weak from radical extremists. US policy had four main sub strategies, which were constructing security in Middle East; inhibiting the usage of weapons of mass destruction; supporting economic development; and working for sustainable peace between Israelis and Arabs. As William Cleveland and Martin Bunton remarked; "...logic of the liberation of Kuwait- that people had the right to live free from occupation- offered a compelling reason to seek a settlement of Israeli-Palestinian question."(2016, p. 71).

This policy yielded its first fruit with 1991 Madrid Conference. For the first time, old antagonists; Israel, PLO, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan came together to resolve the never ended Arab-Israeli conflict under US mediation. It was a gesture, rather than an actual peace process (Rabinovich, 2004). It is important to note that US came out as victorious of Cold War. The world order was not bi-polar anymore. Therefore, in the time of uni-polar conjuncture, all parties seemed to do what they had to do in order to preserve good relations with the hegemonic power. Both Syria and Israel had their own reasons to be a part of peace process.

After a long period of isolation, Hafez made a strategic reassessment and decided Syria needed an entry visa to the post-Cold War world. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the main backer of Syria had disappeared. In order to recover this loss, Hafez made several attempts. Firstly, he joined US-led coalition against Iraq in 1990 Gulf War. Secondly, he also attended Madrid Peace Conference in 1991. These moves allowed Hafez to gain credit and prestige from Arab states; his competitor Saddam was been weakened; and finally got into a process which would allow him

to take Golan back. It is good to remind that, Assad was pragmatist person (Ghadbian, 2001). Although his discourses created an impression that he was driven by ideologies; his attitudes had shown the opposite. Assad actually used Israeli-Arab dispute for domestic support. He did not ideologically obsess to it. He did not get same support as the defender of Arab cause anymore (Scheller, 2013). Syria also had lost its main supporter, Soviets. As the Madrid Conference was the first attempt to find comprehensive solution for Israeli-Arab dispute, so Assad did not want to stay behind and wanted to be a part of new world order. It was a chance to develop good relations with US. He actually achieved it. US found Assad as credible partner for negotiations and time to time found him more compatible than Israel. Assad seemed to know where to stop as in post-1973 War arrangement when he agreed on to sit table in order to preserve the territories that Syria occupied. More than that, US wanted to separate Syria from Iranian camp and their appearance in peace process would be a blow for Iran.

Hafez al-Assad had started to reap the fruits of rapprochement strategy with United States with the peace process. However, Golan Heights had a different position. Since it was lost under Assad's rule as Defense Minister, it became a matter of honor. However, it did not mean that he would endanger the process with an obsession. Egypt got Sinai in return of peace. PLO got a change to establish autonomy in West Bank and Gaza. Therefore, Syria would not accept less than taking Golan back, at least part of it. If it would not, then the balance of power could not be established since the equality pillar is not there for Syria (Scheller, 2013).

For Israel, although attending a peace process had seemed like a foreign policy shift, it actually fitted Israel's main foreign policy objectives. First of all, it was a golden opportunity for dual strategy, since it killed two birds with one stone. On the one hand, Israeli-US relations were under threat and Israeli existence in peace process would definitely reverse it. They also would receive 10 million dollar aid which would be used for new immigrant flow from former Soviets (Scheller, 2013). On the other hand, Israel had a chance to conduct peace agreements with Arab states

bilaterally. Therefore, common Arab interest would not be on agenda. Secondly, it was obvious that regional balance was shifting. Although they developed good relations with United States long before the establishment of new world order; they need to review their attitudes for a comprehensive peace settlement in order to preserve their special status for US politics on Middle East. Moreover, 1987 Intifada caused unbearable damage to Israeli public and there was a pressure to policy makers to settle a final solution for the conflict. Israeli society was no longer wanted to pay the cost of maintenance of status quo (Rabinovich, 2004). Therefore, there was both internal and international pressure on Israeli government to finalize the dispute.

As a result, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir involuntarily agreed on to attend the Conference. According to him, Golan should not be on the table. As Rabinovich underlined; Israel and Syria had no established border actually:

A line separating Mandate Syria from Mandate Palestine had been drawn in 1923; the 1948 war had ended with an armistice agreement in 1949 that in certain respects was ambiguous: it referred specifically to an armistice line, leaving border issue for future settlements. (Rabinovich, 2004, p.61)

Therefore, Syria took advantage on its geographical position and claimed sovereignty over Golan. As a result, putting Golan on negotiation table would mean Israeli acceptance of Golan as Syrian territory. Assad's insist on Golan would deadlock any progress to take. Shamir advocated peace-for-peace solution, rather than peace-for-land solution (Seale, 2000), and Syrian-Israeli track returned empty-handed from Madrid Conference.

3.4.2. Years of Hope: 1992-1996

Negotiations gained real momentum under Yitzhak Rabin's period. He was elected in 1992 elections with high hopes. He was the symbol of Israeli national security with 'Mr. National Security' nickname (Rabinovich, 2004). He was the chief of staff in 1967 War, so he was actually the one who had occupied Golan Heights in the first place.

Settlement with Syria did not seem realistic for Rabin, according to both Itamar Rabinovich (2004) and Patrick Seale (2000). Although he was ready to make compromises, it would not mean full return of pre-1967 borders. Holding West Bank and Gaza became more costly day by day, especially it was seen in 1987 Intifada; but Golan was quite silent. Therefore, it did not his first choice to make any kind of compromises on Golan at the beginning. However, maintenance of Syrian-Israeli track was vital for US policy since a success would detach Syria from Iran's camp. So, Rabin did what he had to do in order to continue to receive US financial aid, especially the new immigrant wave from former Soviets was considered (Rabinovich, 2004).

Rabin preferred to go with Palestinian track first, and leave Syrian track to the final (Scheller, 2013). It was clearly known that Assad was actually against bilateral settlements, since it would underestimate the common interest-which was Syrian interest actually. Therefore, if Israel could close Palestinian and Jordanian files, Syria would not have much to say and would have lower hand in negotiations. Moreover, US could have been pleased with the progress and the pressure on Syrian track would diminish.

It did not mean that the negotiations were suspended, but Rabin preferred to take it slow with Syria (Scheller, 2013). According to Patrick Seale (2000) again, Rabin wanted to hold negotiations indirectly, orally and within secrecy. Israeli offers were always conveyed unwritten in great secrecy. For Assad, it was the source of great suspicion for Israeli intention. He wanted a visual progress to convince public; on the other hand Israel wanted to take it confidential until it was finalized to not seen as giving too much in the eyes of Israeli public (Scheller, 2013). Two intentions were contradictory and undermined the trust between parties.

Rabin proposed several conditional peace offers to Assad; with estimating Assad would actually rejects them since the conditions were amenable (Seale, 2000). He offered very limited withdrawal from Golan in return of long list of conditions on security. The reason for this attitude was, probably, he did not want to be the one

who deadlock Syrian track in the eyes of US. Although Assad partly accepted his proposal, with only making several differences about time for withdrawal; Rabin assumed it as a rejection of his offer. Assad was actually aware of Rabin's waiting game (Seale, 2000). However, if he refused his proposals, then he might seem nonnegotiable person in the eyes of US. Therefore, both parties did deadlock the process with doing a little to maintain it to not be the one who ruined it.

At the final stage, although land for peace was on the table once, Syrian-Israeli track could not have been finalized. For Hafez al-Assad, making peace was an option, not the obsession (Scheller, 2013). For Rabin, making peace would be an obsession, but he was not obsessed to make peace with Syria under the conditions of giving up Golan. Both parties actually were there to be a part of new conjuncture and seemed to enjoy already existed status quo between them. PLO's situation was different for Israel since there was a public demand and continuation of dispute cost a lot; however, Syria was not on their first priority. Their appearance in peace process worked with dual strategy in Israeli foreign policy. With this way, Israel both continued to maintain good relations with United States; and conducted separate bilateral relations with Arab states. Although Assad's foreign policy sought for multilateral relations; this situation also worked for him too since they found a chance to conduct good relations with United States and found a place in new world order. As Itamar Rabinovich underlined, "settlement appears costlier than maintenance of status quo" (1990, p.542).

At the end of the day, Yitzhak Rabin assassinated by Jewish extremist nationalist in 1995, which blow a huge damage to the belief of possibility of comprehensive peace establishment in Middle East. Although Shimon Peres, as Rabin's successor, tried to recover the process, he did not enjoy same level of public support although he did attended the peace negotiations with Rabin as deputy prime minister (Scheller, 2013).

Unlike Rabin, Perez had more dynamic view on peace negotiations with well defined agenda. He urged economic cooperation as main component of Israeli strategy in the

process of normalization. Mutual dependence may occur between them and war would become more costly for the neighbors. As he wrote on his book, *New Middle East*, solution for ongoing conflicts in Middle East was the application of European Union model to Middle East (Perez, 1993). EU started with Coal and Steel Cooperation and became a political entity. Having an economical ground can be a key of solving disputes and have both stability and development. So, they have to incite joint economic program in order to make Israel become a part of Middle East.

Perez also looked forward to finalize settlements in order to have an upper hand for upcoming elections. He knew that Assad would not make any attempt without Israeli withdrawal from Golan and was actually ready to give that for sake of normalization of relations (Rabinovich, 2004). However, Assad concerned on moving that quickly, with suspicious for a trap (Scheller, 2013). He read Perez's economic solution for regional cooperation as another sign of Israel's secret plan of establishing its regional hegemony.

Mutual suspicion was doubled with the terrorist attacks by Hamas and Islamic Jihad against Israel from all fronts. Radical extremist components from each party did not want any further negotiation as it was seen with the assassination of Rabin unfortunately. In order to sabotage the already deadlocked process, suicide bombings became a daily routine (Scheller, 2013). Syria's reluctance to condemn those attacks and their continued strategic partnership with Iran had deepened the mistrust especially among Israelis. Land for peace option was about to leave the agenda.

3.4.3. End of the Peace Process: 1996-2000

On May 1996, Shimon Perez lost the election and Benjamin Netanyahu's period had begun. It brought a complete change in peace process, since Netanyahu did not believe in the negotiations would bring an actual peace. He directly rejected the land for peace solution and insisted on peace-for-peace (Hijjar, 1999). His view of peace in Middle East had no preconditions. Those preconditions were the reason of deadlock and endangered Israeli national security. As a result of his hawkish

policies, mutual suspicion between Israel and Syria was at all time high. Even the war was on the edge when Israel mobilized troops as a reaction to the reports on Syrian military mobilization in Golan Heights (Scheller, 2013).

In addition to Netanyahu's perspective on peace negotiations, he also made significant shift on relations with US. He sought to find a way to reduce Israeli dependence for US economic aids, (Scheller, 2013) in order to diminish US' pressure on Israeli foreign policy decisions. However, Netanyahu walked on eggshells. Diminishing dependence would not mean sever relations with US. Further step of Israeli reluctance in Syrian track would do so. Therefore, secret negotiations were held between Israel and Syria but did not lead a final settlement. Both Netanyahu and Assad were beware of any kind of public appearance together.

On 1999, Ehud Barak won the elections. He was actually more moderate than Netanyahu towards peace process and made several attempts to restart it (Scheller, 2013). With the urges of Bill Clinton, Assad also agreed on to the appointment of border determination committee, with accepting 1967 line would not be a final border. However, Syria continued to insist on Golan in return.

At the end of the day, peace process had been failed with falling hopes for peace in short term. In 2000, with Ariel Sharon's provocative speech in Temple Mount, al-Aqsa Intifada had blown. Another round of civil uprising made Israel to suspend hopes for peace. On the Syrian side, with the death of Hafez al-Assad, his son Bashar came into power. Consolidation of rule and establishment of domestic stability were the prominent policy objectives of Bashar, rather than restarting a deadlocked peace process. New phase was opened on Syrian-Israeli track.

3.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, Israeli-Syrian relation is always in tension. It all started with the establishment of Israel in 1948, and although the tune of the disputes had changed, the nature of antagonism had stayed. However, both sides had learned how to live with the enemy throughout the time. The preservation of balance of power is the

matter. Israel had attempted to change it once via launching an operation in Lebanon; but got its fingers burnt. Therefore, the lessons of Lebanon remained in foreign policy behavior of Israel. The main driver of Israeli foreign policy towards Syria in this period can be summed as defensive, together with the exception of Lebanon. In this sense, peace is neither desirable nor wanted. Existed status-quo is mutually beneficiary for both parties, since Israel will not withdraw from Golan Heights easily, and since Syria will not seem to give up its rights on there. Entering into a peace process would force both parties to make such compromises.

CHAPTER 4

SYRIAN-ISRAELI RELATIONS UNDER BASHAR AL-ASSAD: 2000-2011

Bashar al-Assad came into power following of his father Hafez al-Assad's death in June 2000; and actually aroused high hopes both nationally and internationally. He was young, modern and had educated in Western system. He seemed to be close to Western way of thinking in contrast to his father (Hinnebusch, 2016). In national level, Syrians actually had high hopes on their new President. In the face of ongoing troubled socio-economic conditions of Syria, a new face after Hafez would be a progressive start for Syrians for the integration to new world order. With the Oslo process, Hafez actually started the integration process with establishing pragmatic relations with West, most importantly the United States. Although the peace talks had reached a dead end; victory of Ehud Barak in Israeli elections on December 1999 made some progress. Negotiations resumed under the influence of President Clinton, and as an electoral pledge, Barak completed full withdrawal from Lebanon in 24th of May 2000 (Zisser, 2005).

In international level, Western leaders and journalists had perceived new Syrian president as the member of younger generation of Arab leaders at the very first beginning (Zisser, 2007). Together with King Abdallah of Jordan, King Muhammad of Morocco, ruler of Qatar, and the crown princes of Gulf Emirates; Bashar al-Assad also would bring a new breath to Middle Eastern politics in more pro-Western way. At the beginning of his rule, Bashar was actually aroused progressive signals. He

made several important visits to Europe –like Madrid, Paris, Berlin, and Ankara and met the leaders in personal to give impressions in first hand. He also brought Syrian businessmen in his visits to promote possible economic ties with hosting countries (Zisser, 2007). As a result, Bashar had been received as progressive young Arab leader both nationally and internationally at the very first beginning of his rule; although he continued to preserve Syria’s close relations with Iran and Iraq.

In Israel, Bashar’s takeover of power had been received with full skepticism. Although Hafez al-Assad had sat on negotiation table; his intention was never fully understood. After the fall of Soviet Union and when Syria lost their main supporter; Hafez actually acted in the bases of new conjuncture to find a place in new world order. Entering into a peace process with Israel was an obligation, not a request. He was not seen as reliable partner in peace for Israel. That was why Israel insisted to leave the Golan issue out of negotiation table. Therefore, Bashar’s arrival was also met with skepticism. He was not fully accepted as a governor by his people since the very beginning of his rule. He became president in the absence of any alternative (Zisser, 2003). Therefore, his ability to rule and possible level of influence on Syrians was questionable. Whether he would follow his father’s footsteps or would open a new way –either progressive or not- was the question. However, both Bashar and Israeli politicians had little time to observe each others’ actual intention. Few months after Bashar’s arrival, al-Aqsa Intifada had been broke out and Israel adopted a high level of offensive minded defensive posture strategy in foreign policy once again. With the following events, like 9/11 attacks in 2001, US’s Iraq intervention in 2003 and Israel-Hezbollah war in 2006; Israeli-Syrian relations went off a completely different place that would hardly build up again.

4.1.Al-Aqsa Intifada

Outbreak of second Palestinian Intifada faded out the hopes for any possible renewal of Oslo process. Israeli foreign policy towards Palestinian uprising is always a defense policy since it has a chance to unite Arab world against Israel. Although governments have changed their policies towards Israel from time to time; Arab

public opinion is always sided with Palestinian cause. In order to not lose- or to consolidate- their power, Arab states would likely to take a side against Israel to please their public, at least in rhetoric for the most of the time (Simon & Stevenson, 2004). As a result, all the efforts to make peace in Oslo process had gone. This collapse and the Intifada that blossomed right after was used by the ones who were not in favor of the peace process since the very beginning.

New Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was one of them. In order to cope with the threatening challenges caused by al-Aqsa, Bashar tried to use it as an opportunity to consolidate his power. Unlike his father, Bashar was inexperienced and actually had not seen any Arab-Israeli war. Hafez had known to play in borders of power balance of the region, which worked for Israeli interest either since the existed balance used to work for both of them. Whether new ruler would follow his father's footsteps or would open a new road was the main concern. Nevertheless, Israel had little time to have concerns of new Syrian leader since the Palestinian uprising had outbreak in few months after.

Outbreak of the Palestinian uprising was also a great challenge to the new President of Syria. Renewal of Hezbollah's attacks against Israel from Southern border of Lebanon; Shaba Farms, would trigger possible Syrian-Israeli military escalation. It would be highly risky for a new president with full of economic concerns and sought for foreign support. Any possible military escalation would be a blow to fragile Syrian economy. More than that, Bashar al-Assad was also sought preserve existed relations with West, especially with United States that Hafez had been developed before (Zisser, 2007). However, the march of the events had driven Bashar's attitude completely a different way. Whether his intention at the beginning was neutral or else; using Palestinian uprising as an opportunity to consolidate his regime in domestic politics and recovering Syrian image in the region as the leader of Arab cause against Israel was a great opportunity.

