CAPTURING LEBANON WHILE "SAVING" ASSAD: HEZBOLLAH AND THE
CIVIL WAR IN SYRIA, 2010-2020

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis aims to analyze Hezbollah's motivations in intervening in Syria, how Hezbollah as a Lebanese actor justified its intervention in the civil war in Syria, and its extended role in the war and presence in Syria in the past decade. By looking at the whole process from the beginning of the Syrian uprisings until 2020, it looks at stages of Hezbollah's direct involvement in Syria. By borrowing the concept of win-sets from Robert Putnam's two-level game theory, it aims to answer how Hezbollah justified its intervention and its role in the civil war in Syria and how this foreign intervention influenced its domestic strategies in Lebanon. In trying to analyze how Hezbollah justified its policy toward Syria, this study will also ask the following questions: What kind of win-sets were defined by Hezbollah and bargained with the domestic actors in Lebanon? What has been the critical stages in forming its strategy over time? Whether Hezbollah successfully bargained with domestic actors, how it changed its strategy in time.

Keywords: Hezbollah, Syrian Civil War, Robert Putnam, Win-Sets, Lebanon

ÖZ

LÜBNAN'I ESİR ALIRKEN ESAD'I "KURTARMAK": HİZBULLAH VE SURİYE İÇ SAVAŞI, 2010-2020

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Bu tez, Lübnanlı bir aktör olarak Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki iç savaşa dâhil olmasındaki motivasyonları, bu dahli nasıl meşru ve haklı gösterdiğini ve son on yılda Suriye'deki savaşta varlığını ve rolünü analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Suriye'deki ayaklanmaların başlangıcından 2020'ye kadar olan süreç içerisinde Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki iç savaşa doğrudan müdahalesi farklı aşamalar ile anlatılmaktadır. Robert Putnam'ın iki aşamalı oyun teorisinden win-set kavramı ödünç alınarak Hizbullah'ın iç savaştaki müdahalesi ve rolünün nasıl haklı ve meşru olarak dikte edildiği ve bu dış müdahalenin örgütün Lübnan'daki iç stratejilerini nasıl etkilediğine cevap bulunması amaçlanmaktadır. Bu çalışma, bu amaç çerçevesinde şu soruları cevaplayacaktır: Hizbullah win-setlerini nasıl belirlemiştir? Lübnan'daki yerel aktörlerle nasıl bir anlaşma ve pazarlık süreci içerisinde olmuştur? Zaman içinde stratejisini oluştururken kritik aşamalar neler olmuştur? Hizbullah'ın stratejisinde değişiklikler olmuş mudur?

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hizbullah, Suriye İç Savaşı, Robert Putnam, Win-Set, Lübnan

To My Beloveds: Agah Aren and Başak

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In his speech commemorating the "Day for the Wounded" on the June 14th of 2013, Hasan Nasrallah, the Secretary-General of Hezbollah, pointed the rationale behind Hezbollah's intervention in the civil war in Syria and answered the critics against organization:

> ...we are among the people who care most about Lebanon's security, stability, civil peace, unity, state and sovereignty... the resistance (Hezbollah, i.e.) is of a single nationality, and not of two different nationalities. Our only nationality is Lebanese. Not only have we been Lebanese for more than ten years, but also for hundreds of years... It was over two years ago when we first declared our stance on Syria... we knew that if the scheme continued, then it would definitely harm Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and the other peoples of the region, including Muslims, Christians, Sunnis, Shiite, Druze, Alawites, Ismailis, Zaydis, etc... we have engaged in combat to defend Syria's and Lebanon's people, territories, and economy... Therefore, no one should criticize us for being on the regime's side (Nasrallah, 2013a).

Within a tense domestic condition in Lebanon, the Arab Spring and the beginning of the civil war in Syria opened a new chapter for Hezbollah, its policies in Lebanon, its relations with the Lebanese actors and raised questions regarding its identity. Such an intervention in Syria confirmed Hezbollah's regional identity and how it could balance its Lebaneseness with its increasing regional role. While the organization eagerly supported the mass movements throughout the Middle East at the beginning of the uprisings, its rhetoric was challenged when the riots spread to Syria. In the first months of the Arab Spring, Hezbollah defined the uprisings as democratic attempts of people

against their authoritarian regimes. When uprisings began to be seen in Syria in March, one of the allies of Hezbollah in the region, there have been changes in the rhetoric of Hezbollah. Its advisory role in the beginnings of the uprisings in Syria turned to direct military operations in Syrian territory. With the claim of fighting against sectarianism and protecting Lebanon, Hezbollah took side with Bashar al-Assad. After getting involved in the conflicts in Syria, Hezbollah, affirming itself as a Lebanese national party, maintained its program and rhetoric in Lebanon. Syria has been a transit point for Hezbollah to receive Iranian aid. At first, Hezbollah rejected the allegations of involvement, then it admitted the intervention and claimed that it involved in Syria to protect the Lebanese-Syrian border, Shiite villages and shrines along the borderline and prevent the spread of sectarianism and civil war into Lebanon. The organization militarily intervened in the civil war in favor of the regime.

Hezbollah's entrance in Syria was a controversial decision as the country was deeply divided between pro- and anti-Syrian groups. As Khazai and Hess (2013, p. 5) said in 2013, 40% of the Lebanese population was favorable to Assad, while the rate of those who were unfavorable was 59%. Favorable to Assad were 91% among the Shia, 36% among Christians, and only 7% among Sunnis, while the rate of those who say "Assad should step down" was 3% among the Shia and 80% among Sunnis. As the developments in Syria started in March 2020, many people wondered about what kind of position Hezbollah will take. Is it intervening as a legal Syrian ally, a regional player or it will take whatever it can in order to strengthen against Israel?

This thesis aims to analyze Hezbollah's motivations in intervening in Syria, how Hezbollah as a Lebanese actor justified its intervention in the civil war in Syria, and its extended role in the war and presence in Syria in the past decade. By looking at the whole process from the beginning of the Syrian uprisings until 2020, it looks at stages of Hezbollah's direct involvement in Syria. By borrowing the concept of win-sets from Robert Putnam's two-level game theory, it aims to answer how Hezbollah justified its intervention and its role in the civil war in Syria and how this foreign intervention influenced its domestic strategies in Lebanon.

In trying to analyze how Hezbollah justified its policy toward Syria, this study will also ask the following questions: What kind of win-sets were defined by Hezbollah and bargained with the domestic actors in Lebanon? What has been the critical stages in forming its strategy over time? Whether Hezbollah successfully bargained with domestic actors, how it changed its strategy in time.

Defining Hezbollah is a challenging issue within this context. Hezbollah has been discussed through its standing in Lebanon and relations with Iran. Hezbollah is defined as a political party with its potential in social and economic domains. It is regarded as a social movement in Lebanon. On the other hand, its military wing, which is claimed to be the part of resistance against Israel, is accepted as a terrorist organization. Its close ties with Iran cause it to be described as an Iranian creation. The sophistication in defining Hezbollah also influences the explanations about its involvement in the civil war. The literature on Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian civil war is heavily discussed in four topics. One is claiming that Hezbollah's intervention

in Syria was a strategic choice that Syria's fall could weaken Hezbollah's power in Lebanon. Second is claiming that Hezbollah was in Syria because of ideological reasons that it intervened in order to protect Shia population and shrines in Syria. These explanations also referred to the Karbala and classical views on Sunni and Shia divide. Third is claiming that Hezbollah in Syria because of Iran's directions. The last one is about the Lebanese domestic politics that pointing Hezbollah's involvement in Syria as an end of its Lebanonization. As Ranstrop (2016, p. 41) argues "it is very clear that Hezbollah's military operations in Syria serve as political ammunition in the power struggle" in Lebanon. Hezbollah's intervention in the civil war in Syria caused suspicions about its "Lebanonization" and resistance against Israel among the Lebanese actors. However, the organization justifies its act as a just war that has the same purpose as the war against Israel, and it claims its Lebanese identity at every turn.

The researches on Hezbollah has mostly concerned to explain the political process of the organization in the Lebanese political history and its ideological ties to Iran. In recent years, the literature has begun to link its involvement in the civil war to its Lebanonization project. While some of these contributions emphasized the changing rhetoric and policies of the organization after the beginning of the civil war, many others are underlining its militarily strengthening and emergence as a more significant threat against the American and Israeli interests in the region. The literature on Hezbollah's involvement in the civil war in Syria can be grouped in two general approaches. One line of thought looks at Hezbollah's decision to enter in the civil war in Syria as its own interest and calculation regionally and domestically. Contributions in this group claims that Hezbollah's entrance

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into the civil war in Syria was strategic choice and a result of its need for Syria for its survival. These studies also underline Hezbollah's involvement in the civil war with the Lebanese domestic politics.

Marisa Sullivan (2014) makes a comprehensive analysis of Hezbollah's intervention to the civil war in Syria. In her study analyzing the processes of Hezbollah's moves, she claims that Hezbollah's involvement in Syria was a strategical necessity. Syria is a part of the axis of resistance, which is led by Iran, and the loss of the Syrian leadership would have resulted in essential consequences. According to Sullivan (2014, p. 24), the reputational risks, in the lenses of Hezbollah, are lower than the cost of inaction in Syria. Dara Conduit (2014, p. 102) underlines Syria's importance that "if Iran is Hezbollah's oxygen tank, Syria would be the air hose". That is why "for the second time since 1992, survival became key and quickly elevated Hezbollah's priorities outside its parliamentary paradigm to a position where its democratic support was no longer its primary concern" (Conduit, 2014, p. 102).

Khatib and Matar (2014, pp. 181-182) point Hezbollah's situation on the eve of its armed intervention in Syria. Hezbollah was in a double-edged conundrum that, on the one hand, Syria, its ally, was in a hole, and, on the other hand, it was waging a "war of position" in Lebanon against its opponents. Khatib and Matar (2014, p. 182) argue that the organization embraced an anti-sectarian stance to justify "its military intervention in Syria by using the language of victimization, arguing that the intervention was intended to confront the threat posed by Sunni takfiri jihadi groups to Lebanon.

Filippo Dionigi (2013, p. 2) makes a comparison between Hezbollah's intervention in the civil war in Syria and its involvements in crisis with Amal

Movement in the early 1990s, the civil unrest in Beirut in 2008, and the Iraq War. He underlines distinctness of the war in Syria. According to Dionigi, the Syrian case displays the significance of strategic interests for Hezbollah and its allies, which are Iran and Syria. In acknowledgement of its involvement in the Syrian conflict, Hezbollah's public image in the region changed negatively, and there has been a rise in anti-Hezbollah groups.

Discussing Hezbollah's Syrian intervention as ideological reasoning, Armenak Tokmajyan (2014, p. 108) claims that "religious and political factors play a more significant role in Hezbollah's Syrian policies than mass mobilization and the commitment of Hezbollah members to the idea of resistance". He points out that Hezbollah leadership did not want to lose its one of the leading partners in the region. He adds that the organization aimed to avoid a repetition that it remembered the faith of Shiites in Iraq, which they became victims of sectarian conflicts. Sahar Atrache (2014) also emphasizes the strategical role of Syria for Hezbollah. According to her, the organization saw the risks of rising takfiri threat and weakening of the Assad regime. It was, therefore, a compulsory act for Hezbollah to protect its position and achievements in Lebanon.

Massaab Al-Aloosy focuses on three factors that influenced Hezbollah's militarily support of Syria and its involvement in the civil war: Syria's balancing role during the late 1970s that it prevented Lebanon's disruption (1), Syria's being part of the "resistance" (2), and Syria's rejection of the so-called New Middle East project, which is led by the US (3) (Al-Aloosy, 2020, p. 143). Al-Aloosy, in this regard, claims that Hezbollah's support for Syria was based on interests rather than ideological justifications. He has a dubious view on

Hezbollah's relations with Iran in the Syrian civil war. Comparing Iran's involvement's in other countries in the Middle East, he claims that Hezbollah's involvement in Syria is indicative of the importance of the battle which Hezbollah has attached to it (Al-Aloosy, 2020, p. 149).

Similar to Al-Aloosy, Joseph Daher (2016, p. 180) also thinks that Hezbollah's support for Syria shows the strategic relationship between two actors. Hezbollah's foreign relations are based on strategical interests rather than principles that it mentions. In other words, "Hezbollah's change of position towards the regional uprisings reveals that its interests and those of its allies are more important in its calculations than the emancipation of the people of the region" (Daher, 2016, p. 197). He points Hezbollah's increasing influence in the region after the civil war in Syria. Aurélie Daher (2019) also discovers the possible actions of the post-Assad government and its reverberations on Hezbollah's position. She concludes Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian civil war as a raison d'etre.

Second line of thought argues that it was not a decision made by Hezbollah itself but dictated by Iran. Those including Yezid Sayigh and Makram Rabah argue that Iran led the organization to involve in the Syrian quagmire. According to Rabah (2016; 2017), Hezbollah's involvement in Syria is not a decision concluded freely but the organization itself, but a direct inducement of its Iranian masters. Similarly, defining the Assad rule in Syria as İran's main ally and Hezbollah's rear base, Yezid Sayigh (2014) claims Hezbollah's existence in Syria as an Iranian decision.

Although these studies have enriched our understanding, there is no adequate attention to the influence of domestic and international linkages on the

motivations Hezbollah's entrance into the Syrian civil war. There has been no a comprehensive work on how this intervention has changed Hezbollah's relationship with Lebanese groups and its constituents within Lebanon. Even though some of these studies, for example Dionigi's work, look at how Hezbollah's decision can be compared with other examples in the Lebanese history and how its involvement in the civil war in Syria expands its role in Lebanon, there is no detailed study about Hezbollah's changing and challenging relationships, and its negotiations with domestic actors during the involvement process (Hezbollah's intervention in the civil war in Syria, step by step, is a negotiation process).

While contributing to different explanations regarding Hezbollah's motivations in involving in the Syrian civil war, this study will borrow the concepts of win-sets and negotiations from Robert Putnam's theory of two-level games. In his analysis of two-level games, Putnam emphasizes the mutual interactions between national and international levels. He emphasizes the influence of domestic politics over negotiation processes at the international level and the role of negotiating states, which are constrained domestically. International negotiations are products of overlaps between national and international interactions of actors and institutions, or two levels. Putnam brings the negotiation processes into the agenda as essential factors. His analysis, therefore, is significant for understanding these processes. Putnam introduces two levels of negotiations. First is the national level, where actors interact with each other and make negotiations. Putnam offers win-sets in this context as a unit of bargaining and reaching an agreement. The size of win-sets determines the fate of negotiations. Second is the international level, where chief negotiators meet with their counterparts and make international

agreements through paying attention to size of win-sets and the views of their opponents and constituents.

Using Putnam's two-level game would cause several problems in the thesis. It would require to change Putnam's model to adapt it on Hezbollah. Implementation of two-level game analysis on a hybrid actor might seem artificial that non-state actors are considered as overlooking public consent, ignoring legal, political processes and seeking a solution through force and arms. However, this thesis borrow Putnam's win-set concept and negotiation processes in order to explain the relationship between Hezbollah's operations in Syria and strategies in Lebanon. Hezbollah, as a Lebanese, nationalist, armed organization with its transnational links to Syria and Iran, is a "junction point" of the interrelation of both domestic and international spheres. In other words, Hezbollah can be claimed as an RHA carrying national baggage in interaction with a transnational religious identity.

The study is based on the framework of the qualitative research approach and aims to provide a comprehensive perspective to the researcher through providing an opportunity to analyze the studied phenomenon in-depth. The study is based on desk-based research and includes books, articles, reports, journals, projects, databases and theses. It also covers Hezbollah's media, such as al-Manar and al-Ahed News, and speeches of Hezbollah's secretary general Hasan Nasrallah between 2010 and 2020. In addition to these, data from the Jihad Intel Project (Jihad Identifiers Database) of Middle East Forum , "Lebanese Hezbollah Select Worldwide Activity" platform of Washington Institute , and "Mapping Militant Organizations" project of Stanford University also have been used in the study.

The thesis is divided into four chapters, an introduction (Chapter 1) and a conclusion. Chapter 2 starts with a literature review on Hezbollah. As Hezbollah has become one of the most studied non-state actors in recent years there is a boost literature on Hezbollah. Although many of these studies highlighted different aspects of the organization and concentrated on its separate wings, there are few studies sufficiently focusing on the organization as a whole. This chapter will define Hezbollah as a Lebanese oriented regional hybrid actor. The chapter will also discuss the conceptual framework on the domestic-international dichotomy in IR, literature on non-state actors and an analysis of two-level game approach.

Chapter 3 will examine the formation of Hezbollah within a historical, political and military context. It will emphasize the historical processes that resulted in the formation of Hezbollah regarding its historical, political and military relations with Iran and Syria. It will begin from the period of the French mandate. By looking at the politicization and radicalization of the Shia within the socio-economic and political context of Lebanon, the emergence of Hezbollah will be explained. After explaining the formation of the organization, its structure and ideology, the thesis will show how it went through a moderation process in Lebanon in the early 1990s. Although concentrating in its struggle against Israel, the questions over Hezbollah's identity is the focus of the chapter. Whether Hezbollah is a regional actor with strong ties to Syria and Iran or it is more of a Lebanese actor and the vanguard of Lebanese interests against the Israel is discussed in this chapter. To what extent these two identities can be exclusively defined is also questioned. Looking at Hezbollah-Syria relations, the chapter will compare the periods of Hafez Assad and Bashar Assad and to what extent there has been a change in

the so called alliance. Later, the chapter will look at Hezbollah-Iran relations and it will underline Iran's ideological, political, economic and strategic role for Hezbollah.

Chapter 4 will cover Hezbollah's perception of the Arab Spring and its involvement in the civil war in Syria. This chapter will include the trajectory of Hezbollah's participation in the Syrian civil war. In this chapter, Hezbollah's changing rhetoric, discourse and policies will be explained through a comparison of the first uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and then in Syria. This chapter will follow a four-step stage of Hezbollah's understanding of Arab Uprisings. From the first stage to the last step, it will explain the organization's involvement in the civil war in Syria from an advisory role to military intervention. Then, which motivations encouraged Hezbollah to involve in the civil war in favour of the Assad regime will be questioned. At the end of this chapter, Hezbollah's operations both in Lebanon and Syria related to the Syrian civil war and reactions to its intervention in the war from Lebanon and Syria will be discussed.

Chapter 5 consists of the application of the borrowed concepts from Putnam's two-level game analysis on Hezbollah. It will analyze the role of Hezbollah in the Syrian conflict within the context of win-set formation and negotiations in reference to foreign policy and domestic politics relations. It will analyze Hezbollah's relations with the Lebanese actors, state and public, and its constituents.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Hezbollah explained its intervention in Syria as a part of defending Lebanon. Its involvement was perceived as an obligation because of directions of Iran and Syria. However, involvement of an actor, which is assertive to be national, in a neighboring country and its presenting of this as a domestic issue to the political actors in the domestic increased questions about its intention. It caused the dichotomy of whether being a domestic or regional actor. This chapter will explain two issues in order to understand and define Hezbollah. The first will discuss the relationship between domestic and international in the context of a domestic actor's intervention into another country. The second will reveal the inadequacy of defining an actor with such a capacity as a violent non-state actor, and will develop a new definition and define it as an RHA. It will also introduce Putnam's two-level game theory, as mentioned in the introduction, and explain the concept of win-set, which will be used to help understand how Hezbollah describes its involvement in Syria in the domestic context.

Hezbollah's involvement in Syria caused suspicions about its "Lebanonization" project. It has been considered as a resistance movement not only by the Lebanese public but also by large segments of populations in the Middle East. Its priorities are defined as resistance to Israeli invasion and protecting Lebanon. The literature on Hezbollah has mostly concerned to explain the political process of the organization in Lebanese political history

and its ideological ties to Iran. In recent years, the literature has begun to link its involvement in the Syrian conflict to its "Lebanonization" project. In these studies, Hezbollah's participation in the Syrian civil war is concluded as a matter of *raison d'être* that Syria is mentioned as more than a neighbor for Hezbollah (Conduit, 2014, p. 102; Sullivan, 2014, p. 24). The fall of the Assad regime is expected to bring existential risks for Hezbollah's presence and legitimacy in Lebanon.

2.1. Domestic-International Dichotomy in International Relations

In the literature of IR theories, domestic politics are generally supposed to be part of a state's affairs independent from the international system and have limited influence on foreign policy and international politics. Domestic is believed to have a Hobbesian formation of sovereignty that consists of well-defined and hierarchically ordered centres. International, on the other hand, is believed to be an arena of anarchy that lack of a central authority prevails. States are the main actors in the international realm, and it is a self-help system that each state seeks for its survival. That is the reason why Robert Farrell (1966, p. vi) defined foreign policy as a "no man's land".

There is a traditional categorization of inter-state relations in terms of their levels of analysis. As introduced by Kenneth Waltz (1959; 1979) in the 1950s and then conceptualized by David Singer (1961) and Martin Hollis and Steve Smith (1991), the level of analysis began to be used to investigate the causes of state behaviours. Waltz (1959) introduced three levels of analysis including the international, or the systemic, level that explains the states' positions in the international system, the state, or the domestic, level, which looks to society, culture and political institutions of nation-states, and the individual level that

concerns with personal or psychological characteristics of the statesmen. This view saw the domestic politics as a *black box* that has limited influence over inter-state relations and the states as unitary actors giving primacy to foreign policy. Although the level of analysis framework was influential in explaining the 'outside-in' and 'inside out' dynamics, it was limited to explain how these dynamics were mediated by foreign policy (Brighi, 2013, p. 13).

Figure 1: Approaches to Domestic-International Dichotomy in International Relations

System/Attitude	Solution-Oriented		Interpretivist
International	A		C
		E	
Domestic	B		D
Figure 1: Approaches to Domestic-International Dichotomy in International Relations			

Ontologically and epistemologically, the evolution of domestic and international dichotomy through years can be explained in two categories sometimes intersecting each other: whether in terms of the system or in terms of the attitude (see Figure 1). Firstly, systemic categorization includes the approaches contributing to the problem in terms of privileging domestic or international. Although both approaches are state-centric, they differ through privileging of internal politics or the international ones as influential factors on foreign policymaking. For instance, Realism is an international-privileging approach and Liberalism has a domestic-privileging understanding. Secondly, categorization through attitudes includes solution-oriented and interpretive

approaches. Solution-oriented perspectives are framed in terms of the naturalistic type of inquiry or 'explaining' theories of IR, as Hollis and Smith (1991) argued. Interpretivist approaches are 'understanding' theories of IR that have an internal approach to the issues. These classifications will be briefly explained below.

The first classification is international-solution oriented approaches. The primacy of international that inspired by writings of several thinkers dates back to the seventeenth century. Writings of Thucydides and Niccolo Machiavelli led the state-centric view in international politics. Inspired by the primacy of international, Ranke introduced the supreme law, known as *Primat der Aussenpolitik* (Brighi, 2013, p. 11), that the degree of interdependence determines a state's position in world politics and domestic is an instrument for the goal of self-preservation. Realism, the most influential theory of IR, assumed states as similar units that have stable domestic preferences and decision-making procedures. They are distinguished only through their powers and relative positions in the international system (Moravcsik, 1993, p. 5). The primacy of anarchy left very little space for domestic influences on foreign policy (Waltz, 1979, p. 118). Domestic politics were confirmed as an unimportant factor in shaping foreign policy. In this regard, realism should be placed in box A of Figure 1.

The second classification, international-interpretivist approaches, focus on the social and institutional environment of international politics. The English School and Constructivism can be counted in this category. The English School approves the anarchical structure of international politics. Under the anarchy, states construct a society based on norms, rules and interrelation (Wight, 1994;

Buzan, 1993; Dunne, 1998; Linklater and Suganami, 2006). According to English School, inter-state relations are based on a set of normative standards, and power politics is a secondary issue. It emphasizes the social nature of the 'international' and adopts an interpretivist approach (Brighi, 2013, p. 19).

Similar to the English School, Constructivism also has an interpretivist view of international politics. Relations between states are conceptualized through identity and norms. Anarchy is not defined as a given condition related to the lack of a central authority. On the other hand, anarchy is defined as what states make of it or what the actors understand from it (Wendt, 1992). Constructivism advanced a view of international relations as a social domain in which states' moves need not be explicitly conceptualized (Brighi, 2013, p. 19). Since both theories privilege the social, normative and institutional aspect of IR in an interpretivist approach, both theories can be placed in box C of Figure 1.

The third classification is domestic-solution oriented approaches. Domestic explanations locate the determinants of foreign policy and international relations within the nation-state itself (Moravcsik, 1993, p. 5). In this regard, the structure of domestic institutions and regimes has links with foreign policymaking. Current domestic approaches to IR can be divided into two groups. Firstly, state-centred approaches locate the sources of foreign policy behaviour within the administrative and decision-making apparatuses of executive branches of states. Models based on domestic regimes and bureaucratic structures can be given as examples. Authoritarian or revisionist structures of domestic institutions influence their foreign policy decision-making processes. Secondly, democratic peace approaches emphasize the institutions of representation, education and administration that link the state

and society. Inspired by Kant's perpetual peace and peaceful nature of democracies, democratic peace theory assumes the democratic states as friendly entities that do not wage war against each other. Since both models based on domestic regimes and bureaucratic structures and democratic peace approaches have a naturalistic point of view, observable structures rather than interpretivist methods, they should be placed in box B of Figure 1.

The fourth classification includes domestic-interpretivist approaches. There are society or domestic-centric approaches that stress pressure from domestic social groups through legislatures, interest groups, elections and public opinion (Moravcsik, 1993, p. 6). These approaches emphasize the role of identity and culture as a social construction. As these approaches tend to posit foreign policy as primarily influenced by individuals, their cognitive processes and their identities, they tend to underscore the role of the internal dimension (Brighi, 2013, p. 20). Therefore, these approaches can be placed in box D of Figure 1.

Complex approaches will be counted as the latter approach. Much of IR theories overlook the influence of domestic politics and decision-making factors on foreign policy (Kaarbo, 2015, p. 189). Although realism is interested in power and security politics, which privilege the international, several approaches inspired by Marxism and Liberalism interested in uncovering the influence of the domestic. Liberalism is expected to cover the impact of domestic that Michael Doyle (2008, p. 59) claims that liberals highlight internal structure and individuals' perceptions in policymaking. However, liberal IR theory has minimal references to the impact of domestic on foreign policy.

It is argued for years that the domestic and international affairs are interactive that developments in the domestic have repercussions in the international or international events reverberate within domestic politics. According to Mesquita (2002, p. 2), domestic politics' shaping of international relations dates back to the time of Sun Tzu: "The first of the five constant factors governing war is the principle of the moral law which "causes the people to be in complete accord with their ruler, so that they will follow him regardless of their lives, undismayed by any danger" (Mesquita, 2002, p. 2).

Especially after the 1960s, the traditional understanding of "international-first" was challenged. Complex approaches integrated a three-level analysis including society, political system and international environment. They have a mixed ontology combining domestic and international. However, epistemologically, they have a narrow, naturalistic understanding of explanation, which positions them in box E of Figure 1. James Rosenau is one of the first scholars, who defined interactions between domestic and international politics within this context. He described these interactions within the term, linkage politics (Rosenau, 1973, p. 49). Starting from the distinction between systemic variables and domestic ones, he claimed how events originated on one side is linked to the issues on the other side (Brighi, 2013, p. 22). He introduced the relationship between domestic and international as a bridge identifying the foreign policy, and several works have been produced due to his contributions (Rosenau, 1987, p. 1). Peter Katzenstein argues the interrelation between domestic and international politics. He claims that foreign policies are internalized, and domestic politics are internationalized (Katzenstein, 1976, p. 2).

Referring to the domestic and international interaction, Robert Putnam focused on the issue of how foreign policy tends to be internationally and domestically constrained in the context of economic bargaining processes (Brighi, 2013, p. 23). Putnam's approach provides a simple model to foreign policy that assumes a lack of distinctiveness between domestic and international domains. Rosenau's model of turbulence acknowledges that domestic and international politics are interconnected, and emphasizes the transformation of state-centric and hierarchical forms of order and the emergence of a large number of social and sub-state actors at these levels (Hazbun, 2017, p. 88). In order to understand this, the historical changes in the approaches to the role of state and non-state actors should be reviewed.

2.2. State and Non-State Actors in International Relations

The state has been shaping the international relations theory for centuries. It has gained a central role and dominated every aspect of life. Its dominating and regulating the human life and society also brings questions about its definition and qualifications. Especially after the emergence of nation-states around the world, statehood, definition of a state and the factors that make 'states' a state have been subjects discussed over the years. As a result of these discussions, a rich literature on statehood of entities and a large world of concepts has emerged. The 'real' state-actors, non-state actors, internationally recognized, or unrecognized, quasi-states, pseudo-states, state-like actors, states within the states etc. have been some sorts of this multifaceted world of statehood. Despites states' centrality, however, the non-state political actors remain theoretically under-studied (Özpek, 2010, p. 34).

2.2.1. States and Statehood

International Relations is predominantly under the influence of the realist approach, and with the effect of this, states are seen as the main actors of the discipline (McMillan, 2008, p. 232). There have been definitions mentioning state through its role within the society and its capabilities, and parameters defined for being a state. Smith defines state as an autonomous institution in a given territory and as an entity monopolizing coercion and extraction within this territory. Similarly, Weber (1997, 156) claims that state is the institution has legitimate use of power. Locke points out the right of trying and punishing its people as one of the core functions of the state. He asserts that the state is responsible for protecting its citizens, their rights and the rule of law. In the ideas of Smith, Weber and Locke, the main functions of the state are presented as providing security for its citizens, protecting their territories and borders, and the legitimate use of force. Even though these claims are relevant, these views of statehood draw attention only to the characteristics of empirical statehood and internal legitimacy of states. Therefore, an entity lacking the monopoly on legitimate violence is not considered as a state.

According to the Montevideo Convention[1] signed by the International Conference of American States (ICAS) and adopted in 1933, four criteria are identified as the requirements of being a state: an entity possessing a permanent population (1), a defined territory (2), a government capable of administration (3), ability and capacity to enter into relations with the other states (4) (Grant, 1999, p. 5). The declarative theory of state is based on these

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[1] Although, the Montevideo Convention was signed by several American countries, its definition of the state has been widely used in international law.

criteria adopted in Montevideo. According to this theory, statehood is an empirical issue that an entity meets the conditions of statehood can be defined as a state. It "denies that the act of recognition alone imparts legal personality and detaches statehood from the unilateral behavior of existing states" (Grant, 1999, p. 5). Statehood is an automatic issue gained after the meeting of four criteria.

On the other hand, the constitutive theory defines the statehood as a juridical issue rather than an empirical one. It focuses on the external legal rights and duties. The key to constitutive theory is not an entity's attainment of de facto statehood but, rather, prior international acceptance of its asserted right to independence (Rafaat, 2018, p. 3). Constitutive theory makes emphasize on an entity's international recognition rather than its internal reality. An entity can be defined as a state if it is recognized by the other states in any case it lacks internal legitimacy. In this regard, the Constitutive theory focuses on the external legal rights and duties rather than formal requirements of criteria. According to Oppenheim (2018, p. 92), "a new state before its recognition cannot claim any right which a member of Family of Nations has" and "through recognition only and exclusively a state becomes an international person and a subject of international law". Similarly, Jackson (1993, pp. 22-24) presents international recognition as a precondition to be recognized as a state. If an entity is not recognized internationally, it is a de facto state and cannot be considered as a state.

Despite constitutive theory's juridical prerequisites, Jackson offers two forms of internationally recognized states meeting both an empirical and juridical explanation for statehood: the real states which enjoy dual legitimacy both in

domestic vis-à-vis its own citizens and international vis-à-vis other recognized states, the quasi-states which are recognized by the international community as a sovereign state on the one hand, but lack internal legitimacy on the other hand. According to Jackson, the real states possess right of non-intervention and provide political goods for their citizens. Real states have double sovereignty that they are sovereign both domestically and internationally. Jackson (1993, 21-29) calls domestic sovereignty as positive aspect of sovereignty based on political attributes. External sovereignty is called as negative aspect of sovereignty that is based on legal foundations such as freedom from outside interference and international recognition (Jackson, 1993, 28-30). Within this context, while Jackson's theory of negative sovereignty can be associated with the constitutive theory, his positive aspect of sovereignty can be considered within the frame of declarative theory of statehood (Özpek, 2010, p. 33). It is also possible to associate internal and external sovereignties to realist and liberal definitions of sovereignty. For instance, Thomson (1995, 219) focuses on realism's emphasize on external sovereignty and liberalism's stress on internal aspects of sovereignty. As Rafaat (2018, xvi) claims, "based on Weber's definition of state, an entity that lacks the monopoly on legitimate violence cannot be considered as a state that can be used to further understand Jackson's concept of internal legitimacy and sovereignty". On the other hand, the quasi-states derive their sovereignty not internally from empirical statehood, but externally from the international state system. Quasi-states enjoy only the negative sovereignty and lack the positive one. Although they do not have the capacity to govern themselves, quasi-states are recognized by the international community.

States are considered as holistic and homogeneous structures. These attributes and excellence attributed to the state negate the role of non-state actors in international politics. This situation becomes timider when looking inside the states and domestic politics, and these areas are invisible from time to time. The literature, in which states are seen as the sole and main actors, is now being questioned. The boundaries between state and non-state actors are becoming increasingly blurred, and the clear distinction between state and non-state actors made by traditional IR theory seems increasingly inappropriate for assessing power relations in international relations (Kausch, 2017, p. 67). Gray areas arise between states and non-state actors. As a result of this, as Tınas (2016, p. 50) states, the question of who the actors are in foreign policy gains importance.

2.2.2. Quasi-States and De Facto States

Although states were created through war and diplomacy in the past, the post-World War II period witnessed to existence of new states that lack the basic qualities for statehood. After the process of decolonization, most of the European states lost their status of colonizer that their colonies around the world achieved independence in the 1950s and 1960s. Since they had been ruled by the European 'masters' for a long period, the new emerging states lacked basic infrastructure of administration after the 'masters' withdrew. There was no enough capabilities and infrastructure. As a result, according to Jackson, due to the decolonization in the 20th century, the state's role as the only actor has the ultimate and indivisible sovereignty has decreased and many states have lost their ability to fulfill core state functions including lack of both aspects of sovereignty. Within the Jacksonian understanding of

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statehood, these entities are called as quasi-states that do not have the capacity to govern themselves, but their existence is recognized by the international community. These states protected themselves from collapsing through international recognition. Internal structure of institutions and laws has restricted to build domination in the domestic. "State leaders of such quasi-states often receive the bulk of their revenues not from the taxation of their own population but from international donors and through the exploitation of the country's exportable natural resources" (Kolstø, 2006, p. 748). Jackson further makes a distinction between the de jure state and de facto state that even if it has no an effective administration, the former is an internationally recognized state, but the latter is not a state but has the capabilities of positive aspect of sovereignty. In this regard, de jure state emerges as a quasi-state in Jackson's understanding.

As Jackson claims, many states have failed to build sovereignty and authority within their territories and lost their monopolies over the use of force, which caused a monopoly dilemma that non-state actors emerged as shareholder to states. Emergence of these non-state actors has brought along the definition problems of them. On the one hand, despite Jackson's claims, these actors lack international recognition, but, on the other hand, they have internal legitimacy at least within their communities or boundaries under their control. As states are expected to have monopoly of use of force, protect citizens and boundaries and provide political and economic goods for people, non-state actors undertook this duty and emerged as assertive providers in the territories under their control.

According to Jackson, states of the developed world have the full capacity of internal legitimacy and demonstrate real sovereignty. However, they are composed of many minority groups that are opponents of the rule of these states. Similar to the states in the developed world, many post-colonial states that Jackson classifies as quasi-states have limited internal legitimacy and support at least by a group of society. For example, "the Iraqi state enjoyed internal legitimacy vis-à-vis its Sunni community until 2003, and its Shia community after the invasion" (Rafaat, 2018, p. 5). In other words, there is no state that totally lacks or has domestic support and legitimacy because of their diversion through state-structures and abilities to provide services for their constituencies.