According to Christopher Hemmer (2003), Syrian overall response to Palestinian uprising can be listed in four main topics. First of all, Ariel Sharon's visit to Temple

Mount on September 28, 2000 was not seen as an end for Oslo process for Syria. It was rather a revival of Israel's real intention to peace (Hemmer, 2003). It was the evidence of how Syria was right to reject whole process. Right after the visit, Ba'ath party issued an official statement to condemn Sharon's actions with underlining that Israel is not genuine on their intentions on behalf the peace arrangements (Hemmer, 2003). Therefore, Syria was so right to object to Israel's attitude to make separate bilateral tracks with each Arab country with aiming to diverse unified Arab cause. Sharon's visit was nothing but a provocation, and also a proof that Israel was not interested in making peace from the very beginning (Hemmer, 2003). The eruption of second intifada has validated the official Syrian concept of how to make peace with Israel (Ghadbian, 2001). This concept was based on the assumption that the frame of reference of peace process should be the formula of peace for land. Assad's criticism of Arafat was based on this principle. All the violence was a vindication of Syrian attitude to Oslo process. In an interview in February 2002, Bashar stated that "What I see today is what we saw in 1993 ... Syria said then, that these agreements are going to lead more turbulence..." (Zisser, 2007, p.168). Therefore, Syrian attitude towards entering into a peace process with Israel had remained the same since there was an obvious evidence of Israeli insincerity in Oslo for them.

Secondly, as a leader who found it difficult to legitimize his rule among his people's eyes; Bashar al-Assad had seen the uprising as an opportunity to claim a leadership over the battle against Israel. He tried to use al-Aqsa intifada to consolidate his power and gain popularity. With entering into a peace process, PLO's reputation had been damaged especially when the process had reached to a dead end. Arafat was blamed as much as Sharon in streets, with leading Palestinian cause into a national suicide since the success of Oslo was a matter of survival (Hemmer, 2003). Therefore, the place of the leadership of the Palestinian cause seemed to be empty and Bashar was there to fulfill it. Al-Aqsa was an opportunity to reclaim a leadership over Arab opponents and consolidate Bashar's position as the leader of Arab world in their battle against Israel both in Syria and in the region. Bashar allowed Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to maintain their activities in Syria and provided

supplies for them (Simon & Stevenson, 2004). He made rash statements and supported terrorist attacks against Israel, and used anti-Semitic remarks in order to prove himself as the true leader of whole Arabs (Zisser, 2003). Although his father was quite antagonist against Israel, Hafez had knew the reality and had more balanced tone. He was even so close make a peace with Israel. However, since Bashar did not face any direct military confrontation with Israel and did not defeated by them; he had a stricter tune.

Even though Bashar had an offensive discourse towards Israel to consolidate his power as the new leader of Arab cause; he seemed to be aware of some principle limitations as it can understood in the course of time (Hemmer, 2003). While supporting Palestinians, Syria played carefully to not give an excuse to Israel to attack Syria. Even though Bashar used the term “new Nazism” while referring Ariel Sharon’s visit to Temple Mount, with saying that problem is the Israel’s racist society (“Syria’s Bashar Assad’s Speech at the Arab Summit”, 2001). He called all Arab states to cut all ties with Israel. However, although these statements were quite offensive, they remained unfulfilled. Syria was unwilling to take any actions to go further. Moreover, Syria had little to offer economic and military support to Palestinians since Syrian economy was also ruined. Therefore, as Christopher Hammer concluded (2003); Syrian support to Palestinian Intifada has been similar to their support of Hezbollah: Syria will not take any actions that would end military confrontation with Israel. In this sense, although he was inexperienced and had an offensive discourse towards Israel; Bashar seemed to follow his father’s footsteps in terms of preserving the power balance and not get into new adventures with engaging direct military escalation with Israel. Continuing violent clashes between Palestinians and Israelis, together with Hezbollah’s ongoing attacks towards Israel from Shab’a farms of Lebanon would ended up with military confrontation. Syria and Israel came close to a military confrontation several times during the Intifada, and a Syria certainly had shown that they were not interested in conventional military confrontation since they were relatively weak in terms of military. For instance, when Hezbollah carried out a military operation, Israel retaliated immediately on

April 14, 2001 by attacking Syrian military radar unit in Lebanon and killing one soldier (Ghadbian, 2001). This was a total embarrassment for Bashar since he could not retaliate in that kind. In order to back up such weakness, Bashar adopted more anti-Israeli sentiments in his discourses -like saying 'Jews are betrayers of Jesus during Pope's visit in Damascus (Zisser, 2007)- and more importantly used it as an excuse to justify Syrian military existence in Lebanon.

Finally, Syria claimed that Hezbollah achieved a success in Lebanon. It was a clear-cut Arab victory over Israel since they had been forced to end occupation and had to withdrawn without any gain (Hemmer, 2003). Israel also had withdrawn from Sinai for Egypt; but it was rather a part of Israeli Egyptian deal and a humiliation for Arab cause since the leader of the Arab nationalism had left the common benefit and followed its own path. Moreover, Hezbollah did not recognize Israel in return of withdrawal. They did not give any concessions. As a result, Hezbollah claimed a clear victory over this since they fought until Israel had withdrawn. This model should be a focal point for Palestinian resistance according to Syria (Norton, 2000). Entering into a peace process was a mistake and brought nothing but a national suicide, and Israel was not genuine and only way to deal with them was military resistance (Hemmer, 2003). Outcome of Oslo process and Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 was the proof of it. Hezbollah achieved it under the guidance of Syria, which should also work for Palestinians either.

As a result, Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon gave a strong hand to both Syria and Hezbollah. According to Richard Norton, Barak aimed to reach a peace agreement with Syria in return of unilateral withdrawal; unfortunately as a default strategy (Norton, 2000). Barak hoped to end Lebanon-syndrome among Israelis with both withdrawing from Lebanon and reaching a final agreement with Syria. In order to prepare the ground, President Clinton met with Hazfez al-Assad in Geneva on March 2000; however the summit was a failure. Therefore, Israel actually had

withdrawn in return of nothing. More than that, Hezbollah's campaign had been presented as a success that forced Israel to leave Lebanon. This was a psychological victory rather than militarily one.

Many Israelis had seen this withdrawal as a defeat, so Barak's strategy had seemed as a failure. Anxiety in Israeli public doubled even more especially with Hezbollah's triumphantly statements. Hezbollah's existential reason was the Israeli existence in Lebanon. They presented Israeli withdrawal as their achievement and a turning point in the battle against Israel. Hezbollah's leader Hasan Nasrallah stated that:

a few hundred Hezbollah fighters forced the strongest state in the Middle East to hoist the white flag... This fear prevails not only in occupied northern Palestine but also in the heart of Tel Aviv ... Israel, which has nuclear weaponry and strongest air force in the region, is weaker than spider webs. (Zisser, 2007, p.182)

They achieved what no other country had been able to do: made Israel to leave a piece of territory without any commitment. In this sense, Iranian and Syrian-backed Hezbollah's victory had deep effects in Israeli public and policy makers. This would be a role model for Palestinian resistance as new Syrian President Bashar al-Assad repeatedly urged.

On the other hand, Israeli withdrawal also made Syrian presence in Lebanon meaningless in the eyes of Lebanese people (Zisser, 2007). Especially with the US's containment policy after 9/11 attacks, Bashar found it difficult to justify and legitimize Syrian military existence and political interference in there. At the end of the day, Syria had nothing to do but pullback its forces from Lebanon in April 2005. Although Israeli withdrawal was only one of many reasons of Syria's withdrawal; it had an impact on recovering psychological causes of Israel's pullback and prepared the grounds of its Lebanese intervention in 2006.

4.2. 9/11 Attacks, War against Terrorism and 2003 War in Iraq

When 9/11 attacks occurred in 2001, United States dramatically changed its policy with saying there is no distinction between terrorists and the ones who harbor them. As a result, Iran, Syria and Hezbollah axis had threatened more than ever. Especially Hezbollah's linkage with Al-Qaeda made them highly risked for United States. US repeatedly warned Syria to end its support to Palestinian and Hezbollah terrorism; while refraining from condemning Israeli attacks on Syrian bases in Lebanon in 2001. US also declared a dual containment policy towards the evil axis -Iran-Syria-Hezbollah-; and they said Syria will be the next when they launch military operation in Iraq in 2003 (Simon & Stevenson, 2004).

Right after the 9/11, Bashar al-Assad had changed his statements with recognizing the danger of continuing to support terrorism. He sent his condolences with calling for "international cooperation to uproot terror on its base..." (Zisser, 2007, p.133). In order to drive US aggression out, he offered to assist United States to investigate al-Qaida bases in Syria. Although United States was benefited much from this assistance, there were more than ones that Syria had actually reviled. Although not supporting them directly; Syria had chosen to turn a blind eye on Ladin's operatives in Syria and Lebanon. In Israeli reports, Syria had allowed nearly 150 al-Qaida terrorists to settle in Lebanese refugee camps (Zisser, 2007). Bashar sought for legitimizing it with saying that they are supporting Palestinians under Israeli occupation, not the terrorist; and condemn these reports as political, rather than revealing the truth (Zisser, 2007). At the end of the day, Syria became an object of US's critics and threats.

When the war broke out in 2003, Syria immediately took a side with Iraq since there was an obvious US threat towards Syria that they would be the next. In this sense, together with considering this hazardous threat; Bashar might have seen US intervention as an opportunity to reclaim his position as the leader of the Arab world.

Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan took a side with US. Syria accused US to have a secret agenda in its operations in Iraq, which was a part of long-standing plan to break national standing in the region for the sake of Zionism (Zisser, 2007).

For Israel, US's physical appearance in the region and the direct threat targeted to Israeli nemesis; Syria and Iran, caused a relative calm. With the intervention, United States became a neighbor of Syria. That gave a chance to US to put more pressure on them. Washington's especial focus on Syria's support of terrorism made it more costly for them to have hostile relations with Israel. US stressed Syria with bringing long list of demands, including disarming Hezbollah and withdrawing Syrian arms from Lebanon (Simon & Stevenson, 2004). In order to control Syrian actions on behalf of the war against terrorism, US President George W. Bush signed the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act in December 2003. With this way, Washington sought for detecting Syria's support for terrorist organizations and would punish them accordingly.

In order to dodge the bullet, Syria did not reject them directly (Simon & Stevenson, 2004). Bashar even tried to renew peace talks with Israel to restore Syrian image. In an interview at New York Times on December 2003, Bashar stated that he was ready to renew peace talks, with wishing to have: "I mean normal relations... like the relations between US and Syria. ("Key Passages from Interview with Syria's President", 2003)- with Israel. This message had been received by Israel as an attempt to reconstruct good relations with United States via portraying himself as the moderate. While offering peace, Bashar also had continued to support Hezbollah and Palestinian resistance which made his offer as not genuine for Israel. Even though Bashar had send signals to make a peace with Israel without any preconditions at the beginning of 2004, he abstained from making it officially (Zisser, 2005). Therefore, those signals were regarded as making under stress and pressure, not intentionally. In this picture, making territorial compromises in return of peace was out of table for Israel.

At the end of the day, Bashar took his time and wait for US would bogged down in Iraq (Zisser, 2007); which actually happened. As the time passes by, US found it difficult to justify their existence in there. Their relative entanglement restored both Syrian and other threatened sub-military groups' confidence. Bashar started to sharpen Syrian critiques towards United States and was unwilling to execute US demands. More than that, US's psychical appearance in the region and their followed bogged down triggered region-wide upheavals. Therefore, US started to have their own problems to deal with and their focus had lapsed. That gave an opportunity to Syria to misbehave.

Meanwhile, retaliation attacks had also started between Israel and Syria at the end of 2003. Israeli air forces issued harassment flights along Syrian border and attacked Palestinian training camp in a few miles away from Damascus (Zisser, 2007). Therefore, although his father tried to build bridges between Syria and the West, the situation had become worsen then ever in Bashar's period. He used anti-Israeli sentiments to uphold popularity from other Arab states since US's existence in Iraq was not welcomed by all. He also made strong alliances with Iran. However, especially when it comes to Israel, he was relatively weak. Israel carefully observed Assad's position and behaviors both internally and externally. He seemed to be aware of reelpolitik and sought to work for remaining status-quo in the region. Although his rhetoric was harsh, Bashar acted according to existed conjuncture.

In this sense, Israel launched defensive realist foreign policy in Bashar's early years in power. Syrian foreign policy was predictable and stable for Israel. Especially US's existence in Middle East did calm Israel towards the aggressors. For instance, Syrian Accountability Act in 2003 calls Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon and imposes penalties for Syria in support of terror (Ghadbian, 2001). Syria's back up for Hezbollah's actions became the subject of US's threat as a result. There was a balance in region somehow in Israeli favor, and even if it might face any challenge, US was there so they can act together to eliminate dominant powers.

4.3. 2006 Lebanon War

Years between 2004 and 2006 witnessed important changes in balance of power in the Middle East and had challenged Israel's defensive realist foreign policy. Yaser Arafat died in November 2004 and Mahmud Abbas took power as a new president of Palestinian Authority. Later on September 2005, Ariel Sharon completed the Disengagement Plan from Gaza Strip and then quit Likud to establish Kadima (Podeh, 2014). Also in 2006, Hamas won the elections. Together with Hezbollah's growing influence in Lebanon especially after Syria's withdrawal; the level of threat against Israeli national security had increased. As it was mentioned, Israeli foreign policy is driven by the endless demands of ensuring security. In this sense, national interest became similar to ensuring national security. Any kind of threats to the national security recompensed with disproportionate retaliations. Therefore, change in the balance of power in the region to the detriment of Israel was a challenge.

In July 2006, two Israeli soldiers were captured as a result of well organized ambush of Hezbollah (Podeh, 2014). That gave Israeli government a reason to launch a military operation to Lebanon to destroy Hezbollah. In 12th of July, 2006, Israel entered into Lebanon. The Israeli-Hezbollah war lasted for only 34 days; but its impacts were long-termed.

In domestic level; Israel's 2006 Lebanon operation had deepened the 'Lebanese syndrome' within the public (Kreps, 2007). Weakness in Israeli strategy which had deepened this syndrome can be analyzed under three main topics. First of all, Israeli warfare strategy in 2006 Lebanese operation was based on the airpower strike, which was seen as the best way to decrease casualties in modern warfare (Kreps, 2007). With this way, Israeli Defense Forces would be able to launch target attacks and achieve their objective more directly. They called it as "victory from air" (Kreps, 2007, p.210). Especially the first Lebanon War had taught the cost of having ground forces all around the operational ground. Number of fallen Israeli soldiers did worsen the situation in the eyes of Israeli public. However, Israeli air strike raids in 2006

were far from diminishing the civilian casualties. As a result of the operation, many Lebanese civilians and Israeli soldiers were died. Since the rocket fires could not separate the civil and militia; air strike strategy could not have been successful.

This situation also brought an ethical dilemma in Israeli politics, which was the second weakness. In traditional warfare understanding, conflicting parties were the states and the rules of warfare were determined by international norms and treaties. If a state declares a war against another state, all the measures they take is under the observation of international community. However, Israeli-Hezbollah War in 2006 was held on asymmetric ground. It was a war between a state and a non-state sub-military group. Therefore, conventional understanding of warfare remains inadequate because the ongoing conflict had been shaped in asymmetric ground (Arreguin, 2005). By taking traditional warfare measures, for instance solely developing advanced weaponry to cope with terrorist organization; stronger, which is state, is actually started to lose power. Terrorist organizations know that they will not win militarily in direct confrontation. Therefore, they actually do not want to get in military escalations directly. So traditional thinking does not help stronger to win.

Israel's insist on using a traditional warfare tactic as launching air strikes had weakened its hand in asymmetric war as a result. Hezbollah did not have any advantage in ground battle since Israel was obviously superior in terms of militarily. However, with using air strikes and target attacks, Israel had faltered with giving Hezbollah a chance to use human shields. With this way, Hezbollah had a chance to attack in ethical and moral base. Although Israel had targeted Hezbollah's militias and its leaders, they hid themselves among the civilians to portray any attack as an attack to civilians (Kreps, 2007). It gave limited access to IDF to kill exclusive targets. With launching an air strike attack to kill Hezbollah militias who hid among ordinary Lebanese people, Israel found itself in a place that hard to justify its actions. More than that, the damage and civilian casualties caused by Israeli attacks was shown in media which caused a general sympathy towards Hezbollah in streets. Flows of foreign fighters had traveled to Lebanon to join Hezbollah in their fight

against Israel (Kreps, 2007). Therefore, Hezbollah used the advance of asymmetric warfare and had shown Israel as the aggressor to portray the conflict as an Islamic battle; and successfully had damaged Israeli reputation once again. At the end of the day, even the international community had started to question the disproportionate level of Israeli aggression.

The final Israeli weakness in Lebanon War was their strategy on portraying the war as the last war (Kreps, 2007). Hezbollah was the source of threat; and in order to get away with them for good, Israel had to get into a war that would finalize all wars. However, memories of first Lebanon War were still fresh in Israeli public. People started to accuse the government as getting into new adventures. More than that, increase in casualties had shown that airstrike was not the way to achieve victory with low costs. With the power of media, Israeli policy makers found it difficult to justify the Lebanon war as a just-war. Israeli excuse to launch an operation to Lebanon at the very beginning was rescuing two Israeli soldiers. Far from achieving this objective, Israel had to withdraw from Lebanon once again without any achievement at the end of the day.

As a result, Israel's second Lebanon adventure was a catastrophe again. As they did once in first Lebanon War, Israel again abandoned defensive realist foreign policy with making a direct invasion to Lebanon; even though they launched it in the name of saving Israeli soldiers. Military superiority cannot provide an upper hand in asymmetric warfare; but public support does. With launching an operation through old warfare tactics, Israel unintentionally caused Hezbollah to gain that support.

4.4 New Arab Cold War

Although the 2006 War had revealed the structural weakness of Israeli strategy and ended up with the no gain; it marked the spillover of sectarian conflicts in Middle East. As it was mentioned, Israel sought to prevent Arab world to unite, both politically and militarily; because divisions within the Arab world is advantageous at its best. This strategy has been based on the assumption that Arab and Israeli

interests are always in contradiction so a division among Arab states would work for Israeli interest, both in time of war and peace (Heller, 2013). Israel had been faced four major wars under the impact of united Arab cause; so any possibility of this division works for their interest. In this sense, the revilement of sectarian divisions after the Lebanon War would be a unique opportunity for the sake of Israeli foreign policy objectives.

Even though Lebanon War seemed as the milestone of the sectarian divisions in Middle East, its seed had been sowed a while before in Arab League Summit in Beirut on March 2002, which later translated itself as Arab Peace Initiative.

In February 2002, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdullah came up with a new proposal; normalization of relations of 22 Arab states with Israel in return of full withdrawal in accordance to UN resolutions (Podeh, 2014). According to Elie Podeh (2014), there were four main motives under this proposal. First of all, this proposal was designed under the impact on the conjuncture of war on terror launched by United States. Therefore, Saudi Arabia sought for underlying their alignment with US, especially after the involvement of several Saudi citizens in 9/11 attacks. This proposal would be a way to recover Saudi image. Secondly, Intifada brought instability in the region and systematically challenge moderate Arab states' credibility. A peace settlement with Israel would bring that stability. Thirdly, the seat of the Arab leadership was still empty and Saudi Arabia would fulfill it with establishing a peace agreement with Israel. In the final place, if this peace plan would be successful, it would strengthen moderate camp's hand against the radical fundamentalist axis.

Syria's place in this offer was not for Israel's favor. Although Bashar was in there to attend the summit; his statements were quite offensive. He sought for justifying Palestinian and Hezbollah's suicide attacks with saying that; although the victims of 9/11 attacks were innocent; Israelis were not (Podeh, 2014). He was not seeing

Israelis as innocent civilians since there was occupation; and occupants could not be considered as civilians. Therefore, resistance was the ultimate right of Palestinians. Syria was not in favor of this peace initiative.

Although Israel did not officially reject the offer, Israeli media implied that a full withdrawal would be a direct threat to Israeli security, especially under the impact of hazardous threat of al-Aqsa Intifada (Podeh, 2014). Therefore, the timing of the Arab Peace Initiative was not good. The uprising led all focus to the security oriented policies, so making territorial concessions in return of normalization of relations was seen as a direct challenge to the security. Especially with the failure of Oslo, Israeli faith in peace processes also diminished. Oslo also had been started with high hopes, but could not reach to an end and Intifada had started right after its failure. Therefore, although Ariel Sharon called API as a positive development, withdrawal to pre-1967 borders was nonnegotiable (Podeh, 2014). More than that, Israel is in favor of bilateral relations with Arab states in both in times of peace and war. Therefore, unified Arab peace offer in the times of Intifada was not favorable since there was possibility of urging Israel to make concessions in Palestinian track which was quite costly at that time.

Elie Podeh (2014) issued this rejection as an Israeli failure to catch up one of the most dramatic changes in Middle East. Moderate Arab states; Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan were there to reach a final settlement and there was a chance to isolate 'axis of evil'-Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas- for good. Whether Israel had missed that opportunity, it was a fact that the seeds of the sectarian division were sowed under the name of moderate camp vs. fundamentalist camp with Arab Peace Initiative.

2006 Lebanon War had deepened this gap in the name of sectarianism. On the one hand, there were Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan with accusing Hezbollah to driven the region into new dangerous adventures (Valbjørn & Bank, 2007). On the other hand, there were Iran, Syria and Hezbollah again with blaming Saudi Arabia and

other moderates as applying hidden agenda of US and Israel (Valbjørn & Bank, 2007). As a result, moderate camp's reactions towards Hezbollah's attacks and following Israeli bombardment had shown that last remains of Arab nationalism had gone for good.

Although the division seemed as sectarian, the nature of it was different. In the Sunni camp, there were Israel and United States; and in the Shiite camp there was Hamas. Therefore, it was more like a balance of power tactic for the sake of eliminating dominant powers' ability to affect the balance for their interest. Rise of Shiite power in Middle East was a great challenge for Israel, as did the US's existence in the region for Iran and Syria. The division was not sectarian in societal level either. Shiite Hezbollah and Sunni Hamas have been together for the sake of their cause against Israel. Although Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was sided with Sunni camp, Egypt's Sunni population had deep sympathies towards Hasan Nasrallah as the leader of Hezbollah especially after 2006 Lebanon War (Valbjørn & Bank, 2007). Therefore, although governments made alliances to rebalance the power for their benefit and although it seemed like a sectarian divide; it was hard to recognize the sectarian divisions within the components of alliances and the tendencies of societies. State-led Arab nationalism was replaced by popular street-led nationalism in more Islamic tunes for this time.

4.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, whether Bashar had to choose this way or the regional conjuncture lead him to choose is the question. Soon afterwards he came into power; he faced with serious challenges and had to take a pragmatic position to survive. As a young and inexperienced leader who was lack of full legitimacy in the eyes of his people's; he had to deal with some serious decisions at the very beginning of his rule. Hafez al-Assad had matured over time and developed his pragmatic foreign policy almost in thirty years. Therefore, his decisions were not reactive, but came out of long years of experiences. He was experienced enough to act according to balance of power. If the balance was not in Syrian favor, he acted patiently and used every opportunity to

make that shift. He was pragmatic, not driven by ideologies. Therefore, he got into a peace process with Israel because the existed conjuncture made him to do so. He used Oslo as an opportunity and a strategy to take a place in this new balance. At the end of the day, both Israel and Syrian had found a way to exist together in harmony somehow. Hafez had seen four main wars with Israel and knew the importance of pragmatic power balance in Syria's relations with Israel. Although he remained hostile towards Israel in public sphere; he carefully preserved this balance. However, Bashar was inexperienced and his decisions were quite reactive towards those serious challenges. Reactive foreign policy has not been favorable for Israel, since they share a common border.

As Hafez did once, Bashar also sought to unify Arab cause under his leadership against Israel. This was his policy tool to consolidate his power. Although Arab Peace Initiative and the outcomes Israeli-Hezbollah War in 2006 had opened serious divisions among the Arab world, which called as the new Arab Cold War; Bashar's policy was totally contradictory against Israel's foreign policy objective as dual strategy. Bilateral relations always work for the best for Israeli interest. Bashar's attempts to unify Arab cause were a challenge to Israel especially in the face of series of turmoil in the region.

However, although Bashar did have animosity towards Israel to the bones, his actual actions had shown that he acted in accordance to balance of power at the end of the day. He carefully avoided direct confrontation with Israel and maintain the animosity throughout supporting sub-military groups, like Hezbollah. In the summit of Arab leaders in October 2000, Bashar underlined that full scale confrontation with Israel was not the favorable for Arabs; rather, they should support limited and indirect confrontations through Hezbollah and Palestinian resistance groups (Zisser, 2007). Moreover, Syria was unwilling to end the negotiations with Israel for good. Especially towards Western audiences, Bashar repeated several times that Syria was ready to make a peace agreement in return of Israeli territorial concessions. Especially after US's intervention to Iraq in 2003, Syria had repeated their readiness

to make peace with Israel in order to shown itself as moderate and drive US aggression far away. In addition to that, tone of Bashar's speeches had been differentiated according to the targeted audiences. For instance, in a speech in Damascus May 2001, Bashar had said that Jews betrayed Jesus and now they attempt to betray Mohammad; so betrayal is the mentality of Jews at all (Zisser, 2007). However, in his speech in Paris in June 2001, Bashar underlined that his words were mystifying and one cannot blame whole Jews for their forebears did as one cannot blame Germans today. Although referring Holocaust was a misfortune statement while trying to acquit himself, Bashar seemed to have rash statements in order to use the opportunity to consolidate his power in street; and use more moderate terms towards international audiences to legitimize his rule with establishing good relations.

As a result, a new balance was formed in the name of balance of fear (Zisser, 2007). On the one side, there were rumors on Syria's Weapons of Mass Destruction capacity and range of ground missiles that could reach most of Israeli land. Iran had a nuclear capacity and ready to use it as threat towards Israel if necessary to rebalance the power relations. Hezbollah, backed by Syria and Iran, was now has more self confidence than ever after Israel's withdrawal and the consequences of 2006 War. Although US's psychical appearance lead to change the balance in Israel's favor for a while, the mass they left in Iraq recovered the confidence of axis-of-evil and reinforced the balance of fear. More vitally, US decided to withdrawn from Middle East in mid-2011. They were in Iraq for a long period and their departure left a huge power vacuum, which professionally filled by Islamist extremists. Long before that, their intervention in Iraq actually gave a rise to such establishments; like ISIS, since its founders were Saddam Husain's former generals. US's withdrawal means relatively easy spillover of these groups, especially when the central governments has been relatively weak especially after the beginning of

regional uprising, called as the Arab Spring. This situation is a vital challenge for Israeli security. Especially after the lessons of two wars in Lebanon and the challenging outcomes of terrorist spillovers into Israeli territories, Israel seemed to readopt defensive realist foreign policy approach, at least for a while.

CHAPTER 5

ARAB SPRING IN SYRIA AND ISRAELI RESPONSE

The word Arab Spring is using as an umbrella term to refer revolutionary wave of demonstrations, riots, coups and civil wars in Middle East that began in 17 December 2010 in Tunisia and then have spread all around the region (Inbar, 2013). It challenged political, social, economic and military status quo and attempt to write a new chapter in the history of the region. Authoritarian regimes responded disproportionately with violence which triggers societal anger more. Protests in Tunisia and Egypt succeeded in toppling two of the most stable authoritarian regimes of the region just in several weeks. In Tunisia, also known as the Jasmine Revolution, President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali had step down in January 2011. Just a few days after, massive protest had broke out also in Egypt. After several days of demonstrations and use of extreme violence as a repression, Egyptian army announced that they refused to use force against protestors (Inbar, 2013). In this sense, President Hosni Mubarak had nothing to do but left his office.

As a result of these rapid successes in Egypt and Tunisia, the spirit of protests expanded throughout the region. There were massive protests in Syria, Bahrain, Libya and Yemen. However, those were not end up with popular revolutions. Especially in Libya, Muammar al-Qaddafi removed by the international coalition's intervention led by NATO in the summer of 2011 (Inbar, 2013). A direct foreign intervention to a local event in the region has several ongoing effects which totally changed dynamics of the events and opened an international competition. In Syria,

for instance, competition between international community over searching for influence made military intervention less likely; but when it comes to political intervention, together with direct military support and assistance to different rival groups within Syria, it would be more easy to achieve which makes the events more complicated. Although Bashar al-Assad was not removed, Syria became a state of war and more unstable than ever.

Although the events had seemed to start with Mohammad Bouazizi, an unemployed young Tunisian man who set himself on fire as a protest against Tunisian government, and spread throughout the region as a domino effect; it was just a spark like the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in 1914, which started the World War I. The causes of uprising embedded deeply in the roots of society and reached its boiling point with that triggering event. In the Arab Spring, the embedded causes can be listed in several points. First of all, there was instability in all terms. Those countries ruled by authoritarian regimes for a long time and corruption jar every bone of the government. Ruling authoritarian regimes were corrupted to the bones and isolated themselves from the society. They had been there so long that they could control every apparatus of state. Changing something through elections or with political participation became impossible. The ruling elite held the money and wealth which caused huge rate of unemployment as a result (Inbar, 2013). Instability in the very top to the very bottom of the society ended up with direct grievance against the authoritarian regimes. In the countries where there were high rates of unemployment, people attended protests more; but the countries with low unemployment rates like United Arab Emirates remained peaceful (Inbar, 2013).

Secondly, education level of the main body of the protestors was generally high (Edwards, 2013); however, there were high rates of unemployment. Three main slogans in Arab Spring were: bread, freedom and social justice (Gamson, 2011). Educated people, especially youth, could not find an accurate job related to their

proficiency. With the lack of job and money to survive, they questioned the functionality of their government. More than that, individuals with higher education level are more likely to engage political acts, because education increases social and political awareness.

5.1. Arab Spring and Israel: High Levels of Anxiety

Whatever the reason was, popular unrest in streets was a great challenge to Israeli security since the memories of both Intifadas were quite fresh. In domestic level, there was also ongoing conflict within Israel in those days. In early 2011, Israeli government faced with countrywide protest. Similarly with the Arab Spring, there were tent city demonstrations for a demand of a new social contract (Gamson, 2011). It was the largest demonstration in Israeli history, with mobilizing over 400.000 people from a population of 7.7 million (Craig, 2015). Some of the scholars, like Alan Craig (2015) and William Gamson (2011) underlined that Israeli movement for social justice was heavily influenced by the Arab Spring (Craig, 2015). As in Arab Spring, Israeli facebook generation saw a possibility of changing something through social mobilization via social media with bypassing formal process and structures within Israeli democracy. Therefore, since the domestic situation was highly fragile and had been affected by the Arab Spring –at least in discourse-, it was quite normal for Israel to not choose any side in ongoing conflict in Syria since the possible statements would not welcomed even by its own citizens (Asseburg, 2012). In the end, Israeli government did not exert serious efforts to change regional environment to build new and better relations with newly forming societies and systems.

For William A. Gamson (2011), the term collective action underlines nature of connection between Arab Spring and Israeli Social Justice Protests. It has three components; injustice, agency and collective identity. To begin with injustice, it refers to moral component in political consciousness. This is not something like a cognitive or intellectual judgment about something being unfair; but the one that related with emotion (Gamson, 2011). There were different senses of injustices in every country and in Israeli protest; it was demand social justice in economic terms.

Israel has undergone sharp economic inequalities. However, the sense of injustice within the Arab uprisings was quite different from the Israeli protests. It built up from high employment, food inflation, and lack of political freedoms throughout the long period of time.

The agency component refers to idea to change something through the collective action. It actually reflects that someone can do something. While injustice might be homegrown or local; agency component is collective (Gamson, 2011). A sense of agency is directly affected by the fate of the success of collective action. For instance, rapid success of collective action in Egypt and Tunisia increased the sense of agency by demonstrations in other countries including Yemen, Libya, Syria, and surprisingly Israel. Even the tent-city demonstrations labeled as ‘tentifada’ in Israel (Gamson, 2011). Tel Aviv was full of references to increased sense of collective agency. Banners exclaiming “Egypt is here”, “Tahrir Corner of Rothschild” and “Walk like Egyptian” (Asseburg, 2012, p.118).

Identity component refers the process of defining “we”, which was a main challenge for movements in both Arab countries and Israel. A major challenge in Arab world was creating a division between radical elements of Islamist movement and the others who suffered from poor living conditions regardless of their religion. In Israel, although the discourse within demonstrations was quite different, the Jewish “we” was created rather than Israeli “we”. While protests largely embraced economic concerns of Arabs in Israel, social justice for Palestine in occupied territories was missing from the list of concern (Craig, 2015). The reason for this absence is the collective memory of ordinary Israelis. Palestinian campaigns of suicide bombings and the memory of second intifada still creates a suspicion. Therefore, avoiding Palestinian issue is an essential step in construction of coalition. More than that, unlike their Arab neighbors, protestors in Israel did not call for fall of the government. They demand Netanyahu government to soften its policies about social welfare, housing, education and employment (Craig, 2015). The deteriorating security situation on Israel’s borders with Egypt and Syria; rockets from Gaza; and

deteriorating relations with Iran enabled Israeli policy makers oppose defense cuts (Craig, 2015). Therefore, although influence of Arab Spring was obvious in awakening Israeli protestors as possibility to change and an increase sense of agency; ultimate aims and the demands of the protestors were quite different.