In addition, there is no single and universally accepted meaning of the term quasi-states. Some scholars use different and non-synonymous terms. While some authors prefer the term 'de facto states', others prefer 'unrecognized states', 'artificial states', 'failed states' 'para-states', or 'pseudo-states'. Moreover, there is no a consensus among the scholars in order to categorize the features of quasi-states. For instance, as mentioned above, Jackson defines the quasi-state as a sovereign entity internationally recognized, but lacks internal legitimacy. In Jackson's understanding, de facto non-sovereign state which is not recognized internationally does not fit in this category (Rafaat, 2018, p. 1). Jackson (1993, p. 29) alleged the disconnect between external and internal sovereignty that quasi-states enjoy external sovereignty, yet are unable to fulfil the functions of a sovereign state.

On the other hand, Kolstø (2006), Kosienkowski (2013), Caspersen (2012), Fruhstorfer (2012) have a reverse conceptualization of quasi-states. As

Caspersen asks: "But can the reverse disconnect be found in unrecognized states? Can statehood exist without recognition, as suggested by the declaratory approach, and can unrecognized statehood therefore be placed on a continuum from strong to failed states? Or are the benefits of recognition so important that statehood without external sovereignty is impossible as argued by the constitutive approach and the traditional view of sovereignty? Or is it indeed the case that statehood without recognition is possible but takes a different form; that the disconnect is not complete?" (Caspersen, 2012, p. 15).

They claim that quasi-states lack international recognition, but enjoy internal legitimacy and they define Jackson's quasi-state which is internationally recognized but internally illegitimate as failed states. According to Kolstø, defining states without external sovereignty as quasi-states is important for two reasons: "First, it underscores some striking similarities between the two types of quasi-states, those lacking internal sovereignty and those lacking international recognition. Both categories are located at the margins of the international system of states and challenge basic assumptions of this system. Furthermore, they are quite often found on the same territory and relate to each other as parent state and secessionist region. Entities of both kinds tend to be hot spots in international politics. Finally, there are strong reasons to believe that, if any of the unrecognized quasi-states of today's world should succeed in achieving international recognition, most of them will end up not as 'normal' or fully fledged states but instead transmute into recognized quasi-states of the Jacksonian variety" (Kolstø, 2006, p. 749). Therefore, the term quasi-state, in its classical use, remains problematic that Rafaat (2018, p. 1) claims some scholars use the term exclusively to refer to recognized, and others to unrecognized entities.

The conceptual discussions on the definition of quasi-states give place to a consensus in characterization of de facto states. Different from the quasi-state, Jackson defines the de facto state as a state that has the capabilities of internal sovereignty, but lacks international recognition. Discussions on the legal status and capabilities of quasi-states reach a consensus on internal capabilities of de facto states. Scott Pegg (1998, p. 26) defines de facto states as follows:

> "A de facto state exists where there is an organized political leadership, which has risen to power through some degree of indigenous capability, receives popular support; and has achieved sufficient capacity to provide governmental services to a given population in a specific territorial area, over which effective control is maintained for a significant period of time. The de facto state views itself as capable of entering into relations with other states and it seeks full constitutional independence and widespread international recognition as a sovereign state. It is, however, unable to achieve any degree of substantive recognition and therefore remains illegitimate in the eyes of international society" (Pegg, 1998, p. 26).

In the context of Pegg's explanation, de facto states have the declarative aspect of statehood, capable of applying positive aspect of sovereignty and only lack international recognition (Özpek, 2010, p. 35). They have internal legitimacy at least within their communities and boundaries under their control and provide political and economic goods for people living under their sovereignties. De facto states undertake this duty and emerge as assertive providers in the territories under their control. "The existence of a de facto states is evidence that the official state is not fully operational and lacks capacity in control of its territory and people" (Lemke, 2003, p. 133). Furthermore, Pegg claims that de facto states seek constitutional independence and they aim to be recognized by the international community in this way. Recognition is presented as an ultimate goal of de facto states. Kolstø (2006, pp. 725-726) asserts that a de facto state "must have sought but

not achieved international recognition as an independent state". Even he excludes "those that have persisted in this state of non-recognition for less than two years" (Kolstø, 2006, p. 726).

2.2.3. Hybrid Actors

The historical, ideological, religious and cultural identities of sub-state actors result in their foreign policymaking in international relations at different levels in different ways from the states. For this reason, foreign policy studies should also consider local and international ties and relations that are not dependent on the state as an object of analysis. In this context, non-state actors should also be included in foreign policy studies. Especially after the Cold War, with globalization and the degeneration of the unique role of states (but states continue to be the main actors), non-state actors have emerged as important players in the fields of foreign policy and domestic policy. Studies in this field, especially in recent years, show that sub-state and non-state actors aim to reach their foreign policy goals by putting pressure on their governments, and they create a perception and develop a discourse for this. In this context, while non-state actors are involved in international politics, on the other hand, they try to influence their own foreign policy decisions or developments in foreign policy by creating pressure mechanisms to shape and direct domestic policy. Because, as mentioned above, although their uniqueness has been damaged, states continue to be the main actors in international relations.

In recent years, there is a new definition to describe non-state actors: Hybrid Actors. Hybrid actors are entities that do not have international recognition as a state but have state characteristics. For this reason, since they have to realize their political goals and decisions through these officially recognized states,

they need to influence the decision-making mechanisms and bureaucracy of the state in which they operate. Sometimes this is done by directly influencing the political processes, and sometimes by interfering with society. In this context, first of all, hybrid actors' own political, social, economic and military capacities come to the fore. These features are effective factors in the conduct of international relations of hybrid actors. On the other hand, hybrid actors have to engage with foreign powers to put pressure on states and impose their own decisions on them.

According to Hazbun (2017, p. 97), "at the centre of the erosion of state authority by both political and military means are hybrid actors with semi-sovereign authority over their political and military capabilities. Hybrid actors are not fully or formally sovereign, but they are creating networks and social organizations that increasingly use power and control". And actors like Hezbollah are counted within the frame of this concept.

Hybrid actors are defined as non-state proxies that are led by a foreign sponsor, have domestic support and play political, economic and security role in local politics (Cambanis, et al., 2019, p. 1). These actors benefit from fragility and weakness of home countries and have a partial autonomy from states. A hybrid actor is defined as an armed group that capture state institutions or build parallel institutions to state, participate in legal, political processes, develop relations with other countries and engage in war and diplomatic activities. They have several features of states, but they have no intention or international recognition for being a state. On the one hand, hybrid actors emerge as a result of states' incapacities to fulfil their functions based on their stateness, on the other side, they are barriers before states' efforts to reestablish

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their authorities. Hybrid actors benefit from deficiencies in their stateness character, which excludes liability for governance (Cambanis, et al., 2019, p. 8).

As distinctions between states and non-state actors have been increasingly blurred in the recent years, the clear-cut dichotomy of traditional International Relations theory between states and non-state actors began to be more complicated (Kausch, 2017, p. 67). According to Carmit Valensi (2015, p. 61), overemphasis of political science and international relations literature on non-state organizations, and generalizations and uses of terms have not provided an up-to-date solution for analyzing non-state actors and their areas of "duties". The main approaches in international relations give more attention to states and states' activities, and non-state actors are tackled as the less influential and less important part of the story. However, late developments in the world show a more composite dimension of the non-state field. Especially after the end of the Cold War, the field that actors in international relations share have become more complex. State's role has begun to be questioned, and non-state actors sharing the part and power of states emerged. The Middle East is a conspicuous example showing the complicated relationship between the state and non-state actors.

The Arab Uprisings in the Middle East has displayed and empowered the notion of the complexity between states and non-state actors and elaborated the lines where the sovereignty of the state begins and ends. As a result of shaken dominance of the states, the presence and role of non-state actors increased, and identity politics has been the leading force for them. After the US invasion, Iraq was divided into three de facto regions including Kurdish,

Shiite and Sunni spheres of influence. Today, the Iraqi presidency is assigned among Kurds and the prime minister among the Shiite. While the Shiites have sought to dominate the Iraqi politics, Kurds in the north of the country began to march toward establishing an independent state and several Sunni groups gathered around radical Islamist groups. Similar to Iraq, Lebanon's history is composed of divisions among religions and sects. Almost every position in the state agencies is shared by several communities of different denominations and faiths. After the lynching of Libya's Gaddafi, the country is divided into areas controlled by tribes, clans and armed groups, and led to destabilization that seems to maintain for a while. In Syria, opposition groups from a wide range of ideologies and identities challenged the rule of Assad's Baath regime, and, at least for a while, they have taken control of several regions. Between 2010 and 2020, from the beginning of uprisings in Syria to regime's re-control of the territories mostly in the western part of the country, there have been Sunni groups demanding fall of the government, Shiite groups in favour of the system and international actors including the US, Russia, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia etc. whether as a pro or against the regime, intervened the civil war. The civil war in Syria has brought two actors into forefronts within the context of the lines between states and non-state organizations. One of these actors is the Islamic State or the ISIS with its well-known name, and the other actor is Hezbollah, which operates like no other actor:

> Hezbollah, with its multiple parallel identities as a major Lebanese political party, a quasi-army and a regional proxy actor, illustrates the blurred demarcation between state and non-state. In each of its identities, Hezbollah has undergone a significant transformation: a political transformation from a marginal political group into a party; a social transformation from a charity into a governance and social security apparatus; and a military transformation from a militia into a regional army and Lebanon's most sophisticated military force. Using

multilayered identities, the group has been able to develop parallel political discourses merging nationalism, sectarian politics, Pan-Islamism, and internationalism" and appeal to a broad audience "within Lebanon, the Shiite community at large, as well as in the Muslim World. (Kausch, 2017, 74).

Rather than the sharp contrast of traditional International Relations theory, there is a junction point emerging through the policies of Hezbollah that combine features of both state and non-state actors. According to Valensi (2015, p. 67), "Hezbollah challenges the dichotomy between a state and non-state actor. It constitutes an intermediate phenomenon which blurs the boundary between state actors and non-state actors and also illustrates non-linear organizational practices as a result of its multiple identities". The organization operates in the national order and recognizes the Lebanese political system.

In the last two decades, news agencies and publications of centres for strategic research around the Middle East have reported news about Hezbollah. There is news about the organization defining a wide range of subjects from its domestic status in Lebanon to its relations with Iran. The ideology of the institutions has led this news, their ties with pro-Hezbollah camp or their ways of reporting have changed through the conjuncture:

> A storm in Lebanon: Dozens of masked Hezbollah men are documented in nighttime operation to arrest drug dealers in Beirut; Opponents of the organization: This is what a country that has given up its authority in favour of the 'tiny state' looks like' (Ynetnews, 2017).

> Election of an ally of the Iran-backed group to the role of deputy speaker could give it more power. Hezbollah has strengthened its influence in Lebanon's parliament with the election of an ally of the Iran-backed group to the role of deputy speaker (Aljazeera, 2018).

Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite Muslim political party cum social movement and militia, famously provides its constituents with a wide array of social services (Cammet, 2014).

Hezbollah emerged strengthened from the Lebanese parliamentary elections on Monday, with preliminary results showing the party and its allies won just over half the seats. The Party of God, which is backed by Iran, made marginal gains in Lebanon's first parliamentary elections for nine years but has been boosted by the poor showing of its main rival, the Future Movement. Candidates supported by Hezbollah or allied to it gained in major cities, winning just over half the seats in parliament, according to final results from all but one of Lebanon's 15 electoral districts (Middle East Eye, 2018).

In the ten days since the start of the Israel Defense Forces aerial assault on Hezbollah, warplanes have attacked strategic targets within Lebanon, including bridges, major roads and the air and seaports. The Israeli government has stated repeatedly that its fight is not with the Lebanese people, but with the terrorist organization operating in the south part of the country. It says that it intends to significantly diminish the threat of Hezbollah and its six-year military build-up on the Israel-Lebanon border, which threatens Israeli towns and cities in the North (Haaretz, 2006).

Iran reportedly delivered GPS components to Hezbollah in Lebanon that will allow the group to transform rudimentary projectiles into precision-guided missiles, thereby increasing the threat to Israel. Western intelligence services believe Tehran has shifted its strategy by increasingly shipping weaponry directly to its proxy in Beirut, to evade Israeli airstrikes. The Israel Defense Forces have over the past two years conducted hundreds of attacks in Syria to prevent such arms deliveries (Jerusalem Post, 2018).

As can be seen, there are very diverse attitudes towards the organization that different works highlight different aspects of it. Hezbollah has become one of the most contested subjects in recent years. The quarter-century of Hezbollah in Lebanese politics witnessed the organization's a wide range of policies and actions. After the end of the civil war in Lebanon in 1990, its military wing was exempted from disarmament, while other militias were disarmed, and it was accepted as a resistance force against the Israeli occupation. In 1992, it joined

the legal, political processes in Lebanon and transformed into a political party seeking political support.

Furthermore, it has several ministers in the cabinet and can determine the president. In addition to its political and military identities, it is a social organization providing medical, financial, housing facilities and education for not only the Shiite population in Lebanon but also the other Lebanese citizens. It also has a media wing, which includes a TV channel (al-Manar), a radio station (al-Nour), a newspaper (al-Intiqad) and a website (Al-Ahed, 2013). Thanks to these media outlets, the Arab Spring process has displayed that the organization is beyond the Lebanese borders and has influence in the region.

Due to its that multi-dimensional structure, there are deficiencies in the assessments of Hezbollah. Firstly, studies covering Hezbollah usually use several terms, such as state-like, semi-state, terrorist organization, quasi-state or state within a state, to refer the organization, but they bring limited explanations while expressing the reasons behind their choice. Secondly, the structural conditions in the assessment of Hezbollah are not sufficiently analyzed. While defining Hezbollah, social, political and international dynamics that are influential on the identity construction of Hezbollah are overlooked. These studies overlook the hybrid nature of Hezbollah, which involves several characteristics including being a political party, a social organization, and an armed actor (Dingel, 2013, p. 70).

2.2.4. Hezbollah as a Regional Hybrid Actor

The multi-identity structure of the organization makes defining Hezbollah within a conceptual framework difficult. In this regard, while the

organization's involvement in the legal, political processes and transformation of its radical stance to moderation makes it a civic organization in Lebanon, its transboundary operation and efficiency highlight its hybrid identity. Especially after the 2006 War with Israel and its intervention in the civil war in Syria, Hezbollah's character transformed from a local resistance movement to a regional actor. The news, as mentioned earlier from several news agencies, shows the growing influence of Hezbollah both in the region and within Lebanese politics. It is one of the largest non-state providers of healthcare and social services. It establishes schools, which give education both to Muslims and non-Muslims. In addition to its gradual improvement as a driving force in Lebanon, it has become one of the political actors in the region. Due to the defence of Lebanon's territorial integrity and sovereignty against the Israeli aggression and its pre-emptive intervention in the civil war in Syria, Hezbollah also became a prominent actor in the Middle East. Its strengthening in Lebanon, emergence as a rival organization against the Lebanese state and involvement in domestic and regional affairs independent from the state made Hezbollah an autonomous actor rather than a non-state organization or a political party both in the local and region. Therefore, definition and analyze of Hezbollah as an actor became essential.

However, it is defined through classifications, each of which locates the organization to different archipelagos apart from each other. In other words, approaches defining Hezbollah tend to view the organization in isolation to island asunder from each other. They often exclude one or more aspects of the organization's complex structure. There have been contributions about Hezbollah that define it as a non-state actor that has an armed organization on

the one hand, and a political party participating in the legal, political processes in Lebanon, on the other side (Azani, 2009, pp. 47-48).

In the last decades, especially after the end of the Cold War, another function of states rather than governing and protecting their citizens emerged. Safeguarding the welfare of its citizens and providing a comfortable living standard have been other core state functions. Countries that cannot offer these for their citizens are targeted within the concept of humanitarian interventions. These states are called weak states or failed states. To provide these functions for their people, there are non-state organizations that emerged as a rival of countries in terms of using state functions. In the areas and fields, where states are unable to reach due to their weak structure and conditions, non-state organizations substitute the state. In this approach, Hezbollah is defined as a state-like entity. According to Deniz Baran (2018, p. 6), "the quality, quantity and scale of expected services and the welfare distribution mechanisms have changed" due to the conditions of states and non-state actors. Baran points the fragile structure of the Lebanese state and claims Hezbollah as an actor that is filling the deficiency of it. According to Baran (2018, p. 6). Hezbollah provides social welfare mechanisms and essential public services for people in some parts of Lebanon, where it is sturdy and has public support. In this way, it fulfils one of the core state functions. He uses Joel Migdal's definition of the state that emphasizes compliance, participation, legitimacy as the core functions of a country. Within this context, Baran defines a state as an entity controlling territory and people bounded by that territory, and actual practices of its several parts. He further claims that Hezbollah controls a piece of land in Lebanon, holds the monopoly of using force on that territory and provides security for people living on that

territory. In the end, he claims Hezbollah as a state-like entity: "Considering the history of Lebanon and the absence of the state in the eyes of its Shiite population, Hezbollah fits perfectly into this category of semi-state social entities" (Baran, 2018, p. 7).

Davis (2007, p. 3) claims that Hezbollah benefits from the fragile situation of the Lebanese state and aims to undertake a state-building process. Hezbollah seeks to dispossess the authority of the government and become the more reliable state-like entity within Lebanese borders. He argues that Hezbollah is in action to capture the state from inside: "Similar to the development of state entities in 17th century Europe, an organic process of centralizing control, monopolizing the means of coercion, and establishing a symbiotic relationship with the populace (in terms of taxation and service provision) is now occurring with some sub-state groups inside new states. In other words, sub-state groups are not just challenging state authority (as insurgent theory suggests) but are muscling-in on state resources and gaining domestic legitimacy by creating a viable alternative to the existing state. By creating a parallel state structure that fills the void left of the ineffective Lebanese state, Hezbollah can attract supporters, increase its political weight in the country, and effectively capture the state from the inside rather than taking it by force" (Davis, 2007, pp. 3-4).

Within this context, he defines Hezbollah as a 'state-building movement' (Davis, 2007, p. 11). He claims that Hezbollah already has state-like institutions such as an army to defend the Israeli attacks, a social organization to provide facilities for the Shiite and a complex organization structure to expand its power within Lebanon.

Tınas (2016, pp. 75-76) argues that "when a state is institutionally fragile and not sovereign as it is expected to be, a non-state actor can increase its political power and began to act similar to a country if it has the required capacity". Tınas claims that these kinds of non-state actors show quasi-state patterns. Within the context of Hezbollah, he points out that "a sectarian group refers that these confessional groups may carry out their own private foreign policy agenda in its relations with both states and non-state actors independent from formal inter-state relations. More clearly… a sectarian leader may act as a sovereign and autonomous player in international politics and initiated a very real foreign policy actions from regular meetings with foreign representatives to starting a war with a neighbouring country" (Tınas, 2016, p. 76).

Due to its armed forces, the organization can enforce a system of rules in the areas de facto controlled by itself. Furthermore, it provides a wide range of social and civil services better than the state. Hezbollah's position and policies in Lebanon indeed blurred the traditional understanding of separation between the state and society. However, its alleged state-like role has brought along the definition problems of them. On the one hand, it lacks international recognition, but, on the other hand, it has internal legitimacy, at least within its community and capacity to provide services. Within this context, Hezbollah can be defined neither as a de facto state, a state-like entity nor a quasi-state. De facto states are capable of providing social services for their people and have intentions for international recognition. However, they are not recognized by other countries. Quasi-states cannot also govern themselves. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has witnessed the situation mentioned above for years. There have been powerful non-state actors in many countries, and most of these countries are failed states or weak states.

Thanks to their power, armed non-state actors have political goals and aims to reach a broad social base and political legitimacy (Baran, 2018, p. 6). As a result, they challenge the authority of states and their monopoly over the use of force. Hezbollah is one of the best examples of this trend. However, it has no intention for independence. It emphasizes its Lebanese identity and its duty to protect the Lebanese territories from external threats, Israel as the historical enemy.

Some emphasize the socio-political role of the organization in Lebanon and define it as a Lebanese nationalist organization through assuming it an essential part for the development of the Shiite population (Hamzeh, 1993; Harik, 2004; Haddad, 2006; Norton 2007; Wiegand, 2009; El Husseini, 2010). There are two reasons for this argument. Firstly, Hezbollah is defined as a Shi'i political party in the Lebanese political system. Although it describes itself as a Lebanese actor, it is represented only through the votes of the Shiite. However, this does not mean that it cannot collaborate with other parties from other sects. It has an alliance with President Michel Aoun's party.

Secondly, the formation of the organization around the Shi'i school of thought and the Shi'i background of the Hezbollah leaders also causes the organization to be called Shiite (Abdul-Hussein, 2009). Hezbollah is based on the Shi'i understanding of Islam. It shares the "unfortunate" heritage of Shiite history and refers to it in its policies. The discourses of Karbala and Ashura represent justified resistance to injustice and oppression, and to ensure that Hezbollah fighters gain an enthusiastic and passionate motivation against their enemies.

However, new policies of Hezbollah and its transformation from a radical marginal group to a Lebanese political party through the Lebanonization

display that describing Hezbollah as a party of one sect is a contradictive issue. Hezbollah is historically an outcome of the Shiite population's politicization and radicalization process within the Lebanese social and political life. Its main base is the Shiite population in Lebanon. However, it defines itself as a Lebanese political party and claims its non-sectarian stance. Joining in legal processes motivated Hezbollah to change its discourse and priorities as the party became one of the major players in the public sphere. Hezbollah has evolved into an ordinary political party with an extensive network of social services provided to Muslims and Christians and participated in legal, political processes including parliamentary, municipal elections and governmental works. Within the context of infitah, Hezbollah attempted to open dialogue with the Lebanese Christians. There have been reciprocal visits. Hezbollah gave places to the Christians and Sunnis in its lists of candidates before elections. Against this background, without stigmatizing the organization with the tag of sectarianism, Hezbollah can be defined as a Lebanese political party, whose legislative power is dependent on the Shiite votes, but claims its Lebanese roots rather than Shi'i identity.

Some position the organization within the boundaries of a legal island through emphasizing its participation in Lebanese political processes since the early 1990s, some jail it to an island of terrorism through ignoring its Lebanese identity and defining it as a terrorist organization and take its fight against Israel as the only research of means. There are suspicions about Hezbollah's military wing. Even though some states, including the US, Canada, Australia and Israel accept Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, Gulf countries and the EU define only the military wing of the organization as a terrorist actor. Hezbollah's rhetoric supports such views that it describes the US as the Great

Satan and Israel as a cancerous entity. There have been several attacks of Hezbollah against western and Israeli targets around the world that caused claims of the organization's making terrorism. As Krista Wiegand (2009, p. 669) claims when a westerner thinks about Hezbollah, the suicide bombings, kidnappings, and hijackings of the 1980s, and the war with Israel come to his/her mind. That is almost the same in the Middle East, and some are believing that Hezbollah is a terrorist organization in Lebanon.

Some, on the other hand, positions the organization in an "island of abundance" defining all of its domestic and international features together (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002; Harb and Leenders 2005; El-Hokayem 2007; Saouli 2011; Azani 2013; Knio 2013). For instance, Olivier Roy (2008, p. 103) claims that Hezbollah is a religion-oriented party representing Shi'i population in Lebanon, a Lebanese nationalist party acting in legal, political processes, an armed organization struggling against Israeli occupation to protect the territorial integrity of Lebanon, and a part of the axis of resistance allying with Syria and Iran against the US and Israel. These scholars tried to combine these elements of the organization in various forms.

Furthermore, some positions the organization in an Iranian island that define it as a proxy agent of Iran (Deeb, 2013; Lewitt, 2015; Akbarzadeh, 2016; Friedman, 2018). Hezbollah is often described as an Iran-backed fundamentalist organization or an Iranian proxy guarding Iranian interests in the region. Matar and Khatib claim that "Hezbollah is a late-twentieth-century phenomenon, the outcome of a series of socio-historical and political junctures marked by domestic political upheaval and regional conflicts. It is ideologically and politically connected to Iran, and its capabilities, weaponry

and operations are influenced by Iranian patronage. It also has long-term strategic links with Syria, which has acted as a conduit for the supply of arm and personnel from Iran" (Matar and Khatib, 2014, p. 1).

Although many studies point to the necessity of studying Hezbollah within the Iranian context, top officials of the organization usually claim the Lebanese roots and identity of the organization. Although they accept Iran's ideological support and leadership, they underline Hezbollah's Lebaneseness. According to Lucic (2009, p. 79), statements of Hezbollah officials that point the Lebanese identity of the organization are populist and incorrect. He claims that Hezbollah is politically, financially and ideologically supported by Iran, which makes it proxy of and dependent on that state:

> Hezbollah was conceived thanks to Iran. It directly resembles the operational, ideological, structural, and political standards that were put forth by the Iranian Islamic Revolution. Its fundamental executive capacities and decision-making have been exposed to and affected by the Iranian government since the Iranian Supreme leadership (which at the time of Hezbollah's foundation was headed by the Grand Ayatollah Khomeini) have had the final word on the crucial matters of the Party (Lucic, 2009, p. 79).

Similarly, John Simpson (1988, pp. 90-94) alleges that the Lebanese Hezbollah is a branch of the Iranian Hezbollah. He claims that Iran established Hezbollah in Lebanon to use in the global Islamic revolution and for the sake of the Iranian foreign and international strategic goals. Hala Jaber (1997) also points Iran's backing of Hezbollah and the Iranian influence in the formation of the organization.

Declaring an actor as a proxy of another actor is "used to delegitimize and criminalize one's enemies, in much the same way the terrorism label is used"

(Saad, 2019, p. 629). In this sense, usage of proxy is equated to making terrorism or being the sponsor of terrorism. When the US and its allies take Hezbollah-Iran relations into the scope of security and terrorism, they invite/create Hezbollah as an Iranian agent. On the other hand, they leave the 14 March Movement, which receives foreign aid both economically and politically, Saudi Arabia, which President Donald Trump claimed for being unable to exist without the US support and assistance, and Israel, who receives a sizeable military aid from the US, out of this scope (Saad, 2019, p. 629).

Despite the characterizations of the organization, there are difficulties in defining Hezbollah. As mentioned above, Hezbollah is such an organism that has several branches. In other words, there is no kind of Hezbollah but Hezbollahs. It is challenging to make a differentiation between the Hezbollah as an armed organization, the one as a Lebanese social and political actor, and the one as a liberating force fighting with the Syrian regime against the opposition since 2013 because all of them represent distinctive dimensions of the organization. In an interview with the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), Daniel Byman defines Hezbollah as a prominent organization that can do multiple things quite effectively: "It is a very skilled terrorist group, it's a very formidable guerilla organization, it's the most powerful single political movement in Lebanon, and it's a large social provider" (Byman, 2008).

Equating Hezbollah to a political party seeking for popular support or to a terrorist organization like Al Qaeda overlooks the substantial role of Hezbollah both in Lebanon and in the region (Early, 2006, p. 115). On the other side, equating the organization to internationally unrecognized states such as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh,

or Abkhazia is also controversial. It is why constructing bridges among the archipelagos is needed to study Hezbollah.

As a reliable provider of infrastructure, employment, and political representation for the Lebanese Shiite, the most powerful armed group among the Lebanese multi-confessional system and the only resistance movement in Lebanon, Hezbollah is a militant sub-state group that poses a significant puzzle for international relations (Davis, 2007, p. 2). However, an institutional understanding of Hezbollah is needed beyond presuppositions. What Is Hezbollah? Is it a state within a state, a pseudo-state, a quasi-state? Does it have ambitions to be an independent state, or is it satisfied to be an autonomous organization in Lebanon? There have been scholars who studied Hezbollah within the boundaries of different archipelagos. In this part, this study will cover the assessments of these scholars and analyze their handling of the issue.

In this dissertation, I define Hezbollah as an RHA and propose that Hezbollah follows a double-edged policy against (1) the Lebanese public and actors in Lebanon and (2) external threats like Israel and the Syrian opposition, or the takfiris, out of the Lebanese territory. In the boundaries of Lebanon, Hezbollah highlights its role as a non-state actor that it participates in the political processes, provides social welfare and defines itself as a Lebanese political party. After it initiated the "Lebanonization" process in the early 1990s and military victory after Israel retreated from the Lebanese territories in 2000, "Hezbollah decreased the reliance on terrorist tactics and turned into a status-quo actor" (Samaan, 2017, pp. 163-164). Although it still has arms within Lebanon, the organization needed to avoid jeopardizing its armed role in

Lebanon. Otherwise, it would endanger its achievements as a Lebanese political party and resistance movement in the Lebanese political structure, among the Lebanese people and before the international powers.

Against the external threats out of Lebanon, it plays the role of armed actor. It claims its part of the resistance to protect the Lebanese nation and territory. While it supports the maintenance of the status quo at least for a while in Lebanon and highlights its Lebanese identity within this context, it emerges as a challenging armed actor out of the Lebanese frame. In both of the policies, it benefits from Lebanon's weak state structure and aims to strengthen or to protect, its position within the Lebanese political life. In this context, it emphasizes its roles as a Lebanese actor and protector of Lebanon.

As a result of their complex structures and characteristics, a definition of an RHA is challenging to make. However, there are several characteristics of armed non-state actors similar to RHAs. Hezbollah is usually defined as an armed non-state actor, which causes contradictions between concepts. Therefore, firstly, it is important to define the concept of armed non-state actor, and then, explain the weaknesses of this concept to use for Hezbollah.

According to Hofmann and Schneckener (2011, pp. 604-605), armed non-state actors are autonomous non-state actors that have the willingness to use force to realize their purposes, and an external force usually supports them. They use force as a means of their objectives. They have the willingness to use arms when they feel themselves threatened. An armed non-state actor is an independent organization that it is an unwillingness to disarm and integrate into state institutions. In other words, they singly have an autonomous structure separate from the state's regular army and legal security forces. As a

result of their political and military independence from other parties and groups, they also have a certain degree of autonomy concerning politics, military operations, resources, and infrastructure.

There would be an external actor, either secretly or openly, supporting or using the armed non-state actors as a means of a power struggle to destabilize its rivals. Furthermore, there would be a state officially helping the armed non-state actors to get political or financial gains and ideological reasons. However, their non-state character would be an attractive feature:

> (…) despite close relationships with state actors, these groups can still be seen as non-state actors since they are not under full state control. On the contrary, they may be attractive for some government agencies precisely because of their non-state character (Hofmann and Schneckener, 2011, p. 605).

According to Daniel Byman (2008, p. 315), a central government's inability to satisfy the population's needs may result in groups including the armed non-state actors' emerging and empowerment. For instance, Yeşiltaş and Kardaş (2018, p. 4) claim that the number of Salafist-jihadists non-state organizations from 2010 to 2013 increased by 58% due to a significant decline in governance capacities in the Middle East and North Africa. The presence of non-state actors is directly challenging the nature of states and have strategic balances between regional countries in the Middle East. Although the number and influences of non-state actors increased notably after the Arab Spring and the civil war in Syria, they have been a fact and severe security problems for state authorities in the region long before the Arab Spring.

The term of non-state actor is a large concept that includes diverse types of non-state organizations and armed actors. When using this concept, one

defines different actors with the same name. It is a loosely defined concept that "includes multinational corporations, terrorist groups, criminal syndicates, liberation movements, and many other types of entities" (Cambanis et. al., 2019, p. 7). For instance, both any armed group and Greenpeace are defined as non-state actors. Although the former is an armed violent actor and the latter is a social organization, both are explored within the frame of the concept of non-state actor. This shows that there is a need for a new definition that directly refers to armed actors in order to diverse them from other non-state organizations. The term, armed non-state actor, emerges as a practical definition to separate non-state organizations and armed non-state actors. However, armed non-state actor is still insufficient to compete with armed non-state actors. Different from many armed non-state actors, Hezbollah has features of a state-like entity, a political party engaging in legal political processes, a legitimate part of government, and a social movement. It is therefore more feasible to define Hezbollah as a hybrid actor. As a result of its transnational activities in the region and capacity to influence the regional politics, it should also be defined as a regional actor. According to Cambanis et.al. (2019, pp. ix-x), a hybrid actor is an agent that sometimes operates in accordance or compete with states, hinges on sponsor states, and operates similar to states while has flexibilities of being a non-state actor. Hezbollah has no claims for independence from Lebanon but acts as a non-state organization that provides economic, social and cultural welfare for the Lebanese citizens and protect Lebanon from external threats and enemies while fulfilling several strategic imperatives of regional power.

Hezbollah has been operating both in Lebanon and in the region almost for 40 years as an armed organization and non-state actor. It continues its existence

with claims of protecting Lebanon from external threats as a Lebanese actor and opposing Israel's aggressions. Its policies towards Israel locate it to a counterpart position against Israel, or Hezbollah-Israel confrontation, rather than an Israel-Lebanon one. In this respect, it should be asked how dialogue may occur between two sides, one side (Hezbollah) is not recognized by the other. The dialogue can occur between Israel and Lebanon as the threatened and sanctuary states, but the Hezbollah case has features independent from the sanctuary state's control that requires to define Hezbollah as a Lebanese regional hybrid actor.

In this regard, Hezbollah is defined as an RHA in this dissertation. Hybrid actors arises through several reasons. Eroded state structures is a factor that causes emergence of hybrid actors. As the failed state structures disable the governments to take decision and apply, hybrid actors fill the gap and create parallel state institutions. Civil wars are influential elements in emergence of hybrid actors. They benefit from both the power vacuum and political legacy of civil wars. Interventions of foreign powers rises the power of hybrid actors that political, financial and logistical needs of them can be provided by an external force. Instrumentalization of ideologies and identities is the last factor that accelerates emergence of hybrid actors. Ideologies and regional or sectarian identities politically feed the actors and garnish them with legitimizing features.

Characteristics of Hezbollah as an RHA include nine factors. Firstly, it uses the incapability and lack of the Lebanese government to increase its legitimacy and support among the population. Hybrid actors, on the one hand, are involved in state institutions and participate in legal political processes. On

the other hand, they build parallel institutions to state. During the inability of the state to satisfy the population's needs results in Hezbollah's emerging to provide assistance and resources that the state desperately needs and work as a shadow of the state. Different from other armed non-state actors that appear and gain popularity during weaknesses and turbulence of host countries and aim to challenge the state through force and direct combat against the state, Hezbollah, whose armed force is recognized by the Lebanese state as a resistance force, enters into legal, political processes and claims to use violence only to protect Lebanon.

Secondly, hybrid actors participate in domestic and international legal political processes including negotiations, diplomacy, wars, and propaganda activities. Hezbollah enters into relations in inter-state level and challenges the Lebanese state's capacity, security, and legitimacy. While representing itself as a Lebanese actor to protect Lebanon, it acts independently from the Lebanese state against the external threats, which highlights its armed feature. It instrumentalizes its interests as the interest of all Lebanon.

Thirdly, it aims to disentangle regional security complexes and challenge the regional balance of power. It seems that Hezbollah involved in the civil war in Syria as a Lebanese, domestic actor, but it won the game in the Syrian territories, which assured its decisive role as a regional actor. According to Frazier and Stewart-Ingersoll (2012, pp. 69-75 cited in Saad, 2019, p. 642), regional actors should be able to lead/direct other actors in specific policies through securitization of an external threat. Hezbollah fulfils this criterion that it succeeded in Iran's militarily involvement in the civil war in Syria against the increasing takfiri thereat. Protecting the home country and existing

position in Lebanon still stays as the priority of Hezbollah. Although there have been claims defining Hezbollah as an Iranian proxy and representing the Iranian interests in the region, the Lebanese identity of the organization is the most used discourse in the regional affairs. However, with its "tens of thousands of battle-hardened fighters, military prowess, and successes against both Israel and jihadi groups in Syria and Lebanon", it transforms into a regional player (Saad, 2019, p. 640).

Fourthly, hybrid actors behave more careful in relations with other actors and usually pay attention to the international norms. "The armed non-state actors challenge the international society of states and hasten globalization's dark side by attacking soft targets through exploitation and subversion of the hard-won, centuries-old norms of international and global society using a variety of tools from suicide bombings to developing weapons of mass destruction" (Yeşiltaş & Kardaş, 2018, p. 5). On the other hand, Hezbollah, as a hybrid actor, has been careful to refer the international norms. It has related to international rules including sovereignty, territoriality and independence from the 2006 War with Israel to the civil war in Syria. Although there have been claims offending Hezbollah because of using international norms in behalf of its interests, its assertion of doing these as a Lebanese actor and for the sake of Lebanon's security differs it from other armed non-state actors.