In regional level, it is good to remind United States' withdrawal from Middle East in mid-2011. Barak Obama's main policy on Middle East was driven by the strategy of disengagement (Celso, 2014). US's failure to ensure security and stability in Iraq had triggered the instability in region as whole. As a result, Obama declared the disengagement of US troops in 2011. However, they were in Iraq for a long period and their actions in there had created a social turmoil. As a result, their departure left a huge power vacuum; which were professionally filled by Islamist extremists. Indeed, their intervention in Iraq actually gave a rise to radical military establishments, like ISIS; since its founders were Saddam Husain's former generals. US's withdrawal gave a way to spillover of those groups more easily since the American troops were not there to patronage. Moreover, with the rise of region-wide uprisings, central governments had been weakened which led such non-state actors to take more action. This situation was, and still a vital challenge for Israeli security; especially when it considered Israel's neighbor states, like Syria, was targeted to civil uprising.

5.2. Israel and Syrian Winter

Arab Uprisings reached Syria in March 2011, when Syrian intellectuals, students and union leaders appeared on streets to demand greater transparency, political liberation and economic reforms. Although the tension was not that high at the very beginning, Assad's disproportionate retaliation towards protests had increased the tension. When Syrian Islamists had joined the opposition with challenging state's monopoly on use of force, government's response became rusher and a civil war had begun.

For Israel, turmoil in Syria is a security challenge since they share a common border. However, Israeli foreign policy towards the crisis in Syria is neither reactive nor ideologist. With underlining redlines; Israeli policy makers adopted an offensive-minded defensive posture foreign policy strategy of strategic silence.

It would be more accurate to examine Israeli foreign policy response to Syrian Civil War into three periods which would open more pragmatic understanding since it is hard evaluate the whole events under single umbrella. In this sense, Israeli foreign policy behavior was changing when a game changing event happened. First period begins with the start of protests in Syria as a classical application of defensive realist foreign policy. In second period, Russian intervention had changed the threat perception with the increase of Iran's and Hezbollah's sphere of influence. In final period, Astana peace process aroused a great challenge for Israeli security since its security needs was not considered in the process. However, although Israeli threat perception had raised and felled throughout the time, its defensive realist foreign policy remained in nature of responses.

5.2.1. 2011-2015: Adaptation of Strategic Silence

Spillover of Arab Spring into Syria was an alarm for Israel. In order to response, Israel had adopted strategic silence policy. According to Amichai Magen (2015), top-down mobilization of Israel's small security and foreign policy establishment resulted in articulation of set of policy objectives quickly. In the first period, they had adopted non-entanglement policy objective with aiming to prevent any possible spill over into Israeli borders. General Israeli choice was staying out of Syrian crisis, with adopting wait-and-see policy, and hesitated to make any statement in favor of any sides. To begin with, although the nature of Syrian Israeli relations was hostile, Bashar al-Assad had proven himself as stable partner. His actions were predictable and worked for preservation of the balance of power within the region. A possible radical Islamist takeover would be an existential threat for Israel. Secondly, Israel is already a status quo power who had benefited much from the existing power relations. Preservation of this status quo is vital. Thirdly, Israel balanced non-

involvement with deterrence. Although they had tried to separate themselves from the ongoing turmoil, it does not mean that any possibility of spillover would have been tolerated. “Do not dare to attack us” mentality has been deeply rooted foreign policy option (Jones & Edwards, 2013, p.103). Finally, democratization process is neither desirable nor meaningful for Israel. Democratic elections were ended up with the victory of Islamic elements such as Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Hamas in Gaza. Therefore, the situation would not be different in Syria. As a result, Israel had adopted offensive-minded defense postured foreign policy of strategic silence to both prevent any possibility of spillover into Israeli territories, and also preserve the already existing balance in the region.

5.2.1.1. Bashar al-Assad as a Reliable Partner

First of all, Syria remained silent for some forty years with recognizing that any possible open clash with Israel would be disastrous (Byman, 2011). It doesn't mean that they reflected a peaceful foreign policy towards Israel. As it was mentioned, both Hafez and Bashar al-Assad had knew the limits of their power and did play within the boundaries of it. Both of them had tried to avoid direct confrontation, but it does not mean that they did not get involved any military campaign against Israel. Syria sought to support sub-military groups like Hezbollah and Hamas to undermine Israel's power and preserve the balance of fear. However, the relations between Syria and Israel are quite complicated and governed by many unspoken rules. For instance, while Syria supports Hamas, it also places limits on Palestinian group's activities (Byman, 2011). They also officially supports Hezbollah, but also checks out Hezbollah's activities when they fear any possible escalation with Israel in Lebanon (Byman, 2011), Like Mubarak's Egypt and Hashamite's Jordan, Assad's Syria's foreign policy is quite predictable and relatively safe for Israel. They are all “devils they know.” (Jones & Edwards, 2013, p.104). Therefore, power change in Syria would end up with a new government that does not know these rules and plays to public opinion rather than the strategic reality.

Although both countries have formally been at war since the establishment of Israel and Assad has deepened its alliance with Iran as well as positioning itself in camp of resistance against Israeli and American designers in the region, and also supported anti-Israeli militant movements like Hamas and Hezbollah; Syria had proved its reliability when it comes to secure its border with Israel, which has been kept quite since 1973 War (Asseburg, 2012). Together with that, Syria even cooperated with Israel with allowing exports into Syria from occupied Golan Heights (Ma'oz, 2014). Although there is possibility of removal of Assad would open more close dialogue; it is not been guaranteed. New Syrian regime would be harsher for regaining occupied Golan from Israel. However, Iran's presence within Syria might prevent Israel to give an open support to Assad regime. Therefore, Israel might hesitate to make open statements in favor of choosing a side in order to not taking a side with Iran and Hezbollah officially. In addition to that, Amichai Magen (2015) underlined the dilemma in Syrian crisis for Israel. Fall of Alawite regime will be strategic blow for Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas axis. However, Israel had learned to live with devil; and new coming regime would be more hostile and radical. Also, Assad's ongoing struggle, together with Iran's and Hezbollah's efforts to make him to stay in power, undermined their military power. Scenario of Assad's remaining in power, but weakened militarily it would serve Israel's security interest as well (Magen, 2015). Backing up Assad for a long time is also costly for Iran and Hezbollah, with considering the casualties and the bad reputation they have in arena.

5.2.1.2. Change in Balance of Power

Secondly, Israel has remarkable power in the region. However, its power has some serious limitation when it comes to be influencer in Middle East. Israel has a power to block, but not power to shape the regional order (Kappel, 2014). It has the most superior military in the region and used it effectively as a coercive tool to get others to do what they would otherwise not to do. As a result, although Israel cannot shape

the main dynamics of regional order; it successfully uses its hard powers, vertical networks, and extra-regional allies to draw the limits of threats or even the power capability of their foes against Israel (Kappel, 2014).

This situation does not jeopardize Israel's superiority in terms of military and economy compared to its counterparts in the region. It is quite vital when it is considered that they are surrounded by the hostile states. They had survived from four total wars against pan-Arab forces and maintained their military superiority. Rest of the neighboring hostile states had learned to live with Israeli existence throughout the time and some kind of balance had been developed in the region. Israeli foreign policy is based on preservation of this balance. It is not ideologist, but sought to preserve the existed reign. Although the both Lebanon interventions would have been seen as an attempt to rebalance the power in the region, the cost was enormous for Israel in return. Therefore, making a physical intervention during the Arab Spring was less likely. Memories of Lebanon were so fresh and Israeli public opinion was sided with the protesters at the very beginning (Craig, 2015). Any kind of Israeli intervention or any kind of statement that would be considered as taking sides, would have been used as a pretext to involve Israel into the middle of the events. More than that, Israel actually does not trust Assad personally (Kappel, 2014). He is the devil for them and removal of him would be a blow for Iran and Hezbollah. However, this devil had proved himself as stable throughout the years, which is enough for Israel. Preservation of balance of power in the region is crucial since it works for Israel in every field. Assad is one of the components in this balance. That is why his remaining is working for Israeli interest.

More than that, any possibility of Islamist rise in Syria would mean a disaster for Israel. The deep uncertainty within what would happen if Assad falls is the main concern. If Syria would become a failed-state, there would be no authority there to ensure security among Israeli-Syrian border. More than that, Syrian chemical weapons would fall into other radical Islamist elements, which is also disastrous for Israel.

On the other hand, Syria should not neither fell apart nor succeed as a champion. What would happen after the fall of Bashar is definitely uncertain and the Islamic elements in the opposition were a direct security concern for Israel. However, his absolute success would definitely mean the victory of Iran-Hezbollah axis. Therefore, wounded Assad as the Syrian President would be more beneficial for Israel. With this way, Iran's sphere of influence would have been narrowed. Israel is ready to use all coercive means to preserve this balance and prevent the rise of Iranian effect.

5.2.1.3.Risk of Spillover

Israel also balanced non-involvement with deterrence. In September 2013, Defense Minister Yalalon stated that they will not involve Syrian Civil War unless redlines have not been crossed, which are transformation of game changer weapons to terrorist organizations; and violation of Israeli sovereignty (Aran &Fleischmann, 2018).

Israel also sought to preserve their assets in time of crisis (Amour, 2017). They sought to preserve already existed peace agreements; preserve the existence of Hashemite Kingdom in Jordan; and preserve their ability to make effective deterrence against its hostile neighbors. Especially the last one is essential for their non-entanglement policy and insulation of their civil population from the turmoil of ongoing events. This policy is partially successful towards Syria especially between the years of 2011-2015 (Magen, 2015).

5.2.1.4.Democratization as a Risk of Stability

Democratization in Middle East is not vital or even favorable for Israel for several reasons. First of all, Israel sought to present itself as the villa in jungle to the rest of the world. With this way, Israel wants to assure of separating itself from instability of the region (Kappel, 2014). Israel is economically well-grown and stable compared with other regional actors. They have well-functioned democracy. This stability and

relative success makes them a villa and a stable regional partner for Western powers. This is a vital part of dual strategy in Israeli foreign policy: “making the West always choose between us and them, and if it is not, we’ll create enough trouble to make sure that it must be us” (Kenan, 1982, p.359). If the democratization process would have been succeeded, Israeli nemesis would find a way to develop open dialogue with United States which would limit Israeli sphere of influence as a result.

Secondly, democratic elections do not always ended up with happy ends in Middle East for Israel. Israeli leaders seems to advocate democracy would bring peace in Middle East in discourse; however, democratization of Arab regimes would also ended up with the rise of political Islam, which is definitely not Israeli favor since it will increase Iranian influence in the region. This situation brings out a paradox. Although Israel fears the rise of political Islamist regimes, their stable relations with Saudi Arabia shows that not all Islamist fundamentalist states are necessarily a threat to Israel. However, this is just an exception.

Democracy in Syria would worsen the situation since elections generally ends up with the rise of political Islam as in Iran and Egypt. Democratization and political openings can be seized and kidnapped by anti-democratic and anti-Semitic radicals. Arab public opinion is not that trustable for Israel. Almost 90% of Arabs saw Israel as the biggest threat (Byman, 2011). It is well-known that majority of the people of Middle East are not in favor of Israeli existence in Middle East since the very beginning of its establishment. This is why growing popular influence of public opinion is particularly challenging for Israel (Asseburg, 2012). All peace treaties that Israel had signed in region; with Egypt and Jordan, were signed with dictators, who were quite outside of the public opinion and mainstreams of their societies. More representative government means more influence of public opinion rather than external influence or ruling elite’s interest. New regimes would annul executed peace and economic treaties with Israel. More than a regional stability and change in status

quo, Arab Spring may end up with rise of political Islam as a result of true democratization process. By saying “not Arab Spring...but Iranian winter” (Berti, 2012, p.134). President Netanyahu was actually referring to the perception that uprisings were being hijacked by Islamist groups as what was happened in Iran. As the Islamist parties rises, political Islam would become the biggest winner of the Spring (Berti, 2012), as it was experienced with Iran, Hamas and Hezbollah.

Finally, Israel has a clear self-understanding. Ideology-based democracy promotion is not a foreign policy objective. Their choice of strategic silence, limited military and diplomatic activity, and refraining from promoting itself as a democratic model is coming from the acknowledgment of the fact that Arab reformist would not welcome Israeli interaction in both physical and intellectual terms and so Israel would not promote positive political and economic change among its neighbors (Magen, 2015). Any kind of lauded preferences among sides would have been used as a tool of consolidation of power in anti-Israeli sentiments. They do not have a political aim to be model of democracy. The only objective they sought to implement is preserving the status quo that they already have superiority in all hard power measures; and to survive actually.

5.2.1.5. Defensive Realist Foreign Policy

As a result, Israeli response towards Arab Spring between the years 2011-2015 is advanced by realist tradition. It can be summarized as defensive, conservative, non-idealist and extensively reliant on purposefully discrete military and diplomatic instruments (Magen, 2015), which can be understood in several facts.

First of all, Israeli non-entanglement and insulation policy was undergirded by compelling economic interest. As a small, consumer-driven and investment-dependent economy, Israel is highly vulnerable to economic challenges stemming from internal, Palestinian or cross-border attacks (Magen, 2015). National economy was highly damaged during al-Aqsa Intifada, together with Lebanon War in 2006,

also military confrontations with Hamas in 2010 and 2012 (Aran & Fleischmann, 2018). As a result, Israeli leaders became highly sensitive for preserving normalcy in order to run stable economy. More than that, if the crisis would spill over into Israel, their population will directly suffer. They wanted the preservation of normal life of their citizens to run the economy. Moreover, there was also ongoing internal turmoil within Israel, which named Israeli Tent Protests. It was the biggest protest in Israeli history and the timing was alarming for Israeli politicians. Protestors repeatedly declared solidarity with the rest of the protestors in Arab Spring. This situation would force Israeli policy makers to make some concession in Palestinian issue if there would be an open public demand. Luckily for Israeli government, Israeli Summer was not embraced by Arab protestors and Palestinians because of the self-considered agenda of Israeli protests (Magen, 2015). However, even the possibility of welcoming would be disastrous for Netanyahu government.

Second main fact of Israeli defensive realism is insisting on preserving status quo as a conservative policy. They are already militarily and economically superior in the region. None of its neighbors achieved military success against Israel in military confrontation. Therefore, Israel is a status-quo actor in Middle East, so they insist on preserving the old, not taking a bet on the new. Breaking in regional status-quo would be hazardous for Israel since the new comer's intentions are unknown. Therefore, they adopt strategic silence and wait-and-see approach in order to avoid strategic blunders since the dangers are poorly understood. That is why they urged to preserve their strategic assets as a policy objective when the crisis appeared. Although Netanyahu's speeches were highly skeptical, it displays variance, depending on the audiences, whether it addressed domestic audiences or international audiences; together with the nature of the international audiences (Magen, 2015).

Thirdly, Israel is non-idealist towards the region. Democracy in Syria would worsen the situation since elections generally ends up with the rise of political Islam as mentioned. Therefore, which regime that protestors would prefer is not their main

concern. Although democracies do not fight with each other in democratic peace theory, they secretly supported sub-military groups rather than entering into a direct battle (Magen, 2015). Therefore, democratization of the region does not necessarily mean a progressive development for Israel.

Fourthly, Israel has a clear self-understanding according to Amichai Magen (2015). Israel's choice of 'strategic silence' is the product of this awareness. Israel is aware of that they could not promote positive political and economic change in region since the biases against Israel has deep roots among the society (Magen, 2015). More than that, any kind of lauded preferences among sides might be used as a tool of consolidation of power in anti-Israeli sentiments. They do not have any political aim to be an influencer or a model of democracy. The only objective they sought is preserving the status quo that they are already militarily and economically superior.

Therefore, Israeli strategic silence can be understood as a tool of balancing to preserve status quo, because policy makers knew that any official preferences of sides might damage the side they supported actually. Balancing and preserving status quo is a direct component of defensive realist foreign policy behavior of Israel.

5.2.2. 2015-2017: Change in Balance of Power

ISIS's declaration of caliphate over the invaded territories in Syria and Iraq in June 2014 was one of the turning points of Syrian civil war. In return, United-States-led international coalition launched several airstrike attacks. Although United State did not launch a ground attack at that time, US' jets arrival was alarming for Russia ("Syria: Timeline of the civil war", 2018). To cover up relative structural weakness in Syria, Russia also intervened through Assad's invitation. With the Russian back up, Assad regime was strengthen and did not collapse eventually. When Assad's rule has seems to be permanent, other countries responses have changed as well, together with the nature of whole scale of events. Now, Assad was portrayed as a defender of Syria against dangerous extremist Islamist groups, the Islamic State (Ahmad & Singh, 2015). He also enlarged his political and military power with reoccupying

certain territories back. More than that, ones who used to oppose his rule is now have concerns on what would ISIS have done in the absence of his rule. As a result, Syrian opposition became more fragmented than ever, which is on behalf of Assad's regime.