Fifthly, hybrid actors provide security for certain regions in the country. If it becomes successful, it gains legitimacy on the eyes of people. Hezbollah has a monopoly in the use of force in certain regions in Lebanon. Lebanese national forces has no intention to intervene in these areas without Hezbollah's information and permission (Cambanis et.al., 2019, p. 47). Hezbollah formed

its own intelligence service in addition to the security apparatus. "For Hezbollah's constituents inside Lebanon, the party's security apparatus has brought dividends. Members of Hezbollah's community enjoy a curtain of protection that makes them less susceptible to violence or extortion from members of rival communities. It also entitles them to a greater share of government patronage or immunity from government rules" (Cambanis et.al., 2019, p. 47).

Sixthly, hybrid actors have economic self-sufficiency. They provide basic social needs of citizens. In the case of Hezbollah, providing social aids has been one of the sources of its legitimacy in the eyes of people. From health to social needs, Hezbollah has been working as a parallel state to the Lebanese state.

Seventhly, hybrid actors seek to be a part of governments or states because of two reasons. Firstly, becoming a part of governments enables the actors to reach financial, judicial and political resources. Secondly, as the polls held in several countries in the Middle East displayed, people wants to be governed by a state, not a sub-state of hybrid actor. In this regard, hybrid actors use states and state institutions as instruments to influence citizens (Cambanis et.al., 2019, p. 14). In the case of Hezbollah, the organization is careful about being a part of the government. Since its participation in the legal political processes in Lebanon enables the organization to retain keeping its arms. Otherwise, its labelling as a terrorist organization will be more in sight (Dingel, 2013, p. 75).

Eightly, according to Cambanis et.al. (2019, p. 1), while a proxy-non state actor acts under direct control of a sponsor, it lacks to develop domestic support. In addition, proxy actors mostly rely on security issues and have proxy-patron

relationship with an external power. On the other hand, hybrid actors have domestic support. They are able to operate ideological, social and political functions as well as the security issues. While proxies follow the directions of patron states, different from the proxies, hybrid actors have a more autonomous structure of decision-making processes. Domestic developments sometimes force hybrid actors "to deviate from or reinterpret their patron's demands" (Cambanis et.al., 2019, p. 16). Although there are studies define Hezbollah as a proxy of Iran, different from proxies, Hezbollah has a more autonomous decision-making structure. Security issues are not the only priority of the organization.

Lastly, despite the armed non-state actors depend on brutal nature of violence and specific belief structures and need to legitimize the use of violent means for drawing moral and material support, violence and using force is not the only options for Hezbollah. It is also a political party seeking for political purposes and joining elections for popular support. Legitimization as a Lebanese political party, constructing belief structures and ideologies are necessary for Hezbollah to maintain its power and mobilize its identity. These features enable the organization to act both as an armed and non-state actor in the Lebanese and regional contexts.

2.3. Robert Putnam and Two-Level Game Analysis

In his seminal work on two-level game theory, Robert Putnam focuses on the bargaining processes during negotiations and the interactions between domestic and international during these processes. Inter-state negotiations are considered dual in nature, and they are led by both international and domestic concerns (Draege, 2016, p. 190). Putnam points out that negotiation processes

are not interviews or meetings between state officials and their foreign counterparts.

> They also had to negotiate/bargain with their domestic constituencies. The international game could easily be constrained by the domestic game(s) just as the nature of international negotiations could influence the way in which domestic audiences evaluated the international bargaining process (Ganguly and Thompson, 2011, p. 195).

In this context, he asserts two levels of politics, one of which refers to the international, or Level I, and the other to the national, or Level II in his model of two-level games. He emphasizes the influence of domestic politics over negotiation processes and the role of negotiating states, which are constrained domestically. International negotiations are products of overlaps among national and international 'exchanges', or two levels. Level I refers to bargaining between negotiators representing states. At this level, governments seek to satisfy domestic pressures while limiting the harmful impacts of international developments (Trumbore, 1998, p. 546). Level II refers to the local audience or constituents. At this level, domestic groups pressure the government to adopt policies they favour while politicians seek power by building coalitions among these constituents (Trumbore, 1998, p. 546). According to Putnam (1988, p. 434), "at the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favourable policies, and the politicians seek power by constructing coalitions among these groups. At the international level, national governments seek to maximize their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures, while minimizing the adverse consequences of international developments". Decisions taken in negotiations in Level I should be voted and ratified in Level II. In other words, to accept

decisions, decision-makers should seek to 'sell' the decisions taken in Level I to the domestic audience in Level II.

2.3.1. Win-Sets

Putnam (1988, p. 437) introduces "win-sets for a given Level II constituency as the set of all possible Level I agreements that would 'win' (gain the necessary majority among the constituents) when simply voted up or down". In this sense, a "win-set" can be defined as a state's room for "manoeuvre" both in domestic and international politics that with fewer constraints what it can demand, offer and realize.[2] Agreements are possible only if win-sets in Level II are favourable to the negotiations in Level I. Several factors determine the size of win-sets. Helen Milner (1997, p. 11) points interests, institutions and information as the factors influential on the determination of win-sets. Referring almost the same elements, Putnam argues that "win-sets" are dependent on the distribution of power, preferences, possible coalitions among Level II constituencies and alliances in the domestic (1), Level II political institutions (2) and strategies of Level I negotiators (3) (Putnam, 1988, pp. 441-442).

Firstly, the formation of Level II constituencies affect the size of the 'win-sets'. "For example, the lower the cost of "no-agreement" to constituents, the smaller the "win set". "Some constituents may face low costs from no-agreement, and others high costs, and the former will be more skeptical of Level I agreements

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[2] Thomas Schelling introduced a similar usage of win-sets in his study, *The Strategy of Conflict*, in 1960. According to Schelling, the domestic support to the negotiator or the leader provides an advantage to him/her in international bargaining processes. In other words, it means that while size of win-sets influence the outcomes of agreements in Putnam's approach, it is domestic support that gives advantages to the negotiator in Schelling's contributions.

than the latter" (Putnam, 1988, p. 442). Level II constituencies are political parties, interest groups, public opinion and media. Political parties make a public commitment to policy and in return, public votes for them. Interest groups pressure governments to pursue their interests. In return, governments construct coalitions with them. Media is also an important factor that explains its policy preferences and affects the decisions of the governments and the public. Public opinion is highly related to these three factors.

According to Putnam, several notions help to measure policy preferences. One is the "no-agreement" condition. If a domestic group believes that the international agreement will not influence its members, the impact of "no-agreement" will be limited for them (X_3 in Table 1) (Nakamura, 2007, p. 169). Other notions are "isolationists" and "internationalists". While the former refers to the groups opposing international agreements, the latter represents the supporters of agreements.

Table 1: Win-Set Sizes

Table 1: An Analysis of Win-Set Sizes as a Determinant of International Agreements
It is a modified version of Putnam's win-set formation by Toshiya Nakamura (2007, p. 168).

X and Y are the contracting states;

X_M: The maximum outcomes for X.

X_1: The minimal outcomes that could be ratified by X.

X_2: A possible win-set for X that requires a larger majority for ratification.

X_3: A possible win-set for X that requires unanimity for ratification.

Y_M: The maximum outcomes for Y.

Y_1: The minimal outcomes that could be ratified by Y.

Secondly, political institutions in Level II affect the size of "win-sets". Political institutions are defined as a set of rules that regulate social interactions and provide mechanisms shared by the public to preserve security for society (Knight, 1992, pp. 2-3). They are socially accepted constraints or rules shaping human relations and state institutions (Milner, 1997, p. 18). According to Putnam, political institutions are composed of institutional arrangements, ratification processes and political practices, which are very related to decision-making processes. The institutional arrangement is the degree of chief negotiator's autonomy from domestic constraints. In other words, it means the formation of domestic pressure through the veto, referendum and agenda settings against the government. If governments have considerable autonomy from these domestic constraints, they have more chances to achieve an international agreement or *vice versa*. Ratification is defined as a formal voting procedure at Level II. Putnam uses the term to refer to any decision process at Level II that is needed to endorse or apply an agreement concluded at Level I. The only constraint on the ratification is the necessity of voting and agreeing on. Type of ratification procedures (whether it is done through an absolute majority or qualified majority) influences the size of 'win-sets'. The greater autonomy of central decision-makers from their Level II constituents enables a larger 'win-set' that opens the door of achievement of agreements. In other words, if the required votes for the ratification increase, win-sets get smaller, and the completion of international agreements becomes harder. "Political processes mean the strong discipline within the party that enables the leader or the chief negotiator to be more powerful and provide support of constituents behind" (Nakamura, 2007, p. 172).

Thirdly, the 'win-set' size of a Level I negotiator influences his/her conclusion of an international agreement. The larger the "win-set" of the negotiator means, the more easily an agreement can be concluded. On the other hand, it can weaken his bargaining position.

"The relative size of the respective Level II win-sets will affect the distribution of the joint gains from the international bargains" (Putnam, 1988, p. 440). The smaller the "win-set" means, the higher the risk that the negotiations will break down, ceteris paribus (Putnam, 1988, p. 438). As overlap of Level I and Level II is aimed, the development of greater 'win-sets' in Level II increases the possibility of approval of Level I agreements. On the other hand, smaller 'win-sets' in Level II have a bargaining advantage in Level I that the statesman can perform a more effective bargaining process by stating that s/he may only access domestic support pertaining to a limited number of policies. As Putnam (1988, p. 440) claims:

> The larger the perceived win-set of a negotiator, the more he can be pushed around by the other Level I negotiators. Conversely, a small domestic win-set can be a bargaining advantage: "I'd like to accept your proposal, but I could never get it accepted at home (Putnam, 1988, p. 440).

In Level I, the smaller "win-set" enhances the influence of the statesmen, or the chief negotiators, on the domestic public through influencing them to take what is available as the potential of getting more may not be assured internationally. On the other side, the larger 'win-set' may influence the bargaining power of domestic constituents.

As the negotiation in Level I only can be obligatory if it is ratified in Level II, the importance of structures of Level II political institutions, distribution of power among them and ratification procedures arise. If 2/3 of votes are

required for ratification of an agreement, "win-set" will be smaller than if only a simple majority is needed. In addition, the autonomy of central decision-makers from their Level II constituents also affects the size of "win-sets": The higher the autonomy, the larger 'win-sets' and the more chance to achieve agreement.

2.3.2. Negotiations and Negotiators

The roles and strategies of the statesmen, or the chief negotiators, are central points in Putnam's model. Putnam (1988, p. 438) assumes the negotiators as heads of governments representing nations, for example, or labour and management representatives, or party leaders in a multi-party coalition, or a finance minister negotiating with an IMF team, or leaders of a House-Senate conference committee, or ethnic group leaders in a consociational democracy. According to Putnam (1988, p. 456), the chief negotiator, or statesman, is the only formal link between Level I and Level II. The two-level game approach asserts the statesmen strategically positioned around two tables, one representing domestic affairs and the other international ones (Moravcsik, 1993, p. 4). Around these tables, the statesmen bargain to reach an agreement that overlaps with both national goals and international interests. The larger 'win-set' of negotiator in Level I (in other words, his/her chance to 'sell' the agreement in Level I to his constituents in domestic), the more easily s/he can reach an agreement. Preferences of the chief negotiator may diverge from the constituents in domestic. Thus, the chief negotiator acts through three motivations: enhancing his standing in the Level II by increasing his political resources and minimizing potential losses, shifting balance of power in order to enable themselves to do what they wish but are powerless domestically,

pursuing their conceptions of the national interest in the international context (Putnam, 1988, p. 457). According to Putnam, there are also uncertainties in bargaining and bargaining tactics. Level I negotiators are often misinformed about Level II politics of opposing sides. These have influences on the course of negotiations, and negotiations are open to the public.

2.4. Chapter Conclusion

This chapter along with the questions regarding Hezbollah's identity looked at the interaction between domestic and international and defined Hezbollah as an RHA in looking at Putnam's two level game theory. It looked at how Putnam put forward win-sets to explain international negotiations to the public. How international negotiations held by the states can be applied to an RHA through win-sets was examined in this context. As explained in the introduction chapter, this thesis borrows win-sets from Putnam's two level game approach to explain Hezbollah.

Interaction between domestic and foreign policies and the influence of the international within states have been a common subject in the literature on international relations. Although the primacy of foreign policy has challenged especially since the end of the Cold War, there has been a one-way emphasize on the mutual relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy that the former is believed to affect the developments in the latter. As a result of this, there are limited sources about the influence of the foreign on the domestic politics and evolution of strategies of domestic actors. However, the literature on this issue hints at the precedence of states over non-state actors.

Differences between non-state actors and states have also been fuzzy in recent years. Essentials of statehood and de facto conditions of existing states elaborate on the traditional understanding of statehood. Due to the increasing influence of globalization on the states, significant developments challenging the state's authority such as internal troubles, civil wars, poverty and structural problems, states are no longer able to realize their jurisdiction. They become unable to provide security, wealth, infrastructure and fundamental need for their citizens. The territorial sovereignty of states gets worse that states become unable to protect their boundaries. These states are called failed states or weak states. Non-state organizations emerge within these states and substitute the role of states. As they provide basic need and security for citizens, they get strong among the public. As a result, they emerge as actors challenging the role of states and become a competitor.

However, Hezbollah has a unique structure, which differs the organization from other non-state actors, which is the reason why the organization is defined as an RHA in this study. This chapter has shown the difficulties and different views on studying Hezbollah. Setting Hezbollah as an RHA will lead the reader in the following chapters of this dissertation in three ways: It will help to comprehend the rationale behind Hezbollah's intervention in the civil war in Syria (1), understanding the need for a distinction between Hezbollah's policies in national and international levels (2), and the significance of Hezbollah's foreign policy in Syria and its reflections in the domestic politics (3).

As the Hezbollah case demonstrates, a non-state actor can establish higher authority over a part of territory and population within an existing state, gain

political legitimacy and challenge authority of the country (Baran, 2018, p. 12). While it convinces a significant part of the Lebanese public to provide security and economic and social assistance, it emphasizes its territorial identity. Although the state has a monopoly over the use of force, it keeps its arms and challenges the state authority. Within this context, it has foreign support which provides power to challenge the state apparatus. Although Hezbollah has the willingness to act independently from its external supporter, Iran, in Lebanon, the Iranian support plays a vital role in Hezbollah's emerging as a competitor to the Lebanese state (Jaber, 1997). However, Hezbollah plays a double-edged game against the Lebanese public on the one hand, and the external threats, on the other side. Especially after the civil war in Syria, the developments in Syria reflected in the Lebanese politics relating to Hezbollah's standing and relations with other Lebanese groups. As a result of constraints on studying Hezbollah (since it displays state-like reflections but does not fully fulfill the characteristics of a state), this chapter borrowed from Putnam's two-level game approach. In this regard, it aimed to explain the influence of Hezbollah's foreign operations in Syria on its strategies and practices in Lebanon. In this way, this chapter claims to explain the influence of foreign policy on domestic politics through analyzing actions of a non-state actor.

CHAPTER 3

POLITICIZATION/RADICALIZATION OF THE SHIA COMMUNITY AND CREATION OF HEZBOLLAH IN LEBANON: A CHRONOLOGICAL RESEARCH

This chapter will evaluate the historical process in Lebanon that began with the end of the Ottoman rule in the late 1800s to the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2010. As the trajectory of Hezbollah's establishment and its transformation from a radical organization to a "moderate" Lebanese political actor is based on the challenges in Lebanese history in the 19th and 20th centuries, it will discuss the chain of events in the radicalization and politicization of the Lebanese Shia. According to Matar and Khatib (2014, p. 1), "Hezbollah is a late 20th-century phenomenon, the outcome of series of socio-historical and political junctures marked by domestic political upheaval and regional conflicts". It is critical to look at Lebanese history, the transformations that actors underwent, and developments they witnessed in the 19th and 20th centuries to understand Hezbollah's policies in Lebanon and Syria today. This chapter comprises several parts dealing with the pathway going to the formation of Hezbollah and its transformation within this context. In this respect, it will evaluate Lebanese history from the late Ottoman periods to the eve of the Syrian civil war chronologically. This chapter is composed of eight parts in addition to the introduction and conclusion parts. The first part will argue the political conjuncture in Lebanon regarding the Ottoman past and French mandate in the pre-1943 period. The second part will explain the

1940s and the formation of the National Pact in 1943. The third part will discuss the period between the post-National Pact and the Lebanese civil war in 1975. The fourth part will discuss the emergence of the Lebanese civil war. It will explain the domestic and international influences on the formation of opposite parties. Hezbollah's emergence as a militia will be discussed in this part. The fifth part will explain Hezbollah's international relations with Iran and Syria. The sixth part will argue the Taif period between the end of the civil war in 1989. The seventh part will include the post-Taif period developments in Lebanon between 1990 and 2000. This part will consist of Hezbollah's moderation policy and decision to join the legal, political processes in the early 1990s. The last part will tackle the developments in the 2000s until the beginning of Arab uprisings in the early months of 2010.

3.1. Towards an Independent Lebanon: The Pre-1943 Period

According to Abboud and Muller (2012, p. 2), any discussion on Lebanon must be considered within the historical context of Lebanese politics dating back to the civil war in 1860. In this respect, the path going to the radicalization of the Shia in Lebanon and the emergence of Hezbollah should date back to Lebanon during the late Ottoman period.

During the Ottoman rule, the Mount Lebanon region was divided into two separate bodies in 1843. These were under the administration of the two largest religious communities in terms of population: The Druze and Maronites. One of these communities, which had more population in both regions, was the ruler. However, unlike the Druze, the Maronite had the right to open their institutions on the grounds of the privilege granted to non-Muslim communities by the *millet* system in the Ottoman Empire. Christian

communities benefiting from this privilege also engaged in commercial activities by establishing relations with Europeans which resulted in the empowerment of Christian communities.

On the other hand, Europeans, especially France, supported them on commercial and religious affiliations. However, the dissatisfaction emerged after the increasing taxes in the region, the intervention of European states in the Levant and the attempts to transform Mount Lebanon both socially and economically. The extreme empowerment of the elite caused discontent and riots in the society. As a result, a civil war started in 1860. The French and Ottomans intervened in the region in 1861. France's intervention caused development and gaining influence of political sectarianism that it assisted the Christian Maronites and operated in favour of them.

After the civil war, a new system of governorship called *mutasarrafiye* was built in the region in 1861. As a result of this system, four Maronite, three Druze, two Greek Orthodox, one Greek Catholic, one Sunni and one Shiite were appointed representatives to the administrative council. Thus, the foundations of the confessional system formed according to the populations of sectarian identities. As a result of this system, the representation power of the Maronite Christians and consequently their social, political and economic effects have increased. According to Samir Khalaf (1979, p. 126), *mutasarrafiye* was established as a factor that would solve internal problems and initiate one of the most prolonged periods of political stability in Lebanese history. With this structure, a painful and vital transformation process started in Lebanese society. Mount Lebanon has been administratively reorganized, and new constitutional and geographical arrangements have been made. In addition to

the developments in infrastructure, the development of agriculture, industry, education and bureaucracy has been encouraged. These regulations brought social, economic and cultural changes in society. The feudal economy declined, urbanization and literacy increased, and differences between religious groups became more pronounced. This situation resulted in the deepening of the problems among the sectarian groups in the following years.

Although the *mutasarrafiye* was a step towards strengthening the administration, it could not affect the strength of feudal ties. Mount Lebanon, for example, continued to be a place where many communities lived together rather than a unified political structure. For many years, the communal ties reinforced by lineage differences, consciousness, inter-community marriages have survived (Khalaf, 1979, p. 129). The influence of the feudal lords, *zuama*, maintained to be leading on the Lebanese society. According to Dekmejian (1975, p. 12), there are four characteristics of *zuama*: having a central political power in a particular region (1), having economic power (2), having social prestige due to family ties or reputation (3), and the ability to influence a group or use it according to their interests (4).

The Maronites have always maintained that they were the real owners of Mount Lebanon. They also received support from Europe in their claims. For example, the independence attempts of Yousef Karam between 1873 and 1877 were supported by the French (Khalaf, 1979, pp. 130-131). Similarly, there were revolts against *mutasarrafiye* under the leadership of the clergy, Butrus Bustani and Yousef Dibs. Other groups in Lebanon did not support these independence and autonomy initiatives organized by the Maronites. The split in public opinion manifested itself in the different responses to the conflict in

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the leading newspapers. For example, Sunni and Greek Orthodox publications supported the *mutasarrafiye* against the Maronites (Khalaf, 1979, p. 131).

With the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, the Levant was shared between Britain and France. Lebanon remained within the domain of France. The San Remo Conference in 1920 provided France with the right of establishing a mandate over Lebanon, and the Lebanese State was proclaimed in 1920 by General Henri Gouraud, the first High Commissioner of the French mandate over Syria and Lebanon (Shanahan, 2005, p. 29). In addition to Mount Lebanon, the boundaries of this state encompassed coastal cities such as Beirut, Sidon, Tire, Tripoli and Marjyun and inland areas such as Hasbayyà, Râshayya, Baalbek and al Muallaqa (Saadeh, 1993, p. 67). The inclusion of Jabal Amil and Biqa in the territories of the new state brought a sizeable Shia population under the sovereignty of Lebanon (Shanahan, 2005, p. 29). The establishment of the French Mandate in Lebanon after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire increased France's control. France stayed as the only political force in Lebanon. Related to close French-Maronite relations, the role of the Maronites in the critical positions of Lebanon increased.

Since its formation in 1920, Lebanon has been built on a system where the Maronite was the highest in the hierarchy. The French high commissioner became the other partner of the system. There was a Council of Representatives, where Maronites were positioned on the top and worked with High Commissioner Gouraud (Saadeh, 1993, p. 68). Council members were chosen among the Lebanese religious and sectarian communities.

The establishment of Lebanon emerged as a result of France's effort to be an influential power in the Middle East and the Maronite's desire to have an

independent Christian state under the protection of France (Zamir, 1985, p. 97). By building Lebanon, France sought to gain a permanent and loyal ally in the Levant and establish a base against Muslims who opposed their political and cultural goals. At the same time, it tried to respond to the demands of the Maronites, whom it assumed traditional protection for the establishment of an independent Christian state. The Maronites considered the founding of Greater Lebanon as a result of their centuries-long struggles for independence. For them, the new state was a historical continuation of the *mutasarrafiye* (Zamir, 1985, p. 97). At the same time, the establishment of Lebanon was seen as the last step in the historical process in which it was defined as the homeland of Christians. Europe, and especially France, was seen as the guarantor of this state. The Maronites' relations with Europe developed in the eighteenth century. During the Ottoman rule, Christians and Jews controlled out the trade with Europe in the Middle East. In addition, the schools established by the French missionaries played an essential role in the trade and cultural development of the Maronites by teaching the students French, which was very important for commerce and communication (Saadeh, 1993, p. 68).

The main opposition to the Maronite demands for establishing an independent Lebanon was the Sunnis (Zamir, 1985, p. 126). According to the Sunnis, the idea of an independent Lebanon aimed to establish a structure independent of Muslims. For this reason, they refused to make Lebanon an independent state separate from Syria and insisted on uniting with Syria. For them, Lebanon was an integral part of Syria and the Arab world. In response to the reaction of the Sunnis, the French turned to the Shiites within the scope of the divide and rule policy. They recognized the Shia as an independent sect in 1926 (Rabinovich, 1985, p. 38). Thus, they tried to make the new state more

attractive to the Shiites who did not have this status during the Ottoman rule (Shanahan, 2005, p. 29). Previously, the issues of the Shiites were dealt with by Sunni lawyers who acted according to Hanafi law. On the other hand, the French made the Jafari law essential in solving the legal issues of the Shiites. The other reason why the French gave this right to the Shiites was to cut off their cooperation with Syrian nationalists (Shanahan, 2005, p. 30).

The roots of the country's sectarian system were created with the Constitution announced in 1926. The Constitution in 1926, which introduced Lebanon to parliamentary democracy and defined a unique system, ensured the integration of religious groups, especially Muslims, with the Lebanese state (Zamir, 1985, p. 199). The first article of the Constitution was as follows:

> The Mandatory shall frame, within a period of three years from the coming into force of this mandate, an organic law for Syria and Lebanon. This organic law shall be framed in agreement with the native authorities and shall take into account the rights, interests and wishes of all the population inhabiting the said territory. The Mandatory shall further enact measures to facilitate the progressive development of Syria and Lebanon as independent states. Pending the coming into effect of the organic law, the Government of Syria and Lebanon shall be conducted in accordance with the spirit of this mandate. The Mandatory shall, as far as circumstances permit, encourage local autonomy (Zamir, 1985, p. 199).

Thus, while emphasizing the "protective" and "watchdog" role of France, the representation of local communities was ensured. Traboulsi (2007, p. 109) claims that the Constitution, on the other hand, contains a contradiction within itself:

> It establishes the judicial, civic and political equality of all Lebanese as citizens (*muwatinin*), inasmuch as it institutionalizes their judicial and political inequality as subjects (*ahlin*) belonging to hierarchized religious communities with unequal access to political power and public office.

Charles Dabbas, the first prime minister of Lebanon, was appointed in 1926 with the approval of France. Dabbas was not a Maronite but a Greek Orthodox. The election of Dabbas was accepted by Shiites, Sunnis and Druze, considering that it was more appropriate than a Maronite president. Even the Maronites supported Dabbas because of their Lebanese nationalist views (Dekmejian, 1975, p. 35). Dabbas appointed the Maronites as prime minister. During this period, August Adib Pasha, Habib Pasha Saad, Emile Iddih and Bishara Khoury were the politicians who served as prime ministers.

The first rival coalitions among the elite in Lebanese politics emerged during Dabbas's presidency. These coalitions led by Emile Iddih and Bishara Khoury and their rivalry would keep Lebanese political life complicated until the 1950s. While France supported the former, the latter had the support of Lebanese Christian groups. Khoury set up a pan-Arabist program of national unity and independence to gain support from the Lebanese Muslims. However, Iddih won the elections in 1936.

It should be noted that a pro-Syrian movement aiming to unite Syria and Lebanon was widespread among Lebanese Muslims in this period. The French response was to sign an agreement with the Iddih Government based on sectarian representation. 1936 became an important milestone in Lebanese history in many ways. Even though sectarian and political tensions rised, social and regional developments led to new alliances and the emergence of a multi-sectarian movement aiming to gain independence from France (Traboulsi, 2007, pp. 97-98). Independence and anti-colonialist movements that started in Egypt and Syria put Britain and France in a difficult situation. While Egypt declared its independence, Britain continued to intervene in

Egypt's foreign policy and keep troops. In Syria, on the other hand, the increasing opposition forced France to pledge to recognize the independence of Syria and support its membership in the League of Nations. In Lebanon, Khury supporters, who lost the elections with only one vote against Iddih, demanded a solution from France similar to the situation in Syria (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 98). France, on the other hand, responded negatively to this request. The solution offered to Lebanon was "domestic independence", where the French would provide the country's defence, and France could control Lebanon's foreign policy.

On the other hand, this situation worried the Lebanese Maronites and Muslims from two dimensions. According to the Maronites, France's abandoning its "protection of Lebanon" may cause Syria to follow irredentist policies towards Lebanon. For Muslims, an independent Lebanon would be the end of the ideal of unification with Syria. France signed an agreement with Iddih to end the concerns of the Maronites and guaranteed the borders and independence of Lebanon (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 100). This situation caused reactions among Muslims. Shiite Najib Usayran and Sunni Khayr al Din Ahdab criticized France for defending the rights of certain religious minorities and rejected Maronite rule in Lebanon. In this context, the demand of Christians from France was to protect Muslims and Syria. Muslims, on the other hand, pursued an advantage over Christians. With the agreement signed between France and Lebanon in 1936, most of the demands of the former group were fulfilled, while Lebanon gained its independence. According to the agreement, while the French capital and investments in Lebanon were guaranteed, it was declared that France was an ally of Lebanon. France assured that it would provide military assistance to Lebanon if a third party

attacked it. Thus, Lebanon achieved more than "domestic independence" while securing its borders against Syria. However, starting in 1939, the Second World War caused Lebanon to lose what it had achieved. While the French National Assembly did not approve the independence agreements with Syria and Lebanon, the high commissioner in Lebanon suspended the constitution and seized the administration. President Iddih, on the other hand, was dismissed from office.

3.2. The National Pact: 1943

While World War I created the conditions for the emergence of Lebanon under the French mandate, World War II paved the way for Lebanon's independence from France (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 104). The change of government in France in the early 1940s and the competition with Britain to expand its sphere of influence in the Middle East had essential consequences in Lebanese domestic policy. Khoury and Constitutionalists supported Britain against France. Iddih, on the other hand, continued to be on the side of France. Iddih got rid of the influence of his Arab neighbours with the support of France and aimed to build an independent Lebanon (Dekmejian, 1975, p. 36). Khoury sought to establish a Lebanon with closer relations with the Arab countries in the region. Khoury also advocated an agreement between Muslims and Arab nationalists (Zamir, 1985, p. 126). Khoury won the elections held on September 21, 1943. He tried to form a coalition with broad participation. However, this situation had also increased the competition between and within sects. For example, the rivalry among Druze families had also shown itself in supporting Khoury. Khoury's supporters were Sunni families such as Solh, Karami, Yafi and Kuveyni; Faranjiyya family among Maronites; Hamadeh and Assad from the

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Shiites; and Arslan from the Druze. On the other hand, Sunni Addab and Druze Jumblatt families opposed Khoury. The Karami family later gave up support for Khoury due to Khoury's relationship with Faranjiyya.

Sunni Riyad Solh was appointed as prime minister. Riyad Solh's cabinet was composed of Habib Abi Shahlah (Orthodox), Majid Arslan (Druze), Camille Chamoun (Maronite), Adil Usayran (Shiite) and Salim Taqla (Catholic). The reluctance of France to end the mandate on Lebanon forced the Khoury Government to make constitutional changes for independence. The Lebanese Parliament adopted a series of constitutional revisions to abolish the clause stating that France was the only political and judicial power (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 107). In addition, Arabic was declared as the country's only official language, and a new Lebanese flag was adopted. Thus, Lebanon's independence was imposed on France as a *fait accompli*. However, France's reaction was the arrest of Khoury, Solh, some of their ministers, the suspension of the constitution, and the parliament's dissolution. Iddih was appointed as the new president. In the following period, while regime change took place in France, Syria and Lebanon were occupied by British forces. With the withdrawal of France from Lebanon and Syria as a result of the pressure of Britain, Khury and the ministers gained their freedom. These developments resulted in the National Pact of 1943. Khury, who became president again, worked with fifteen governments and nine prime ministers during his tenure between 1943 and 1952 (Dekmejian, 1975, p. 37). Riyad Solh was one of the creators of the 1943 National Pact, who served as prime minister in six of these governments under Khoury's presidency.

The National Pact was an oral agreement between Maronite President Khury and Sunni Prime Minister Solh, which concluded with the support of British representatives and the Syrian and Egyptian governments after the 1943 elections (Zamir, 1985, p. 221; Saadeh, 1993, p. 68). Traboulsi (2007, p. 109) explains that the only written copy of the Pact was the ministerial declaration dated October 7 1943. As Rabinovich (1985, p. 24) underlines the Pact's importance, while the Muslim community admitted the existence of the Lebanese state, Christians accepted to share power. In other words, the Lebanese Muslims would give up the ideal of uniting with Syria. In return, the Christians would stop demanding the protection of the French and accept the Arab character of Lebanon. According to Saadeh, this was a fascinating situation. Because most Lebanese Muslims and Christians were in favour of uniting with Syria and oppose the French policy of establishing an independent Lebanon (Saadeh, 1993, p. 68). Saadeh explains it as follows:

> …the reasons given by Riyad Solh as to why the Moslems demanded unity with Syria are reasons pertaining to the interests of the Muslim caste rather than reasons based on the principles of national identity or even national ideology. He tells Khoury, in his famous encounter: 'If the Moslems are treated in the same manner as Christians in an independent Lebanon, then the Moslems will no longer demand unity'! This is why I believe that the National Pact is no more than an agreement between the two major castes at the time: The Maronite and the Sunni. That the Maronites sought the help of France was merely because France was willing to further their interests, and that the Moslems sought Arab help was again to further the interests of their caste as the explanation of Riyad Solh shows. It is in accordance with this principle of interest of caste that Riyad Solh was able to convince other Moslems to accept Lebanon as an independent entity. This line of logic has been so widely accepted that a historian such as Hasan Hallaq is prompted to assert that 'Moslems are obligated to proclaim Lebanon as a final, independent state only if they are treated on an equal footing with the Christians; otherwise, they are free of this commitment (Saadeh, 1993, p. 69).

In other words, the priority of both Christians and Muslims had been to take steps in the interest of their communities. While Christians believed that this could be achieved by cooperating with France, Muslims benefited from uniting Syria. However, sharing Lebanon equally between these two groups had been a preferred result of both communities. Rabinovich (1985, p. 25) explains the rationale behind the agreement between the Sunnis and Maronites as:

> The Muslim leadership could not ignore the historical basis for the Christian claim to a special status and a special role in Lebanon, nor could it disregard the American and European support for this claim. The Sunni establishment was fully aware of the significant concessions made by its Maronite counterparts in 1943, as well as of their common interests. Changing the status quo might, after all, play into the hands of more radical Sunnis and Shi'is, whose share of power in the government no longer reflected their numbers.

What was surprising at this point was that Solh was in a decision-making position on behalf of all Muslims and Khoury on behalf of all Christians. While the Maronites and Sunnis assumed the role of representing the majority of the population, the Shiites remained at a disadvantageous position and were expressed under the Sunnis.

Table 2: Population Distribution of Christians and Muslims in Lebanon

YEAR	1913	1932	1975	2011
CHRISTIANS				
Maronite	58,3	28,8	23	19,31
Greek Orthodox	12,6	9,8	7	6,75
Greek Catholic	7,7	5,9	5	4,37
Other	0,8	6,7	5	4,29
Total	**79,4**	**51,2**	**40**	**34,72**
MUSLIMS				
Shiite	5,6	19,6	27	29,37
Sunni	3,5	22,4	26	29,37
Druze	11,4	6,8	7	5,47
Total	**20,5**	**48,8**	**60**	**64,21**
TOTAL POPULATION	**414.963**	**786.000**	**2.55 Mil.**	**4.8 Mil.**
Source: Bassel Sallouk et al., _The Politics of Sectarianism in Post-war Lebanon_, London: Pluto Press, 2015.				

The National Pact was fundamentally an attempt to establish a bridge between the Lebanese Christians and Muslims, who were seen as two contradictory elements in defining the national identity of the Lebanese state (Zamir, 1985, p. 221). At the same time, based on the system of representation adopted in the Lebanese Constitution in May 1926, it also tried to eliminate the dilemmas and envisaged the distribution of political power between sects. The Pact

finalized the formula of power-sharing among the sects already established in article 95 of the Constitution. Accordingly, sectarian communities gained the right to share politically according to their population numbers. According to the Pact, chairs and representation in the parliament were divided according to a 6:5 formula favouring Christians against Muslims. The basis of this power-sharing was based on the census conducted by France in 1932.[3] In this census, the Shiites in the Christian regions were claimed to be counted as Christians. According to Joseph Alagha (2007, p. 26), the practice of *taqiyya* led the Shiites to conceal their identity and consequently, the population rates were underestimated. In addition, with the foresight that the numerical changes in their population could harm their political interests, the Maronites gave citizenship to Armenians and Christian Palestinians residing in Lebanon (Saadeh, 1993, p. 71). Thus, the Christian population increased when compared to the Muslims. On the other hand, they refused to grant citizenship to Muslim Kurds and Palestinians. However, there was a minimal outcry among the Shia that, as Shanahan (2005, p. 32) claims, powerful Shiite families discovered that their leadership goals could be fulfilled and their privileged role among the Shiites could continue with the representation allocated to them.

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[3] The first census was held in 1921 by the French. After 1932, an official census was not repeated and there were unofficial counts made by various organizations. According to these unofficial counts, the Shiitetes constitute the largest religious group in Lebanon and Sunnis and Maronites follow them, respectively. Hezbollah demands a fairer reorganization of the representative system, due to the current population of Shiitetes in Lebanon. Table 2 can be viewed in terms of showing the changes in the population of Lebanon. For more details about the census in 1932 see, Muhammad Faour, "The Demography of Lebanon: A Reappraisal", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 27: 4, 1991, pp. 631-641; Rania Maktabi, "The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited: Who Are the Lebanese?", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 26: 2, 1999, pp. 219-241.

The Pact also included an "unwritten agreement" between Maronites and Sunnis that the elites of both communities controlled access to economic rents and management of critical sectors of the economy (Abboud and Miller, 2012, p. 3). The Shia community, which was the third-largest group among sects, but had the fastest-growing population, felt undermined by the other factions (Abisaab and Abisaab, 2014, p. 26). They remained dependent on agriculture and had limited power to influence the Lebanese economy and politics. Majed Halawi (1992, p. 52) displays that South Lebanon and Biqa, where the Shia community constitutes the majority, were the primary sources of agriculture in Lebanon.

The Pact made specific definitions regarding Lebanese identity and the country's foreign relations. While the first article of the Constitution defined Lebanon as "an independent state enjoying indivisible unity and integral sovereignty", the Pact defined it as an Arab country open to Westernization (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 110). Thus, Muslims' ideal of unification with Syria was replaced by the Arab identity, while closer relations replaced the protective role that the Christians attributed to France with the West. With these features, the Pact guaranteed the rights of Christians and gave new rights to Muslims. Traboulsi (2007, p. 111) states that Lebanon's history was essentially a product of the interpretation of the Constitution in 1926 and the National Pact in 1943. Since the independence in 1943, the presidency became a balance and maintenance of the status quo (Dekmejian, 1975, p. 29). The presidency position did not enable the president to rule independent from the domestic actors that required retaining the *zuama*, economic groups, and sectarian leaders. The National Pact also provided opportunities for the religious and traditional leaders, *zuama*, to keep their privileged positions. These social and

traditional figures exploited the regional lists through the electoral system and assured themselves to be carried into the parliament (Rabinovich, 2005, p. 25).

3.3. From the National Pact to the Lebanese Civil War: 1943-1975

The building of Israel, *Nakba*[4], after the war with Arabs in 1948, had an impact on Lebanon. While Chamoun and Jumblatt increased their anti-regime rhetoric after Israel's independence, Khoury was accused of not giving adequate support to the Palestinian cause (Goria, 1985, p. 33). The Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), led by Antoun Saadeh, saw Arab nationalism as responsible for the loss in Palestine and rebelled against the Lebanese State. However, Saadeh's attempt was suppressed in a short time. Israel's declaration of independence in 1948 and increasing fights among Israelis and their Arab neighbours resulted in the migration of Palestinians to the countries in the region. Lebanon was one of the countries hosting a high population of Palestinian migrants.

Southern Lebanon, where most of the population was composed of the Lebanese Shia, was the densest place where these migrants moved. In addition to the Arab-Israeli dispute, developments in the early 1970s such as the "Black September" in Jordan that the Kingdom of Jordan deported hundreds of Palestinian militia and civilians also resulted in increasing Palestinian settlements in Southern Lebanon. As this region was neighbour to the Lebanese-Israeli border, the Palestinian fighters continued attacks on Israel. As a response to the aggression coming from the Lebanese territories, Israel engaged in several episodes and interventions in the Lebanese border, which

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[4] The establishment of Israel is called as *Nakba*, which means great disaster, by the Arabs.

were resulted in many deaths. As a result of Israeli aggression, many Shiites living along the Israeli-Lebanese border and in Southern Lebanon migrated to the north, especially the capital city of Lebanon, Beirut. They began to live in the suburbs of Beirut under low living standards. While the migrant Palestinians caused social problems in the country, they also provided financial flows to the Lebanese economy. About 150 million Palestinian pounds capital and many upper and middle-class Palestinians who fled Palestine came to Lebanon (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 113).

The 1950s were the years when the Lebanese economy flourished and grew. Due to Israel's control of the Haifa Port, Lebanese ports gained strategic importance by the Arab states. In particular, they have become one of the critical centres of the oil trade. Aramco company of Saudi Arabia traded oil with Europe, mainly through Lebanon. In addition, anti-British movements and political developments in the region's countries have also positively affected the economy of Lebanon. The coup attempts that started in Syria in 1949 and repeated in different periods and the anti-imperialist movement that took power in Egypt in 1952 resulted in international companies' moving their regional offices from these countries to Lebanon. According to Majed Halawi (1992, p. 51), Lebanon transformed into a "city-state from an agrarian republic" due to economic growth. The Lebanese State adopted the "Merchant Republic" model in the face of these developments:

> The merchant republic thrived in the 1950s with fortuitous regional and international circumstances marking that decade Lebanon's 'golden age'. The seeds of the merchant republic were sown in the nineteenth century by the emergence of an influential merchant class that resulted from socio-political change, migration from the mountain to the city, and expanding trade relations with Europe. It was a small group of predominantly Christian Lebanese bankers and merchants who were

close political allies, related by marriage to President Khoury and his entourage, who directed the development of the economy towards a deregulated service-oriented laissez-faire economy that favoured trade and finance to the detriment of industry and that ensured the maintenance of a weak bureaucracy and administration. This system best preserved the political and economic interests of the elite but did not serve the best interests of the population at large in terms of job creation priorities or development projects. The main ideologue of the mercantile-financial elite was Michel Chiha, whose sister was married to the president and who in turn was married to the sister of Henri Pharaon, his partner in the influential Banque Pharaon & Chiha (Attie, 2004, pp. 41-42).

Lebanon's economic development achieved significant success with bilateral agreements with the Western countries, Eastern Bloc countries and other countries. The President of the period, Camille Chamoun, had a considerable influence on these agreements. Chamoun established close ties with Arab countries and signed agreements with Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Egypt.

Despite the economic development of Lebanon, its historical and systemic problems continued to exist. Attie (2004, p. 42) states that among these problems were "sectarianism, parochialism, corruption and disrespect for law and order". As a result of the Palestinian issue and uneven development of the Lebanese economy, the Shia community was exposed to low living standards. With the establishment of Israel in 1948, many Palestinians were exiled from their lands and settled in neighbouring countries. The southern region of Lebanon has been one of the places where most Palestinian settlers were located. In addition to the unilateral attacks by Israel, the area has also witnessed conflicts between Palestinian groups and Israel. Due to the insecure environment of the region, the Shiites living in the region settled out of the region, especially in the suburbs of Beirut. It is claimed that those who settled

in Beirut as of 1970 constituted approximately half of the Lebanese Shia population (Alagha, 2007, p. 28).

However, the deprivation of the Shia community was not limited to economic and social factors. There were also inequities in sharing of state institutions. The disproportion in the state institutions and power-sharing was not limited only to the top positions. There was a disadvantageous power-sharing for the Shia among civil service positions. When compared to the Maronites and Sunnis, the number of Shia in administrative functions was meagre. In 1946, only 3,2% of Shia had seats in administrative state institutions when compared to 40% of the Maronites and 27% of Sunnis (Kahraman, 2019, p. 62). This situation seemed to maintain in 1974. In that year, 14% of the top positions in administrative state institutions was filled by the Shia, while the Maronites had 43%, Sunnis had 22%, and the Druze had 6% of positions. According to Kahraman (2019, p. 62), even though the portion of the Shia in places of state institutions seems to increase between 1946 and 1974, it was still disproportional when reviewed through the population increase of the community. After the 1970s, the Shia population became the first group among Muslims in Lebanon. Researches show that the group with the highest rate of population growth in Lebanon was the Shiites (El Khazen, 2000, p. 32). After the beginning of the Lebanese civil war in 1975 and due to economic deprivation of the Lebanese economy, there had been an increase in the migration rates of Maronites abroad. On the other hand, the migration rates among the Shia were lower than other sects.

The Shia community have been living in southern Lebanon, mainly in Beqaa and north of Baalbek. The places where they lived were known for scarcity,

low education and poverty. Researches on this subject clearly show that the Shia are located in the more miniature stages of society in terms of economic and socio-cultural development. According to Daher (2016, p. 12), while the rate of illiteracy among Christians was 31.5%, this rate was 68.9% among the Shia. While 15% of Sunnis and 17% of Christians were secondary school graduates, this ratio was only 6.6% among the Shia. In 1948, most of the Shia lived in the countryside, and only 10% lived in the cities. In addition to these, the influence of the Shia was quite limited in the economic field, where Christians owned 70% of banks, commercial companies and factories. While the average household income in Lebanon was 6247 Lebanese pound, the average salary of a Shiite family was 4532 Lebanese pounds (Daher, 2016, p. 16). The Shiites were 18% of the total population of Lebanon between 1945 and 1955, while the proportion of Shiites in the civil service was only 3.2% in 1946 and 3.6% in 1955 (Daher, 2016, p. 13).

Chamoun initiated a series of reforms to address existing problems. In this regard, reforms were made in the field of administration. Regulations were made for the institutions that were still a remnant of the French mandate period and considered inefficient. In this context, approximately 600 bureaucrats were fired. An examination requirement was introduced for entrance to public institutions to prevent political partisanship that was influential on the administrative structure. The Supreme Judicial Council was established to form an independent judicial institution. In addition to these, a press law was passed, and women were given the right to vote. However, reform initiatives failed due to the pressures of the sectarian structure. For example, a decision was made in 1955 that the final results of the exams for

entrance to public institutions would be within the knowledge of the relevant institution (Attie, 2004, p. 51).

On the other hand, reform initiatives were also opposed by the traditional classes, whose interests were undermined. The sectarian groups, which initially supported Chamoun, then moved to the opposition front. Sunni groups, who claimed to be underrepresented in the existing political system, demanded that the rising Arab nationalism be supported and Syria and Lebanon establish better relations. Some ideological groups, including Arab nationalists and communists, targeted the system, which was defined as an obstacle before their purposes. The Druze Jumblatt family requested a commercial and land reform. The Shiite Assad family did not want to lose their influence in their region. In this context, the families of Jumblatt, Karami, Yafi, Faranjiyya, Hamadeh and Assad started to oppose Chamoun.

In addition, Chamoun's increasingly close relations with the West disturbed Arab nationalists and pan-Arabist states, especially Egypt. On the one hand, Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser made anti-Chamoun publications from newspapers and televisions; on the other hand, he urged the Lebanese people to action against Chamoun (Attie, 2004, pp. 102-103).[5] Chamoun's intention to extend his presidency strained domestic policies. Chamoun embodied nationalism and patriotism in himself and forced people to accept it. Jumblatt and the Progressive Socialist Party launched an armed opposition to Chamoun in 1958. Other members of this opposition movement known as the Third Force were Henry Pharaon and Abdallah Yafi (Traboulsi, 2007, p.

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[5] At this point, it should be noted that Chamoun supported the occupying forces in the Suez Canal Crisis. This policy of Chamoun met with the reaction of Egypt.

133). In the face of escalating conflicts, the Lebanese Army followed an active neutrality policy. Instead of suppressing the opposition with coercion, Fouad Shihab, the army commander-in-chief, tried to limit its influence.

Foreign relations also played an essential role in the rise of tensions. There was international discontent that foreign powers, including Egypt, Syria, and the Soviets, who claimed Lebanon was under the West's influence, were seeking more dominance over Lebanon (Rabinovich, 1985, pp. 26-27). Egypt supported Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt against Chamoun. In the same period, the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy with a coup and the coming to power of a movement along the line of Baath also worried Chamoun. Chamoun contacted the US as a precaution and persuaded the US to help Lebanon. What happened in Lebanon was also crucial for the international politics of Dwight Eisenhower, the then president of the US. According to the Eisenhower Doctrine, the US should follow the principle of helping Middle Eastern states in need of assistance to reduce Soviet influence. The 6th Fleet of the American Marine Corps, which was in the Mediterranean at that time, landed in Beirut. With the involvement of the US, the conflicts ended, and Fouad Shihab, who could get the support of a broad coalition, became the president instead of Chamoun, whose term of office expired. Behind the support that Shihab received, the attitude he took during the tensions in 1958 had a significant effect.

After Shihab took office, he had his first international meeting with Nasser at the Lebanese-Syrian border. Because he did not want to repeat the crisis with Egypt during the previous periods. Unlike Chamoun's anti-Nasser and pro-Western policies, Shihab developed close ties with Egypt and Syria but

followed a policy of neutrality in Arab politics (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 138). Meanwhile, he endeavoured to reduce tensions in Lebanon, build a common identity among Lebanese, and strengthen Lebanon's independence. In this context, in his speech on Independence Day on November 21, 1960, he called for comprehensive social reform and building a new society:

> …those who benefited from prosperity should take care of the deprived Lebanese… some should sacrifice, and the others should be patient'. His version of Lebanese nationalism was unifying and egalitarian, for, said he, 'in being Lebanese there is no discrimination nor privilege (Traboulsi, 2007, pp. 138-139).

Shihab appointed Karami as prime minister. Although Karami initially established a government that excluded the Chamoun and Gemayel families, it has reached an agreement with Gemayel's Kataib Party due to its failure to control the country in general.

In the following year, the first internal problem of the Shihab Period emerged. The SSNP, which was suppressed during the Chamoun Period, attempted a military coup in the night connecting 1961 to 1962, which was the first coup in Lebanese history (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 139). The coup was blocked by forces supporting Shihab. The coup attempt caused large sections of the public to gather around Shihab. Shihab initiated a series of economic and political reforms, which caused this period to be called Shihabism. For example, he arranged the sectarian sharing system in favour of Muslims. To represent all important names, it increased the number of representatives in the parliament from 66 to 99. During the Chamoun period, the Maronites, who made up 29 per cent of the population but held at least half of the administrative authorities, contained only one-third of these posts at the end of the Shihab's term (Traboulsi, 2007, p.140). He attached importance to economic

development. He made investments, especially in the regions where the Shia, the most impoverished community of the country, lived.

Shihab tried to solve the problems created by the sectarian system by making reforms in the economy and social justice. However, Shihabism also created its political opponents in the process. The Maronites considered that they lost their sphere of influence against the Muslims, the traditional and sectarian classes who claimed to lose their privileged and superior position over their communities.

After the end of Shihab's term, Charles Hilu was elected as the new president in 1964. The most significant development of this period was the Arab-Israeli war in 1967. This war also profoundly affected Lebanese political life. Diversities emerged among Lebanese groups in terms of the war and the Palestinians. During the war, nearly 300,000 Palestinians migrated to Lebanon. The Palestinians who immigrated began to live in camps and continued to take up arms against Israel. The area on the Syrian-Lebanese border where Palestinian settlers were concentrated was called "Fatahland" (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 152). The presence of armed Palestinians in Lebanon caused the reaction of Christian groups.

Moreover, the Palestinians continued to attack Israel from the Lebanese lands and intervened in Lebanese domestic politics. This situation resulted in the emergence of the Maronite-Palestinian conflicts. Maronite groups such as Gemayel's Kataib, Chamoun's National Liberal Party and Raymond Idde's National Bloc, who claimed that President Hilu remained passive against Palestinians, established the Triple Front to protect the Maronite identity and control the Palestinians. On the other hand, a counter-movement was

organized under the leadership of Kamal Jumblatt, aiming to protect the Arab identity and defend the Palestinians. Several Sunni groups also supported Jumblatt. As Ayhan and Tür (2009, p. 86) argue, this polarization was a continuation of the problems that arose during the state-building process of Lebanon. While a group emphasized the Maronite identity of Lebanon, the other regarded Lebanon as a part of the Arab world and, in this context, wanted to protect the Palestinian cause.

Palestinians' radicalization in Lebanon and continuing the war against Israel from the Lebanese territories caused conflicts with the Lebanese Army. On the other hand, Israel attacked Beirut Airport in 1968, justifying through the attacks from Lebanon, and damaged Lebanon's civilian planes. The Druze and Sunnis criticized the Lebanese Army's attitude towards Palestinians. They even protested the Lebanese state's failure to the protection of Palestinians against Israeli attacks. In this context, Yafi, the prime minister of the time, and Karami, who became prime minister after Yafi, resigned. Tensions between Sunnis, Druze and Maronites prevented the establishment of a new government. This polarization was reflected in the election of the new head of state, close to the end of Hilu's term of office. The Triple Front supported Suleiman Faranjiyya, and Muslim groups supported Elias Serkis. Faranjiyya won the election in 1970 with only one vote.

After he was elected president, Faranjiyya tried to stabilize the country. The Triple Front criticized Faranjiyya for being passive against the Palestinians and launched armed operations against the Palestinian camps. In 1973, Israel's murder of three senior Palestinians increased the tension in the political environment. The Maronite-Palestinian conflicts turned into a civil war in

1975, involving all the Lebanese groups. The Lebanese Shia would be the most advanced community that achieved a significant position after the civil war. In the sect-based system, Shiites, who felt under-represented in proportion to their population, demanded a revision of the political system. With high birth rates, the Shiites became the fastest-growing religious group in Lebanon. As the largest group in the lowest socio-economic class, they demanded reorganization of political power and economic distribution (Alagha, 2007, p. 27). In addition to socio-economic problems arising from power-sharing within the Lebanese state, the Lebanese Civil War also became an influential factor for the radicalization and politicization of the Shia in Lebanon.

3.4. The Lebanese Civil War (1975-1989) and Formation of Hezbollah

The clashes ignited the Lebanese Civil War started on April 13, 1975, when the Phalange leader Gemayel attacked a bus carrying Palestinian refugees. Up to the early 1970s, Lebanon had already divided between the groups that supported the Palestinian fighters' struggle against the Israeli aggression and who helped the limitation of acts of the Palestinians because of their causing tensions between Lebanon and Israel. According to Lyna Comaty (2019, p. 21), there were 45,000–50,000 militants engaged in the civil war under 29 Lebanese armed groups, only nine of which were well organized while the influence of the rest stayed limited. In addition to the Lebanese groups, there were Israeli armed forces, the Syrian army and 13 Palestinian armed groups involved in the civil war. The conflicting parties were the armed groups formed by Pierre Gemayel, Suleiman Faranjiyya and Camille Chamoun against the Druze, Palestinians, Nasserist, Baathist and communist parties under the leadership

of Kamal Jumblatt, and the Shiite group led by Musa Sadr.[6] The Lebanese National Movement (LNM), formed by the latter group, gained the upper hand in the following years of the war. However, as the LNM started to control most of Lebanon, Syria became involved in the civil war. Hafez Assad invited the leader of the movement, Jumblatt, to Damascus to meet. Stating that Israel and Westerners would not allow Christians to be defeated, he asked Jumblatt to stop their operations (Ayhan and Tür, 2009, p. 160). Upon Jumblatt's refusal, Syria cut off its arms aid to the LNM. The LNM was accused of dividing Lebanon.

On the other hand, President Faranjiyya started negotiations with Syria and supported Syria's intervention in the civil war. He even allowed Syrian troops to enter the areas occupied by the LNM in 1976. Syrian armed forces intervened in the civil war favouring the Christian groups and fought against the Palestinian militias and the LNM. From its intervention in the Lebanese civil war until its withdrawal after Rafiq Hariri's assassination in 2005, the Syrian Army stayed in Lebanon.

Until the Syrian intervention, the civil war was taking place among the status quo and revisionist forces. However, Syria's involvement caused the emergence of a third party, which was the pro-Syrian group. The status quo parties were substantially composed of Maronites. This group was organized under the Lebanese Front, which included Pierre Gemayel's Phalange forces, Camille Chamoun's national liberals and Suleiman Faranjiyya. Aiming to protect Lebanon's Christian identity and building a Maronite dominance in

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[6] Jumblatt, Arafat, the leader of Al Fatah, and Sunni Ahmad Khatib, who left the Lebanese Army and organized the Lebanese Arab Army, later formed the Lebanese National Movement.

Lebanon, Gemayel formed Phalange in the 1930s. It played a significant role in the politicization of the Christian youth. When it considered that the Lebanese Army was insufficient to cope with the Palestinian threat, it played the role of "builder, surrogate and defender of the Lebanese state" (Rabinovich, 1985, p. 63). On the other hand, the organization realized the hardships of establishing a Maronite dominant system in Lebanon in 1975. Then it limited its purpose with the formation of a Christian Lebanon only in the region, including Mount Lebanon and East Beirut (Rabinovich, 1985, p. 63). Chamoun formed National Liberal Party, but it had limited impact and a narrow structure compared to Phalanges.

On the other hand, the revisionist group included leftists, militias formed before the civil war, Sunnis, Shiites and Palestinian groups (Rabinovich, 1985, p. 75). Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt was the leading figure of them, of leftists. The demand of revisionists included abolishing the sectarian system, a constitutional reform that reorganizes the relations between institutions, reforming the electoral law, new regulations in the Lebanese Army, and forming a new citizenship law. The Shiite and Sunni groups expressed their demands for equal representation in power-sharing and government.

Syria started to intervene in Lebanon's internal affairs after its involvement in the civil war. It played a role in electing Elias Serkis to replace Faranjiyya. It interfered in the militia forces of Arafat and Jumblatt. Christian groups supported Syria's intervention. In several regions, the Syrian Army and Maronite groups fought together against the LNM. As a result of the intervention, the LNM came to the brink of disintegration. The Maronites, especially Gemayel, aimed to divide Lebanon and establish a Maronite-

dominated state. Syria was concerned about such a possibility. Because this goal, which Israel also supported, would mean the emergence of a "second Israel". According to Syria, Lebanon was established on Arab geography, and it was historically a part of Syria. The defeat of the Maronites by the LNM would result in the emergence of a political structure in Lebanon where Sunnis were generating the majority. Assad, who belonged to Alawite origin, a Shiite minority in Syria, ruled Syria, did not want to adopt this scenario.

Syria's involvement in the civil war also caused conflicts between Maronite groups. While the Faranjiyya family supported Syria, the Chamoun family wanted Syria to leave Lebanon. Despite Faranjiyya's pro-Syrian and Chamoun's anti-Syrian attitudes, Gemayel, whose ideology was based on the protection of Lebanon's territorial integrity, on the one hand, opposed to Syrian presence in Lebanon, on the other hand, allied with it against the revisionist group. As a result of intra-group tensions among status quo parties, clashes occurred between the two Maronite groups and the Lebanese Front dissolved. Chamoun family also supported Gemayel. However, Syria had no intention of leaving Lebanon. Because Lebanon could be a new front in the war against Israel, this situation brought Gemayel, Chamoun and Israel together against the common threat. Gemayel and Chamoun established relations with Israel to drive Syria out of Lebanon. On the other hand, Israel realized that the support it gave to the Lebanese Front was not enough to drive Syria out of Lebanon. It, therefore, planned to invade Lebanon. Israel's plan caused the Muslim groups to support Syria. The murder of Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt as a result of the assassination also pushed the Druze to the side of Syria.

After the 1977 elections in Israel, the hard-liner Likud Party was appointed to form a government. The prime minister was Menachem Begin, who supported the invasion of Lebanon. Israel invaded South Lebanon in March 1978 after an attack of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Haifa. The Israeli occupation aimed to respond to Syria's presence in Lebanon, damage the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon and strengthen the pro-Israeli Maronite groups within Lebanon.

After Israel invaded Southern Lebanon, many Shiites living there immigrated to Beirut. There were also international reactions to the occupation. Resolution 425 of the UNSC called for Israel to end the invasion in Lebanon. The peace force, UNIFIL, established for this purpose, was located in Lebanon. Israel left Lebanon one month after the occupation.

The civil war continued after Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. Gemayel and Phalangists, who broke the influence of the Chamoun family, gained the upper hand among the Christians. The Lebanese Front, led by Gemayel, published a manifesto in 1980 and declared its goals. Accordingly, Palestinian groups and the Syrian Army had to leave Lebanon. The National Pact of 1943 had to be abandoned, and a federal structure had to be built. The Iraq-Iran War that started in 1980 also caused tensions between Lebanese groups in this period. There have been conflicts between the Shiite AMAL organization, which supported Iran, and the Palestinian Arab Liberation Front, which supported Iraq. According to the political atmosphere of the early 1980s, Muslim and Christian groups were fighting with each other on the one hand and within themselves on the other.

In 1982, Israel re-occupied Lebanon. A more radical cadre who found the 1978 attempt unsuccessful dominated the Israeli government. According to Ariel Sharon, who became Minister of Defense in 1981, the new operation should not be limited to South Lebanon but proceed until Arafat was destroyed and "Gemayel was crowned" (Ayhan and Tür, 2009, p. 126). According to Sharon, Syria's influence had to be eliminated, and a new administration in which the Maronites were influential should be established in Lebanon. Israel's invasion of Lebanon started on June 6, 1982. Damaged the existing infrastructure, the Israeli army advanced as far as Beirut. Palestinian groups, on the other hand, could not resist Israel. With the ceasefire signed as a result of the conflicts, the Palestinians agreed to leave Lebanon. On the other hand, Israel achieved control in the region from the Lebanon-Israel border in the south to Beirut. Bashir Gemayel, supported by Israel, became the new president of Lebanon. Gemayel had the support of almost all Christian groups except Suleiman Faranjiyya and Raymond Idde. Druze leader Waleed Jumblatt, AMAL's leader Nabih Berri, and many Sunni groups also opposed Gemayel.

While Gemayel died due to an assassination in 1982, his son Amin Gemayel was elected president instead. Amin Gemayel's prominent supporters were the Druze Arslan family, the Sunni Salam family, and most Christian groups. The Shiites, most of the Sunnis, Waleed Jumblat and the Maronite leader Faranjiyya opposed the leadership of Gemayel. The Phalangist groups, which put the responsibility of the Gemayel's assassination on the Palestinians, started to occupy refugee camps and killed many civilians with the support of Israel. Sabra-Shatila was one of these camps. The year 1983 witnessed new conflicts. Clashes took place between the Lebanese Front and the Druze and between the AMAL and the Lebanese Army. On the other hand, the Shiites

revolted against the Israeli occupation in South Lebanon, which has a dense Shiite population.

The Lebanese Shia joined the civil war under the leadership of Musa Sadr and the AMAL Movement. Until Sadr arrived in Lebanon in 1959, the Shiites were active in two main political/economic fields. The first of these was the relationship established with the state through feudal lords, *zuama*. The patronage system of the Shia *zuama* consisted of Shia feudal families such as Assads, Osseyrans, Zayns, and Khalils (Shaery-Eisenlohr, 2008, p. 24). These feudal families organized the relations between the Shia masses and the state, and they played an intermediary role between them. The people's demands were met by negotiating with the relevant institutions of the state and politicians or by petition. This situation led to the strengthening of the patron-client relationship between the Shia population and *zuama*. Because the *zuama* was benevolent towards the Shiites on the one hand, it exploited and controlled the Shiites on the other. The second area in which the Shiites were actively involved was making politics under the influence of communism. The majority of Shiites in this group came from the working class and gathered around organizations such as the Lebanese Communist Party, demanding and fighting for the system's transformation. According to the Shia communists, with the abolition of political sectarianism, the feudal structures of the time would be broken, and more rights could be provided for the Shiites. Sadr organized the Shia community against these two groups and Zionism. Sadr's efforts to reorganize and unite the Shiites with an emphasis on Shiite identity met with the reactions of *zuama*, communists and the secularists. This resistance against Sadr took place because they feared losing their power.

Born in Qom, the religious city of Shia understanding of Islam in Iran, in 1928, Musa Sadr is a Lebanese religious scholar. His ancestors are believed to come from Musa Kazem, the 7th Imam of Shia, and migrated from Lebanon to Iraq first and then Iran. Musa Sadr is a member of the extended Sadr family, who is still influential in Iraqi politics. Musa Sadr took his religious education in Najaf, Iraq and Iran. Musa Sadr had close relations with Jabel Amil, one of the central basins of Shiism in Lebanon, including Najaf in Iraq and Qom in Iran. Sadr, who left Iran in 1958, was expelled from Iranian citizenship because of his criticisms of the Iranian Shah because of his attitude towards the public during the popular uprisings of 1963 and later switched to Lebanese citizenship. Sadr, who protected his close ties with Iran, became the leader of the Shiite community in Lebanon in time. Fuad Ajami, who wrote a book on Sadr's life, claims that his charismatic personality was one of the most critical factors in the revival of Shiism (Ajami, 1986). Sadr mobilized and organized the Shiites who sought a more just socio-economic and political system. In 1967, the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council was established and transformed the Shiite quietism and passivity (Rabinovich, 1985, p. 38). Sadr was elected as the head of the Council in 1969.

Sadr was respected not only by the Shia but also by other religious communities in Lebanon. He demanded a pluralist system based on equal representation of all religious/sectarian groups and led to charity organizations.[7] In addition to organizations that provide economic and social

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[7] There are also some studies claiming that Musa Sadr worked with the Shah of Iran during this period. According to these studies, he received regular financial aid from the Iranian secret service, SAVAK. However, when support for Khomeini raised, he moved away from the Shah and supported Khomeini-led movements. For more information, Manaz. Abdullah, *Siyasal İslamcılık 1: Dünyada Siyasal İslamcılık*, İstanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2008, p. 481.

aids to people, Musa Sadr also led religious activities to the Shia and consolidated them around political purposes. He established a language whose target group was the ordinary Shia community and used a critical discourse against the deprived conditions of the Shia created by the political system. Sadr's speeches towards the Shia were composed of political demands and Shiite narrative:

> This revolution did not die in the fields of Karbala; it flowed into the life stream of the Islamic world and passed from generation to generation, even to our day. It is a deposit placed in our hands so that we may profit from it, that we draw out from it as from source a new reform… We do not want sentiments, but action… from today on, I will not keep silent… we want our full rights completely. Not only posts but the twenty written demand in the petition… Eighteen million pounds are destined for the improvement of roads. This south has received none of this, and the Biqa only one-hundred thousand pounds. O rising generations, if our demands are not met, we will set about taking them by force: if this country is not given, it must be taken (Rabinovich, 1985, p. 39).

He also opposed the *zaim* system and clientelism. This system was a patronage system of leading and influential families in several regions of Lebanon. There was a disconnection between the Shia population and the *zuama*. The Shia was living in rural that caused difficulties for the Shia to present their voice in defiance of the *zaim* families. Sadr's rhetoric created a new language among the Shia community and adopted an attitude towards the poor, peasantry and the deprived people. Shaery-Eisenlohr points three purposes of Sadr:

> 1. Political sectarianism is completely unacceptable since it has created for Lebanon problems and difficulties and has not served its purpose. 2. The second choice is the total secularization of institutions... This is also a solution we reject because of its failure, as the international community has suffered from it. 3. We demand the third solution, which is the establishment of a state of believers, in the sense that believing in God and what it entails be the basis of society, and that institutions and systems and the ties that connect the individuals be constructed on the

basis of faith. And since believing in God is the common element in Lebanon between the two major religions, I am sure that this solution will be greatly accepted (Shaery-Eisenlohr, 2008, p. 26).

The Movement of the Deprived (*Harakat al Mahrumin*) was established in 1974 within this context. Thus, while the struggle against Israel's attacks was institutionalized, the Shiites were united under the roof of an organization that would protect their rights against the Lebanese State. With the intensification of the civil war that began in 1975, AMAL, the military wing of the Movement of the Deprived, emerged. At first, AMAL was trained by the Palestinian Fatah. Sadr invited Shiite youth to join the organization. According to Sadr, military training was a duty like a prayer and carrying a weapon had the same meaning as reading the Qur'an (Alagha, 2007, p. 33). In this way, for the first time in the history of Lebanon, the Shia had a military organization. AMAL was one of the first essential results of Shiite radicalism. However, it did not attract the attention of many Shiites at first, for reasons such as the relative ineffectiveness of their militia and their inability to present themselves as a viable alternative source of loyalty (Shanahan, 2005, p. 107).

At first, AMAL was a part of the LNM. AMAL tried to build a consensus environment that many Shia were annoyed with the Palestinian settlements and militias in Southern Lebanon, where the Shia was the majority. Even AMAL supported Israeli operations against the Palestinian fighters in the region that it expected Israel to withdraw from the region after destroying Palestinian military bases. However, Israel's maintenance to stay in the region and AMAL's moderate attitude towards the Lebanese government was perceived negatively among the Shia population. Meanwhile, Musa Sadr was

"disappeared" during his visit to Libya in 1978 (Avon and Khatchadourian, 2012, p. 23).

Sadr, who allegedly went to Libya to meet with Muammar Gaddafi, was never heard of again. Even though Libyans claimed that he flew to Italy with an aeroplane to Rome, it was seen that only his suitcase went to Rome (Ajami, 1986, p. 21). The disappearance of Sadr in Libya has been associated with the disappearance of the Mahdi in the Shiite faith and has led to an increase in the religious rank of Sadr (Sirriyeh, 2012, p. 40). The disappearance of Sadr caused leadership problems within AMAL. After Sadr, Nabih Berri came to the leadership of AMAL. However, Berri's rapprochement with the Lebanese government on the issue of Palestinian refugees and his moderate policy towards the Lebanese state have led to divisions within the organization and annoyed the Lebanese radical Shia and Iran. As a result, AMAL lost its influence on the Shia.

Furthermore, Berri's negative attitudes towards the Palestinian militia in Lebanon, supported by Iran, deepened the intra-organizational disputes within AMAL. Leaving AMAL, more radical organizations, including Islamic AMAL and Islamic Resistance, united under Hezbollah's flag later, were formed by the Shia. These were led and supported by Hussein Musawi and Sayed Hussein Fadlallah. Hezbollah was initially not a single movement but an umbrella organization that included other radical Shiite Islamist groups such as the Islamic AMAL and Dawa Party, in which the founding committee of Hezbollah also had names from these organizations (Shanahan, 2005, p. 113).

According to Shaery-Eisenlohr (2008, pp. 38-39), the main differences between AMAL and Hezbollah were: First, the two organizations have different approaches to Lebanese identity citizenship. AMAL insists on cultural Lebanonism and expresses this discursively. Hezbollah, on the other hand, has a more Islamic vision of Lebanon. Hezbollah views Lebanon from a religious perspective. A secular Lebanon does not make sense historically, socially and culturally. According to Hezbollah, Islam does not contradict Christianity but complements it. Hezbollah's vision of Lebanon's political identity has in common with AMAL on some issues, such as the emphasis on Lebanon's Arab and Islamic identity, using Arabic as its national language, and secularizing the personal without secularizing political institutions. Hezbollah has embraced an absolute struggle against Zionism, and in this context, it has highlighted the culture of martyrdom and jihad. This situation differs in AMAL. According to AMAL, resistance does not mean an active struggle against Israel. Resistance is defined as the rebuilding of the Shia community. Therefore, although both organizations have adopted resistance as a goal, their definition of resistance is different.

According to Shanahan (2005, p. 113), "while AMAL represented the emergence of a pragmatic Shia political movement that sought to represent its community more or less within the existing framework of the Lebanese political system, Hezbollah represented the radical path of sectarian development". According to AMAL, it was possible to weaken Maronite dominance by having more control over state institutions. In expressing this, AMAL uses a discourse that sees Islam and Christianity as equal. Hezbollah, on the other hand, advocates the superiority of Islam. However, Lebanese Christians cannot be forced to convert. Hezbollah's aim of removing the

sectarian system does not include destroying other sects in Lebanon. The abolition of the sectarian system is based on the worldview that Hezbollah defines as oppressors and oppressed. According to this rhetoric, arrogant and powerful elites are described as corrupt and immoral, while the oppressed are hardworking and moral. Breaking the hegemony of the Maronites and Sunnis over Lebanon gains legitimacy within the framework of this discourse. The same rhetoric can be seen in Hezbollah's foreign policy understanding. Maronite and Sunni hegemony in Lebanon is maintained by establishing close relations with some oppressive Western states and the US. Against this, Hezbollah is building a resistance front with Syria and Iran.

Radicalized and politicized due to the social, economic and political problems originated from state establishment, civil war and Arab-Israeli conflict, Hezbollah became the leading organization that the Lebanese Shia gave support (Dionigi, 2014, p. 93). Unlike other regional Islamist movements in the region, Hezbollah's main base, Lebanon, is composed of a long history of struggles, civil wars and a confessional system (Matar and Khatib, 2014, p. 4).

Iran and Hezbollah relationships developed and deepened after the Iranian Revolution in 1979, which will be discussed with the Hezbollah-Syria alliance in the next part. However, it is essential to emphasize the following two points before starting. First, the emergence of Hezbollah was not the result of the Iranian Revolution being exported to Lebanon. Iran's support for Hezbollah was a response to AMAL's unsuccessful attempts to shape Lebanon and the Shiites between 1974 and 1982 (Shaery-Eisenlohr, 2008, p. 91). Second, Iran's interest in the Lebanese Shiites was not a process that started with the Iranian

Revolution. There were Iranian attempts to influence the Lebanese Shia before the revolution in 1979.