With the Russian and Iranian backed renewed confidence, regime had attacked Aleppo and took it back from opposition forces in November 2016 ("Turning Point in Syria", 2016), and followed by other victories. Russia's and Iran's back up gave Assad an upper hand and had changed the scope of civil war on behalf of Assad regime. Especially the opposition forces' casualties gave Assad a space to maneuver, although Russia claimed that the bullets were targeted to the terrorists.

When it comes to Iran, they had already spent serious amounts of money and soldiers to back up Assad regime (Westall & Khalidi, 2015). Shiite umbrella is a source of their power in the region, and especially Syria plays a crucial role as a strategic ally. With the 2003 Iraq invasion of US, power shifted proportionately to Shiite majority, which followed by the rise of radical Sunni groups as ISIS. For Iran, protection of this Shiite-Crescent is crucial. For this sense, Assad's resistance against Sunni-blocked opposition forces plays a crucial role. Quds Force as a special force unit of Iran's Revolutionary Guards located in Syria to fight together with Assad forces (Hokayem, 2014). Although, Iran stated that their residence in Syria did not have any military purposes but a logistical support, military training, and consultancy to Assad regime; it has been known that several chief commanders of Revolutionary Guard died in the land of Syria during the battle (Wright, 2015). Moreover, Iranian commanders also trained Hezbollah fighters who came from Lebanon to fight in Syria on behalf of Assad.

In conclusion, Russian intervention conduce Bashar al-Assad to survive and change the whole scope of events. In 2016, Iran, Russia and Turkey met in Moscow to find a solution for Syrian crisis. United States and United Nations were clearly excluded from the process (Hubbard & Sanger, 2016). At the end of the meeting, Moscow

Declaration had been issued with addressing the territorial integrity of Syria. Therefore, Russia, Iran and Turkey have become the guarantors of a political solution and a transition period under Bashar al-Assad. Russian involvement definitely assures Bashar will continue to rule as a result.

5.2.2.1. Israel: Catastrophe had begun

As the time passes by, it seemed that some of the main Israeli concerns in the first period were in vain. For instance, violence of Sunni extremism did not spillover into Israeli territories. Although they may turn their attention at some point, it seems like they are more interested in fighting with each other. Although the situation definitely had challenged the already existed balance of power in the region; their existence did not impose a direct security threat to Israel. There were several cross border attacks but successfully repelled back by Israel. Moreover, democratization was, and still definitely far away from the nature of the events. People's will was out of the agenda for Syria. However, some of the main concerns have deepened and also new comers have arrived. With the Russian intervention, Israeli threat perception and the main concerns over Syrian crisis was also transformed. In order to overcome those concerns, Israel sought to preserve the balance of power with more active way for this time.

5.2.2.2. Containing Iran: The Ultimate Aim

Before Russian involvement, Iran was seemed to sink into the marsh of the Syrian crisis. They spend huge amount of money and energy, and their reputation was also damaged since they are sided with Assad. In this sense, Israel was watching what is happening in Syria carefully with strategic silence since the events did not threaten them directly. However, Russia's involvement had challenged this balance and gave Iran an upper hand.

It is also important to note that there was no significant Iranian importance in the region during 1990s. However, regime changes in several states and the weakening

of central governments in the region as a result of 2003 Iraq invasion of US and subsequent Arab uprisings made Iran to emerge as one of the most important actors in the region. In addition to that, nuclear deals under Hassan Rouhani government and gradual lifting of Iranian embargo finally gave a space for Iran to have an influence in the region. With the abolishment of embargo, Iran finally finds a space to enlarge its economic capacity. As a result of this new cash flow, they again find a resource to give additional support to the components of its Shiite umbrella, although Iranian officials denied it directly (Hokayem, 2014).

With the Russian involvement, Assad regime had seemed to be survived and Iranian influence in the region had increased as a result. Although Assad's remain in power works for the preservation of status quo for Israel, Russian involvement limits US's hands in Syria and what concerned Israel the most when Assad seemed to stay in power is now Iran actually. Iran is the biggest supporter of Assad, even more than Russia. Their close ties are based on geopolitics than a religion. For Tehran, Syria is a strategic gateway to the Arab world (Ahmad & Singh, 2015). Therefore, fall of Assad regime would be hazardous for Iran, and in order to prevent that, they did their best. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei believes that Syrian regime is a crucial part of the axis of resistance against Israel and frontline in Iran's struggle with the United States (Ahmad & Singh, 2015). Moreover, increase of Iranian sphere of influence is also works for Hezbollah. Russian operations against Sunni extremists opened a space to both Iranian and Hezbollah's fighters to maneuver more freely. With the Iranian presence and their ability to maneuver freely, Israel is now nearly a neighbor with its most arch enemy. More than that, while Russia cleaned up Sunni extremists, it opened a way to Iranian and Hezbollah fighters to spread all around Syria, including Golan Heights (Bernard, 2015). This is the most existential threat above all for Israel. Although Iran was there long before the Russia and although Israeli government had declared that they would not allow any weapon transformation into the hands of Hezbollah, Russia's presence was increased the threat. They equipped the regime supporters with advanced weapons to fight against ISIS; which doubts Israel that the barrel would turn against them as sooner or later. Therefore, Israel is ready to take

any measure to prevent sophisticated weapons transformation to Hezbollah's hands. More than that, Iran's existence in Syria also created another front in Golan (Nadav, 2015), which endangers Israeli civilians in there. Iranian physical existence that close to Golan is alarming and will not be tolerated. Israel launched several attacks to Syrian territory to strike Hezbollah's and Iranian convoys with justifying that they are using its self defense right with preventing weapon transformation (Zisser, 2015). However, these attacks were preemptive and avoided a direct confrontation with Iran. On the other hand, although the increment of Hezbollah's and Iran's sphere of influence is a great threat, it would also be advantageous for Israel in long term. Being active in the battlefield of Syrian Civil War is costly for Iran. Sending troops and locating in there for a long time needs energy and money. Also for Hezbollah, spending such energy in Syria is also diminishing their material sources. Hezbollah has given serious amount of casualties and has to get reinforcement from Lebanon, which challenged group's legitimacy in there since their existential reason was fighting against Israel, not the Syrian opposition forces.

5.2.2.3. Russia: The Game Changer

Since Russian involvement had changed the course of events and challenged the balance of power against Israel's favor, one of the Israeli main strategies becomes preventing Russia to establish further permanent military presence since it means more Iranian influence. As Larry Hanauer explains in his article; "Israel's Interest and Options in Syria" (2016), Russia's existence conducted three main obstacles to Israeli interest.

First of all, Israel concerns that Russia would become the political protector of Shiite axis. Their presence in Syria had survived Assad and they have open and pragmatic relations with Iran. Without US's interference, the scope of events would turn against Israel at the end of the day. In Reuters' news piece, named "Israel sees Assad winning Syrian War, urges more US involvement" (2017); Avigador Lieberman as the Israeli Minister of Defense commented that they regularly predicted that Assad would lose control until mid-2015. With the Russian involvement, Assad

consolidates his power and now every party takes him into account in future plans of Syria. In this sense, Israel urges more US involvement in order to diminish Iranian influence in ongoing events (“Israel Sees Assad Winning Syrian War”, 2017) However, US solely focused on Syrian opposition on fighting against rebel Jihadists organizations like ISIS, which is quite unsatisfying for Israel and so they try to persuade both US and Moscow that Iran’s expanding is the furthest threat (Hanauer, 2016). Therefore, Israel called US to be more active. Defeating ISIS is crucial; however, Iran and Hezbollah would fill the space that ISIS had left if the international community would not do something about it.

Secondly, Israel does not want Hezbollah to reach sophisticated weapons that Russia provided for Assad’s army as mentioned. When Russia located additional forces in Syria in September 2015, Netanyahu had traveled to Moscow to assure that Russia would commit to prevent Syrian army to transfer Russian weapons to Hezbollah (Hanauer, 2016).

Thirdly, Russia’s presence also limits Israeli freedom of action in ground. From time to time, Israel has launched air strikes to the convoys in Syrian territory in which were suspected to transfer weapons to Hezbollah or other sub-military group (Hanauer, 2016). Russian air defense system that located in Syria would threaten Israeli air strike forces. More than that, there is a risk of targeting Russian troops by accident. Therefore, while increasing Iranian sphere of influence, Russian presence in Syria directly limits Israeli freedom of action.

5.2.2.4. Israeli Foreign Policy: Active-Defensive Realism

In this sense, defensive realist foreign policy seemed to continue one again. Assad seems to remain in power, which is actually preservation of status quo; but Russian involvement actually limits US influence in Syria which challenged Israeli security interests. In order to re-balance the situation and eliminate Iranian dominance in Syria, Israel used diplomatic channels through open dialogues with Washington and

Moscow. Therefore, it can be said that 2015-2017 period is more like a transition period of defensive realist foreign policy to be more active defensive. Defensive position was taken under three main policies.

First of all, Israel sought to prevent any possible spillovers once again. Retaliation power is the furthestmost security pillar for Israeli defense strategy. In order to preserve it, Israel responded harsh towards any kind of cross border attacks to defend the territory. In 2015, Prime Minister Netanyahu had stated in United Nations that “Israel will continue to respond forcefully to any attacks against it from Syria..” (Hanauer, 2016, p.10). Israel had started cross border retaliation attacks long before Russian intervention actually. Israeli Defense Forces even launched reprisal attacks when a stray rocket had launched in Israel in fighting between regime forces and rebels. As Moshe Ya’alon underlined; “Israel has no intention of ignoring such incidents” (Hanauer, 2016, p.10).

Secondly, Russian existence does not prevent Israel to launch attacks to Hezbollah operatives near Golan Heights. Prevention of weapon transformation from Iran or Russia to Hezbollah is vital. However, although some of the targets are Syrian or Iranian bases, Israel beware of attacking Iranian personnel to not get into a direct confrontation with Iran (Hanauer, 2016). Therefore, their ability to launch a preemptive strike is like to be limited.

Finally and the furthestmost, Israel has open diplomatic channels with Russia to embed Israeli interest in the final settlement in Syria. As it was mentioned, Russia’s intervention was a game changing event which topples the balance of power for Iranian interest. In this sense, Iran has now able to achieve its interest in the region. Moreover, Nuclear Deal with Iran also undermined Israeli interest in Syria. Israel sought to be sure about Iranian isolation in international arena. During the negotiations, Israel issued aggressive campaign to discredit the agreement with arguing it is solely an Iranian illusion to Western powers since they will not give up their nuclear capability that easily (Hanauer, 2016). Also, when the isolation disappears, the money would flow into Hezbollah’s hands. This situation is a great

challenge for Israel. More than that, Israel's ability to constrain Iran in Syria is limited. Extensive use of ground forces or airstrikes would endanger Israeli-Russian cooperation and also would end up with direct confrontation with Iran. Therefore, Israel cannot affect ongoing events via direct physical intervention. If they would attempt to do so, it would not be welcomed by Israeli public since the memory of Lebanon is still fresh. In this sense, Israel seemed to have two options to constrain Iran. First, continuation of open dialogue with Russia is vital as mentioned. Russia could be a partner of Israel to block Iranian actions that threaten Israel. Israeli-Russian cooperation also works for Russian interest since it demonstrates that Russia can work with US allies which also considers the United States (Hanauer, 2016). Secondly, although Russia's existence made the air strike campaign more costly, Israel continues to use force as a tactical tool to eliminate real-time threats; but not to shape whole events as they did once in Lebanon. Getting into Syrian turmoil would be a third Lebanon syndrome. Therefore, Israel sought to get Russian support to implement their interest in the final setting; together with preserving retaliation power as a security measure and underlining that violation of Israeli redlines is intolerable. This strategy is the definite implementation of defensive realist foreign policy since it is a non-ideologist balance-preservation.

5.2.3. Astana Process: End of the Conflict?

As an outcome of the 2016 Moscow Declaration, the peace process has started in Astana, Kazakhstan in January 2017 under the guarantors of Russia, Iran and Turkey. As a result of the first meeting, it has been agreed that military options will not be the solutions of the Syrian crisis. The importance of the implementation of an armistice had been underlined once again. Most importantly, the preservation of Syrian territorial integrity was represented as the furthest objective ("Syria: The Astana Peace Process", 2018). There were also several sub-meetings in Astana and also in Geneva, which ensure Assad to remain in power once again.

As an outcome of the process, the establishment of de-escalation zones was adopted under the supervision of Russia, Iran and Turkey to ensure local ceasefires. In these

zones, both regime fighters and rebels have to lay down all arms, including aircrafts (“Syria: The Astana Peace Process”, 2018) However, in the course of time, these zones are conquered by Assad forces once again. Therefore, the process is under the accusation of United States and Israel as being a pretext of Assad’s regain of control over whole Syrian territory with the support of three guarantor states.

5.2.3.1. Israel: A Nightmare Becomes Real

Iran’s existence so close to their territory has already deepened anxiety for Israel. However, a peace process without United State’s involvement over the settlement in Syria is a catastrophe.

Before the Astana process, Israel had sought to preserve open dialogue with Moscow to implement Israeli interest in possible final settlement. However, Astana reveals the blow of Iranian influence over the process. More than that, Assad remained as more powerful than ever. These two outcomes are the most undesirable ones since they impose a direct threat against the Israeli-favored balance of power.

Pre-Astana period would have been considered as competition between Assad forces and rebels over the control of Syria. Peace process had evolved the nature of events. All the components of conflict, both external and internal, have acknowledged that Assad will remain in power. Therefore, it can be said that axis of conflict has shifted in post-Astana period. Syrian Civil War has never been an intrastate conflict. Both regional and international factors were, and still, there to search for influence. However, there was no dominant power. A balance somehow had been developed. However, Astana process reveals Russia and Iran as the dominant powers in the post-conflict era. This situation is highly catastrophic for Israel. Now, Iran has access to Israel cross Iraq towards Golan Heights.

Moreover, right after the Astana, de-escalation zones was re-occupied by Assad forces (“Netanyahu to Putin”, 2017). Those areas; Eastern Ghouta, Daara and Quneitra are so close to Israeli border. Especially Quneitra is near the 1974 Ceasefire

Line of Golan (“Netanyahu to Putin”, 2017). Regime’s takeover of those territories gives a way to Iranian access to Israeli borders. What arouses more anxiety is the declaration of the preservation of Syrian territorial integrity as the outcome of Astana. This might be the reason of United State’s official announcement of recognizing Golan Heights as a part of Israeli territory. With this way, both United States and Israel might seek to separate Golan from territorial issues in final settlement. As a result, a peace process does not end the conflict; but starts a new one over the search for influence in final settlement.

In order to cope with the challenge and rebalance the situation for Israeli favor, Israel increased the cross border attacks, but without considering the identity of the target for this time. Until 2017, Israel had a relatively more passive tone in defensive realist understanding of Syrian War. As a result of strategic silence policy, Israel denied all cross border attacks that they had launch before December 2017. They became almost a routine attacks as well as assassinations and air raids carried out exclusively by Israel that have intensified since the War began in 2011 (Tahhan, 2017). They have been launched in order to preserve the redlines as a policy objective, however officially denied as a result of defensive realist foreign policy with aiming non-entanglement into the Syrian War. These attacks were carried out towards Israel by different groups, together with rebels with aiming that Syrian government would have been suspected. Netanyahu stated that “We will attack anyone who attacks us... We won’t accept any spill over” (Tahhan, 2017). However, these attacks were not only carried out a result of reprisal always. Israel attacked even the convoys passed near Golan Heights with aiming to underline they are here and will not tolerate any attacks or any transformation of sophisticated weapons to Hezbollah.

In 2017, Israel officially confirmed that they launched a cross border attack on Syria, mainly the arms convoy of Syrian government and Lebanese Hezbollah (“Israel confirms Israeli strike”, 2017). It is not the first Israeli cross border attack, but the

first attack that they officially confirmed. Moreover in October 2017, Israeli aircraft was targeted by Syrian forces while flight over Lebanon for the first time since the war began. Israeli reprisal attack was devastating.

When the metamorphosis of war changed, these attacks have increased as a result. Although rebels made substantive gains in the first round, Russian and Iranian involvement changed the scope as mentioned. Since then, third parties in Syrian War would nothing to do but to accepting Assad as the successor.