In the late 1970s in Lebanon, Hezbollah was founded as an Islamic, social and political movement based on the Shia understanding of Islam. It is an output of the results mentioned above of the Lebanese state structure, sectarian environment of the Lebanese politics and Arab-Israeli wars. Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak said in 2006 that "when we entered Lebanon in 1982, there was no such thing as Hezbollah. The Shia welcomed us by throwing flowers and rice grains on us. It was our presence there that created Hezbollah" (Norton, 2007, p. 33). In addition to these, Haddad also adds the cultural revolution of the Lebanese Shia as the igniter of the organization. According to Haddad (2006, p. 96), "the Shiite publishers have transformed the once weak sector in Lebanon, doubling its size and acquiring nearly 45% of the national market".

In addition to domestic factors, the newly established regime in Iran after the Iranian Revolution in 1979 has been an influential parameter in the strengthening of Hezbollah. Before the Iranian Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini made ideological and financial aids to the Lebanese Shia to support them against the Israeli aggression in Lebanon. After the revolution and Khomeini's coming to power, the Iranian support for the Lebanese Shia is institutionalized. According to Edgar O'balance (1998, p. 133), Iran sent 500 armed men to Lebanon after the Israeli invasion to support Palestinians. Iranian Revolutionary Guards also supported them after the Revolution in 1979. Trained and supported both economically and militarily by Iran, Hezbollah began to gain power in Lebanese political life. On the other side,

Revolutionary Iran found a chance to influence Lebanese politics from inside through its Shiite ties with almost 40-50 % of the Lebanese population.

Under Hezbollah's flag, the Lebanese Shia increased its armed attacks against Israeli targets and the Western military bases. As a result of Hezbollah's attacks, Italy, France, and Britain withdrew their armies. Israel, on the other part, put withdrawal on its agenda from early 1983. Sayed Ebrahim Amin, the spokesman of Hezbollah, declared that Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon was an achievement of Hezbollah's resistance role (Ayhan and Tür, 2009, p. 51).

Hezbollah announced its ideological, political and social vision with its Open Letter on February 16 1985. In the Open Letter, Hezbollah refused to participate in or deal with the Lebanese government, which, according to the organization, was not based on religious principles or sharia law (Atrissi, 2007, p. 88). Inspired by the ideology of the Iranian Revolution, Hezbollah attempted to control the political system and aimed to establish an Islamic rule through arms in Lebanon. Between 1985 and 1990, it became a full-fledged social movement, which has had a well-structured organization and ideology, aiming at social change and justice (Alagha, 2013, p. xxi). The Open Letter shows Hezbollah's objectives in Lebanon and its ideology. In this document, Hezbollah defines the nation as a religion-oriented community and underlines itself as a Pan-Islamist organization:

> We are a community connected to Muslims from every corner of the world, solidly bound to Islam, the principle of faith and well-established policy, whose message God has perfected through the hand of the seal of His prophets (Avon and Khatchadourian, 2012, p. 106).

In addition to its reliance on Islamic society, the *ummah*, Hezbollah is also a universalist organization:

> On the basis of that state of affairs, whatever assails the Muslims in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in the Philippines, or anywhere else assaults the body of the Muslim nation, of which we are an indivisible part (Avon and Khatchadourian, 2012, p. 107).

Hezbollah declares its solidarity with the Islamic movements worldwide. Like Iran's declarations of its support to all independence movements globally, Hezbollah also defines itself as a supporter of Muslims and the Muslim faith. It also mentions itself as a jihadi organization fighting for the Islamic faith. It underlines its loyalty to the *wilayat al faqih* of the Twelver Shiism:

> (…) each of us is a warrior when called to jihad, and each of us receives his combat mission in accordance with his legal assignment, within the space of action conforming to the authority (*wilayat*) of the jurist-theologian commander (Avon and Khatchadourian, 2012, p. 107).

The organization declares its objectives in Lebanon as driving Israel out of Lebanon. In this regard, it refers to the Palestinian cause and places the liberation of Quds from Israeli occupation in its objectives. It opposes any external force to intervene in Lebanese politics and aims to drive the US, France, and their allies out of Lebanon and end the colonial state's influence in Lebanon.

It also opposes the established system in Lebanon. According to the organization, the Lebanese system collaborates with powers hostile to Islam. It is also an unjust system that the roots should extract. Instead of the current system, the organization promises a free system under an Islamic order which guarantees justice and dignity to the Lebanese people: "We do not want Islam to govern by force in Lebanon, we call for the founding of an Islamic regime based on free and direct choice of people" (Avon and Khatchadourian, 2012, p. 114).

Related to the general conditions of the Cold War and Iran's revolutionary world view, Hezbollah's division of the world consists of the imperial world, including the West led by the US and the East led by the Soviets Union, and the third way as the views of Hezbollah and Iran. In this divided world, the US is emphasized as the first root of evil:

> (…) the nations of iniquitous imperial world, in the West and in the East, have come together to combat us; they have begun to set their agents against us, and they are attempting to discredit us and slander us with lies (Avon and Khatchadourian, 2012, p. 107).

Furthermore, religion is seen as the only objection, and confrontation is the only alternative for Hezbollah. Struggle against the US and its allies in the region, Zionists and Phalangists, the Christian fighters in the Lebanese civil war between 1975 and 1990, is emphasized: "(…) we place honour, freedom and religion above a wayward life and a continual subjection to America, and its allies, as well as to the Zionists and Phalangists" (Avon and Khatchadourian, 2012, p. 108).

In the Open Letter, there are several references to the Phalangists. Hezbollah sees them as responsible for the Lebanese civil war and aims to hand them over to the legal authority and judge them for crimes encouraged by the US and Israel. It defines the Christians' acts as inspired by the US and Israel:

> The policy by the Maronite political leaders through the Lebanese forces does not allow the achievement of peace and stability for the Christians of Lebanon. In fact, it is a policy based on clannishness, religious discrimination and an alliance with the colonizers and Israel (Avon and Khatchadourian, 2012, p. 115).

While fulminating against the Phalangists, on the other hand, Hezbollah sends positive messages to the Lebanese Christians:

> If some people deceive you, making you fear our reaction to the crimes committed by the Phalangists against us, be assured that it will never happen. The men of peace among you have never ceased to live with us, without any molestation of their purity. And if we fought against Phalangists, it was because they prevented you from seeing the truth, they were for you an obstruction on the path toward God (Avon and Khatchadourian, 2012, p. 117).

Thanks to the institutionally weak structure of the Lebanese state, Hezbollah capitalized on the state's disregard of the socioeconomic underdevelopment of the Shiite areas (Mikaelian and Salloukh, 2016, p. 120). According to Davis (2007, p. 7), the failure of states in the Middle East concludes with the inability of governments to provide security or prosperity to citizens. As a result, social organizations emerged and strengthened in the areas where the state was unable to influence.

Hezbollah became one of the most potent and influential non-state organizations providing security, education, health, etc. for the people living in its areas of operation. Studies are arguing Hezbollah's social program and activities within the context of the civil society approach. However, its role as a social charity organization is usually overlooked to highlight its other aspects such as terrorist organization or sectarian force, or its social side is defined within the context of its instrumentalization of social services to gather militants and supporters. They claim that, due to mostly the Iranian support, Hezbollah has a social network system to provide education, health services and public assistance for its supporters (Lewitt, 2015). In return, the organization gained popularity among people and empower its position among the Shiite and other sects (Hamzeh, 2004, pp. 53-54).

Hezbollah's health and social services organizations were composed of three central units, each of which includes several sub-branches and committees.

The Social Unit performed social care and financial supports for those who were wounded in jihadi actions and the relatives of martyrs, who lost their lives in military efforts. This unit was also responsible for infrastructure construction (Flanigan and Abdel-Samed, 2009, p. 125). After the Israeli bombings of several Lebanese cities, this unit supports local people and builds infrastructure in the places, where the Lebanese state is insufficient. Islamic Health Unit provides health institutions for all Lebanese people, who are low-income populations. Besides, the Educational Unit provides financial aids and scholarships for children of low-income families. In this way, it operates numerous primary, secondary and technical schools. According to Flanigan and Abdel-Samed (2009, p. 126), "in a country where public education is weak and sometimes lacking, Hezbollah's highly valued educational services put the party at the centre of people's daily lives".

Hezbollah's social services are believed to discredit the Lebanese state's social programs. It operates as a branch of the country and fulfils state's deficiency through providing social aids and services. Hezbollah's assistance to the Lebanese public has been one of the essential parts of its identity (Love, 2010, p. 34). In this way, it maintains to have contact through its social aids and service organizations.

In 1988, the civil war reached a consensus under Syria's guidance with the support of Muslim and Christian groups. On the other hand, President Gemayel and Michel Aoun, the chief of general staff, opposed the consensus. In this respect, Gemayel deposed the prime minister Hoss and assigned Aoun, a Maronite, as prime minister. While Gemayel's decision was supported by Geagea, the leader of the Lebanese Front, it caused oppositions among

Muslims. In reaction to Muslims, Aoun formed a military government. After the rising of tensions, the Arab League stepped into the conflicts after Syria's proposal. Ayhan and Tür (2009, p. 159) claim two reasons that led Syria to offer the Arab League to intervene in Lebanese politics. Hafez Assad, the leader of Syria, aimed to procure the Arab states to accept the Syrian influence on Lebanon. In addition, he sought to split the economic burden of the civil war among the Arab states.

The Lebanese Civil War was not a conflict between Muslims and Christians nor an armed uprising of rebels against the state. The rival groups also involved people from the same religions or sects. In this regard, although the significance of identities cannot be denied, emphasizing identity politics as a determinant of the civil war is a reductionist argument. Furthermore, claiming unity of people coming from the same sect or religion is inaccurate. Because if the one was on the "wrong" side, it was tenable to kill the ones from the same denomination or faith. In this regard, the notion of civil war has been a necessary instructive and threatening experience for the Lebanese people. It has been an influential factor that affected the Lebanese actors' policies, rhetoric, and discourse in future developments.

Throughout the civil war, armed groups sometimes used dehumanizing and terror tactics to intimidate their opponents and legitimize their practices. Kidnapping and disappearance have been one of the widely used methods in this context. During the 15-year civil war, the years 1975 and 1976 were the period with the highest number of kidnappings (Helou, 2020, p. 25). The Lebanese Civil War continued until the rival militias accepted the Taif Accord. After the intervention of the Arab League, the consensus among the Lebanese

communities was provided, and 70 former Muslim and Christian parliamentarians who survived the civil war agreed in Taif in September of 1989. The 15-year civil war resulted in increasing tensions among rival sects, invasion of Lebanon by Israeli forces, and deploying Syrian troops on Lebanese soil. After the war, militia groups, except Hezbollah, were disarmed and joined the Lebanese Army. As a resistance movement, Hezbollah came out of the civil war by growing more potent due to its role against Israeli aggression.

3.5. The Role of Iran and Syria on the Lebanese Shia and Hezbollah

Since its formation in the late 1970s, Hezbollah has been in close relations with Iran and Syria. Especially for fighting against Israel, Syria and Iran became the key international actors in the formation and development of the organization. After the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, while avoiding a hot conflict with Israel, Syria and Iran militarily, financially, logistically and politically supported Hezbollah. Ideologically, Iran became an influential backer in the evolution of Hezbollah's ideology and identity. Syria also became an important connection point between Iran and Hezbollah that it became a transit state providing the Iranian support reaching the organization. Although Iranian support for Hezbollah has been ideologically, politically, militarily and economically from the Iranian Revolution in 1979 until today without undergoing sharp challenges, there have been several dynamics in Hezbollah's relations with Syria, which caused several ups and downs in bilateral relations. The organization's relationships with Syria is different from those with Iran. When compared with Iran, Hezbollah is more independent in bilateral ties with Syria. The forced withdrawal of Syria from Lebanon and the

war with Israel in 2006 allowed Hezbollah to adopt a more assertive and more persuasive position vis-à-vis Syria (Barari & Akha-Rashida, 2012, p. 120). This condition became tightened after the civil war in Syria and Hezbollah's intervention in the civil war favouring the Syrian regime. Iran, on the other hand, remains an ideological partner and strategic ally for Hezbollah. The organization relies on Iranian support, making it more dependent and less autonomous on Tehran in the international realm.

Iran has seen Hezbollah as a chance to export its Islamic revolution to the region, and in this way, it aimed to establish a bloc of resistance against the policies and interventions of the United States in the region and existence of Israel. Syria, on the other hand, has had a complicated relationship with the organization. While it instrumentalized the organization as a stabilizer within Lebanon and an equilibrant against Israel during the rule of Hafez Assad, the period under the government of Bashar Assad witnessed close relations between two actors. Close ties between three actors and several Shiite organizations in several countries in the Middle East is defined as the axis of resistance.

This part will analyze the relationships between Hezbollah, Iran and Syria. It will explore the influences of Iran and Syria in the evolution of the organization. It will argue that there have been military, ideological and financial ties between these three actors. However, it will be claimed that the evolution of the relationship between them has not developed in one way that Hezbollah has not become an Iranian or Syrian proxy. Equating the organization to an Iranian proxy or puppet denies its role as a party and movement legitimized within a particular Lebanese milieu (Barari & Akha-

Rashida, 2012, p. 121). Although its connections with Syria and Iran make it more dependent on these actors in its international relations, Hezbollah is an autonomous actor in the Lebanese context.

In this regard, this part will be composed of two parts, including several subheads in both sections. Firstly, it will analyze Hezbollah's relations with Syria. It will argue that the organization's ties with Syria evolved from instrumentalization to alliance in time. In this context, it will cover two periods. The first one is the period under the rule of Hafez Assad, and the second one is the period under the government of Bashar Assad. The second part will cover Hezbollah's relations with Iran. In this part, bilateral ties between the two actors will be explained through ideological and strategic alliances.

3.5.1. Hezbollah-Syria Relations: From Instrumentalization to Alliance

Hezbollah's relations with Syria goes back to the period under the rule of Hafez Assad between the late 1970s and Assad's death in 2000. Syria has been a dominant partner under the government of Hafez Assad that the Syrian state instrumentalized Hezbollah to control the Lebanese-Syrian border and Israel's policies (Samii, 2008, p. 37). It is hard to define Syria-Hezbollah relations during this period within the partnership frame compared with today. Related to the hegemony of Syria on Lebanese politics, Hafez Assad aimed to protect both Lebanese Shia and Lebanese politics. In this regard, Syria preserved its cautious position against Hezbollah. It considered that the arms coming to Hezbollah from abroad would unbalance the conditions within Lebanon and Syria's relations with Israel. Since Hafez Assad had a Baathist and secular ideology, he favoured AMAL Movement rather than Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Furthermore, there have been struggles among Hezbollah fighters and the Syrian army due to these reasons. These struggles ended with the involvement of Iran.

After the death of Hafez Assad in 2000, his son, Bashar, became the President of Syria. During Bashar's period, relations between Syria and Hezbollah reached the peak. With Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, while Hezbollah's popularity in the region increased, Hezbollah and Syria, on the other side, came closer. After the assassination of Rafiq Hariri, the former Lebanese prime minister, in 2005, and Syria's forced withdrawal from Lebanon, Hezbollah declared its solidarity with the Syrian regime. Hezbollah and its allies have organized demonstrations to thank Syria for its contributions to the stability of Lebanon. In these demonstrations, Nasrallah defined Syria as a true defiant of the resistance movement. In this regard, there have been Syrian supports for Hezbollah during the 2006 war with Israel. In 2009, Hezbollah declared Syria as its strategical ally in the Middle East (Blanford, 2011, p. 290). Hezbollah's vice secretary-general, Naim Qassem, defined the Syrian-Hezbollah relations as a geopolitical necessity. He emphasized the historical weak state structure of Lebanon, which witnessed to power struggles of foreign states. Within this context, Lebanon had two options to establish relations with its neighbours. One is Israel, and the other is Syria. Inherently, Hezbollah chooses the latter to develop ties. Qassem argues that Hezbollah's relationship with Damascus is not "mandatory or accidental," instead it is based on regional geopolitics, including Syria and Iran relations and has "so far proven its utility and necessity" (Samii, 2008, p. 38).

In brief, Syria has an essential effect on the continuity and effectiveness of Hezbollah. In the war against Israel, Hezbollah is the frontline, and Syria is the rearguard. The Syrian regime is a haven for Hezbollah that harbours the organisation's training camps in the Syrian territories. Hezbollah has training camps and arsenals in Syria. Hezbollah fighters going to Iran to take military training generally use Damascus Airport (Navad, 2016, p. 2).

Moreover, Syria is an important actor for Hezbollah to take the logistical and military support from Iran. Iran sends weapons to Hezbollah via Syria. The Syrian regime plays a vital role in the transfer of firearms, money and equipment. As Dara Conduit (2014, p. 102) analyzes, 'if Iran is Hezbollah's oxygen tank, Syria would be the air hose'. Iranian aid would be constrained to reach Hezbollah without Syrian support (Samii, 2008, p. 38). Moreover, according to Ali Akbar Velayati, Senior Advisor for Foreign Affairs to Iran's Supreme Leader, "Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the new Iraqi government and Hamas form the chain of resistance against Israel, and Syria is the golden ring of this chain" (Goodarzi, 2013, p. 33).

Against this background, this part will analyze the Syrian-Hezbollah relations between the period beginning in the 1970s and 2010, when the Arab Spring began in Syria. It is composed of two subheads. The first one will explain the period under the leadership of Hafez Assad. During this period, Syria instrumentalized Hezbollah against the Israeli threat and to provide balance in Lebanese politics. The second one is the period under the leadership of Bashar Assad. It will be argued that Hezbollah-Syria relations developed and came closer in this period.

3.5.1.1 Relations Under the Leadership of Hafez Assad

Hezbollah's relations with Syria have been heavily associated with Syria-Iran links. Related to Damascus's ties with Tehran, Hezbollah's relationships with the Syrian state has had ups and downs in several periods. Although there have been contradictions between two actors during the Cold War under bipolar conditions, there have been challenges in the 1990s after the Lebanese civil war. According to Hage Ali (2019, p. 3), Hezbollah–Syria connections deepened after the end of the civil war, and the organization accepts Syria as a dominant actor in Lebanese politics. The opposition to Israel and its invasion of the Lebanese territories have become an essential dimension of two actors' relationships.

During the uprisings in the late 1970s before the revolution, Syria supported the Islamic opposition in Iran (Maltzahn, 2015, p. 21). Hafez Assad, President of Syria, granted passports to the members of Iranian revolutionary groups and provided military education for them (Hage Ali, 2019, p. 3). Besides, Syria initiated connections with Musa Sadr, the leader of Lebanese Shia, to contact the Iranian revolutionaries. The Iranian Revolution in 1979 deepened the Iran-Syria relations. Syria became the first Arab state to recognize the new regime established in Iran after the revolution. In this way, Syria aimed to balance its rival country, Iraq, in regional politics.

The increasing connection between Iran and Syria after the Iranian Revolution in 1979 resulted in the growing collaboration for both states in the rise of Hezbollah in Lebanon. As the Shia was one of the sides of the Lebanese civil war that began in 1975, Syria made military assistance to the Shia militias. In return, Hafez Assad demanded the Shiite ulama to include the Alawites in the

Shiite understanding of Islam. In this way, he aimed to provide a religious base of justification for his minority rule in Syria (Rabinovich, 1985, p. 37). It was also appropriate for Musa Sadr that he counted Alawites within the Shia circle and took the Syrian support. In addition, Sadr opposed the Sunnis because of monopolizing Islam with the Sunni understanding. Syria had an indirect influence on the formation of Hezbollah (El-Hokayem, 2007, p. 36). After the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, Syria permitted many of Iran's Revolutionary Guards army to enter Lebanon and train the Shia militias (Esposito, 1999, p. 155). It also allowed Iran to establish a military base in Zabadani, a Syrian town close to the Lebanese border (Samii, 2008, p. 38). According to Naim Qassem (2007, p. 20), the vice secretary-general of Hezbollah, there was an advanced training system of religious practice and personal/moral cultivation.

Close relations between Hezbollah and Syria tackled with challenges after the civil war in Lebanon in 1990. Even though Syria supported Hezbollah's activities on some occasions in the 1980s, it was also suspicious about the organization and sometimes sought to prevent it from increasing hostility with Israel (Samii, 2008, p. 39). As Syria emerged as a hegemon power in Lebanese politics in the late 1980s and after, it was perceived as a stabilizing force in Lebanon. On the other hand, Hezbollah maintained its violent policies in Lebanon. Supported by Iran, the organization began to target the Western citizens and institution in Lebanon. There have been tensions between Hezbollah and Syria that the former supported aggressive policies in Lebanon against the Westerners and Lebanese citizens, while the latter introduced itself as a stabilizing force in Lebanon in the post-civil war period. Therefore, Syria sought to preserve its domination and existence in Lebanon and prevent Iran

and Hezbollah from maintaining the aggression policies. In this way, Syria aimed to protect its dominance in Lebanese politics. The secular Shia movement, AMAL, was the first ally of the Syrian state. Even though it was worried about the acts of Iran and Hezbollah, it supported Hezbollah against the Israeli aggression in the region. The increasing tensions between Hezbollah and Syria regarding Lebanese politics reverberated in the relations between AMAL and Hezbollah. There have been armed struggles between two Shia organizations that Syria intervened in favour of the AMAL. By the late 1980s, fighting between Hezbollah and Syria exacerbated that:

> In May 1986, fighting between the two sides left three Hezbollah members and two Syrian soldiers dead. When Hezbollah kidnapped two Syrian officers, the Syrian army reacted by detaining several party members. 16 In February 1987, Syrian troops massacred Hezbollah members at the party's headquarters, the Fathallah Barracks in West Beirut. The victims had not been previously involved in interparty fighting, leading many to speculate that they were executed as a warning to Hezbollah (Hage Ali, 2019, p. 5).

There have also been influences of the international conjuncture in the Hezbollah and Syria relations. As a result of the collapse of the Soviets Union and the end of the Cold War, Syria lost the support of the Soviets, one of its allies in the region. To "compensate for the loss of its major international backer, Damascus was compelled to engage in a rapprochement with the United States" (Hage Ali, 2019, p. 5). Under the leadership of Hafez Assad, Syria found a chance to take part in the United States-led international community. In return, Syria worked to free the Westerners taken hostages by Hezbollah. Struggles and tensions between Hezbollah and AMAL and Hezbollah and Syria ended with the involvement of Iran. Syria and Iran

reached an agreement in 1990 that finished the fights among every side (Blanford, 2011, p. 92).

The Arab-Israeli conflict has been one of the controversial issues influencing Hezbollah-Syria relations. As there has been a rapprochement between the relationships of two actors due to Iran's involvement and the end of the civil war in Syria, the late 1990s became the years that relations of both actors strengthened. However, Syria's dialogue and peace talks with Israel again increased tensions. While Hafez Assad aimed to be the promoter of peace, Hezbollah and Iran felt threatened that they perceived the negotiations between Israel and Syria as threats targeting their interests in Lebanon and the region. Tensions reached the peak after the demonstrations opposing the peace negotiations of Hezbollah affiliated groups (Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, 2011, p. 48). With the death of Hafez Assad in 2000, a new era in the Hezbollah-Syria relations initiated, and relations between both actors began to be closer and more in-depth.

3.5.1.2 Relations Under the Leadership of Bashar Assad

Bashar Assad's coming to power after the death of Hafez Assad caused closer relations with Hezbollah compared to the previous period. Hafez Assad pointed his son, Bashar, as his successor. In this context, Bashar Assad was introduced to regional allies as the new leader of Syria. For instance, Assad met with Hezbollah's leader, Hasan Nasrallah, Emile Lahoud, the Lebanese President, Nabih Berri, the leader of AMAL and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, faqih of Iran in 1999 (Samii, 2008, pp. 43-44).

When Bashar came to the rule, there was a positive attitude that he was educated in a British university and familiar with the West. He was expected to modernize the Syrian state, make political reforms and provide individual rights. However, consciously or unconsciously, he was unsuccessful to answer these expectations. After he came to power, Syria was named in the list of the countries giving support to terrorism and rogue states. After Al Qaeda attacked the US and Washington declared a "global war on terrorism" in 2001, Syria found itself a target of the US's global war on terrorism due to its close ties with Hamas, Islamic Jıhad, and Hezbollah (Reilly, 2015, p. 176). Despite Syria's losing reputation in its international relations, Hezbollah-Syria relations under Bashar's rule developed further due to the regional developments, and Hezbollah began to be the upper hand in bilateral ties.

> Bashar Assad, who succeeded his father in July 2000, had a warmer relationship with Hezbollah, allowing the party to gain more influence in Lebanon. Syria also, for the first time, became an important source of armaments for Hezbollah. Hezbollah's military intervention in Syria from 2012 to assist the Assad regime against the armed opposition has placed the Lebanese party on a partnership footing with Damascus, a significant shift from the subordinate role it played under the rule of Hafez Assad (Blinford, 2017, p. 1).

There have been several developments changing Syria's role in Lebanon and the region, which caused Hezbollah to follow new policies. Between 2000 and 2010, Hezbollah faced a range of challenges in its relations with Syria: The Hariri assassination in 2005 (1), the 2006 war with Israel (2) and the civil war in Syria (3).

In 2005, Rafiq Hariri was assassinated, and the inspections of the United Nations pointed Syrian members behind this death. Hariri was a supporter of peace between Lebanon and Israel. He was described as dangerous and blind

to the dangers of peace with Israel and various catastrophes it would bring (Khatib, 2014a, p. 21). After the assassination, the UN built a tribunal to investigate Hariri's death (Khatib, 2014b, p. 72). The United Nations declared the UNSC Resolution 1559 that required the disarmament of militias in Lebanon and withdrawal of Syrian forces out of Lebanon. After Syria's withdrawal of its military from Lebanon, its hegemony in Lebanon was over, which means Hezbollah lost one of its foreign supports within Lebanon. Opposing the Syrian withdrawal, Hezbollah and its allies held public demonstrations on 8 March 2005 to thank the Syrian government for its contributions to preserve public peace and its support to provide security in Lebanon. In the events, Nasrallah told the crowd that Lebanon and Syria are inseparably bound: "No one can get Syria out of Lebanon or out of Lebanon's mind, heart, and future" (Samii, 2008, p. 47). The 8 March Alliance under the leadership of Hezbollah was established due to these meetings and closeness to Syria. On the contrary, Saad Hariri-son of Rafiq Hariri-led groups held public demonstrations that they opposed Syrian hegemony in Lebanon and demanded the withdrawal of foreign actors out of Lebanon. It was called as 14 March Alliance.

As a result of Syrian withdrawal, power dynamics in Lebanon changed. Until 2005, Hezbollah's armed status was guaranteed by the Syrian presence in Lebanon. While Hezbollah had members in parliament, it had not sought—nor was it asked—to join any of the post-Lebanese civil war governments (Blanford, 2017, p. 6). "Hezbollah's main concern was safeguarding its weapons, guaranteeing a leading role for itself in national politics, and protecting Iranian and Syrian interests against the United States and its allies" (Hage Ali, 2019, p. 7). Hezbollah redefined its approach toward Syria and,

instead of underlining the shared history of Syria and Lebanon as it did before, began to define Hezbollah-Syria relations by portraying Damascus as "ally of the resistance".

Hezbollah entered the Lebanese cabinet to preserve its power within Lebanon after Syria's withdrawal. Hezbollah became a member of the government in 2005, and it directly entered interactions with other communities. To participate in the government, Hezbollah did not get approval from the Iranian leadership. Because "the need to counterbalance Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon overrode doctrinal considerations" (Dionigi, 2014, p. 140). In Hezbollah's perspective, it was no longer possible to preserve the Resistance outside the decision-making structures. Therefore, Hezbollah joined the cabinet to counterbalance the 14 March Alliance and its foreign patrons and continued its resistance movement. Participation in the government enabled Hezbollah to take advantage to influence the decisions made by the Lebanese government. By accessing the government, Hezbollah could control the negotiation and implementation of UNSC resolutions by limiting their impact over its actions (Dionigi, 2014, pp. 150-151). Resolution 1559 was neutralized, forcing the government to renew its acknowledgement of Hezbollah as a national resistance entity, not as a militia.

After Syria's withdrawal, Hezbollah stayed as the most potent member of the resistance in Lebanon. It gained the upper hand in its relations with Syria. In other words, while maintaining its alliance with Syria, the organization was now autonomous in its decision-making. On the contrary, it became the leading factor in bilateral relations. That was evident in summer 2006 when Hezbollah and Israel began a 34-day war (Hage Ali, 2019, p. 8). During the

war, Syria supported Hezbollah militarily and logistically that it supplied arms for Hezbollah for the first time, including 220-millimeter and 302-millimetre rockets (Hage Ali, 2019, p. 8). One of the reasons for Syria's support of Hezbollah was the Golan Heights. It had very strategic importance militarily, and as a result of this reason, it was invaded by Israeli troops.

Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 raised the popularity of Hezbollah but questioned the role of resistance, whether required or not. In addition to this, Hariri assassination in 2005 and the boost of anti-Syrian sentiments in Lebanon decreased its popularity. However, Israel's military campaign in 2006 brought the resistance back in the eyes of the Lebanese public and the region. Syrians sought to exploit Hezbollah leader Hasan Nasrallah's burgeoning popularity on the Arab street to shore up domestic support (Yacoubian, 2006, p. 1).

The last challenge to the relations between Hezbollah and Syria became the beginning of the civil war in Syria. After its involvement in the civil war, Hezbollah has had an upper position to the regime that will be explained in the following parts discussing Hezbollah and the Syrian Civil War.

To conclude, Hezbollah has had close relationships with the Syrian regime for an extended period. This relationship has strengthened since father Assad's rule and became more robust in the period of son Assad. While on the one hand, father Assad imposed controls on the number of arms transferred to Hezbollah from Iran via Syria, the son Assad opened the arms floodgate (Daher, 2016, p. 179). In return, Hezbollah supported Syria's hegemony over Lebanon. Assad used Hezbollah to empower Syria's relations with Iran and pressure Israel. This tactical relation between Hezbollah and Syria has

changed in the period of Bashar Assad. After Syria's militarily withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005, ties between Hezbollah and Syria evolved to a strategic alliance. Political and military collaborations between two actors increased and deepened.

3.5.2. Hezbollah's Relations with Iran: An Ad Infinitum Relationship

According to Avon and Khatchadourian (2012, p. 11), some Lebanese sects have appealed to foreign actors for centuries to gain an advantage over their internal rivals in Lebanon, and as a result, while certain groups define an actor as an occupier, others have described it as a liberation force. For instance, Maronites have been in close relations with France, and Sunnis have close ties with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries. The Shia groups have often criticized these. Similarly, Iran and Syria have different meanings for different sects in Lebanon. While the Sunni groups generally regard these two countries as external actors attempt to involve in Lebanese politics, a significant number of the Shia groups reject Sunnis' view. They define Syria and Iran as friends of Lebanon. Iran's historical relationship with the Lebanese Shia began during the "Shiization" of Iran during the reign of the Safavids. The Lebanese Shia sent clerics to Iran and influenced the "Shiization" policies of the Safavids. This relationship strengthened with the support of the Iranian revolutionary Islamists to Hezbollah before the Iranian Revolution. For example, Khomeini was worried about Israel's aggression and Palestinian issue between 1965 and 1978 when he was in exile in Iraq and sent *humus* to the Shia groups to support the resistance forces in Lebanon. After the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, support for the Islamic movements was carried out more institutionally.

During the Pahlavi Dynasty, Iran had a transnational Shia relationship with the Lebanese Shiites. The relationships between the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza, and Lebanon go back to Camille Chamoun, who was president between 1952 and 1958. In the face of the rising Arab nationalism in this period, Chamoun claimed that Lebanon was a unique part of the Arab world and got the Shah's support. Both countries opposed the anti-Western and Israeli opposition of Abdul Nasser, the champion of Arab nationalism, and his use of the Palestinian Cause as a tool. Even Iran recognized Israel's independence in 1950. However, Iran's relations with Lebanon were not limited to the sphere of international relations. Iran also supported the Lebanese Shiites, some of whom were characters opposing the Lebanese State. Iran sent economic aid to the Lebanese Shiites through the then Ambassador to Beirut, Ahmad Atabaki, in the 1960s. While Musa Sadr mediated in delivering this aid to the Shiites, the faith of the support was followed by Iran's intelligence agencies. However, there had been severe changes in Iran's view of Lebanon since the early 1970s.

The most crucial factor of the difference was that Lebanon became the destination of Iranian opposition figures, including Mustapha Chamran, who fled Iran, to the Shah. The Iranian opponents, who communicated with the Palestinian groups, took advantage of the weak state structure of Lebanon and received armed training against the Shah. Lebanon became a vital performing field of the anti-Shah Liberation Movement of Iran, which the Iranian dissidents founded. According to Shaery-Eisenlohr (2008, p. 9), "the most important transnational network between Iranian and Lebanese Shiites in the 1970s was the close relationship between the members of Liberation Movement of Iran, Sadr, and AMAL". Liberation Movement of Iran also became a significant base for those who formed the Islamic AMAL.

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After its revolution in 1979, Iran aimed to build bridges with its Arab counterparts. Lebanon was the second country involving the most prominent Shia population after Iraq. Also, the Lebanese Shia was able to cooperate and organize due to the fragile situation of the Lebanese state institutions. In this regard, the Lebanese Shia emerged as a target group for Iranian revolutionaries. On the other hand, Iran's export of revolution also became an essential factor in Iran's policies towards Lebanon. After the Iranian Revolution, Iranian radicals claimed that the revolution was doomed to failure unless exported. With its large Shiite population, Lebanon was seen as a platform to promulgate revolutionary ideas (Avon and Khatchadourian, 2012, p. 24).

The newly established regime in Iran had two important ideological principles. The first was the "Third Worldism" based on the principle of anti-imperialism and opposition to the US, which can be summarized around the principle of neither East nor West. The second is the export of revolution, which includes the support of Islamic movements in the region, the strengthening of Islamic resistance organizations against Israel, and Islamic regimes' establishment. In this regard, Iran has supported the Lebanese Shia and then Hezbollah. In addition, AMAL's moderate attitude towards the Lebanese government and Israel has been a driving factor for Iran that the Iranian leadership supported the radicals, who then formed Hezbollah. Within this context, Iran pioneered the establishment of an Islamic council in Lebanon. Two of the five members of this council were Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, who served as Iran's ambassador to Syria between 1982 and 1986 and Ahmad Kenani, a commander of the Revolutionary Guard Army. The council has organized Hezbollah's agenda in Lebanon and served as an intermediary for

the communication between Hezbollah and Iran. Iran, who wanted to benefit from the authority vacuum and political turmoil in Lebanon, played an essential role in increasing the spread of Hezbollah's influence. Mohtashemi played a critical role in becoming a mediator between Iran and Hezbollah through meetings with the leaders of the Shiite community. According to Mohtashemi, Iran would support the resistance in Lebanon just as it defends its cities militarily and politically (Daher, 2016, p. 29).

After Musa Sadr formed the AMAL Movement, there was no direct relationship between Iran and Sadr, but Sadr had indirect talks with Mustapha Chamran, the first minister of defence in the Islamic Republic of Iran (Ajami, 1986, p. 194). Opposed to the Pahlavis' policies, Chamran devoted his life to teaching Islam. Hasan Nasrallah was one of his students:

> We used to have weekly or bi-weekly meetings at the Jabal Amil Art [technical] School. Martyr Chamran was our teacher at the school and used to gather the heads of the Amal movement in the South and speak to them … I have to say that in political and organizational terms, Chamran was my master, and I enjoyed his teaching for two years (Saad, 2019, p. 631).

After the revolution in 1979, Iranian leadership directly connected with the Lebanese Shia and supported them in their war against Israel. As Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, Iranian Revolutionary Guards were sent to Lebanon to train the Shia fighters. According to Mohtashemi, "part of Hezbollah's skill goes back to its experience fighting and training … soldiers from Hizbullah fought amongst Iranian [in Iraq] or separately" (Asharq al-Aswat, 2006 cited in Saad, 2019, pp. 631-632).

Since the Iranian revolutionary elites have suspicions about the AMAL Movement, which was relatively moderate for Iranians, they supported the

radical wing of AMAL, which was the skeleton of Hezbollah. On the other hand, Hezbollah admitted the religious superiority of Iranian leadership and built close relationships with Iran.

The newly established regime in Iran had two important ideological principles. Firstly, it had an anti-imperialist and Third Worldist attitude, summarized within the policy of "neither East nor West, but the Islamic Republic". The second principle was the export of revolution that aims to support Islamist movements in the region, strengthening Islamic resistance organizations against Israel and, if possible, the establishment of Islamist regimes. In this context, after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, around 1,500 soldiers from the Revolutionary Guards of Iran were sent to the training camps in Syria to train Hezbollah fighters against Israel (Daher, 2016, p. 27). Filippo Dionigi (2014, p. 92) claims that Iran's involvement in Lebanese politics was an "unexpected" consequence of Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Besides, Iran has pioneered the establishment of an Islamic council consist of five members in Lebanon. Two of these five members were Ali Akbar Muhtashami, who served as Iranian ambassador to Syria between 1982 and 1986, and Ahmet Kenani, commander of the Revolutionary Guards. The council organized both Hezbollah's agenda in Lebanon and played a mediator role between Hezbollah and Iran. Iran, who wished to benefit from the political turmoil in Lebanon, played an essential role in the formation of Hezbollah. Ali Akbar Muhtashami set meetings with the leaders of the Lebanese Shia community (Samii, 2008, p. 41). According to the ambassador, Iran would support the resistance in Lebanon as its cities (Daher, 2016, p. 29).

According to some Iranians, on the other hand, the revolution would cause failure if it was limited in Iran. Lebanon was regarded as an essential platform for disseminating revolutionary ideas (Avon & Khatchadourian, 2014, p. 24). Fawaz Gerges (2006, p. 85), at this point, claims that Iran's support for Hezbollah did not aim a direct war against Israel but to politicize the Shia in Lebanon.

In the following years, Hezbollah continued to receive financial and political support from Iran. The late 1970s, when Alagha (2007, p. 37) pointed out the foundations of Hezbollah were laid, were the years when Iranians, who came to Lebanon with the support of Khomeini, established religious and military training centres there. Iranians came to Lebanon and trained the Lebanese youth who wanted to fight against Israel. With the revolution in Iran, Lebanon has become an essential target of Iran's export of revolution policy.

Naim Qassem, deputy general secretary of the organization, claims that Iran has established relations with Hezbollah to support Lebanon's social needs and resistance to Israel. Indeed, with Iran's extensive financial support, Hezbollah has made significant progress in health, education and social spheres to the socially, culturally and economically deprived areas. In the 2006 war against Israel, Iran Hezbollah declared Iranian economic and military support as the key behind its successes. In return, it strengthened its social and political base in Lebanon and had the opportunity to increase its popularity. According to Qassem, the relationship with Iran has improved in time and has a solid background since its inception. This relationship is shaped around ideological, religious and strategic parameters. Hezbollah follows the *wilayat al faqih* institutionalized in Iran after the revolution and accepts Khomeini as

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the legitimate imam, or guide, of Muslims. Hezbollah is the first organization subjected to the *wilayat al faqih* doctrine in the world (Saad, 2019, p. 633). With the revolution, the Islamic Republic has been chosen as a form of government in Iran. Hezbollah is a follower and supporter of the Islamic Republic. On the other hand, Hezbollah's adherence to the religious leaders of Iran is not a political commitment but a spiritual dependency. As Qassem claims:

> There is no connection between the internal administration of the Iranian state and Hezbollah's administration. These are two separate issues, each having its particularities and bodies of administration despite the commitment of both to the commands and directions of the Jurist-Theologian who is the custodian of the entire nation of Islam and whose power of command is not confined to any circle within it (Saad, 2019, p. 634).

It is claimed that the differences in the application of Islamic rules by both actors stem from the unique characteristics of the two sides. Iran's foreign policy seems to be compatible with the political line that Hezbollah defends. According to Qassem (2007, p. 259), no matter who comes to power in Iran, Hezbollah-Iran relations will continue unchanged.

In the following years, Hezbollah has gained autonomy from Iran. In 1995, Hasan Nasrallah and Mohammad Yazbek were assigned as the representatives of Ayatollah Khamenei in Lebanon. As a result of this, Hezbollah gained independence to decide within the Lebanese context. As the organization took Khamenei's consent to participate in 1992 elections in Lebanon, thanks to this assignment, it decided to join the Lebanese cabinet in 2005 independent from the permission of Iranian religious leadership.

According to Barari and Akha-Roshida (2012, p. 118), "labelling Hezbollah as a proxy of Iran denies agency to a party and movement that remains located

and legitimized within a particular Lebanese milieu". Iran is an ideological and strategic ally for the organization that Hezbollah relies upon military assistance, training and economic aid from Iran. In one of his speeches in 2016, Nasrallah said that the weapons, missiles, money, and logistics of the organization are coming from Iran (UANI, 2016, p. 6). In addition, Tehran trains Hezbollah fighters in their wars against Israel and the Syrian opposition. These make Tehran superior to Hezbollah. This unequal balance of power makes the organization less autonomous in its relations with Tehran but does not equate it to puppet or proxy. Ideological and historical ties between Iran and Hezbollah are beyond the material calculations, which the American cannot understand (Saad, 2019, p. 645).

3.6. Taif Accords, 1989

Taif Accords ended the civil war in Lebanon, and political actors entered the post-war phase of politics. Taif strengthened the sectarian regime and provided a significant boost to the resilience of the sectarian system by reorganizing the sectarian control. In this regard, it maintained the sectarian distribution of power in the system (Comaty, 2019, p. 21). On the other hand, while reproducing the sectarian structure, it also prepared the ground for possible new conflicts (Atlıoğlu, 2014, p. 432). The patronage relationship created by each sect with the new system has increased the elite influence on the people. The idea of political representation commensurate with sectarian representation has been re-emphasized. In this context, firstly, representational sharing between Christian and Muslim communities was equalized.

According to the consensus between Muslim and Christian communities, the religious bases of the Lebanese political system were confirmed. The agreement redistributed power among the three major religious communities based on the principle of "coexistence" (Comaty, 2019, p. 32). The new regulations brought equal sharing of representation between communities. The 6:5 formula adopted after the National Pact in the division of expression in the parliament changed in favour of Muslims and set as 6:6 (Table 3). The number of seats in the parliament increased from 99 to 128, which was shared equally by Christians and Muslims. Sixty-four chairs of Muslims were divided into four: 27 for the Sunni, 27 for the Shia, 8 for the Druze and 2 for the Alawites. When compared with the situation before Taif, the Shia became the group that increased its representation highest. Sixty-four chairs of Christians were shared between Maronites (34), Greek Orthodox community (14), Greek Catholics (8), Armenian Orthodox community (5), Armenian Catholics (1), Protestants (1) and other Christian groups (1) (Table 3).

While the president's power was limited, the power and authority of the prime minister and the president of the parliament were increased. These reorganizations of senior positions have created a unique and unprecedented situation in Lebanon. Lebanon now had three representatives running the country: the president, the prime minister as head of the Council of Ministers, and the president of the parliament. Although the capacities of these three positions were different, the power was shared among this troika. Senior state cadres were also distributed according to their denominational identity. In this way, a balance was created in the state staff, and an attempt was made to prevent an internal conflict that may occur between sects. The system that emerged in the post-Taif period provided closer integration between the

country's sectarian, political and economic elite. At the same time, public services and resources were put at the service of their class interests that resulted in the gradual increase of elite control over state resources and the emergence of a socio-economic cycle of the kind that serves the material interests of the elites. In the continuation of this, sectarian identities were reproduced depending on the strengthening of patronage relations.

Taif abolished the sect quotas in the military and public service, and the Lebanese Parliament were authorized for appointments. The president was defined as the head of the army, but it was a symbolic position. The government, on the other hand, had the authority to declare war.

Taif also provided a set of regulations in the administration, education and judicial system to build a robust civil state. In this respect, a higher court was established to judge the presidents and ministers. A higher council was made to empower the Constitution. New reforms on education were held that aimed to create national cohesion and consolidation of the nation. Textbooks were re-written and unified about the integration of the nation.

Table 3: Distribution in the Parliament According to Sects in Lebanon Before and After Taif

CHRISTIANS	PRE-TAIF	POST-TAIF	MUSLIMS	PRE-TAIF	POST-TAIF
	Number of Representatives			Number of Representatives	
Maronite	30	34	Shiite	19	27
Greek Orthodox	11	14	Sunni	20	27
Greek Catholic	6	8	Druze	6	8
Armenian Orthodox	4	5	Alawite	0	2
Armenian Catholic	1	1			
Protestant	1	1			
Other	1	1			
TOTAL	54	64	TOTAL	45	64
Source: https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01587503/document					

After the Taif, militias adapted to the new state of affairs and political parties reverted to their political party status, aiming to restore the state's sovereignty and complete control of the Lebanese Army (Alagha, 1993, p. 99). In this context, there was an attempt to dissolve militias and commit their weapons to the Lebanese army. The accord called Israel to end the invasion of the Lebanese territory. It also established a special relationship between Lebanon and Syria. "The accord consecrated the role of the Syrian presence as a stabilizer and force of support to the Lebanese legal forces" (Comaty, 2019, p. 34). Syrian army assumed modernization of the Lebanese army. In this way, Taif justified the Syrian military presence since 1976 in Lebanon. Syria has become an influential factor in the administration of Lebanon with the help of

its extensive intelligence network and its allies in Lebanon. Even in the post-1990 period, Syrian administrators influence the state's executive, legislative, judicial, press and security institutions (Salloukh et al., 2015, p 25).

In addition to Syria's influence on institutions, the groups it supported within Lebanon would also dominate the political sphere over time. The most important of these groups was Hezbollah. With the end of the war, disarmament of all the militia forces involved in the civil war and participation of the fighters in the Lebanese Armed Forces excluded Hezbollah, defined as a resistance organization.

In the post-war period, this politicization of security and the pressure on the Lebanese political system by favouring Syria's allies in Lebanon increased the anger of anti-Syrian groups, especially the Christian opposition, and deepened the political divisions. The main opposition to Taif was the Kataib Party of Samir Geagea. According to Geagea, Taif empowered the Syrian hegemony in Lebanon, while it decreased the role and power of Maronites. Michel Aoun declared that Taif was a void agreement. Opposing Syria, he called to all non-Lebanese actors to leave the country. There were conflicts between anti- and pro-Syrian groups. The Iraqi government also supported Aoun. However, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1991 resulted in decreasing in Iraqi support for Aoun. As Syria criticized Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, relationships between the US and Syria got better for a while, which caused Aoun to stay unbacked in Lebanon. Aoun fled to France as a result. Another Maronite figure opposing Taif was Dany Chamoun, who was assassinated in 1990.

After Taif, the general elections, which could not hold since 1972, were organized on August 23rd of 1992. The first president of the post-Taif period

was Rene Muavad, who was killed three weeks after taking office. Elias Hrawi, a pro-Syria politician, was elected as the president, which empowered Syrian influence on Lebanon. Saudi Arabia played an essential role in the reconstruction of Lebanon after the war through the economic relations with the Sunni leader and businessperson Rafiq Hariri.

3.7. Post-Taif Period: 1990-2000

After Taif, restructuring and stability in Lebanon became essential goals. While the country was experiencing significant economic development, the civil war actors were legally secured through the enactment of an amnesty law in 1991, which "pardoned all crimes including the ones against humanity and those that seriously infringed human dignity that was committed in the civil war and excluded crimes committed against religious or political figures" (Comaty, 2019, p. 40). As the important actors of the civil war took power during this period, the aim was to continue the stability. On the other side, the public was tired of tensions and conflicts, and they expected welfare and peace. The system, in addition, required getting away from the crisis and returning to a normalized life.

In 1992, Lebanese businessman Rafiq Hariri returned from Saudi Arabia to take over the prime minister and restore order and economic stability. The slogan of his time appeared as economic growth, restructuring and stability. The pioneer of the reorganisation was Hariri's private company, Solidere. The company's motto was "Beirut: a city based on the future".

There have been changes in the political outlook of Hezbollah due to interaction with other actors in the post-civil war period that created a mixed

confessional space. There have been an emergence of a pluralistic political environment and public sphere and increasing openness of communities towards each other. Within this context, Hezbollah's identity is socially constructed through influences of domestic and international areas, including the end of the Cold War, the end of the Iran-Iraq War and globalization. Hezbollah faced a new situation, and it decided not to mobilize its resources to fight against Israel. As the Lebanese state attempted to implement the articles of the Taif and defined the country as the sole authority to use armed force in Lebanon, Hezbollah's armed force was threatened. To counter this, Hezbollah declared new political programs and organized campaigns aiming exclusion of Hezbollah from other militias. In the wake of the implementation of Taif, Hezbollah announced a political agenda in January of 1993. According to this new program arranged by Abbas Musawi, the second secretary-general of the organization, Hezbollah declared its intentions for maintaining resistance against Israel (1), open discussions to solve the problem with former enemies (2), and opening up a policy with Christians to construct a national unity (3) and solution of socio-economic and communal difficulties (4).

In this respect, Hezbollah's radical position evolved by the early 1990s, when it engaged in legal, political processes. Joseph Alagha (2013, p. 96) claims that the Arab Spring of Hezbollah began in the 1990s with its policy, the *infitah*, or Lebanonization. Changed its radical discourse and rhetoric, Hezbollah moderated its policies and began to struggle within the Lebanese political system, which it refused and aimed to replace it with an Islamic order from its establishment until the 1990s. Hezbollah's moderation occurred not only in the domestic sphere but also in regional and international politics.

Hezbollah re-established its identity, changed its strategy, and re-identified itself within the existing political structure (Alagha, 2013, p. xviii). Its attempt to "struggle within the existing system" was called Lebanonization or *infitah*. From a *realpolitik* perspective, it represented itself as an Islamic movement and a Lebanese nationalist party. It declared its will to cooperate and establish a relationship with Lebanese political groups, including rival Shiite groups and Sunnis and Christians.[8] Since the late 1980s, Hezbollah started to give signs of a more moderate stance regarding its politico-religious agenda (Bassedas, 2009, p. 24). It re-evaluated its purpose from the coercion of an Islamic state in Lebanon to implement Islamic order based on natural and free choice as exercised by the populace (Alagha, 2006, p. 28). The increasing moderation of Hezbollah's views reached a peak with its decision to participate in Lebanese elections in 1992. It succeeded in elections due to its promises on social services and opposition to Israel. Although it defended the use of violence in certain circumstances (to liberate the Shebaa Farms from Israeli occupation, protecting Lebanon's territorial integrity against Israel), it adopted pluralist practices when engaging with other domestic political actors (Schwedler, 2006, p. 9). Its 2009 Manifesto aimed a complete 'Lebanonization' and declared its will for political changes by democratic means. Transnational links such as *wilayat al faqih* and ideals like establishing an Islamic state in Lebanon are no

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[8] In the late 1990s, Hezbollah officers visited Maronite Church and developed close relations with Christian population of Lebanon. In return, it decreased use of religious and ideological symbols in Lebanese political life. During the municipal elections in 1998, the organization removed all religious and ideological symbols in Christian-living areas. In 2000, when Israel withdrew from occupied lands in Southern Lebanon, the slogan on Hezbollah's flag, 'the Islamic Revolution in Lebanon', replaced with a moderated and more 'Lebanonized' one: 'the Islamic Resistance in Lebanon'. During the 2004 and 2005 demonstrations, which were resulted in formation of Hezbollah-led 8 March Bloc, the organization not only carried its own flags but also flags of the Lebanese state.

longer included in its civic projects. The logic of functioning within the Lebanese state system is preferred to the sense of revolution (Alagha, 2013, p. 218).

Hezbollah witnessed the emergence of pluralist politics and increasing openness toward other communities and political parties. These motivated the organization to change its discourse and priorities that it became one of the major players in the public sphere. Hezbollah, therefore, altered its stance from:

-Islamization to integration,

-Islamic Revolution in Lebanon to Lebanonization,

-a religious-political program to a "down-to-earth" one.

A survey conducted by the American University of Beirut in the early 1990s shows the compatibility between Hezbollah's evolution and the changing attitudes of the Lebanese Shia in the post-Taif period. According to the survey, only less than 25% of the Lebanese Shia wanted to establish an Islamic state in Lebanon (Avon and Khatchadourian, 2012, p. 41). Similarly, the Lebanese public is also poised about the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon. According to Khatib (2014a, p. 16), the idea of establishing an Islamic state in Lebanon is not attractive for at least 50% of the Lebanese population.

It evolved as an ordinary political party with an extensive network of social services provided to Muslims and Christians and participated in legal, political processes, including parliamentary, governmental and municipal works and elections. It admitted the political system in Lebanon. According to

Dionigi (2014, p. 116), after it decided to participate in the political system, Hezbollah was exposed to domestic Lebanese politics and international norms. Even though it did not consider positive law as legitimate from an Islamic point of view, it became part of the legislation, which is secular. Hezbollah follows a two-rule policy in case of inconsistencies between positive law and the juridical principles of Islam. Firstly, Hezbollah prioritizes the *maslaha*[9], the Islamic jurisprudential concept of public interest and general good. For instance, it joins the legislation processes of several cases or collaborates with non-Muslims that contradict the Islamic principles. Matters, including regulation of the banking system, management of production, consumption, and marketing of alcoholic products, and gambling that are generally inconsistent with Islamic rules are approved within the context of *maslaha*.

The second rule compares the greater evil and the lesser evil, or *tezahum* (Dionigi, 2014, p. 120). *Tezahum* is a kind of assessment that, on the one hand, the jurisprudent weighs the effects of an action in terms of *maslaha*. On the other hand, the extent of the work is considered through Islamic principles: "When action greatly benefits the general interest, *tezahum* allows for the derogation of certain Islamic principles" (Dionigi, 2014, p. 120).

As a result, legislation in contradiction with Islamic rules would be approved to avoid a greater evil. To protect the social pluralism of the Lebanese social life, Hezbollah is claimed to tolerate the legislation processes. Social pluralism is considered as respect to the general interest. It allied with secular parties

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[9] This concept, which has an important place in Islamic thought, states that the main goal of Islam is the welfare of the people.

such as AMAL and former enemies, including the Christians and Sunnis, during the elections. In its political programs between 1992, the year of its first participation in the election, and 2010 Hezbollah stressed on:

-supporting the resistance against the Israeli occupation,

-establishment of civil peace in Lebanon and formation of the state of law, promotion of political participation and social, economic and political reforms, dialogue among the Lebanese communities,

-establishment of social and developmental programs dealing with health, education, culture and environment.

-application of socio-economic development plans to provide equality for the deprived areas and people.

The post-Taif process changed Hezbollah's relations with other religious communities. In the 1980s, Hezbollah was defining the Christians as *dhimmis*, the non-Muslims living in Muslim lands. The *infitah* process in the 1990s changed its rhetoric from dhimmis to *muwatana*, citizenship. Hezbollah even engaged in dialogue with the Lebanese Christians based on the Papal Guidance of the Vatican.

Hezbollah's *infitah* also brought transformations in its media outlets. *Al Ahd* was the first media outlet of Hezbollah. On the pages of *Al Ahd,* Ayatollah Khomeini's writings were published, and he was described as the guide fighting against injustice. *Al Ahd* printed Iranian leaders' photos, including Khomeini and Khamenei, with verses from Koran. In the transformation from radicalism to moderation, Hezbollah began to reduce the use of Iran-inspired

pictures. In the early 1990s, the organization established a television channel, *Al Manar*. It had broadcasts featured a mix of religious, political and social programs in the early 1990s. Notably, after the organization participated in legal, political processes, it began to broadcast programs appropriate for all Lebanese communities (Khatib, 2014b, p. 60).

Although *infitah* of Hezbollah displays its will to be integrated into the political system, it is claimed to be a tactical moderation. Conduit points out Hezbollah's "instrumentalization" of political processes to adopt its radical agenda (Conduit, 2014, p. 83). Judith Harik goes further and attributes its moderation to 'the adoption of modern political techniques and new technologies to spread messages and expand the influence of Hezbollah in many domains of national life' (Harik, 2004, p. 4). She points out that moderation of Hezbollah was opportunistic rather than authentic that psychological and material needs of the varying constituencies of Hezbollah caused its moderation (Harik, 2004, p. 4). In this respect, Hezbollah is claimed to be "a wolf in sheep's clothing", using moderation as an instrument and taking decisions independent from the Lebanese government.

On the other hand, rivalry and tensions between Hezbollah and Israel gradually increased. In the post-Taif period, Hezbollah increased its attacks against Israel. The number of attacks, which was 100 between 1985 and 1989, grew to 4430 between 1990 and 2000 (Ayhan and Tür, 2009, p. 167). The Lebanese State has supported the struggle of Hezbollah, the only militia that did not lay down its weapons after the Taif, against Israel. According to then-president Emile Lahoud, the battle against Israel in the occupied territories was supported by Lebanon. A legal arrangement that could be against

Hezbollah would not have been made (Ayhan and Tür, 20009, pp. 168-169). Hezbollah's attacks have resulted in significant losses to Israel. The insufficiencies of Israel's safe zone and Israeli security in Southern Lebanon have emerged. As a result, Israel withdrew its troops from Lebanon in 2000, which increased Hezbollah's popularity in Lebanon.

In the 1990s, Lebanon did not experience any significant internal conflict or civil war. However, Israeli attacks occurred in the south of the country. These were Operation Accountability in 1993 and Operation Grapes of Wrath in 1996. In addition to these, there have been many small scale conflicts involving Hezbollah. In these attacks of Hezbollah against Israel, approximately 1000 operations were carried out between 1990-1995 and around 5000 operations between 1996-2000 (Knudsen, 2005, p. 10). With Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Lebanese territories in 2000, the number of Hezbollah attacks on this country decreased. While Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon increased the popularity of Hezbollah in Lebanon, the existence of its armed wing continued to be questioned.

On the other hand, Hezbollah declared that it would continue its struggle and resistance until it leaves Israel's occupied lands, with Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000. However, according to Hezbollah, Israel's occupation of Lebanon has not yet come to an end. Because Israel still kept the Shebaa Farms, which was claimed to be the Lebanese land, under occupation.

After Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, the main subject of the Israel-Lebanon-Hezbollah triangle was Shebaa farms. Israel announced that Shebaa Farms belonged to Syria, not Lebanon, and occupied it after the 1967 War. Lebanon claimed that the Shebaa region was left to Lebanon by Syria in 1951.

Because in the period before 1967, the people of the area were paying their taxes to the Lebanese State, but Syrian soldiers provided the region's security. On the other hand, Hezbollah declared that Israel would not end the occupation unless it left Shebaa, and Hezbollah would continue to fight for it.

According to Atlıoğlu (2014, p. 434), two of the most important actors that the post-Taif era brought to Lebanese politics and joined the legitimate politics by entering the 1992 elections were Hezbollah and Rafiq Hariri. One of the shining figures of the Cold War and the post-Taif era, businessperson and prime minister Hariri aimed to make Lebanon an attractive destination for investors and carried out a neo-liberal restructuring project in this context. He carried out these policies with Saudi Arabia, the Lebanese diaspora and Gulf countries, with which he developed close economic relations (Baumann, 2016, p. 636). Hariri's policies, which followed an anti-Syrian attitude, led to the strengthening of the Lebanese economy, although they led to wealth at the top and concentration of unemployment and poverty at the bottom. On the other hand, his support for the disarmament of Hezbollah and Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon caused the breakdown of Hariri's relations with Syria and Hezbollah.

3.8. Lebanon in the 2000s: From Israel's Withdrawal to the Arab Uprisings

Israel's withdrawal brought the issue of withdrawal of Syria from Lebanon, which had troops in Lebanon, on the agenda again. Michel Aoun, who was in exile in France, was one of the pioneers of the anti-Syria movement. The Maronite Church also took an anti-Syrian position. Patriarch Sfeir claimed that Lebanon was not ruled by the Lebanese. He explained that Syria intervened in Lebanon's internal affairs and that it should get out of Lebanon and recognize

the sovereignty of Lebanon. Patriarch Sfeir even voiced his anti-Syria campaign in the international arena. In the US he visited, he declared that Syria was an invader in Lebanon, establishing its hegemony over Lebanese politics. Sfeir also asked for support from the US (Ayhan and Tür, 2009, p. 187).

Additionally, the Maronite Gemayel and Chamoun families and the Druze Jumblatt family took part in the anti-Syrian camp. The anti-Syrian base was gathered under a single roof in 2001. Patriarch Sfeir's visit to Walid Jumblatt resulted in an alliance between the two actors, which was crucial in two respects. First, the anti-Syrian camp started to be managed from a single centre. Second, it was a step towards ending the Maronite-Druze tension, which had a history of decades.

In 2001, Syria withdrew its troops from Beirut and left the control to the Lebanese Army, which was seen as a win for the opposition. However, the anti-Syrian camp could not find sufficient support within the Lebanese public. It is also difficult to say that it achieved to get the help of international powers. On the other hand, Hezbollah and its allies made propaganda for Syria to stay in Lebanon. In this context, Syria became one of the topics and a tool of the conflicts within Lebanon between Lebanese groups in the post-Cold War period. However, the inability of anti-Syrian groups to find enough support among Shiites and Sunnis made it difficult for their demands to be realized. Broad-based opposition to Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon would emerge with the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005.

The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 also affected Syria's presence in Lebanon. The US increased the measures against Syria by enacting the Syria Accountability Act 2003, which called Syria to respect Lebanon's sovereignty (Helou, 2020,

p.135). Therefore, what started as political friction between the US and Syria secured US support for Lebanese freedom and independence without Syria's intervention in Lebanese affairs. In 2004, the US started to impose sanctions on Syria. Syria was expected to end its military presence in Lebanon.

On the other hand, Syria attempted to extend President Emile Lahoud's term, whose term of office ended in Lebanon. The Maronite Church, Maronite parties and the US criticized this step. The US has tried to increase international pressure on Damascus. Towards the end of 2004, the UNSC took resolution 1559 and called for the disarmament of all Lebanese or non-Lebanese armed forces in Lebanon. This decision was directed at both Syria and Hezbollah. Syria's response to this was extending Lahoud's term of office, which inferred Lebanon was Syria's "backyard" (Ayhan and Tür, 2009, p. 191).

When unknown perpetrators assassinated those who objected to the existence of Syria in Lebanon, besides the Maronite and Druze groups, Rafiq Hariri, who was the prime minister since 2000, was one of the critical figures of the opposition. Hariri resigned in 2004 as a result of Syria's attempts to intervene in the government. Hariri did not leave politics after his resignation and started to prepare for the elections in 2005.

However, Rafiq Hariri was killed in a bomb attack on February 14, 2005. This situation increased the tensions between the Shiites and Sunnis. This assassination had significant effects on Lebanese political life. First of all, the anti-Syrian front in Lebanon could get Sunni support after the assassination, unlike it could not in 2000. In other words, the Sunnis have joined the anti-Syrian front. This situation, combined with international pressure, left no alternative to Syria other than withdrawing its troops from Lebanon. In this

process called the Cedar Revolution, Syria withdrew its troops from Lebanon on April 26, 2005, and an intense internal and external struggle began over Lebanon (Salloukh et al., 2015, p. 28).

After Hariri's death, a tribunal was established by the UNSC to investigate the assassination. Hezbollah and Syria have accused the work of this tribunal of working in favour of the US and Israel and trying to harm the resistance movement in Lebanon. However, the allegations that Hezbollah and Syria were behind the assassination put both actors under pressure. In Lebanon, the position of Hezbollah has begun to be questioned again, and its disarmament has come to the fore.

The withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon provided a political environment that allowed previously banned or suppressed movements to participate in political processes. Aoun returned from France, where he had been in exile for 15 years, following the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and the subsequent rapid withdrawal of Syria. In the same year, Aoun decided to turn the Free Patriotic Movement into a political party. Having adopted a secular discourse in the period 1990-2005 as a social movement, FPM adopted sectarian strategies and discourses to mobilize a predominantly Christian support base and compete with other political parties such as the Kataeb and Lebanese Forces the post-2005 period (Helou, 2020, p. 131). FPM's strategies in the post-2005 period contrasted sharply with its political position in the previous period. FPM, previously a secular movement, influenced Christian voters by participating in parliamentary elections in the post-2005 period. In this respect, he defended the interests of Christian voters to a large extent

through social and economic projects and adopted sectarian strategies centred on his sect.

Lebanese politics was officially divided into two groups after the withdrawal of Syria, the Syrian supporters and opponents: The March 8 Movement and the March 14 Movement. However, this division was influenced by Lebanon's nearly 100-year-old past full of conflicts, wars and tensions. Defining the ideological differences between these two camps according to their political position (opposing or supporting) after Syria left Lebanon was insufficient to explain the political situation of the two groups in Lebanon. The two camps were a product of the power struggle that emerged after the establishment of Lebanon, deepened during the civil war and determined by external forces such as Syria and the Arab League during the Taif process (Altunışık, 2007, p. 20). The March 8 Movement claimed that Syria contributed to protected Lebanon. It supported Syria to stay in Lebanon. Hezbollah and AMAL led this group. This group also received the support of Iran and Syria. The March 14 Movement, on the other hand, wanted Syria to leave Lebanon. It supported the investigation of the Hariri assassination. According to this group, Syria and Hezbollah were responsible for the assassination. In this respect, it supported disarming of Hezbollah. The March 14 Movement was led by the Future Party, led by Rafiq Hariri's son Saad Hariri, and supported by other Sunni, Christian and Druze groups. External supporters of this movement were Saudi Arabia, the US, and the Gulf states.

The demands of the March 14 Movement were the resignation of President Lahoud, who was thought to be responsible for the assassination of Hariri, and the security officers alleged to be planning the assassination and the

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establishment of an international commission to investigate this assassination (Rowayheb, 2011, p. 419). In response to this, the March 8 Movement aimed to gain success in the 2005 elections, organize protests, and consolidate its base. However, the 2005 elections were not successful; the March 14 Movement provided the majority. Thereupon, government members allied to Hezbollah resigned, thinking that the newly formed government would lose its legitimacy. Then there were protests led by Hezbollah and its allies. In the meantime, the UN tribunal investigating Hariri's assassination was criticized. It was observed that the tribunal was protecting the interests of the US and Israel. Hezbollah claimed that the tribunal demonized Iran, Syria and Hezbollah. In the following days, Muslim and Christian groups, members of the 8 March Movement, took their peaceful protests one step further and started to block the roads, occupy the neighbourhoods and attack opposition groups. The response of members of the March 14 Movement to these events was similar. Considering that the process was heading towards a civil war in the face of escalating tensions and violence, the March 8 Movement ended its protests by calling the army to duty (Rowayheb, 2011, p. 427).

On the other hand, the balance of power in Lebanese politics was challenged after Syria's withdrawal. As a result of the shift in the power balance, Hezbollah witnessed a policy shift and intended to manipulate the political realm and gain more power. As Alagha (2013, p. 110) asserts, "the party has resolved not to join the cabinet as long as Syrians were in Lebanon, since their presence accorded Hezbollah political patronage".

To counterbalance Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon, Hezbollah joined the cabinet. In Hezbollah's point of view, it was no longer possible to preserve the

Resistance outside of the decision-making structures. Therefore, Hezbollah joined the cabinet to counterbalance the 14 March Movement and its foreign patrons and continue its resistance movement. Participation in the government enabled Hezbollah to influence the decisions through the Lebanese Constitution, which was the resignation of 1/3 of the cabinet or resignation of the entire component of a religious sect. In addition, Hezbollah had to take a direct part in the cabinet to protect its rights and especially its militia after the withdrawal of Syria; otherwise, they could not veto a decision to be taken in this direction.

The political situation that emerged in the post-2005 period was as dangerous as the civil war between 1975 and 1990, and it was thought that a new civil war would break out. In the post-Taif period, Lebanon was dragged into a violent Sunni-Shia power struggle to control the state (Salloukh et al., 2015, p.28). The political conjuncture that emerged after Hariri's death has replaced the traditional rivalry between Christians and Muslims with a new division between Sunnis and Shiites, who constituted the vast majority of the population. Christians have taken the conventional equilibrium position that the Druze occupied between Christians and Muslims throughout history (Saouli, 2006, p. 173). While increasing the sectarian references, the tense politics, especially among Sunnis and Shiites, caused a new arms race. Religious communities organized new militia forces and physically and symbolically divided cities into ghettos (Salloukh et al., 2015, p. 29). The background of most leaders in the post-2005 period has also been another factor that increased the likelihood of a new civil war. Most of the former warlords and militia commanders who committed many war crimes and human rights violations were in active politics during this period that they

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succeeded to become a minister, security staff or deputy (Rowayheb, 2011, p. 419).

The March 14 Movement entered the 2005 elections under the alliance of the Future Party led by Rafiq Hariri's son Saad Hariri, Fouad Siniora, Walid Jumblatt, Samir Geagea and the Maronite Church. The 8 March Movement, on the other side, joined the elections under an alliance with Hezbollah, AMAL, Emilie Lahoud, Omar Karami, Suleiman Faranjiyya and the Free Patriotic Movement of Michel Aoun. The March 14 Movement, which won 72 of the 128 seats in total, became more successful. The most important result of the 2005 elections for the future of Lebanon was the rapprochement between Hezbollah and Michel Aoun.

> In the early 1990s, both FPM and Hezbollah shared a severe dissatisfaction with the national reconciliation document known as the Taif Accords, which ignored political perspectives in restructuring Lebanon's post-war political order. As a result, the ongoing dialogue between some FPM members and Hezbollah turned into a political understanding that led to support for FPM candidate Hikmat Dib in the engineer union elections in 1993 (Helou, 2020, p.67).

After the 2005 parliamentary elections, political alliances between Lebanese parties changed. FPM was a crucial participant in the March 14, 2005 protests. Hezbollah was the leader of the 8 March Movement. However, parties such as the Sunni Future Movement, the Druze Progressive Socialist Party and the Christian Lebanese Forces were not eager to form an alliance with the FPM in the 2005 parliamentary elections. Because FPM was in a stronger position among Christians than other parties, they thought that they could hinder the election success of FPM, which was seen as a rival. This situation prompted FPM to ally with Hezbollah and AMAL. A memorandum of understanding was signed between FPM and Hezbollah on February 6, 2006, by moving

further cooperation in the elections. The relationship between FPM and Hezbollah developed further during the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel. The Shiites who escaped from the attacks of Israel and mostly went to Beirut and Mount Lebanon were welcomed by the Christians living in the region with the support of Aoun. After the war, Hezbollah considered Aoun a nationalist and reliable ally, and a strong relationship emerged between the two actors. According to Helou (2020, p. 67), while Aoun should have increased its inter-sectarian support and FPM's gains in Lebanese politics, this relationship has put him into political tensions.

Since the end of the Lebanese Civil War, the intensity of internal conflict in the country has decreased significantly. However, there have been ongoing tensions between Christians and Muslims. According to Knudsen (2005, p. 10), while there was a significant decrease in the incidents of war-related violence, there was a gradual increase in attacks targeting politicians, activists, religious leaders and institutions. Knudsen points out that the reason for the "return of the bomb to Lebanon after the war" was the lack of a will to conduct an independent investigation into political murders and bomb attacks, especially from the 1990s to 2005. This was the controlling and oppressive administration method that Syria created over Lebanon within this period. On 1 October 2004, Druze deputy Marwan Hamadeh, one of the four MPs who voted against the extension of the term of the then pro-Syrian president Lahoud, on 2 June 2005, the anti-Syrian journalist and academic Samir Kassir, and the former leader of the Lebanese Communist Party, George Hawi, in the same year were killed after several attacks (Knudsen, 2005, p.11).

On the other hand, the supporters of Syria have also been subjected to attacks. The attack on former Minister of Defence and Deputy Prime Minister Elias Murr on 12 July 2005 was the first attack on a pro-Syrian politician (Knudsen, 2005, p. 11). The March 14 Movement announced that Syria had committed the assassinations to destabilize Lebanon and thus wanted to dominate Lebanon (Ayhan and Tür, 2009, p. 214). Walid Jumblatt claimed that Hezbollah also played a role in the assassinations. Hezbollah did not accept the accusations and claimed that Israel had a share in the attacks.