According to Shmuel Rosner's news piece in New York Times, named 'Why Israel cannot support a cease-fire in Syria' (2017); the cease fire could undermine Israel's security and further destabilize the entire Middle East, unless US would develop a strategy for Syria (Rosner, 2017). Although there is some important points that Israel might have been pleased, like Assad's forces backed by Hezbollah and Iran sit miles away from Israeli borders; Israel actually believes that this agreement would not stand for a long. This calm would make Iran more influential in power vacuum leftovers in return of ceasefire. A delicate ceasefire can be achieved only by robust supervisor, but there is no potential supervisor that Israel can trust, according to the New York Times (Rosner, 2017). Russia is the one who changed the scope of the War, but sided with Iran. United States would be a good candidate but Iranian presence in Syria is not their main concern. ISIS is their main focus. Therefore, Israel actually concerns about the outcomes of the Astana process since they seen the outcome as the more Iranian influence in the Syria. As a result, they continue to issue freedom-of-action policy as a tool of preservation of Israeli redlines. However, there are limits of it as it was once in the past. Aggressive cross border attacks would make the Israeli interest more complicated because there is a risk of Russian, or another third party, involvement near the Israeli border to manage the cease-fire. As a result, Israel have to maintain its balancing strategy and use diplomatic channels more actively to urge more US involvement into ongoing events. They adopt more proactive standing in confronting threats posed by Asad, Iran and Hezbollah.

What do these attacks tell is actually maintenance of defensive realist policy, but in more proactive term now. According to the news piece in New York Times, named “How to understand Israel’s strike on Syria” in September 2017, Israeli proactive standing has three clear messages. First of all, the agreement itself is unacceptable for Israel. Keeping Iranian-backed forces solely for 20km away from Israeli border is not enough. Prime Minister Netanyahu went Sochi to discuss this issue with President Putin; however it seems like Israeli redlines was not taken into account in 2017 ceasefire.

Secondly, Israel used to carry out preemptive strikes to stop its enemies from constructing advanced conventional weapons, which was officially pioneered by Former Prime Minister Menachem Begin in 1981, known as Begin Doctrine. Therefore, launching cross border attacks is the continuation of old politics actually. However, any possible final settlement without taking Israeli interest into account would damage its freedom of action. Since the beginning of Syrian War, Israel launched more than 100 attacks (McKernan, 2018), and only few of them were officially confirmed after 2017. Why Israel has started to confirm may be the third parties’ partial acceptance of Iranian and Hezbollah’s existence in Syria. Especially with Astana process, battle between rebels and Assad seems to end and new order in Syria started to develop in Iranian favor. Although Assad’s remaining would work for Israeli security interest; Israel would predict-or hope-that it would be more US-dominant order rather than Russian or Iranian favor. However, US seemed to limit its strategic objective in embattling ISIS. Therefore, one of the possible reasons of Israel’s more active involvement in Syrian conflict in 2017 may be the searching for re-balancing the situation as a result of defensive realist foreign policy, since defensive realist foreign policy has seen balancing strategy as a useful tool to get out of security dilemma. In this sense, more Israeli intervention in Syrian conflict would mean more Iranian interaction in return; together with more US involvement since they do not led any possible Israeli-Iranian confrontation. Therefore, it is actually a

balancing strategy. It is an example of preserving the balance with eliminating the irrational. What is different now is their preference to be more active as a tool of balancing strategy at this time, rather than adopting a strategic silence policy objective that they had adopted between the periods of 2011-2015.

5.3.CONCLUSION

Arab Spring was a great challenge to Israeli security since the scope of events had deep anti-Israeli tone and the bullet would turn against Israel at some point. Especially uprisings in Syria aroused anxiety when the Iranian influence considered. In order to examine Israeli foreign policy responses, it would be more productive to divide the period as; 2011-2015 as the period of observation and anxiety; 2015-2017 as the period active defensive; and finally 2017 as the period of Astana peace process.

Israeli response towards Arab Spring between the years 2011-2015 is advanced by realist tradition. It can be summarized as defensive, conservative, non-idealist and extensively reliant on purposefully discrete military and diplomatic instruments. There are several reasons of adaptation of wait and see policy with strategic silence. First of all, there was a risk of spillover. Together with considering the internal turmoil that Israel had, the cost of spillover would be highly risky. With adopting silence and not taking any sides, Israel sought to separate itself from the hazardous effects of the conflict in Syria as the neighboring state. Secondly, Bashar al-Assad used to be some kind of a partner for them. The relation between Syria and Israel has always been hostile, but they knew how to preserve balance of power in the region together, which used to be Israeli favor. Thirdly, outcomes of the civil war might change this balance against Israeli interest. Islamic State's threat was real and Islamic takeover of Syrian presidency would be a great danger. Finally, democratization of Middle East is not vital or even desirable for Israel, since it would be a challenge the balance of power once again. As a result, wait-and-see policy had been adopted between the years of 2011 to 2015 with aiming to preserve of red-lines and ensure its security.

When it comes to 2015-2017 period, Russian intervention into Syrian Civil War with the Bashar al-Assad invitation had changed the whole characteristic of the event. With Russian back-up, Assad seemed to remain in power. When Assad had secured his position, Iranian influence had also aroused with finding a free space to maneuver. Also, there is a risk of transformation of Russia's game-changing weapons to Hezbollah's hands. Those recent developments aroused a strategic challenge for Israeli security. Containment of Iran and Hezbollah has the furthest priority. However, this is not ideology-based. If there is, then Israel would also be more active at the ISIS issue. Indeed, ISIS was also a great threat to balance, but Israel did not consider it as a direct threat to their security. The only threat it would arouse was the exportation of its fundamentalist ideology to Israel's stable neighbors like Jordan or Egypt. As long as ISIS stays away from Golan Heights, Israel would tolerate their existence at some point. However, Iran is different. They are a direct challenge to the balance of power and their physical appearance in Syria is the direct threat to Israel. In order to cope with those challenges caused by Russian intervention, Israel used diplomatic channels with Russia and United States to convince them to consider Israeli security interest in Syria and prevent Iran for taking further step. Therefore, defensive realist foreign policy once again dominated the state behavior in conflict resolution; but in a more active way now.

In the final period, Astana peace process had evaluated Israeli threat perception once again. Declaration of acknowledgement of Syrian territorial integrity had renewed the Israeli concerns over Golan Heights. United States' acknowledgement of Golan as Israeli territory would be a strategy to leave Golan out of table. Moreover, regime forces reinvaded de-escalation zones which are located near Golan. Iran's physical appearance that close to Israeli territory is alarming. Finally, United States seemed to be expelled from the procedure and Israel does not trust to the rest of the participants to look out for Israeli security interest in the final settlement. As a result of peaked anxiety, Israel has adopted more active strategy with launching numerous cross border attacks. They did launch those kinds of attacks since the very beginning of the dispute, but these were not accepted officially. For the first time, Israel officially

accepted those attacks. The mentality over this transparency is actually defensive again. Israel finds the process inadequate to cover Israeli security needs; so they try to implement that any kind of violation will face with harsh deterrence. Iran's existence that close to Israeli border is something Israel cannot tolerate. Therefore, it is actually a balancing strategy. It is an example of preserving the balance with eliminating the irrational. What is different now is their preference to be more active as a tool of balancing strategy at this time. Although foreign policy behavior seemed to change with the Astana process; its nature remained the same.

As a result, although peace process sought to make a final settlement in Syrian dispute, it seems like it actually opens new fronts. What will happen in Israeli-Iranian front in future is the question which is hard to foresee.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In this study, Israel's Syrian foreign policy during the Arab Spring is examined within the context of defensive realist perspective. In this sense, Israeli-Syrian relations through the establishment of Israel to the Arab Spring were observed in order to reveal the changes and continuities in foreign policy. As a result, the defensive realist foreign policy seems to be the most prominent behavior of Israel as a status quo state. Although Israel has revisionist policies towards the region from time to time, defensive realism proved itself as the most comprehensive policy choice since the preservation of strategic pragmatism works for Israeli interest in the long term. In this context, due to the numerous of ambiguities and already existed pragmatic relationship with Syria, a defensive realist foreign policy has once again adopted by Israel to preserve the existed balance of power.

The literature indicates that, some scholars evaluated Arab Spring as an opportunity for Israel since the democratization is the main pillar of democratic peace theory and would bring a sustainable peace to the Middle East. More than that, the whole events were not seen as an existential threat to Israel according to the other scholars as well. According to them, cross border attacks which were caused by Arab Spring were a matter of day-to-day security, not the basic security of Israel. Iran's improving influence is the biggest threat, and more than that, empowerment of Bashar al-Assad would be a blow to Iran as well. However, other scholars evaluated the events as a direct challenge to Israeli security and have more pessimistic view. In international

level, Israeli threat perception with the West towards the uprisings was not the same. This difference would challenge Israel's dual strategy policy. At regional level, it was a direct challenge to the balance of power in the region, which is not in favor of Israel. At domestic level, Israel was also threatened by internal uprisings, which would have been also embraced by Arab Spring. As a result, Arab Spring is a direct challenge to Israeli security and stability in all levels of analysis.

When it comes to Syria, literature is also divided into two camps as optimists and pessimists. For optimists, it would be an opportunity for Israel if a democratic regime would appear in Syria to have more comprehensive relations. Also, removal of Bashar al-Assad would be a huge blow to Iran-Hamas-Hezbollah axis. On the other side, although some scholars objected the approach with underlining the role of ideology and personal biases of Benjamin Netanyahu; most of the scholars summed up Israeli pessimist reflect towards Syria during the Arab Spring as a defensive realist ad non-ideologist. Fists of all, Bashar al-Assad proved himself as some kind of a reliable partner for working for the preservation of status quo. Removal of him would involve lots of unknowns. Secondly, Israeli economy is sensitive, so it needs a conservative policy to avoid spillovers to ruin the workability of the economy. Thirdly, Israel has non-idealist attitude towards the Syrian Uprising. Promotion of democracy is not something favorable since the public opinion in protests was definitely against Israeli existence. Finally, Israel has a clear self-image and had known that their official acknowledgement of any sides would have worsened the situation, since the other group may use it to gather more support.

All those contributions give a deeper look on Israel's reactions towards the Arab Spring in general and Syrian uprising in specific. Especially the defensive realist perception gives the best explanation to Israel's strategic silence towards the events. However, although those scholars are looking at the issue in this perspective, they seemed to neglect two main issues. First of all, the effect of Lebanon was neglected as an example of what happened when they departed from defensive realist foreign policy behavior in the past. Secondly, it would be a mistake to generalize all Israeli

response towards Syrian Uprising in same level. Israeli foreign policy reactions changed when the threat perception changed. However, although operational environment is offensive, Israeli reactions remained in same nature as defensive realist. In this sense, Israel continued offensive minded defensive postured foreign policy towards Syria. However, with the Arab Spring, Israel started to be more active in defensive measures.

In order to have a more comprehensive understanding, Israeli Syrian relations through the establishment of Israel to the Arab Spring was also examined. In this sense, it was aimed to reveal that hostility between two neighbors is not a new phenomenon. They went into several direct and indirect conflicts throughout the time. Although the root cause of the dispute seems to be the Palestinian issue; relations of these two embattled neighbors has its own nature. In the first period, dispute between them accumulated under the issues of sovereignty over demilitarized zones and water issues. With the 1967 War, Israel occupied Syrian Golan Heights and the main dynamic of the conflict become this district. Since then, main Israeli motive is preserving the Golan as one of the most vital component of Israeli security strategy, while main Syrian aim is to regaining it.

However, both Israel and Syria learned how to live together throughout the time especially during the ruling of Hafez al-Assad. Therefore, a balance was settled somehow. Israel attempted to change the existed power relation with and Syria twice over the disputes on Lebanon; however got its fingers burnt. Therefore, memoirs of Lebanese syndrome remains in Israel's political behavior and continued to adopt defensive standing in their relations with Syria since the offensive behavior used to have some serious consequences. The power relation between two neighbors had been matured by the time and relied on pragmatic partnership. In this sense, Hafez al-Assad proved himself as a reliable partner. He acted within the boundaries of established balance of power relationship which is mutually beneficiary for both parties.

With the death of Hafez, his son Bashar al-Assad came into power with receiving full of Israeli skepticism. In this sense, continuities and changes during Bashar's period compared to his father were also examined. Although both parties had little time to observe their actual intentions because of the blowing effect of al-Aqsa Intifada and following blasting events of 9/11 attacks in 2001, US's Iraq intervention in 2003 and Israel-Hezbollah war in 2006; the pragmatic relationship that was settled during Hafez's period somehow had continued also in Bashar's period. As a young and inexperienced leader who became a leader in the absence of any alternative, Bashar used anti-Israeli statements to gain popular support among Arabs in general and Syrians in specific. He continued and also deepened Syria's strategic partnership with Iran and Hezbollah. All those factors were alarming for Israel. However, at the same time, Bashar also carefully avoided direct escalation with Israel as well. He acted according to the needs of existed conjuncture. At the end of the day, Syrian foreign policy was quite stable for Israel. Although the hostility and animosity between two embattled neighbors had remained to the bones, both sides acted according to the preservation of balance of power at the end of the day.

With considering established pragmatic relationship, blow of the Arab Spring in Syrian borders had opened a dilemma for Israeli security as mentioned. At the end of the day, Bashar's rule had more pros than his arrival. Any change in Syrian presidency would threaten the existed balance of power. As a result, a defensive realist foreign policy once again was adopted towards Syria. Throughout the time, this policy has been tasted. Therefore, the whole period was divided into three in order to give more comprehensive understanding on continuities and changes in Israeli foreign policy towards the landmark events.

In the first period, between the years 2011 and 2015, Israeli foreign policy towards ongoing events was directly advanced by defensive realism as non-ideologist and conservative with reliant on diplomatic channels to preserve status quo. Lessons of the both Lebanon wars were still fresh and none of the parties were trustable for Israel. Especially the fundamentalist Islamist elements in the opposition side were a

challenge to Israel at the beginning. Although those elements stayed silent towards Israel and did not launch a direct threat, it doesn't mean that they would follow the same path in the scenario of their possible success in the future and may take anti-Israeli position to consolidate their power. Although Bashar al-Assad had deep animosity towards Israel, his actions were predictable and stable. Those new comers were a close box and for Israel, political Islam had proved itself as an existential threat for Israeli security. Therefore, preserving the existed power relations, together with preservation of any spillover to Israeli borders is crucial for Israel. Wait-and-see approach is a wise political option in this sense since there were so many unknown variables.

In the second period, Russian intervention in 2015 was seen as a game changing event. With Russian back-up and physical appearance within the Syrian territory, Bashar al-Assad achieved an upper hand and the whole events started to change into his advantage. Although Bashar's removal was not in Israeli favor since the balance of power was under threat; such of his empowerment means a definite rise of influence of Iran and Hezbollah in Syria. Especially the risk of transformation of game-changer weapons to Hezbollah's or Hamas' hands was quite challenging for Israeli security. Therefore, Israeli threat perception increased since the Russia's physical appearance also limits the United States' hands in Syria. In order to rebalance the situation and make the US and Russia to consider Israeli interest in future Syrian resolution, Israel used diplomatic channels with open dialogues with both superpowers. Therefore, it can be said that defensive realist tradition was one again adopted, but in more active way now. Especially with the Nuclear Deal, Israeli threat perception was once again peaked and adopted more aggressive campaign to discredit the agreement with saying it is solely an Iranian illusion. All those factors started to change the balance of power in the region against Israeli favor. Since the options were limited, Israel has followed two campaigns as a defensive realist foreign policy reaction to constrain Iran in indirect ways. First of all, an open dialogue especially with Russia continued in order to make them to consider Israeli

interest. Secondly, although the physical escalation with Iran had been carefully avoided, the retaliation capability was preserved as vital security option with not tolerating any cross border attacks and spillovers into Israeli territory.

In the final period, Astana peace process in 2017 was the most threatening test to Israel's defensive realist foreign policy. In so much that the future of the policy preference was questioned. Before Astana process, Israel relied on diplomatic channels especially with Russia to constrain Iran and implement Israeli interest further. However, Astana process revealed Iranian dominance over the final settlement in Syria and the United States as the main supporter of Israeli interest in international politics was expelled from the process. More than that, with the back-up of confidence, Bashar al-Assad started to reoccupy de-escalation zones whose are also located near Israeli border; which also means the Iranian physical appearance near Israeli territory. As a result, holding on a defensive position policy has started to change since the threat is enormous. Iran is a direct challenge to Israeli security and their dominance in Israeli neighbor is not something tolerable for Israel. Especially with the reoccupation of de-escalation zones, Iran becomes a neighbor to Israel. More than that, although Bashar's rule is a stable and preferable option for Israel since he worked for the preservation of existed balance of power structure; post-Astana period made him stronger than ever, which is not in Israeli favor. In order to cope with the challenge, Israel increased the cross border attacks. They did launch such attacks since the starting of the events; however, they did not officially confirm it before. Those attacks used to be ordinary reprisals to underline Israeli redlines and officially denied as a result of non-entanglement policy.

In 2017, Israel officially confirmed that they launched such attacks for the first time. Although the action seems like taking an offensive position; the mentality behind was defensive actually. Israel regards whole process is inadequate to cover up Israeli security needs; so they seek to implement that any kind of violation will face with harsh deterrence. In the previous period, they used diplomatic channels to implement Israeli security needs; however, an open dialogue with Moscow seems to remain

inadequate. As a result, with confirming cross border attacks, Israel officially announced to the world that they will not tolerate Iranian appearance in that close to Israeli border. Moreover, the United States seems to be isolated from the process. Besides, their main motive is rather the ISIS than Iran. By taking more aggressive tone, Israel may force the United States to be more active in Syria as a result of their strategic partnership. The battle between regime forces and opposition seems to end, and it is a clear victory of Assad, Iran and Hezbollah at the end of the day. Therefore, the balance of power seems to change against Israeli favor. In order to rebalance the situation, Israel does launch such attacks to eliminate the irrational. Therefore, it is a balancing strategy and a continuation of defensive realist foreign policy for some extent. What is different now is their preference to be more active as a tool of balancing strategy at this time, rather than adopting a strategic silence policy that they used to adopt in pre-2017 period. Although the foreign policy behavior seemed to change with Astana process, its nature remained the same. However, continuation of this nature is under challenge with the increase of Iranian sphere of influence in Syria in the future. In this sense, a new chapter seems to be opened in Syria; but not between regime forces and opposition at this time; but rather between Israel and Iran over the competition for search for sphere of influence in Syria. In this new chapter, Israel may depart from defensive realist foreign policy behavior since the definite rise of Iranian power will be the strategic blow to Israeli interest that they will not tolerate.

As a result, this thesis draws an attention to the Israeli defensive realist foreign policy behavior towards Syria from the establishment of Israel to the blow of Arab spring. In this sense, this study gives several contributions to the literature in several ways. First of all, it comes up with an approach; active defensive realism. In this sense, adopting defensive foreign policy doesn't mean that leaving offensive measures out of table. Israeli foreign policy is a good example of offensive minded defensive postured foreign policy since the aim is defensive; but the operational environment is offensive. Although Israeli foreign policy towards Syria is defensive; Arab Spring reveals structural challenges and prohibits Israel from adapting defensive measures.

Passive strategic silence policy did not adequately secure Israeli interest since the Russian intervention changes the scope of events. Therefore, they use diplomacy more actively to constrain Iran. In this sense, Israeli policy tools were not the same; although the nature remained as defensive. It was more like a transition period between passive defensive realism to be more active defensive. In the final period, confirmation of attacks reveal the threat perception change of Israel. It becomes clear that both diplomacy and strategic silence is not adequate to secure Israeli interest in Syria. Therefore, Israel started to be more active with confirming cross border attacks. However, those attacks were ordinary and had been launched even in most passive standing. Therefore, it is the continuation of offensive minded defensive postured foreign policy in more active ways now. In this sense, this thesis comes up with an approach; active defensive realism; since the strategic silence in the first period and official confirmation of launching cross border attacks in post-Astana period cannot be evaluated in same level. Although Israel continued old offensive minded defensive posture; they adopted more active policies throughout the process when the old measures could not secure Israeli interest.

Secondly, lessons of Lebanon prohibit Israel to adopt revisionist foreign policy. Making a direct intervention into another state's internal affairs had some serious side effects which called as Lebanon Syndrome. Therefore, both Lebanon adventures revealed that Israeli power framework has ability to block, not reshape regional order. As a result, revisionist foreign policy proved itself as useless to secure Israeli interest. Continuation of defensive realist foreign policy is the most comprehensive policy option. In this sense, this study claims that defensive realist foreign policy to the turmoil in Syria is not an option for Israel. It is the most comprehensive way to separate themselves from the devastating effects of ongoing events. However, what this study comes up is the limits of this policy may end with the definite rise of Iranian power in Syria in specific and Middle East in general. Day-to-day security violations can be tolerated unless the retaliation capability has been kept. In this sense, turmoil in Syria was read in this perspective and so Israel adopted strategic

silence policy to prevent further spillovers in defensive realist tradition. However, rise of Iranian power is the matter of basic security concerns. Therefore, a defensive position may not be adequate to eliminate the irrational in future.

For further study, this thesis may light the way for a framework for future Israeli foreign policy behavior to same kind of events. As a geographically small but relatively powerful -in terms of economy and military- state which is surrounded by hostile neighboring, defensive position is the most comprehensive way to prevent further spillovers and preserve the existed status-quo. However, rise of Iranian power in Middle East and future of Israeli defensive position may be a topic of another study with the lightening of the framework that this study reveals.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKKÇE ÖZET

Arap Baharı ve sonrasında yaşanan gelişmeler, hem bölge ülkeleri hem de dünya siyaseti üzerinde büyük değişimlere neden olmuştur. İsrail, bu değişimlerden en çok etkilenen ülkelerden biridir. Protestoların bu denli yayılması ve Ortadoğu'nun en güçlü otoriter rejimlerinin yıkılmayla karşı karşıya kalması; temel dış politika hedefi güvenliğini sağlamak olan İsrail için büyük bir tehdit oluşturmuştur. İsrail'i en çok tehdit eden değişimlerden biri de hiç şüphesiz Suriye'deki iç savaştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, İsrail'in Lübnan deneyimlerinin ve Suriye ile olan pragmatik ilişkisinin saldırgan bir dış politika izlemesine engel olduğunu; ama yine de çıkarlarını korumak adına savunmacı realist perspektife bağlı kalarak aktif savunmacı bir politika izlediğini gözler önüne sermektir.

İsrail dış politikası, güç kapasitesi ve yapabilirlik arasında sıkışmış; kimi zaman revizyonist, özellikle Suriye'ye karşı da çoğu zaman savunmacı bir yapıya sahiptir. İsrail ve Suriye arasındaki ilişki savaşlar ve düşük yoğunluklu çatışmalar üzerine kurulu olsa da, bu iki düşman devlet arasında yıllar içerisinde oluşmuş pragmatik bir ilişkiden bahsedilebilir. Özellikle Hafız Esat döneminde belirginlik kazanan bu ilişki, var olan statükonun devamının iki devlet için de faydalı olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Bu faydacı ilişkiyi gözler önüne sermek ve Arap Baharı'yla birlikte gelen değişimleri gözlemek için İsrail dış politikasının temelleri ve İsrail'in kuruluşundan günümüze kadar olan Suriye ilişkileri incelenmiştir.

İlk bölümde İsrail dış politikasının temel belirleyicileri ve ona özgü olan karar alma süreci işlenmiştir. Bu bağlamda belirleyicileri üçe ayırmak daha kapsayıcı bir yaklaşım sağlamaktadır. Sistemsel belirleyicilerden başlamak gerekirse, İsrail dünyayı realist perspektiften algılar. Bu anlamda güvenlik, temel dış politika amacı haline gelmektedir. Yapısal bazı problemler, çeşitli endişeleri beraberinde getirir. İsrail'in sınırları, hatta başkenti bile uluslararası anlamda tam olarak kabul görmüş değildir. Ekonomik, diplomatik ve kültürel olarak bölgeden dışlanmıştır. Ekonomisi batı piyasalarına bağımlıdır. Bu yapısal endişeler, İsrail'i ikili strateji izlemeye yönlendirmiştir. Bu stratejinin iki ayağı vardır. İlk olarak; İsrail savaşta ve barışta Arap ülkelerinin birliğini engellemeyi hedefler. Buradaki temel ilke İsrail ve Arap çıkarlarının her zaman birbirine zıt olduğu görüşüdür. Savaş zamanı, İsrail coğrafyası ve ekonomisi uzun süreli bir birleşmiş Arap saldırısına karşı koyamayabilir. Barış zamanı ise Arap devletleri ikili ilişkilerde İsrail'e karşı daha ödün vermeye yönelik davranabilir. İkili stratejinin diğer ayağı ise bir süpergüç'ün koşulsuz desteğidir. Bu bağlamda Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, İsrail'in en büyük müttefikidir. Bu durum, İsrail'in statükocu; yani halihazırda üstün olduğu güç dengesini savunmaya yönelik politikalar izlemesine neden olmuştur.

Bölgesel dinamiklere gelindiğinde, İsrail'in bölge ülkeleriyle genellikle savaş ve çatışma ile iletişim halinde olduğu görülmektedir. Bu anlamda bir İsraili için güvenli sınırlar, bir Kanadalı ya da Amerikalı için olduğundan daha büyük bir önem teşkil etmektedir. İsrail ekonomik olarak stabil ve askeri olarak son derece gelişmiş bir ülke olsa da, hatta güç kapasitesi bir hegemon devlet olmasına engel taşımasa da; yapısal farklılıklar onu bundan alıkoymuştur. İsrail, kesinlikle bir bölgesel güçtür. Ancak yapısal farklılıklar nedeniyle gücünün bazı sınırları vardır. Bölgesel olayların sınırlarını çizebilirler. Devletlerin neyi yapıp, neyi yapamayacağını çeşitli savunmacı ya da saldırgan dış politikalarla belirleyebilirler. Ancak daha fazlası bölgesel bir duvarla karşılaşacakları için mümkün değildir. Yani İsrail'in bölgesel dinamikleri belirleme gücü olsa da direkt etkileme gücü sınırlıdır. Dolayısıyla hali hazırda üstün oldukları güç dengesini muhafaza etme yolunu izlerler.

Yerel dinamiklere gelinecek olursa, İsrail'in düşman devletlerle çevrili olması onu bir kuşatma psikolojisine sokmuştur. Bu psikoloji, bölgeye karşı bir şüphe ve önyargı geliştirmiştir. İkinci olarak, İsrail demokratik bir devlettir. Bu kimliğin muhafazası, uluslar arası toplumdaki 'karmaşanın içerisindeki villa' imajlarının korunması için önemlidir. Ancak İsrail demokrasiyi bir nüfuz aracı olarak algılamaz. Aksine, Ortadoğu'nun demokratikleşmesi çok da İsrail'in çıkarına yönelik bir gelişme değildir. Toplumun yönetimdeki temsiliyeti demek, hali hazırda son derece İsrail karşıtı olan düşüncelerin karar alma sürecinde daha da etkin olması demektir. İsrail'e göre Ortadoğu'da seçimler, İran, Hizbullah ve Hamas'ta da görüldüğü gibi siyasal İslam'ın yükselişiyle son bulur.

Son olarak, İsrail aslında muhafazakar bir devlettir. Buradaki muhafaza; Yahudi kimliği muhafazası, güvenlik muhafazası ve en önemli olarak var olan güç dengesi muhafazasıdır. Bunları korumak adına caydırma stratejisi benimsenmiştir. Burada düşmana ağır darbelerle sürekli saldırarak direncini kırıp bir daha saldırmaya cesaret etmemesi amaçlanmıştır. Amaç savunma olsa da gerçekleşme alanı saldırgandır. Bu da İsrail dış politikası savunmacı mı yoksa saldırgan mı ikilemini açığa çıkarır. Bu anlamda İsrail'in saldırgan olduğunu söyleyen akademisyenler olsa da, bu tezin amacı İsrail'in özellikle Suriye'ye karşı savunmacı olduğunu ortaya çıkarmaktır.

Karar alma sürecine gelindiğinde ise bilindik bir anlayış hakimdir; İsrail'in dış politikası yoktur, ancak güvenlik politikası vardır. Güvenlik perspektifi bu süreci o kadar domine eder ki Dış İşleri Bakanlığı, Savunma Bakanlığı'nın kararlarını halka açıklama kurumu haline gelmiştir. Bu durum dış politika davranışlarını da etkilemiştir. Bu bağlamda verilen karar zaman zaman revizyonist ve saldırgandır; çünkü güvenliği sağlamak için her şey mubahtır. Ancak revizyonist dış politika Lübnan örneklerinde hayli maliyetli olduğunu kanıtlamıştır; dolayısıyla İsrail için savunmacı politikalar, özellikle Suriye özelinde bekasını korumak için daha etkilidir. Bu politikadaki amaç, gerçekleştirme metotları saldırgan olsa da savunmacıdır.

İkinci bölümde, İsrail'in Beşar Esat dönemine kadar olan Suriye dış politikası incelenmiştir. İsrail ve Suriye arasındaki çatışma yeni bir durum değildir. İsrail'in

kuruluşundan itibaren üç ana savaş ve sayısız düşük yoğunluklu çatışma içerisinde bir ilişki geliştirmişlerdir. Çatışmanın eksenini 1967 Savaşı'na kadar silahsızlandırılan bölgelerdeki egemenlik arayışı ve su projeleri olmuştur. 1967 Savaşı'yla İsrail Golan Tepeleri'ni işgal edince eksen değişmiştir. Özellikle Hafız Esat'ın Savunma Bakanlığı döneminde kaybedilen bu tepeler Suriye için bir onur meselesi haline gelmiştir. İsrail için, bu tepelerin stratejik üstünlük sağlaması nedeniyle güvenlik için gözden çıkarılmayacak bir önemi vardır. Bu durum, İsrail ve Suriye arasındaki olası barış görüşmelerinin kilitlendiği nokta olmuştur. Ancak görülmektedir ki, iki devlet arasındaki pragmatik ilişki, barışın çok da istenilen bir durum olmadığını göstermiştir. Hafız Esat İsrail için güvenilir bir partner olduğunu zaman içerisinde kanıtlamıştır. Öyle görünse de, aslında ideolojik takıntıları yoktur. Var olan konjonktür neyi gerektirirse o düzlemde davranmıştır. Konjonktür savaş durumunu gerektirdiğinde Mısır ile İsrail'e karşı savaşa girmiştir; barışı gerektirdiğinde ise Oslo Barış Süreci'ne katılmıştır. Golan meselesi ise, Mısır İsrail ile barış karşılığında Sina Yarımadası'nı aldığı için bir prestij meselesi haline gelmiştir. Ancak yine de bunun için savaşa gidecek kadar takıntılı değildir. Sonuç olarak zaman içerisinde İsrail de Suriye de birlikte var olma, hatta birbirinin varlığıyla bir denge oluşturma yolunu bulmuşlardır. Denge var olduğu sürece bu faydacı ilişki iki taraf için de en uygun seçenektir. İsrail için bu denge güç dengesidir. Hali hazırda hem ekonomik hem de askeri anlamda güçlüdür. Suriye ise bunu korku dengesiyle dengeler. İsrail'in gücünü Hizbullah ve İran ile olan işbirliğiyle sınırlar. Bu durum, İran'ın etkisi belirli yöntemlerle sınırlandırıldığı sürece İsrail tarafından tolere edilebilir.

İsrail bu güç dengesini iki kere Lübnan'a müdahale ederek zarar vermiştir. İkinci bölümde bu müdahalelerden ilki incelenmiştir. 1982 Lübnan müdahalesiyle İsrail, savunmacı dış politikadan sıyrılarak tamamen saldırgan bir tutum benimsenmiştir. Amaç İsrail'i savunmaktan ziyade Lübnan'daki iç savaşa yön vermek ve sonucunu direkt müdahalede bulunarak etkilemektir. İlk olarak Suriye'nin müdahalesine izin vermiş olsa da bu durumun yeterli olmak bir yana ayrı bir Suriye hegemonyasıyla sonuçlandığını görünce direkt kendisi müdahale etmiştir. Sonuç olarak direkt bir askeri müdahale ile Lübnan sendromuna neden olunmuştur. Önceki Arap-İsrail

savaşları, bir varlık savaşı olarak lanse edilmekteydi. Ancak Lübnan'da İsrail'e varlığı direkt olarak tehdit yoktu. Bu saldırgan tutum hem iç siyasette hem de uluslararası toplum nezdinde büyük tepkilere neden oldu. Daha da önemlisi, İsrail'in en büyük düşmanlarından olan Hizbullah'ın kurulmasıyla sonuçlandı.

Üçüncü bölümde ise İsrail'in Beşar Esat dönemi dış politikası incelenmiştir. Genç ve batı tarzı eğitim almış olan Beşar'ın göreve gelişi umut vaat etse de, babasının yolundan mı gideceği yoksa dönem şartlarına uyup kendi yolunu mu çizeceği İsrail için temel sorun olmuştur. Ancak iki taraf için de birbirini tanıma ve asıl niyetini anlama fırsatı olmadan El Aksa İntifada'sı patlak vermiş; sonrasında takip eden 11 Eylül 2001 saldırıları, Amerika'nın 2003 Irak müdahalesi ve teröre karşı savaş ilanı ile iki ülke ilişkileri tamamen farklı bir boyuta taşınmıştır. Göreve yeni gelmiş olan Beşar Esat için bu gelişmeler hiç şüphesiz zorlayıcı olmuştur. Kendi halkı tarafından da tam olarak kabul görmediği için El Aksa ve devamındaki gelişmeleri kendi gücünü pekiştirme aracı olarak kullanmıştır. Özellikle İsrail'e karşı sert bir retoriği vardır. Saddam Hüseyin'in devrilmesi ve Filistin Kurtuluş Örgütü'nün Oslo'daki varlığıyla Arap halkının gözünde iyice boşa kalan Arap milliyetçiliği liderliği koltuğuna göz dikmiştir. Ancak retorik ve niyeti ne kadar sert olursa olsun İsrail'e karşı direkt bir askeri faaliyetten imtina ile kaçınmıştır. Özellikle Amerika'nın teröre karşı açtığı savaş ve Suriye'nin Irak'tan sonra sırada olduğunu her fırsatta yenilemesi Beşar'ın elini bağladığı için İsrail adına rahatlatıcı bir ortam sağlamıştır. Ancak Amerika'nın Irak'ta başarısızlığa uğraması ve devlet dışı milis güçlerin nüfuzlarını arttırmasıyla durum değişmiş, daha önce büyük tehdit altında olan Esat ve Hizbullah'ın özgüveni yerine gelmiştir.