Following Hariri's assassination, the event that most affected Lebanon's politics and social life was the Israeli attack on Lebanon in 2006. Israel's attacks can be explained for different reasons. After the Hariri Assassination, the tensions experienced in the investigation of the background and the perpetrators of the assassination entered a different stage with the March 14 Movement's attempt to create public pressure to disarm Hezbollah. As a result of this initiative, which international actors also supported, Hezbollah's position in Lebanon and continuing to hold its weapons began to be questioned. Meanwhile, the process that started with the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah led to Israel's invasion of Lebanon and fighting with Hezbollah, while Hezbollah's resistance and the protectorate of Lebanon provided it with the opportunity to prove its identity.

Hezbollah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers to negotiate with Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners' release in Israeli prisons. Hezbollah Secretary-General Hasan Nasrallah has announced on several occasions that he declared 2006 as the "year of returning prisoners" and attempts to "capture Israeli soldiers and exchange them with Arab prisoners in Israel" (Krishnappa, 2007, p. 52).

However, Israel's response was harsher than Hezbollah had anticipated, and Israel destroyed the Lebanese infrastructure to a great extent and killed dozens of civilians by attacking Lebanon.

On 13 July, the Israeli navy blockaded the Lebanese territorial waters while the air force carried out airstrikes on different Lebanese cities to destroy Hezbollah's arsenal. In response, Hezbollah attacked Israeli targets and killed eight Israeli military personnel. Hasan Nasrallah declared Hezbollah's policy as defence and resistance against Israel.

This war has been beyond the traditional Arab-Israeli conflict. Both actors have moved around a broader political and ideological agenda. According to Israel, Hezbollah has become a more dangerous power since its withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000. Israel aimed primarily to destroy Hezbollah's military and logistical power by attacking Lebanon. In this context, settlements in cities where Hezbollah is strong were targeted (Makovsky and White, 2006). Thus, on the one hand, the attitude of the Lebanese people towards Hezbollah was tried to be changed; on the other hand, the Lebanese government and the public were forced to pressure the organization (Krishnappa, 2007, p.54). For Hezbollah, the Hariri assassination, the UNSC resolution 1559 in 2004 and the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon in 2005 led to dramatic changes in the organization's balance of power in Lebanon. Despite its increasing reputation in Lebanon and the region after 2000, domestic and international pressure on the organization increased after 2005. The allegations that Hezbollah and Syria were behind the assassination raised suspicions about the organization. The 2006 war with Israel provided the organization with the opportunity to regain its resistance identity and reputation in the eyes of the

Lebanese and Arab people. Moreover, with this war, Hezbollah declared its victory by guaranteeing the roles of the resistance movement and the country's protector (Khashan and Mousawi, 2007, p. 3).

The 2006 War was not traditional, but a guerrilla war carried out by a resistance movement against a state and its army (Wilkins, 2013, p. 51). With the acceptance of the UNSC's ceasefire decision 1701 in August 2006, the war ended. Israel withdrew from Lebanon after 34 days of the war. After the withdrawal, both sides declared victory. Hezbollah, on the other hand, has reinforced its positive reputation by helping civilians damaged by the war while increasing its popularity in Lebanon and the region. For example, in a survey conducted before the 2006 War, approximately 58% of Lebanese approve of Hezbollah's use of weapons, while a post-war study shows Hezbollah's support for its war against Israel was 87% (Hazbun, 2016, p. 1060). Another critical change created by the 2006 War was that Hezbollah shifted from its military defence strategy to offensive strategy. The 2006 War was a rapid factor in Hezbollah's transformation into a national resistance movement. According to Dabashi (2007, p. 299), the 2006 war made a quick transformation in Hezbollah's becoming a national resistance movement. The war caused the organization's increasing fame and reputation among the Muslim and Lebanese public. In addition to the polls showing increasing support for the organization, there were also social outcomes of Hezbollah's fame. For instance, after the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, many Arab poets paid tribute to the liberation praising the resistance and Hezbollah's role in it (Alshaer, 2014, p. 130). On the other hand, the dominant poetic juncture for Hezbollah was the 2006 war with Israel. Poets from outside

the Shia community and out of Lebanon praised and celebrated Hezbollah's resistance and struggled against the Israeli forces (Alshaer, 2014, p. 133).

The war between Israel and Hezbollah has sparked controversy among other Lebanese actors. Fouad Siniora claimed that the Lebanese Government had no responsibility in the war. Hariri, who criticized Hezbollah for dragging Lebanon into war by acting irresponsibly and acting according to the orders of Iran and Syria, tried to keep the Lebanese Army out of the war. Tınas and Tür (2018, pp.136-137) cite three factors as the reason for this. The first of these is the weakness of the Lebanese Armed Forces vis-à-vis the Israeli Army. Second, as a result of the confessional system, cadres in the military are shared between different sects. Members of the military are subordinate to sectarian leaders rather than the state itself.

According to the sects' assessment of the war, conflicts may arise at different army levels, and the army may disintegrate when involved in the war. The last one is the unwillingness of the March 14 Movement to get the Lebanese Army into the fight. Because the March 14 Movement hoped that Israel would neutralize Hezbollah, that Hezbollah would not regain its power and lose its influence in Lebanese politics, some of these requests have even been documented in leaked US diplomatic reports (Hazbun, 2016, p. 1059). The expectation of the March 14 Movement was the implementation of UNSC resolution 1559 and the disarmament of Hezbollah.

Like Hariri, the Maronites and Druze criticized Hezbollah for the unilateral action and claimed that it followed the policies of Iran and Syria rather than the Lebanese agenda. In the eyes of the Druze, Hezbollah "had given the excuse to use Lebanon as a battleground for regional powers to divert

attention away from its weapons and for the sake of its ambitions" (Tınas and Tür, 2018, p. 137).

After the war, the election of a new president to replace Lahoud increased tensions between the March 14 and March 8 movements. The parliament, which was convened for election, was not opened by the Speaker of the Assembly and the leader of AMAL, Berri, because there were not enough numbers. Hezbollah demanded more ministries as a condition for compromise with the March 14 Movement. In addition, Nasrallah stated that if the organization could not get the right for the veto, they prevent the president's election.

After the 2006 war, Hezbollah and its allies demanded more roles and veto rights from the government, but these demands were denied. Hezbollah and its allies' ministers in the cabinet resigned. The argument of the then Prime Minister Fuad Siniora in rejecting the veto right was that the Hezbollah-led front could undermine the work of the UN tribunal appointed to investigate the Hariri assassination once they gained the right to veto. Upon the rejection of the veto request, Hezbollah, AMAL, and FPM started a sit-in action to overthrow the government. The March 14 Movement, led by Saad Hariri, accused the Hezbollah-led 8 March Movement of being a puppet of Iran and Syria. Michel Aoun, one of the allies of Hezbollah, was labelled as power-hungry (Dakhlallah, 2015, p. 69).

On the other hand, the accusations of the 8 March Movement against Hariri were based on being pro-West, working in favour of Israel and harming the Resistance Movement. The tensions between the two sides evolved into street clashes between Shiites and Sunnis in the last months of 2006 and the first

months of 2007. Even towards the end of 2007, clashes took place between the jihadist organizations with the extension of Al Qaeda and the Lebanese Armed Forces. Attacks on politicians also occurred in this period. Anti-Syrian Maronite Industry Minister Pierre Gemayel in November 2006, Syrian MPs Walid Eido and Antoine Ghanem in June and September 2007, respectively, General François Hajj, one of the military commanders, in November 2007, and an intelligence officer in the Lebanese Internal Security Forces Command, Wissam Eid, who investigated the assassinations., were attacked at the beginning of 2008 (Dakhlallah, 2015, p. 69). Apart from these attacks on individual names, there were also attacks in Beirut's regions where Christians lived. In the following period, Hezbollah was accused of spying on prominent anti-Hezbollah figures and plotting their assassinations. In May 2008, the Lebanese government closed down Hezbollah's telecommunications networks because they were illegal and dismissed the Beirut Airport security chief, close to Hezbollah and threatened its intelligence and military capabilities (Conduit, 2014, p. 91). Hezbollah's response to the government's actions has been to engage in armed activities in Beirut, which resulted in several deaths and casualties. Neighbourhoods where Sunnis were densely populated and buildings belonging to media outlets close to Hariri were attacked. The conflicts were stopped with the initiatives of the Arab League, and the Doha Agreement was signed in 2008 between Hezbollah and the Lebanese government under the supervision of the Union. According to the agreement, while Hezbollah and its allies gained the right to veto, the parties were called upon to resort to arms for political gain and refrain from engaging in political/sectarian incitement (Dakhlallah, 2015, p. 72). With the agreement, Michel Suleiman was decided to be the head of state. According to the

agreement, the Council of Ministers would consist of 30 people; 16 of these would be appointed by the government, 11 by the opposition and three by the president. In addition, a new election system was created to be implemented in the 2009 elections.

At the end of the Doha process, Hezbollah has made their demands accepted. At the end of the process, it was revealed that Hezbollah, which claimed to be a part of the Lebanese political structure, had no intention of complying with the government's decisions on issues related to its armed wing. In addition, it has been observed that Hezbollah could counter any threat to its armed force. This has shown that Hezbollah's attempts to become a part of the government and become a Lebanese actor, which claimed to be a part of Lebanese legitimate political processes, were tactical and not caused by an ideological change. Hezbollah's military intervention in the Syrian Civil War would raise doubts about its Lebanese role and test its "sincerity".

On 30 November 2009, Hezbollah declared its last Manifest on the heels of its moderation and Lebanonization. From its Open Letter in 1985 to its Manifest in 2009, Hezbollah has presented an inclusive vision transcending the boundaries of Lebanon (Khatib, 2014a, p. 14). Before the early 1990s, the Great Satan and the Small Satan were used to define the US and Israel. After the Manifest in 2009, the "Zionist entity" and the "cancerous gland" became the most common descriptions of Israel. Israel represents a constant threat for Lebanon because of its historical goals on the Lebanese soil and ground sources (Avon and Khatchadourian, 2012, p. 140). The tone in the language used in the 2009 Document transformed into more moderate rhetoric. According to Shalabi (2015, p. 23), while the organization maintained its

discourse on anti-Zionism in the 2009 Manifest, the expression, "Israel must be completely wiped out of existence", turned into "it is a cancerous gland" that ought to be removed".

In the Open Letter of 1985, Hezbollah aimed to establish an Islamic state in Lebanon. In 2009, Lebanon is defined as the homeland, and the organization recognized the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon:

> Lebanon is our homeland, the land of our fathers and forefathers. It is the homeland of our children, grandchildren and of all generations to come. For its sovereignty, its dignity and its honour, for the liberation of its soil, we have offered the dearest sacrifices and the worthiest martyrs. We want that homeland to belong to all Lebanese equally, we want it to embrace them, encompass them, rise up through them and through what they bring to it. We want it to be unified and united as a land, a people, a state, and as an institution. We reject every sort of division or federalism overt and covert. We want it to be sovereign, free and independent, worthy, honourable, invincible, strong and powerful, a factor in the regional equations contributing in an essential way to the construction of the present and the future… that is what all Lebanese desire, what they work for and we are among these Lebanese (Avon and Khatchadourian, 2012, p. 140).

In this document, Hezbollah seems to give up the purpose of an Islamic revolution in Lebanon, respectful to the Lebanese political system and calling to all Lebanese without considering their religions and sects. However, it still demands reformation of the political system. The organization's declarations since 1985 show that it aspires to an Islamic democracy in Lebanon.

The 2009 Manifest delineates an almost Lebanonization of Hezbollah, at least in the discourse, since it no longer included transnational links such as *wilayat al faqih* and Islamic state in its first frame of authority (Alagha, 2013, p. 180). Moreover, it underlines the national goals as beneficial for all Lebanese people. It claims that its efforts will cooperate with all Lebanese to realize the national

plans helpful for all people (Avon and Khatchadourian, 2012, pp. 147-148). The Open Letter was inspired by Pan-Islamism; the Manifest can be claimed as a shift towards post-Islamism. The organization involved in political processes opened more space to Sunnis and Christians and aimed at pluralism and the end of sectarian tensions.

However, there are also some continuities in the attitudes of Hezbollah in both documents. Firstly, it can be said that Hezbollah's worldview did not alter drastically from 1985 to 2009. It emphasized the bipolarity of the international system and divided the world into two spheres: The East & the West against Hezbollah's line. Similarly, the Manifest in 2009 involves Ayatollah Khomeini's ideological bipolarity that divides the world into two: the oppressed or *mostazafin* and the oppressors or *mostakberin*. Secondly, Hezbollah underlines itself as a pan-Arabist and Islamist organization in both documents. When compared to the Open Letter, the pan-Arabist discourse is melted down in Lebanonization in the Manifest. Lastly, the organization demands privileged relations with Iran and Syria in both documents. While on the one hand, the organization emphasizes the necessity of unique relations including politics, economy and security between Lebanon and Syria and its interest for peoples of two countries, on the other hand, it points out Iran's importance for the Islamic world (Avon and Khatchadourian, 2012, pp. 150-152). That displays that the organization's close relations with both countries maintain both in its radical periods and the moderation process.

The world is divided into two camps in Hezbollah's ideology: *mostazafin* (the oppressed) (1) and *mostakbarin* (the oppressors) (2) (Jaber, 1997, p. 9). This division is based on the Qur'anic verses, Bakarah (2: 190-193), Nisa (4: 75) and

Nahl (16: 23). As declared in its Open Letter in 1985, it is one of the fundamental ideologies of Hezbollah that Alagha (2011a, pp. 131-132) transmits from Hezbollah's manifest: "…divergence is between the arrogant and the wretched, the oppressor and the oppressed, the haughty occupier and the pursuer of freedom and independence".

Hezbollah uses this dichotomy both in its understanding of life and conceptualization of domestic and world politics. As mentioned while explaining the Shia's process of radicalization and politicization since the establishment of the Lebanese state, Hezbollah uses the deprived position of the Shia in the Lebanese political, economic and social life. It defines the Shia as the oppressed people of Lebanon (Majdalani, 1999, p. 13). In politics, the US-led Western world and Israel are referred to as the oppressing camp, which follows brutal politics to dominate the world. The US is approved as the first root of evil, and fighting against it is defined as a just action (Avon & Khatchadourian, 2012, p. 110). It is similar to the Iranian Revolution's conceptualizing the world into two rival groups. After the revolution in 1979, the new regime in Iran called the US the "Great Satan" and Israel the "Lesser Satan".[10] On the other side, there are Iran-led revolutionaries, liberation movements and masses fighting against the first group's brutalities, oppression, and domination. As the new regime in Iran declared its support for the oppressed in the world and supported liberation movements worldwide within this context, Hezbollah also follows a similar policy. The organization uses the dichotomy of *mustazafin* and *mostakbarin* to form a world

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[10] Usually, the Soviets Union and Britain are also referred as Lesser Satans.

view. In other words, Hezbollah instrumentalizes these concepts in its determination of enemies or allies of the organization (Shalabi, 2015, p. 110).

The organization's division of the world into a bipolar camp is different from a kind of division between the East and West. Inspired by the ideology of the Iranian Revolution, the organization claims an only way of Islamic understanding, which defines all of the other doctrines as "others". It carries its ideology of *mustazafin* vs *mostakbarin* both in its Open Letter in 1985 and the Manifest in 2009:

> The countries of the oppressor world, in the East and the West, have coalesced to fight us (…) We think that the ideological struggle between America and the Soviet Union is a bygone… both have drastically failed in achieving felicity for mankind since both capitalism and communism have failed in solving human problems by establishing a just, balanced society (…) We exhort all the oppressed in the world to the necessity of forming an international front comprised of all the liberation movements (Alagha, 2011a, pp. 41-52).

3.9. Chapter Conclusion

The history of Lebanon consists of domestic rivalries among different sects and ideological groups and influence and involvement of foreign powers in Lebanese domestic politics. This chapter explained Lebanon's political history by emphasizing the cornerstone developments. As this dissertation aims to explain Hezbollah's foreign policy behaviour, the historical background of Hezbollah's formation should be analysed about the Lebanese domestic politics and the interventions of foreign powers. This chapter aimed to answer the radicalization and politicization process of the Lebanese Shia, which resulted in the emergence of Hezbollah. Arguments in this chapter will lead the reader to conceptualize the emergence of Hezbollah, its policies and its trajectory in the Lebanese context with its involvement in the civil war in Syria.

It will also help associate Hezbollah's activities, foreign relations and foreign policy.

The Lebanese Shia has been in an un-advantageous situation since the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the French mandate. Hezbollah's rise to power and its political reinvention is related to expanding the social constituency it addresses. The increasing power of the Shia in almost all spheres of Lebanese social life gave way to the strengthening of Hezbollah. It emerged as a radical Islamist and jihadist movement aiming to overthrow the Lebanese state and establish an Islamic state in Lebanon. The ideology and discourse of Hezbollah changed in time due to domestic and international developments. It can be said that the Lebanese public sphere dictated specific policies on Hezbollah. The end of the Cold War and globalization also can be influential factors. As a result, Hezbollah compelled to co-opt with the political system in Lebanon. Used arms to struggle with the Lebanese state, Israel and domestic opponents, Hezbollah was standing aloof from the Lebanese political structure. However, it recognized the legal, political processes after the Taif Accord in 1989 and the end of the civil war in 1990 and participated in elections in 1992. In other words, its challenge from radicalism to moderation took shape in 1992. Until the early 1990s, Hezbollah considered the armed struggle as an instrument of the establishment of an Islamic state. However, after it moderated in the 1990s, it regarded the armed struggle as an instrument to construct hegemony over the Lebanese political structure and a means of guaranteeing its power. After Taif, it was recognized as a resistance movement and claimed to protect Lebanon from foreign threats and invasions. Once accepted by the Lebanese state as a national resistance, Hezbollah legitimated its existence and action by referring to principles of

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international law as the right to self-defence (Dionigi, 2014, p. 154). After then, it stays as a national resistance movement represented in the Lebanese parliament and protects Lebanese territories from foreigners.

CHAPTER 4

A TRAJECTORY OF INVOLVEMENT: HEZBOLLAH AND THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR

This chapter following the previous chapter will look at Hezbollah in the post-2010 period. It will analyze Hezbollah's policy towards the Arab Uprisings, its involvement in Syria through different stages. It will discuss Hezbollah as a RHA through its involvement in Syria and bring forward a discussion on its identity. It will also question different Lebanese reactions to Hezbollah's involvement in Syria and thus its manifested regional identity.

Hezbollah's secretary-general Hasan Nasrallah claimed in 2008, two years before the Arab Uprisings:

> Hezbollah does not want to engage in feuds with any regime […] we do not want any bitterness with any Arab regime; we do not want any rivalry with any Arab regime, we clearly do not want to engage in any conflict with any Arab regime, not security-wise, politically or militarily, even in the media (Daher, 2016, p. 170).

However, this approach of the organization challenged within only two years. After the beginning of the Arab Uprisings in Tunisia in 2010 and then spread to other countries in the region, Hezbollah played an active role towards the people in Arab streets. However, it followed a very selective policy that while it supported uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, etc., declared an exact opposite strategy when the riots began in Syria.

The civil war in Syria was an armed conflict between the Ba'ath regime under the leadership of Bashar al-Assad and his supporters, and those seeking to oust him. It began as a part of the uprisings in the Middle East, called as Arab Spring, which brought challenges to the region . Opposition groups drawing attention on human rights, democracy and development of economic conditions demanded to topple of the Assad regime. However, when the Syrian army fired on the opposition groups, uprisings evolved into a civil war. Since the region witnessed foreign interventions due to the fragile conditions, several actors were included in the agenda both from and out of the region. With the involvement of radical and jihadi groups, such as ISIS (the Islamic State) and Al-Nosra Front, into the picture, the issue crucially internationalized. With the affiliation of foreign fighters in the civil war and reciprocal violence with the regime has dramatized the issue. With the beginning of the civil war in Syria, all sectarian violence among Shiite and Sunni groups increased, and sectarian oppositions in the region have begun to be defined based on Syrian uprisings. Involvement of the Lebanese Hezbollah and Iran, and their support for the Assad regime, the formation of opposition Sunni groups with the logistical and financial assistance of the Gulf, Saudi Arabia and Turkey aiming to topple of the regime, and involvement of the US and Russia have triggered violence in both international and regional fields. The civil war transformed into such a complicated issue that confused groups of alliances and fighting took place among the actors (Figure 2). Unpredictable effects of a possible regime change have caused engagement of several actors like Hezbollah and Iran, which are mobilized with ideological and political motivations".

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The organization firstly supported the regime in Syria and then militarily involved in the civil for in regime's side. There have been several criticisms to Hezbollah's intervention in the civil war that pointed out Nasrallah's speeches before the Arab Uprisings and Hezbollah's stance during the uprisings before spreading to Syria. There were claims that Hezbollah was making sectarianism through supporting the Alawite rule in Syria and fighting against the Sunni-majority opposition forces. Also, the organization was criticized because of killing Muslims and losing the sight of resistance against Israel. Hezbollah opposed these claims that it declared its support for both the Arab uprisings and the Assad government as part of its strategy of Resistance. As it is argued in the previous chapters, Hezbollah's resistance identity is based on the classification of the world affairs into two groups: the oppressors and the oppressed. Resistance identity explains Hezbollah's "contradictory" stance during the Arab Uprisings. Hezbollah supported the protestors in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, etc. in favour of resistance against oppression and West-affiliated leaders in the region. In this regard, protest movements were identified as anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist, and anti-Western. Protestors were composed of people whose demands were right and peaceful. In this way, Hezbollah's stance during the Syrian civil war can be evaluated within resistance discourse. According to the organization, the Assad rule in Syria was anti-imperialist and opposing Israel's policies in the region. The opposition, on the other hand, was pro-Western and supported by the US and Israel to topple the Assad regime, which was a part of Resistance Front. In this way, Hezbollah classified both Arab protestors in Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, etc. and the Syrian state as the oppressed. That made them a part of Resistance, which removed the suspicions about Hezbollah's "contradictory" stance

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during the Arab uprisings. Therefore, Hezbollah's intervention in the civil war and its support for Syria becomes "non-contradictory" with its Lebanese identity and support for other Arab uprisings.

Figure 2: Complex Web of Alliance in Syria
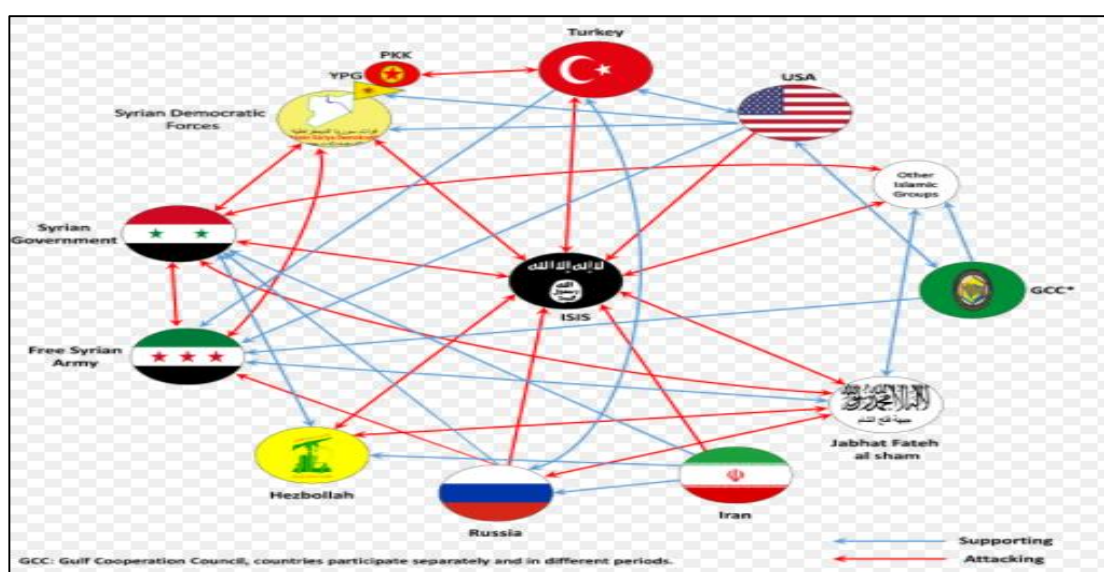
Hezbollah's intervention in Syria displays the organization's character and ideological reasoning. According to Armenak Tokmajyan (2014, p. 108), religious and political factors certainly played and still play a fundamental role in its decision. Hezbollah followed a four-stage policy towards the uprisings in the region. Before the uprisings spread to Syria, the organization supported the mass movements (Table 4). Hezbollah defined the popular uprisings as a natural continuation of the Iranian Revolution (Khatib, 2014b, p. 115). According to the organization, masses were organized around the idea of Islamic Awakening that inspired by the Iranian Revolution in 1979. The uprisings were carrying an anti-American and anti-Zionist agenda and

inspired by the resistance movement led by Iran. Hezbollah was pleased from the attempts aimed overthrow of dictatorships in Tunisia and Egypt. It claimed that the fall of the Mubarak regime was the fall of the Lebanese 14 March Movement, which were both serving to American interests in the region (Khatib, 2014b, p. 114). Even in the case of the fall of Muammar Gaddafi's regime, Hezbollah was happy that it had a personal score to settle, one that abduction of Imam Musa Sadr happened in Libya in 1978 (Mikaelian and Salloukh, 2016, p. 139).

When the uprisings began in several countries in the Middle East in 2010, they have caused profound influence on Hezbollah's standing in the region, its relations with neighbouring states, and quite likely, its future within Lebanese and regional politics. This chapter will evaluate Hezbollah's trajectory of involvement in the Syrian Civil War from the beginning of Arab Uprisings to 2020. In this regard, Hezbollah's participation in the civil war, motivations led it in Syria and its armed operations in the field, and reactions from Lebanon and Syrian actors against its involvement will be explained in the following parts.

4.1. Four Stages in Hezbollah's Trajectory: From Supporting Arab Spring to Involvement in Syria

Hezbollah's perception of the Arab Spring and its actions in the field in Syria can be analyzed through four stages between 2010 and 2020. These stages proceed through accumulation and do not follow a chronological order. They include several developments caused changes in rhetoric and policies of the organization. In every stage, it is possible see the similar strategies of organization or impact of the former stages. For instance, in the stage of action

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and further deployment Hezbollah used similar rhetoric. In this regard, classification of stages is about the organization's generalizable policies and strategies in the context of both discourse and operations.

Table 4: Nasrallah's speeches on the Uprisings across the Middle East.

THE ARAB UPRISINGS AND HEZBOLLAH	
After the Uprisings began in:	Hasan Nasrallah said that:
Tunisia	"We must congratulate the Tunisian people on their historic revolution, their strategy and their uprising. The regime in Tunisia was under the Western control".
Egypt	"Tyrants have gone away. We call on the people of Egypt to unite, because division could be a prelude to the resurrection of the ruling regimes. Congratulations to the Egyptian people on their historic and honorable victory, which is a direct result of their pioneering revolution".
Libya	"It is a revenge that had kidnapped Musa Sadr in the 1970s. Libyan regime is now slaughtering its own people. What is taking place in Libya is a war imposed by the regime on a people that was peacefully demanding change".
Yemen	"It is not possible to keep silent about killing and oppressing the demonstrators in Yemen. We praise the steadfastness of the Yemeni people and their commitment to their peaceful movement".
Bahrain	"Why is the movement in Bahrain condemned and the injured accused? Just because of they are Shiites? We have always been with the Palestinian people, but sect of the Palestinians was never an issue for us".

4.1.1. Stage of Verbal Support

The first stage consisted of the period when Arab uprisings started in the Middle East. In 2010, the self-immolation of Muhammad Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vendor, because of having financial problems became the catalyst of the uprisings. Following Bouazizi's death, firstly Tunisians revolted against the Tunisian government. Revolts expanded to almost all-region in the following days. People demanded amelioration of economic conditions and initiatives in

human rights issues. After Tunisia, revolts emerged in Egypt, Algeria, Yemen and the Gulf states. Syria became the last and ongoing address of revolts. From the beginning of the uprisings, Hezbollah did not stay silent and declared its support for people. In the first stage, the stage of verbal support, the organization defined the riots as just and democratic demands of people against their authoritarian and the pro-US rulers/regimes. According to the organization, riots in the Arab streets were comprised of masses, who supported the Palestinian cause and fight against Israel. On the other hand, Arab regimes were not representative of these people that "regime change—for the most part—would be positive for Hezbollah" (Al-Aloosy, 2020, p. 141).

Encouraged protesters to establish democratic systems, Hezbollah declared its solidarity with them:

> We are gathering here to announce our solidarity, and our standing side by side in support of the people of Egypt, and before we stood side by side in support of the people of Tunisia. You are waging the war of Arab dignity. Today, with your voices, blood and steadfastness, you are retrieving the dignity of the Arab people; the dignity which was humiliated by some rulers of the Arab world for decades (Nasrallah, 2011a).

Hasan Nasrallah, the secretary-general of the organization, defined the uprisings in the Arab world as the revolutions not only against the US and Israel but also against corruption, oppression and hunger (Nasrallah, 2011). Nasrallah declared that:

> This is the true path, when people believe in their resolve… this is the new Middle East created by its own people. Your spring has begun; no one can lead you to another winter. Your belief, vigilance and resilience will overcome all difficulties and make you triumphant (Alagha, 2011b, p. 188).

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According to the organization, uprisings developed in an anti-American and anti-Israeli manner. As Nasrallah declared:

> (…) the ongoing revolutions were made by the people against pro-US regimes, which do not pose any sort of threat to American policies and unequivocally Israel. America does not trigger revolutions against such submissive regimes. It is irrational to say that these revolutions are cooked in the US kitchens, and that this would have been a probability if this or that regime is against Israel (Nasrallah, 2011b).

In Lebanon, several groups supporting the masses gathered in the squares of Tunis and Cairo came together to show their solidarity with opposition groups in Tunisia and Egypt (Wählisch and Felsch, 2016, p. 2). These groups were composed of leftist Lebanese organizations, Islamist groups, and Tunisians and Egyptians in exile in Lebanon. They aimed to fix the Lebanese public's attention to fundamental human rights, media, women rights and democracy in Lebanon. In addition to Hezbollah-led 8 March Movement, 14 March Movement also supported the uprisings taking place in the Arab world. On the other hand, 14 March Movement was worried about losing its Egyptian ally, Mubarak.

4.1.2. Stage of Advisory Role

However, when the uprisings reached to the streets of Damascus, and riots began in Syria, Hezbollah experienced several challenges. It was the second stage, the stage of the proposal, of Hezbollah within the Syrian civil war and Arab Spring context. Since the downfall of the Assad regime would cause an existential risk for Hezbollah, the members of the organization consolidated to give support for the Syrian government (Tınas, 2016, p. 239). The demise of the Assad regime was an existential threat for the organization because it was heavily depended on militarily, financially, ideologically, and politically

Syrian and Iranian support. Fall of the regime would cause achievements of Shiite both in Lebanon and in the region.

In the early days of uprisings in Syria, Hezbollah's activities in Syria were limited. It sided with the Assad regime but did not make more than advisory and supporting roles. It only encouraged the Assad government to make political reforms. According to the organization, the government in Syria was open to make political reforms (Nasrallah, 2011c).

> Since the beginning of Syria's war, we have said that Assad's regime has its merits and demerits. Reform is required, and the only way to reach this is through political dialogue. I have contacted Assad and members of the opposition to reach a settlement. Assad accepted the suggestion whereas the opposition rejected it (Nasrallah, 2013b).

The organization publicly supported the Assad regime in Syria and opposed to the protesters. It blamed the protesters as foreign forces backed by the US. Nasrallah said that he was a friend of Syria, but not a Syrian agent in April of 2012 (Alagha, 2013, p. 221). In this stage, Nasrallah rejected the claims that allege Hezbollah's direct interference in Syria. He also denied the accusations that the organization sent fighters to Syria. He insisted on Hezbollah's advisory role and peaceful diplomacy in Syria.

Unlike Hezbollah's worries about the uprisings in Syria, which it saw them as a threatening factor for the Lebanese minorities, and security of Hezbollah, March 14 Movement was happy with the beginning of the uprisings in Syria (Fakhoury, 2016, p. 24). It considered the Syrian uprisings as a chance for the fall of the Assad regime which could provide more independence for Lebanon (Wählisch and Felsch, 2016, p. 2). It was therefore March 14 leaders defined the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon in 2005, which was resulted in withdrawal

of Syrian troops from the Lebanese territories, as the first step of the Arab Spring. The uprisings in Syria were continuation of Cedar Revolution. Although March 14 Movement's position in the beginning of Syrian civil war was limited with advisory role for the opposition, one member of the bloc then admitted that the movement transferred arms to the opposition groups in Syria (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2012). Because they saw the uprisings in Syria as a chance to weaken the influence of Hezbollah, the most important ally of Syria in Lebanon (Salem, 2012, p. 5).

During this period, Lebanese political life entered into a period of political vacuum, which will deepen in the following years. In March 2013, the Najib Mikati Government resigned after a dispute with Hezbollah on the latter's refusal of extending the tenure of Lebanon's national chief, who was a Sunni official. In the following month, Tammam Salam was elected as new Prime Minister. He gave eight seats out of 24 to each of March 8 and March 14 movements. The remaining eight seats were given to unaligned parties. As a result, neither March 8 nor March 14 movements did not have veto power. In the Salam Government, Hezbollah gained the Foreign Ministry and Industry Ministry.

4.1.3. Stage of Action

In 2013, when the opposition in Syria strengthened and began to threaten the regime, Hezbollah's involvement shifted from an advisory mission to direct combat and operations in large number alongside the regime (Sullivan, 2014, p. 12). That is the third stage, stage of action, of Hezbollah in Syria. In the lenses of the organization, what was taking place in Syria had transcended the calls for reform and democracy. Nasrallah, who supported the reform process in

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Syria, changed his position and began to blame the opposition for what was happening in Syria and for their rejection of a dialogue process (Tınas, 2016, p. 256).

According to the organization, Syria was at the centre of the Resistance, and its fall to the hands of the opposition groups could be resulted in Hezbollah's surround by the US, Israel and *takfiris*. Fall of Syria would cause Israel's impositions new conditions on Lebanon, and it would affect the Palestinian resistance (Ezzi, 2020, p. 2). The war evolved into a sectarian phrase that ISIS and Al-Qaeda groups became more powerful than before. Participation of jihadists in the opposition groups was seen as a direct threat for Hezbollah. For this reason, as Nasrallah claimed, there was no more option for Hezbollah to involve in the civil war:

> What would be the case if the *takfiri* trend takes control? The *takfiri* does not accept anyone within itself… The *takfiri* terrorism should be defeated in Syria. If the axis gains victory in Syria, all the Lebanese will be safeguarded (Nasrallah, 2014).

As Tokmajyan (2014, p. 109) claims, Hezbollah's argument of calling the opposition in Syria as *takfiris* was an instrument of preemptive measures for the prevention of an expansion of the war into Lebanon.

When the Assad regime's power declined against the opposition groups, military action emerged as the only and ultimate solution for Hezbollah for the sake of the organization itself, the Syrian regime and the Shi'i achievements in Lebanon and region. The organization's historical experience in urban and guerilla fighting became an essential factor in supporting the Assad government against the opposition (Devore and Stahli, 2012, p. 344). The recapture of Qusayr by the Hezbollah supported-Syrian forces became a

turning point for Hezbollah's trajectory of involvement in Syria. Then, Hezbollah joined further operations in Syria including Qalamoun, Damascus, Daraa, Aleppo and Idlib, which both helped the organization to be permanent in the battlefield and deepened the political gap between the organization and its adversaries in Lebanon and the region (Daily Star, 2013a; 2014a; 2014b).