Değişen dengeyi kendi lehine çevirmek için İsrail bir kez daha Lübnan'a askeri müdahalede bulunmuştur. 2006 yılında gerçekleşen bu müdahale sadece 34 gün sürmüştür ancak İsrail siyaseti üzerinde çok derin etkileri olmuştur. Hizbullah tarafından kaçırılan iki İsraili askeri kurtarma bahanesiyle gerçekleştirilen bu müdahale; askerleri kurtarmak bir yana, hali hazırda var olan Lübnan sendromunu derinleştirmiştir. Özellikle kayıpları azaltacağı düşünülerek tercih edilen "hava

yoluyla zafer” askeri stratejisi, asimetrik savaş düzleminde fiyaskoyla sonuçlanmıştır. Kendisinden askeri olarak daha güçlü olan devleti geleneksel savaşta yenemeyeceğinin bilincinde olan terör örgütü, onu asimetrik savaş düzlemine çekerek üstünlük sağlayabileceği alan arar. Bu alan da genel olarak halk desteğidir. Bu anlamda Hizbullah, İsrail’in hava saldırılarına karşı insan kalkanı adı verilen sivillerin arasına saklanma metodu izleyerek İsrail’i orantısız saldırgan konumuna sokmuştur. Hizbullah’ın sempatisini arttırmasının yanı sıra İsrail kendi halkına karşı bile bu saldırıları savunamaz konuma gelmiştir. Günün sonunda, Lübnan’ı bir kez daha terk etmek dışında bir seçeneği kalmamıştır ki bu da Hizbullah tarafından İsrail’e karşı bir zafer olarak lanse edilmiştir.

İki Lübnan müdahalesi ve derinleşen Lübnan sendromu göz önüne alındığında İsrail’in bölgesel dinamikleri direkt fiziksel bir müdahale ve revizyonist bir dış politikayla etki edemeyeceği açıktır. Özellikle bu iki deneyim ve sonrasında yaşananlar, Arap Baharı başladığında İsrail’in özellikle Suriye’ye karşı savunmacı bir politika izlemesine neden olmuştur.

Son bölümde bu politikanın seyri incelenmiştir. Arap Baharı ile birlikte bölge dinamikleri önemli değişimlere sahne olmuştur. Güç dengesinden ve hali hazırdaki göreceli üstünlüğünün idamesinden yana olan İsrail için bu değişimler endişe vericidir. Bu anlamda literatüre bakıldığında Arap Baharı’nın etkileri iki şekilde incelenmiştir.

Akademisyenler arasında bir kesim Arap Baharı’nı İsrail için bir fırsat olarak görmüştür. Amnon Aran, Arap Baharı’nın İsrail’in temel güvenlik sorunlarına bir tehdit oluşturmadığını; gündelik güvenlik sorunlarından biri olduğunu savunmaktadır. İsrail ve Amerikan bayraklarının yakılması, İsrail karşıtı sert söylemler ve sınır ihlalleri Arap Baharı’ndan önce de var olan sorunlardı ve İsrail’in baş edemeyeceği yapısal krizler yaratmadı. İsrail için asıl mesele İran’ın nüfuzunu arttırması ve özellikle nükleer silahlanmasıydı. İkinci olarak Benedetta Benti de

demokratik barış teorisini hatırlatarak demokrasilerin birbiriyle savaşmaktan geri duracağını; dolayısıyla Ortadoğu'nun demokratikleşmesinin İsrail için olumlu bir gelişme olacağını savunmuştur.

Diğer taraftan akademisyenlerin büyük çoğunluğu Arap Baharı'nı İsrail için büyük tehdit olarak görmüştür. William Craig ve William Gamson, İsrail Çadır Protestoları'na dikkat çekerek bu protestoların Arap Baharı ile birleşmesi ihtimalinin İsrail için büyük tehdit olacağını vurgulamıştır. Daniel Byman ise uluslararası kamuoyunun Arap Baharı'nı ilerici bir dalga olarak algıladığı, özellikle Amerika'nın tutumunun İsrail çıkarına uygun olmadığını belirtmiştir. Son olarak Philip Amour, bu protestoların güç dengesinde bir değişime yol açacağını, içerdiği radikal İslamcı gruplar nedeniyle oluşacak yeni dengenin İsrail için bir tehdit oluşturacağını yinelemiştir.

Suriye özeline gelindiğinde aynı ikilem yine vardır. Akademisyenlerin bir bölümü bunu bir fırsat olarak görmektedir. İran yandaşı Beşar Esat'ın devrilmesi İran-Hizbullah-Hamas üçgenine büyük bir darbe vuracaktır. Ancak büyük çoğunluk yine bu protestoları büyük bir tehlike olarak incelemektedir. Bu anlamda İsrail'in protestoların başında benimsediği stratejik sessizliği Netanyahu'nun kişisel etkisini ve İsrail'in devam ettirdiği saldırıları hesaba katarak farklı şekilde ele alan akademisyenler olsa da; savunmacı realist dış politika benimsediğini belirten akademisyenler çoğunluktadır. Amchai Magen, Danial Byman, Efraim Inbar ve Muriel Asseburg bu akademisyenlerden bir kaçıdır. Onlara göre İsrail'in Suriye Ayaklanması'na karşı olan politikası savunmacı realisttir. İdeolojik motivasyonlar barındırmaz. Var olan ekonomik ve sosyal normalliğin devamı için Suriye'deki karmaşadan uzak durmak temel amaçtır. Hali hazırda üstün olduğu güç dengesinin idamesini sağlamak dışında bir müdahalede bulunmamıştır.

Yazarların değindiği noktalara katılmakla birlikte bu çalışmanın amacı, gözden kaçmış iki noktaya parmak basmaktır. İlk olarak, İsrail için savunmacı realizmin bir seçenek olmadığı; aksine Lübnan sendromu göz önüne alındığında bir zorunluluk olduğudur. Direkt bir fiziksel müdahale fazlasıyla maliyetli olduğunu ve İsrail

çıkartlarını korumak bir yana büyük yıkımlara yol açtığını kanıtlamıştır. Dolayısıyla Suriye Ayaklanması başladığında İsrail Lübnan derslerini de anımsayarak stratejik sessizlik politikası benimsemiştir. Hizbullah'ın varlığı, üçüncü kez bir başarı olmaksızın geri çekilme ve bunun Hizbullah tarafından üçüncü kez zafer olarak adlandırılma ihtimali şüphesiz tehlikelidir.

İkinci nokta ise, son bölümde değinilen aktif savunmacı realizm kavramıdır. Suriye krizi boyunca İsrail'in savunmacı realist politikası çeşitli tehlikelerle karşı karşıya kaldı. Bu tehlikelerin neticesinde doğası aynı kalsa da çeşitli metotsal değişimlere uğradı. Bu nedenle bu çalışmanın amacı İsrail'in savunmacı realist perspektifinin aynı tonda olmadığını, tehdit algısı arttıkça aktifleşerek aktif savunmacı realist bir yapıya büründüğünü ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bunu daha detaylı incelemek ve değişimleri gözlemlemek için İsrail'in Suriye Ayaklanması dış politikası üç ana bölümde incelenmiştir.

İlk kısımda, protestoların başlangıcından 2015 Rusya müdahalesine kadar olan süreç incelenmiştir. Burada İsrail'in savunmacı realist dış politikasının tüm belirtileri görülmektedir. Var olan riskin boyutu ve savaşta radikal İslamcı elementler nedeniyle stratejik sessizlik ve bekle-ve-gör politikası benimsenmiştir. Bu sayede İsrail kendisini karmaşadan kesin olarak sıyırmayı hedeflemiştir. Bu durumun nedeni birkaç başlıkta sıralanabilir. İlk olarak, her ne kadar İsrail'e düşmanlığı retorik olarak ayan beyan ortada olsa da Beşar Esat bir çeşit güvenilir ortak olarak görülmektedir. İsrail tarafından bir çeşit "şeytan" olarak görünse de; en azından bildikleri şeytandır. Hareketleri ve sonuçları tahmin edilebilirdir. Dilinde İsrail karşıtlığı olsa da hareketleri göstermektedir ki İsrail ile birebir çatışmadan kaçınmaktadır. Babası Hafız gibi pragmatik bir politika benimsemiştir. Onun gitmesi İran'a büyük darbe indirecek olsa da; yerine gelecekler radikal İslamcı olabilir ya da gücünü pekiştirmek adına İsrail karşıtlığını aksiyona dökebilir.

İkinci olarak, Suriye ayaklanması güç dengesinde direkt bir değişim tehdidi oluşturmaktadır. Bu durum, bu dengeden fazlasıyla faydalanan İsrail için büyük tehlike arz etmektedir. Dengeyi tekrar kurmak adına müdahalenin zararı Lübnan'da

görülmüştür. Bu nedenle İsrail, yapısal sınırlarının bilincinde olarak ve misilleme gücünü muhafaza ederek kendini geri çekmiştir. Üçüncü olarak demoktarikleşme süreci, toplumun İsrail karşıtlığı bilindiğinden başlı başına bir tehdittir. Ayrıca, İsrail'in batıya karşı kendini sunduğu "karmaşadaki vaha" anlayışını da değiştirebilecek kuvvettedir. Bu nedenle Ortadoğu'da demoktarikleşme İsrail için istenilen ya da arzu edilen bir şey değildir. Son olarak, coğrafi olarak küçük bir ülke olan İsrail için bu tarz protestoların ülkeyi etkilemesi, ekonomi ve normal hayatın idamesi açısından büyük sıkıntılara yol açabilir. İsrail'in bu anlamda temel politikası bu tarz olayların İsrail'e bulaşmasını her ne pahasına olursa olsun engellemektir.

Sonuç olarak ilk bölümde, bu nedenler çerçevesinde pasif bir stratejik sessizlik benimsemiştir. Amaç savunma olsa da, misilleme ve sınır ötesi saldırılar nedeniyle operasyon çerçevesi yine saldırgandır.

İkinci bölümde 2015 yılında Rusya'nın Suriye müdahalesi ile İsrail'in tehdit algısı değişmiştir. Daha önce gideceği kesin gözüyle bakılan Esat ve onu kurtarmak için Suriye krizine iyice saplanan İran, Rusya'nın yardımıyla etki alanlarını hızla arttırmıştır. Esat'ın görevde kalması statükonun devamı açısından İsrail'in faydasına olsa da, bu kadar güçlenmiş bir Esat ve İran istenmemekteydi. İç savaş iki taraf için de yıpratıcı bir süreçti ve güç dengesini İsrail lehine çevirmektedir. Ancak Rusya müdahalesi ile nüfuzunu arttıran Esat ve İran, bu dengeyi kendi lehlerine değiştirmişlerdir. Bu yeni tehditle başa çıkabilmek adına İsrail, önceki döneme kıyasla daha aktif bir politika izlemiştir. Bu anlamda bu dönemi bir geçiş dönemi olarak görmek mümkün. İsrail direkt olarak Astana sonrası kadar aktif olmasa da, Rusya öncesi kadar da pasif değildir. Pasif savunmacı realizmden aktif realizme geçişteki bir ara dönem olarak görülebilir. Pasif stratejik sessizlik politikası ile İsrail'in çıkarları korunamayınca diplomasi kanallarını kullanarak İran tehdidiyle başa çıkmaya çalışmıştır. İran'ı Suriye'de kısaç altına alma kapasitesi yapısal sorunlar nedeniyle sınırlıdır. Lübnan da direkt bir müdahalenin ne kadar zararlı olduğunun kanıtıdır. Bu nedenle özellikle Rusya ile yapılan diplomatik görüşmeler, savaş sonrası dönemde İsrail çıkarlarını korunmasını amaçlamaktadır. Bunun yanı

sıra, İsrail'in kırmızıçizgilerinin altını çizmek için sınır ötesi misilleme saldırıları devam etmiştir. Sınıra yakın Hizbullah ve İran varlığına müsemma gösterilmemiştir. Bir diğer kırmızı çizgi ise sofistike silahların Hizbullah'ın eline geçme riskidir. Bu iki durumu engellemek adına İsrail her türlü önlemi almaya hazır olduğunun, gerçekleştirdiği misilleme saldırılarıyla alıntı çizmiştir. Önceki dönemde kendilerini tamamen karmaşadan uzak tutmayı hedefleseler de İran'ın nüfuzunu arttırmasıyla daha aktif bir politika izlemişlerdir.

Son kısımda ise 2017 Astana Barış Süreci İsrail için istenmeyen sonuçlara gebe olmuştur. Esat'ın görevde kalması İsrail için olumlu olsa da her zamankinden güçlü konumdadır. Özellikle Rusya'nın muhaliflerden temizlediği bölgeleri yeniden işgal ederek nüfuzunu arttırmıştır. Ayrıca, yenilenmiş özgüvenle Kasım 2017'de ilk kez İsrail' saldırıda bulunmuştur. Bunların yanı sıra Astana, savaş sonrası dönemde belirgin bir İran ağırlığının kanıtıdır. Dolayısıyla İsrail için barış süreci savaşı bitirmemiş; aksine bu kez savaş sonrası Suriye'sinde etki alanı arayışı olarak yeni bir cephe açmıştır. Bu cephede İsrail, eski tutumunu değiştirerek daha aktif bir politika benimsemiştir. Pasif stratejik sessizlik de, diplomasi de İsrail'in çıkarlarını korumaya yetmemiştir. Ancak, direkt müdahalenin de sorunu çözmeye yeterli olmayacağı daha önce görülmüştür. Bu nedenle İsrail, tam anlamıyla bir aktif savunmacı realist dış politika izlemiştir. İlk olarak, kırmızıçizgilerini hatırlatmak amacıyla İsrail Suriye sınırındaki tehdit olarak algıladıkları tüm faaliyetleri bombalamışlardır. Astana öncesi dönemde de bu saldırılar gerçekleşse de olaylara resmi olarak müdahale olmamak adına devlet nezdinde bunların gerçekleştiği reddedilmiştir. Astana sonrası ilk kez Aralık 2017'de İsrail, bu saldırıları gerçekleştirdiğini resmi olarak kabul etmiştir. Bunun nedeni, göreceli pasif tutumun bir işe yaramadığını, İsrail'in kırmızıçizgilerini korumak adına aktif olarak orada olduğunu vurgulamaktır. Eylemin kendisi saldırgan olsa da amaç revizyonizmden ziyade çıkarları korumak ve var olan durumu savunmak olduğu için savunmacıdır. Anlaşma, İsrail çıkarlarını korumak adına yeterli değildir. İran'ın İsrail'in neredeyse sınır komşusu olması en büyük tehdit olarak algılanmıştır. Önceleri Arap Baharı ve Suriye Ayaklanması gündelik güvenlik ihlali olarak algılanırken; Astana sonrası İran'ın baskın kuvvet

olarak ortaya çıkması İsrail için temel güvenlik meselesidir ki bu da pasif politikalarla ya da diplomasiyle çözülememiştir. Her ne kadar yöntem yine saldırgan olsa da bu saldırıların mantığı savunmadır. Engelleyici ataklar ve sert misillemeler İsrail savunma stratejisinde sıklıkla başvurulan yöntemlerdir. Astana sonrası fark, bunları resmi olarak kabul edip sürece aktif olarak dahil olmaktır. Bu durum, agresif devlete karşı yapılan bir dengeleme politikasıdır.

Durum her ne kadar savunmacı realizm perspektifinde ele alınsa da artan İran nüfuzuna karşı İsrail'in aktif savunmacı realist dış politikasının yeterli olup olmayacağı öngörülememektedir. Her ne kadar direkt bir askeri müdahale maliyetli ve riskli olsa da; İran'ın İsrail'in sınır komşusu haline gelmesi, Suriye Ayaklanması'nın ilk dönemlerinden farklı bir tehdit açığa çıkarmıştır. Bu bağlamda aktif olarak savaş sonrası Suriye'sinde kendi çıkarlarını koruyamaması halinde savunmacı realizmden çıkıp revizyonist politika benimseyebilir. Bu anlamda İsrail'in aktif savunmacı realist dış politikasının geleceği, bu çalışmada ortaya konulan ilkeler çerçevesinde başka bir çalışma konusu olabilir.

Appendix B: TEZ İZİN FORMU / THESIS PERMISSION FORM

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TEZİN ADI/ TITLE OF THE THESIS (İngilizce / English) : Israeli Foreign Policy Towards Syrian Uprising: A Defensive Realist Perspective

TEZİN TÜRÜ/ DEGREE: Yüksek Lisans/ Master

Doktora / PhD

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