In the third stage of Hezbollah's trajectory in Syria, the Lebanese sub-state actors showed diverse reactions against the fate of the Assad rule in Syria and Hezbollah's involvement in the civil war. On August 7th of 2014, there was an armed conflict between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Al Nosra Front in Arsal around the eastern regions of Beqaa Valley (Aziz, 2014). There were more than 20 Lebanese soldiers who lost their lives in the conflict. The March 14 Movement under the leadership of Future Movement claimed that the conflicts showed that the civil war in Syria reached the Lebanese frontiers. Saad Hariri, the leader of Future Movement, criticized Nasrallah "for calling for restraint at home while reinforcing his commitment to the battle in Syria which has polarized Lebanon and sharply raised sectarian tensions" (Reuters, 2013). As Pew Research (cited in Tınas, 2016, p. 236) points, while almost 80% of Sunnis were in favor of the opposition and supported overthrown of Assad, it was 30% among the Christians, and only 3% among the Shiite. These rates indicate the tense sectarian contrast between the Shiite and Sunni in the wake of the civil war in Syria. Christians, on the other hand, had a more balancing position between these two sects. There was a disagreement between the Lebanese Christian groups. Maronite Church had been opposing the Syrian political and military pressure over Lebanon since the end of the Lebanese Civil War. However, the beginning of the civil war in Syria caused changes in the Church's attitudes toward Syria and Assad. The possibility of Assad's

overthrown and Muslim Brotherhood's power grab in Syria was defined as a threat to the Lebanese state and Christians living in the region. Existence of a secular administration in Syria was important for the Church. In addition, there was no a consensus among other Christian figures on Syria. Amine Gemayel, the leader of Kataeb Party, was neutral because of a possible spillover effect. Samir Geagea, the leader of the Lebanese Forces, was opposing the Assad rule in Syria. Michel Aoun, the President of Lebanon, was in favor of Assad. Similarly, Gebran Bassil, the leader of Free Patriotic Movement and Aoun's son-in-law, was supporting Assad against the opposition groups.

Walid Jumblatt, the Druze leader, had a flowing stance about Syria and Assad. At first, he was a critic of Syria before the 2000s that he claimed Syria as the one behind assassination of his father in 1977. In the beginning of the Syrian Uprisings, Jumblatt defined the protests as an American and Israeli plan. However, in the following periods, he began to criticize Assad. Tınas explains these changes in Jumblatt's position with two factors:

> The first one is his concern about the survival of his community, which are intensely populated in the southern Syria and some in Idlib province in the north. The second one is that as a comparatively smaller community in Syria too, the Druze are not able to afford to be on the losing side of the ongoing sectarian contest in the region (Tınas, 2016, p. 250).

As a result of the political disputes based on the Syrian war between the March 8 and March 14 movements, the general elections, which were to be done in 2013, and the presidential elections, which were to be done in 2014, were delayed that caused deadlocks in the Lebanese bureaucracy and political structure. Moreover, a weak Lebanon without a president in this period was a

more preferable choice for Hezbollah that there was no an authority, which can criticize its armed wing in Lebanon and its presence in Syria (Khatib, 2015).

In this period, the President Michel Suleiman's term ended. Hezbollah blocked the parliament for almost two years until 2016 (Daily Star, 2015). It aimed to elect Michel Aoun, a Hezbollah ally, as the new Lebanese President. In this way, Hezbollah aimed to benefit from the political vacuum in Lebanon and easily make military deployments in Syria (Schenker, 2016). In addition, it pressured the Lebanese actors when its intervention in the civil war in Syria become the main topic of the agenda.

In 2016, Hezbollah, who was more powerful in the Lebanese political life than before, and other Lebanese actors compromised on Aoun's election as President of Lebanon. Election of Hezbollah-backed former general Michel Aoun ended a 29-month political vacuum caused by disagreement in the deeply divided parliament. Saad Hariri, on the other hand, was designated as the Prime Minister. New positions of Aoun and Hariri were defined as Hezbollah's political exchange with the March 14 Movement that none of them would be elected without the support and consent of other sides. Hariri was criticized by its domestic and foreign supporters such as the Gulf and Saudi Arabia because of his support for a Hezbollah ally. Hariri defended himself and said that it was a necessity to protect Lebanon, system, state and people. Lebanon was already in a political deadlock based upon domestic and international issues. The country was under the burden of a deep economic depression. International pressure because of Hezbollah's armed wing and its activities both in Lebanon and world triggered political pressures over the Lebanese state. Foreign financial aids and credits were canceled because of

government's inability to control Hezbollah's operations. Moreover, there was a problem of Syrian migrants, who were an additional burden over the Lebanese economy. Therefore, Hariri had no option other than supporting Aoun's candidacy for presidency. Dionigi (2016) explains two factor behind Hariri's support for Aoun: legitimacy crisis he faced within his constituents (1) and financial troubles of Hariri family (2). As a return of his support, Hariri was nominated to prime ministry.

Saleh Machnouk (Washington Institute, 2020) points Aoun's election as Hezbollah's capture of the Lebanese political system in addition to former developments including the group's 2008 invasion of Beirut and its using military force in 2011. According to Nicholas Blanford (2016), "the election of Michel Aoun as Lebanon's 13th president cements Hezbollah's immunity against domestic opposition and safeguards its military priorities the simmering confrontation with Israel and its armed intervention in Syria".

Holding the general elections and solution of security problems originated from the civil war in Syria and Syrian refugees in Lebanon were primary purposes of the Hariri Government. Hezbollah was also insistent on the solution of the migrants issue, whom it perceived as a threat. Because almost the whole of migrants were composed of Sunnis, who were critical of Hezbollah and its activities in Syria. In the elections in 2016, Hezbollah and the March 8 Movement gained the majority in the parliament for the first time since 2005.

4.1.4. Stage of Further Deployment

In 2017, ISIS began to lose its power and withdrew from territories thanks to cooperated efforts of Russia and Iran, and anti-ISIS international coalition. Declining of *takfiri* threat led Hezbollah to develop plans of long-term presence in Syria. That was the turning point in Hezbollah's strategy in Syria. It was the last stage that Hezbollah aimed at further deployment in Syria. In 2015, Nasrallah explained the organization's future plans in Syria as:

> We are fighting alongside our Syrian brothers, alongside the army and the people and the popular resistance in Damascus and Aleppo and Deir Ezzor and Qusayr and Hasakeh and Idlib…we are present today in many places and we will be present in all the places in Syria that this battle requires (Pollak, 2016, p. 14).

The organization had already developed a Shiite network called Syrian Hezbollah that organized, trained and led the Shiite fighters coming to Syria. According to Ezzi (2020, p. 3), Hezbollah had three main areas of operation in Syria. These are major Shiite sites, southern Syria, and the Lebanese-Syrian border. In this stage, the organization aimed Shiitezation of Syria. Almost 15-20% of the Syrian population is composed of Alawites, which is counted as a sub-sectarian identity within the Shiite understanding of Islam. However, there are several claims about Alawites that see them out of Shiite and even some religious authorities in Shiite declares Alawites as a non-religious belief. The conversion of Syrian Shiite would be towards *wilayat al-faqih*, which was advocated by Ayatollah Khomeini after the Iranian Revolution in 1979, understanding of Iran. As Hezbollah was also a believer of this understanding, it sought to create a Shiite structure that was close to its theological and political belief.

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In order to feed this strategy, the organization completed its purpose by installing infrastructure and military bases in Syria. For instance, it built roads, tunnels, and arsenals to safe the Hezbollah-controlled areas in Qalamoun and Qusayr along the Lebanese-Syrian border, and the "Triangle of Death", which includes the intersection area of Damascus, Daraa and Quneitra. In this way, the organization aims to guarantee its further deployment in Syria. This goal is based on three political, security-related, and economic reasons. Firstly, the organization wants to safe the Lebanese-Syrian border and the dual citizens living there. In this way, it aims to control border crossings and transit routes between the two countries. The organization has several bases along the border, where it trains its members. Besides, control of the border areas empowers Hezbollah's claims of protecting Lebanon. The political rationale behind Hezbollah's intervention in Syria is based on its Lebanese identity and the role of the protector of Lebanon. Secondly, further deployment of the organization in Syria and the rise of military bases built along the Lebanese-Syrian and Syrian-Israeli borders enable the organization to open a new front for the Resistance against Israel. These military investments along the border provide the organization to expand the boundaries of the fight with Israel. Also, these military bases, including tunnels, roads, and armouries protect Hezbollah's bases from possible Israeli attacks (Ezzi, 2020, p. 8). In addition, the military deployment in the region enables the organization to balance deterrence with Israel. Thirdly, the organization had several economic opportunities from the political vacuum that emerged after the beginning of the civil war and Assad government's loss of control. The organization enjoys the drug trade that makes exports to Jordan and the Gulf countries, and even to Europe through using Syrian territories (Ezzi, 2010, p. 10). In addition to the

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drug trade, the organization became the monopoly in smuggling of people and products from Lebanon to the Syrian market. The organization also makes a trade of weapons that it sells light weapons to opposition forces, which it fights. Illicit activities are another tool of Hezbollah's revenue coming from Syria. The organization buys and sells the abandoned properties and real estates of displaced Syrians in Hezbollah-invaded and controlled areas. As the organization intervened more in the civil war, it began to exploit more economic benefits and ways of self-financing. In the context of sanctions on Iran, and Hezbollah's human and financial losses in Syria, the organization's control over alternative economic sources help it to maintain its operations and plans in Syria.

During this period in Lebanon, Hariri government, which was formed only a year ago, resigned. Hariri declared its resignation due to Hezbollah's role in the Lebanese politics and the political atmosphere in Lebanon. Many analysts defined the resignation as a result of regional competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Hezbollah, on the other hand, overshadowed itself behind the Hariri government. Lebanon with a political vacuum was better for the organization. In this way, on the one hand, it consolidated its power in Lebanon, on the other hand, increased military operations in the region (Ghaddar, 2017). However, Hariri's resignation can be read as a political threat for Hezbollah. As the organization performs in an environment with a functioning government, it provides legitimacy for its status both in Lebanon and abroad. After Hariri's resignation, it can be said that, the organization lost one of the pillars of its legitimacy.

In 2017, the new electoral law was enacted that empowered Hezbollah and its allies (Ghaddar, 2018a). The amendments in electoral law were based on proportional representation. The new law reduced the number of districts from 26 to 15, which caused every region to be more homogenous than before. The new law boosted the status quo actors including Hezbollah. The organization reaped the fruits of the new electoral law in elections, which were held in the following year.

In the elections in May 2018, while Hezbollah and its allies were the dominant actors, Hariri's Future Movement lost almost a third of its seats. However, Hariri was designated as prime minister. Negotiations to form a new government lasted until January 2019. In the meanwhile, Lebanon's economy got worsened, which caused hundreds of Lebanese citizens to protest because of deteriorating living conditions and falls in the value of national currency, the Lebanese pound, in September of the same year. In a short span of time, protests grew and turned into opposition to corruption, poor infrastructure and sectarian political system in October 2019. Hezbollah was defined as a threatening actor for Lebanon's political structure and one of the perpetrators behind corruption. At the end of the October, Hariri announced his government's resignation. In December 2019, Hasan Diab, backed by Hezbollah, was named as the new prime minister. However, he was rejected by protesters. Nevertheless, Diab formed a new government in January 2020. The government was composed of a single political camp that was made up of Hezbollah and its allies, who were the majority in the parliament.

The explosion in Beirut Seaport on August 4, 2020 got Lebanon into a worse political atmosphere. Almost 200 people died and 6000 were wounded in the

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explosion. The 15 billion $ damage of explosion deepened the economic crisis in Lebanon, which was already shaky due to decreases in value of money and Covid-19 pandemic. Hezbollah was pointed as the responsible actor of the explosion. However, it was rejected by Nasrallah. On the other hand, Hezbollah accused Israel as the actor behind the explosion. In this way, Hezbollah aimed to turn the public's eyes from its Syrian trajectory to the Israeli threat.

After the explosion, the Minister of Finance, Ghazi Wazni, a Hezbollah ally, and Hasan Diab resigned from the government. Although it seems that Hezbollah lost its supporters in the cabinet and its influence, Hanin Ghaddar (2020) points a different dimension. According to Ghaddar, Hezbollah aimed to alienate itself from the government it supports, and distance itself from the responsibility of the explosion.

The explosion maintained the protests of October 2019 and new protesters walked along the streets of Beirut, majority of whom was Sunni and Christians. There were also Shi'i Lebanese people supporting the protests and criticizing Hezbollah's foreign interventions. The Shiite was also complaining about the economic conditions in Lebanon. Moreover, there was criticisms and hatred among the Shiite against Hezbollah's military operations.

However, Hezbollah continued its weight on the Lebanese political system. It benefited from the sectarian nature of the structure. Hezbollah's intervention in the civil war in Syria increased sectarianism and tension between the Sunnis and Shiite. It seems Hezbollah exploited the sectarianism. Its legitimacy rises on three pillars including Resistance, provision of services, and the Shiite identity. After the civil war in Syria, Hezbollah changed the discourse of

Resistance, which was composed of the fight against Israel before, to resistance against takfiris and jihadism. Shiite identity emerged as a consolidating factor among many of the Shiite. On the other side, Hezbollah's pillar of provision of services was badly influenced by the Syrian civil war. Financial problems the organization faced because of the civil war's economic burden caused the organization to decrease its social aids. As a result, the claims of Hezbollah's loss of resistance against Israel and financial problems, only the Shiite identity left as the pillar of legitimacy for the group.

4.2. Hezbollah's Motivations in Syria

There are four motivations behind Hezbollah's intervention in Syria. Firstly, Syria is one of the members of the axis of Resistance, which includes Iran, Hezbollah and the Iraqi Shiite. This axis is formed against the existence of Israel and the US interests in the region. Iran provides military and financial aids to the axis. However, the toppling of the Assad regime is claimed to serve American and Israeli interests in the region (Abboud and Muller, 2013, p. 122). In a speech of him, Nasrallah mentioned the importance of Syria for both axis of alliance and the resistance against the Israeli invasion of Palestinian and Lebanese territories:

> Thanks for the Syrian leadership, the Palestinian cause was preserved and guarded and not liquidated as it was the goal of all the US and Western invasions and conspiracies against our region… The persistence of the Syrian position is a primary condition to the persistence of the Palestinian cause and preventing its liquidation… the Palestinian resistance leaderships and movements in Gaza know the conduct, behaviour and gratitude of the Syrian leadership so that Gaza remains steadfast and strong through this performance and support used always to bring along the Syrian leadership more US pressure and threats (Nasrallah, 2011d).

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Furthermore, he underlined the vital importance of Syria's territorial integrity and security for the sake of Lebanon. According to him, it was foolish to do nothing, while there was a growing threat against the motherland:

> Syria is the back of the resistance and its foundation, and the resistance cannot stand by watching, leaving its back exposed or its foundation broken, otherwise we would be idiots. The idiot is the one who watches the conspiracy crawling toward him, but doesn't move. If Syria falls into American and takfiri hands, the resistance will be surrounded and Israel will enter Lebanon to impose its conditions and again carry Lebanon into an Israeli era (Hage Ali, 2019, p. 9).

Secondly, the Assad regime is vital for the survival of the organization. In Hezbollah's war against Israel, Hezbollah was the frontline and Syria was the rearguard. As Nasrallah emphasizes political and military backing of Syria in the stabilization of Lebanon:

> The land on which you sit now in the South of Lebanon wouldn't have been liberated was it not to the victorious Resistance in 2000. The Resistance was not to gain victory in 2000 was it not for several reasons the most important of which is Syria's support and backing… This land fought and resisted with Syria's support (Nasrallah, 2011d).

Besides, the Assad regime is a safe haven for Hezbollah that it harbours training camps of the organization. Moreover, Syria is a transfer country of Iran while sending weapons to Hezbollah. Assad regime plays a vital role in the transfer of firearms, money and equipment. Thus, Hezbollah seeks to retain access to Iranian and Syrian material support by securing the lines.

Thirdly, Hezbollah is concerned about results of the toppling of Assad regime and its repercussions in both the region and in Lebanon. In Syria, the majority of the population is Sunni. Thus, Hezbollah seeks to prevent the emergence of a Sunni-dominated regime in Syria. It is concerned that the establishment of a

Sunni government can create a potential for spillover into Lebanon. In this sense, the increase of Salafi groups in Syria is seen as a threat to the Shiite population both in Syria and Lebanon. Therefore, Hezbollah is claimed to protect the Shiite community in Syria and along the Syrian-Lebanese border.

Lastly, the leadership of the organization has offered religious justification for involvement in the civil war. It aimed to protect the Shiite villages along the border and sacred sites related to the Shiite understanding of Islam against the attacks of radicals. According to the Salafist ideology, shrines are seen as shirk, a kind of polytheism, and Islam's rules prohibit them. It was the rationale behind the ISIS's demolishing of shrines in Syria. Hezbollah therefore involved in the civil war to protect Shiite shrines, the most notable was Seyyida Zainab Shrine, in the region and Shiite villages. In this regard, cities along the Lebanese-Syrian border became an instrument of justification for Hezbollah. These cities included Shiite towns and had strategic importance for Hezbollah-Syria connection. Qusayr, a Sunni majority city in southern Syria, was occupied with this baggage. Another significance of Qusayr was it's symbolizing the challenges in Hezbollah's military strategy. Intervention in Qusayr in April 2013 showed Hezbollah's effort for a cross-border operation. While claiming its protection of Lebanon and the Lebanese border, Hezbollah intervened in the Syrian territory.

Hezbollah's expansion in the Syrian soil maintained with operations to Qalamoun, another connection point between Lebanon and Syria, after the Qusayr Operation. Although the organization officially did not declare its intervention to protect these villages and sites, there have been many fighters who carry out this duty. (Tokmajyan, 2014, p. 108). Hezbollah claims that it

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defends religious sites, which are consecrated by the Shiite, such as Seyyida Zainab Shrine in Damascus, to prevent sectarianism in the Middle East. According to him, damages of the Shiite religious sites by the extremist Sunnis causes radicalization of sects against each other, which can cause increasing sectarian tensions. Therefore, Hezbollah's involvement in Syria is seen as a vital issue for the future of Lebanon.

After its military intervention, Hezbollah officials made an effort to cover the involvement in Syria. There were three obstacles before Hezbollah and its direct response in the civil war in Syria:

> Its identity as a 'Lebanese national resistance' that had been entrenched throughout the 1990s the principles of non-intervention in international law; and the April 2012 Baabda declaration was opposing any importation of the Syrian conflict into Lebanon, which had been signed by all major political factions in the country (Suechika, 2018, p. 91).

As a result, Hezbollah kept its first interventions in Syria secret or rejected the claims of interference in the early months of the civil war. At first, they remained unwilling to publicly acknowledge their involvement that Nasrallah denied the war alongside the Assad regime in 2012. Then, the organization framed its motivation behind its intervention in the civil war in Syria through the protection of Lebanese-Syrian dual citizens living along the Lebanon-Syria border. In the last months of 2012, Nasrallah accidentally admitted involvement of Hezbollah in Syria in a speech and said that it was a limited involvement to help the Syrian government forces along the border (Hage Ali, 2019, pp. 8-9). According to Nasrallah, 30.000 people were living in the villages along the border.

From the beginning, there were many casualties of Hezbollah, who were killed in Syria. Since the organization was officially unwilling to declare its presence in the war, in the beginning, burials often occurred with few formalities. That was unusual for Hezbollah that it would make several public organizations in these kinds of events. Hezbollah officials sought to clarify these events that 'martyrs' were doing their 'jihadist duties' (Sullivan, 2014, p. 12). However, rising casualties and increasing funerals complicated the organization's condition in Lebanon. Especially during the battle in Qusayr in May 2013, fatalities of Hezbollah doubled that caused the organization's intervention in Syria challenging to explain. The organization needed more explanations to justify its existence in Syria to both domestic and international constituents and rivals. Related to the battle in Qusayr in 2013, Hezbollah formally accepted its intervention in Syria and its help for the Assad regime. According to the organization, the situation in Syria was beyond a legal struggle of people. The uprisings in Syria transformed into danger for Lebanon. Nasrallah claimed that the emerging threat in Syria was not only against to Hezbollah and the Shiite but also to the whole Lebanon including the Sunni and Christian populations (Hage Ali, 2019, p. 9).

4.3. Operations Related to the Civil War

As mentioned before, Hezbollah's main justifications while intervening in Syria were securing the Syrian-Lebanese border, protecting the double citizens (Lebanese and Syrian) living the borderline and the Shiite shrines and villages in Syria. Before starting operations in Syria, the organization claimed that many Lebanese citizens were living in the Syrian cities along the Lebanon-Syria border, which were under the threat of *takfiris* (Hage Ali, 2019, p. 8).

These *takfiri* groups were alleged to threaten the Shiite population in the region and Shiite shrines (Shalabi, 2015, p. 41). According to Nasrallah, almost 30.000 people were living in the villages along the border (Hage Ali, 2019, p. 9). The organization did not want the Shiite to have a similar condition with what happened in Iraq, where the Shiite became the victims of sectarian conflict. Until 2012, the organization did not declare its involvement in the civil war in Syria, but it also did not stop the volunteer fighters entering Syria.

After early 2012, Hezbollah involved in Syria to prevent increasing power of the *takfiris.* It justified its involvement as a pre-emptive strike that the jihadi groups would attack Lebanon if Hezbollah stays neutral (ICG, 2014, p. 5). Even though the organization built its discourse on the rhetoric of protection of the Lebanese border and the Shiite population in Syria, the primary rationale behind its operations in Syria was securing the supply routes between Syria-Lebanon line. As the rebel forces gained power in the region, the route between Syria and Hezbollah would be closed off (Choucair, 2013). In this regard, it can be said that Hezbollah's operation in Syria had two objectives: fighting against the "necessary evil" (1) and "strategic necessity" (2) (ICG, 2014, pp. 3-4).

> The organization followed a principle in the operations against the opposition groups in Syria. It was forcing the opposition groups into submission with a fierce siege and thus starving the population. These sieges which were followed by deals, made an important Hezbollah objective possible. It was achieving demographic changes in sensitive areas (Alami, 2017).

In this context, Hezbollah firstly deployed its fighters in Zabadani, an essential place for the transportation of supplies from Syria to Lebanon (Tokmajyan, 2014, p. 110). Zabadani is a city located in 30 kilometres northwest of

Damascus. The Syrian regime lost its control in the city in January 2012, and Free Syrian Army forces took the command. Clashes between Hezbollah supported- Syrian army and the Syrian rebels, Al Qaeda, and ISIS-affiliated groups began in February 2012 and maintained until 2015, when Hezbollah and the regime forces took the control. After it secured Zabadani city with the regime army, it also acquired the buffer area with the regime (Masarat, 2017, p. 10).

The operation of Qusayr also had a similar objective. Qusayr is located in a strategical crossroads that has links with Damascus, Homs, Latakia, Tartus in Syria and Baalbek in Lebanon. It provides the link between Syria and Hezbollah headquarters in Lebanon. Qusayr operations displays a departure in Hezbollah's involvement in Syria. With the Qusayr, "not only did Hezbollah operate in much larger, more concentrated numbers than ever before, but the group also controlled the planning and conduct of the operation" (Sullivan, 2014, p. 4).

Fights in Qusayr started in April 2013 and lasted almost for three weeks. During the clashes, casualties of Hezbollah doubled since its intervention in Syria (Hage Ali, 2019, p. 9). Nasrallah claimed that "the situation in Syria was beyond a legal struggle of people. The uprisings in Syria transformed into danger for Lebanon. He claimed that the emerging threat in Syria was not only against to Hezbollah and the Shiite in Lebanon but also to the whole country including the Sunnis" (Hage Ali, 2019, p. 9). After the fights, rebel forces composed of jihadist groups and the Syrian opposition were defeated and compelled to withdraw from the city. Also, it developed its fighting skills in the guerilla warfare against the rebels:

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> In these areas, Hezbollah proved to be professional in creating a widespread system of sophisticated, agile pockets of defense serving as shelter and storage facilities. In similar fashion, it exploited the topographical situation of that strip of land: the hilly and densely wooded landscape was crucial for the performance of Hezbollah's guerrilla squads. It enabled them to operate covertly and to camouflage a vast array of command posts. Drawing on more than twenty years of experience in low-intensity warfare against Israel in its natural habitat of southern Lebanon, Hezbollah excelled in its urban and guerilla-style warfare (Masarat, 2017, p. 10).

Hezbollah's victory in Qusayr became a significant step in Hezbollah's trajectory in Syria. It gained moral superiority over the rebel forces. It brought a psychological success to Hezbollah fighters. After Qusayr, Syrian national forces began to re-take districts along the Lebanon-Syria border. Moreover, the supply lines of rebels were cut that secured the Syrian-Lebanese border, Hezbollah's strongholds in the region, and the Shiite settlement in Lebanon. Hezbollah used a different tactic from the previous operation in Qusayr that it performed an urban warfare, which it trained its fighters since 2006. It was operating the rural and mountainous regions in Lebanon before Qusayr. According to Sullivan, Hezbollah increased its presence in Syria and openly declared its position in favor of Assad:

> One week into the offensive, Nasrallah offered a new justification for Hezbollah's involvement in Syria in a speech on May 25, 2013. "Syria is the rear guard of the resistance, its backbone, and the resistance cannot stay with its arms folded when its rear guard is exposed," Nasrallah argued, adding that Hezbollah had "entered a new phase a few weeks ago: the phase of fortifying the resistance and protecting its backbone (Sullivan, 2014, p. 16),

As Qusayr was a Sunni-dominated city, Hezbollah's role as an actor beyond sectarian differences was tarnished after its operation.

Similarly, the organization operated wars against the rebel forces in Qalamoun region of Syria, which are located along the Lebanese border and Arsal within the Lebanese border. In these battles, "Hezbollah claimed its aim as the prevention of an expansion of the war into Lebanon" (Tokmajyan, 2014, p. 109). The military operation in Arsal was different from the organization's civil war involvement since it was operated within the Lebanese territory. In Arsal, the organization waged war against the jihadi groups, including Tahrir al-Sham, Al Qaeda affiliated militant group, attacked to the Lebanese territory. After the end of the operation, "Syrian refugees in Lebanon were sent to Syria, which gave credibility to Hezbollah's narrative of resistance, empowered its position among the Shiite and expanded its reach to the non-Shiite Lebanese population" (Alami, 2017). This operation strengthened the organization's power within the government and highlighted its role as resistance.

The Arsal Battle in 2017 became a milestone in Hezbollah's fight in Syria. According to Choucair (2017), rather than being a fight against opposition groups, Arsal Operation represents Hezbollah's increasing interference in Syria. Through this operation, Hezbollah aimed to isolate *takfiri* threat from residential areas and compelled them to withdraw or compromise. During the battle, many Syrian citizens, mostly Sunnis, abandoned the region that resulted in sectarian cleansing of the region in benefit of Hezbollah. After the battle, the organization accomplished the goal of building an isolation zone along the Syrian-Lebanese border, which was similar to the one in southern Lebanon made against Israel. That enabled the organization to secure its routes to transfer militant and weapon from Lebanon to Syria. It also ensured the maintenance of communication lines between Hezbollah and its allies, Syria and Iran.

In the perspective of the Lebanese context, Arsal Operation also displayed maintenance of Hezbollah's Lebanonization narrative and used as a selling point. During the operation Hezbollah affiliated TVs showed:

> Images of fighters climbing the rugged mountains or engaged in fierce battles were transmitted to the backdrop of nationalistic music. Some of the Hezbollah fighters were shown planting Lebanese and Hezbollah flags on mountain tops and carrying pictures of the Lebanese army, and internal security officers who were killed at the hands of the Nosra Front and ISIS after thirty of them were kidnapped in 2014 (Alami, 2017).

Even the secretary-general Hasan Nasrallah claimed Hezbollah's victory in Arsal as the triumph of all Lebanese and peoples in the region. In his speeches on TV, Nasrallah was portrayed with both Hezbollah and Lebanon flags (El-Masri and Corbeil, 2017).

From 2013 to the present day, it expanded its forces and areas controlled. Hezbollah's increasing power grew to Aleppo, Homs and Idlib. Nasrallah claims the organization's operations in dark sides of Syria as struggles to defend Lebanon: "The defence of Aleppo is the defence of the rest of Syria, defence of Damascus, Lebanon and Iraq. We will increase our presence in Aleppo" (Alami, 2018).

In conclusion, the organization aimed to secure the transit routes connecting Syria and Lebanon and empower its control over the territories in the southern and southwestern Syria along the Lebanese borders (Maier, p. 24). The Shiite shrines in Syria, population, which have double citizenship, living along the Lebanese-Syrian border and protection of Lebanon's security have been the major factors behind its "motivation" to involve in the civil war. The victories in these operations are defined as the public litmus test for Hezbollah (Masarat, 2017, p. 10).

Hezbollah's operations in Syria showed the relationship between the organization and the Lebanese Army. Security threat perceptions of two actors have been the same along the Syrian-Lebanese border. The Lebanese Army has been a target of Sunni radicalism several times that its knowledge of threat was similar to Hezbollah. In the fight against radical organizations, including fundamentalist ones, Hezbollah is mostly aligned with the Lebanese Army (Saade, 2017, p. 86). In this regard, Saade (2017, p. 86) defines the relations of two actors as symbiotic rather than controversial. Another importance of Hezbollah's operation in Syria has been influential in the building of its identity as the protector of Lebanon. While the Lebanese Army was seen as the primary security provider within Lebanon, Hezbollah emerged as protector of Lebanon in buffer zones or transnational borders. It seems that Hezbollah fights against its enemy, the *takfiri* threat, outside of Lebanese borders and the Lebanese Army undertakes the role of struggle against the same enemy in Lebanon. The Lebanese Army benefits from the creation of these buffer zones and security islands along the border. The operations also displayed Hezbollah's plans in Syria. After the war, Hezbollah gained the control of a vast territory along the Lebanese-Syrian border. In this way, it opened new battlegrounds for its struggle against Israel, which will be explained in the next chapter.

4.4. Reactions from Lebanon and Syria to Hezbollah's Intervention

Before the Arab Uprisings firstly began in Tunisia and then gained momentum throughout Egypt, Libya, the Gulf and Syria, Lebanon was already facing a social disorder based on sectarian tensions (Tınas, 2016, p. 232). Assassination of Rafic Hariri in 2005, the committee of investigation formed by the UN in

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order to deepen the assassination's background, Hezbollah's control of Beirut in 2008, and the end of the Saad Hariri government in 2011 after resigns of Hezbollah-led ministers tightened relations between the Lebanese actors. In addition to these, the political environment in Iraq after the US invasion increased tensions between the Shiite and Sunni across the region. Suspicions on Hezbollah's becoming behind the Hariri Assassination, demands of anti-Hezbollah Lebanese groups to disarm Hezbollah, and a general discomfort about Hezbollah's capture of Lebanese political life have been the major problems that the Lebanese public faced.

From the beginning, therefore, the Lebanese state has followed a policy of official dissociation from all sides of the conflict in Syria and sought to protect its neutrality. Stability in Syria was the main priority of the state that a stable Syria would protect the delicate balance in Lebanon. In this regard, the Lebanese foreign policy, differently from sub-state groups, was based on neutrality. The Lebanese State even did not the international meetings on the Syrian Issue including the UN and Arab League assemblies. It called on all Lebanese actors to act in the frame of Lebanon's territorial integrity, independence and the Baabda Declaration. On the other hand, Hezbollah intervened in the conflict and invested more in the Assad regime. Hezbollah's discourse is formed initially on the struggle against oppression. In this way, it aimed to keep Lebanon out of this issue. However, Syrian civil war showed that it gave way to an uncompromising 'either with us or against us' rhetoric and passive acceptance of the Syrian regime's brutal tactics (ICG, 2014, p. 14). Reactions from the Lebanese actors, including rivals of Hezbollah and the Shiite is concluded in details in Chapter 5.

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Syria's reactions against Hezbollah's intervention in the civil war have been indecisive that the ruling regime of Assad welcomed Hezbollah's military support along the Lebanon-Syria border on the one hand, but disliked the Hezbollah-Iran partnership in the mobilization of the Shiite population and fighters across the Syrian territory without consulting with the regime. The Assad regime opposed to the challenge of its authority, which caused increasing tensions with Iran and Hezbollah. Iran and Hezbollah aimed to establish a religious network, "indoctrinated militias, and supportive communities, all outside the state's control and influence" (Hage Ali, 2019, p. 10). Within this context, Iran and Hezbollah began to control the Supreme Islamic Jaafari Council (SIJC), the first independent Shiite representative body in Syria established by the Assad regime in 2012. Even though the Assad regime formed the SIJC to mobilize its Shiite population, the SIJC acted as an Iranian and Hezbollah institution.

In addition to the SIJC's controlling by Hezbollah and Iran, the Syrian regime was also uncomfortable with the prevalence of Hezbollah across southern Syria. The Hezbollah fighters were present in Syrian cities so were the images of Hasan Nasrallah and Hezbollah flags.

The peak of tensions between Hezbollah and the Syrian regime has been evident with formation of the Quwwat al-Rida (QAR), a prominent Shiite militia fought with Hezbollah fighters against the Syrian opposition groups in Homs and Aleppo. The Assad regime aimed to impose authority over the QAR and in this way, it wanted to limit Hezbollah's influence over the militia. Even, the Assad regime integrated the QAR fighters into the state military. In other words, the QAR fighters became state officials whose salaries paid by the

government (Hage Ali, 2019, pp. 10-11). By doing so, the regime aimed to decrease Hezbollah's influence on the militia forces.

Moreover, Hezbollah and Iran benefited from the advantage of Syria's weaknesses and triggered the war against Israel by using the Syrian territories. Within this context, they were organized militarily along the Golan Heights. As Syria had a *de facto* "implied" agreement with Israel on the Golan Heights, the Syrian regime did not take the risk of a war with Israel. However, its capabilities were minimal to withdraw Iranian and Hezbollah forces from the region. On the other hand, Israel declared that it would not permit Iran and Hezbollah to build up a military capacity in Syria against its territorial integrity and security. Russia, which established an air zone on Syria's air space, did nothing against Israel's threats. It was interpreted as a sign that Moscow opposed Iran's and Hezbollah's expanding in Syria and their efforts to undermine the stability of the Assad regime (Hage Ali, 2019, p. 12).

After Russia's military intervention in the civil war in Syria, the Assad regime regained its confidence and influence thanks to Russia's combat against the Syrian opposition. Russia's involvement encouraged the Assad regime to take control of the militias and saved it from dependency on Hezbollah and Iran. In other words, the regime found a chance for raising its voice against its regional allies.

4.5. Chapter Conclusion

The Syrian civil war started as a part of Arab Spring and influenced the Middle East initiated as a war between the Baath regime under the rule of Bashar Assad, his supporters and the opposition groups in 2011. The opposition

groups emerged with the demands of human rights, economic development and democracy aimed to change the regime in Syria. This kind of discourse that succeeded in Tunisia and Egypt after the overthrown of dictatorships inspired the Syrian people. However, the brutal attitude of the Syrian army against the opposition groups and the state's policy of oppressing people through arms caused armed struggles among two sides, and the Syrian state took a step to a future without peace. The developments in the country resulted in the involvement of several actors both from and out of the region. Through the participation of many foreign fighters in the war and increasing power of radical organizations such as ISIS and Al Nosra Front in the country, the Syrian Civil War began to internationalize. Possibility of a regime change and its results caused interventions of state and non-state actors which act through political and ideological motivations into the conflict.

The beginning of the uprisings in the region in 2010 influenced Hezbollah's policies both in Lebanon and the region. The uprisings began in Tunisia and spread to Egypt and Libya in time are defined as the resistance of the people against the pro-US and oppressor regimes. The organization supported the uprisings. However, the beginning of the riots in Syria caused challenges in strategies and discourse of Hezbollah. This chapter, in this regard, argued the influence of the civil war in Syria to Hezbollah's security and threat perspectives in four stages. In the first stage between 2010 and 2011, the organization claimed that the uprisings were democratic demands of people. It alleged that people in the region resisted to their oppressor and West-inspired regimes. The organization's approach towards the Arab Spring is similar to Iran's in this stage. Similar to Iran, Hezbollah also claimed that the uprisings were anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist and inspired by the Iranian

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Revolution in 1979. The second stage includes the years 2011, when the civil war in Syria began, and 2012. In this stage, Hezbollah claimed that the uprising in Syria was different from others in the regime that the Syrian opposition was hand in hand with the West and Israel, who aimed to weaken the Resistance. However, the organization formally did not intervene in the civil war. Its role was no more than advising the regime. The third stage began in 2013 when Hezbollah involved in the civil war. The Syrian opposition was perceived as a dangerous threat as Israel was, and the organization developed security policies against this threat. The fourth stage is composed of Hezbollah's future deployments in Syria and its building of new possible battlefields against Israel.

The organization needed to adapt itself to the dynamics of the civil war and the civil war made changes on the organization's security perspective. Hezbollah defines itself as a Lebanese actor. It adapted the resistance against Israel and protection of Lebanon's territorial integrity and security as a raison d'etre. In this regard, it had the chance to legitimate its actions in the Lebanese political life throughout its armed struggle against Israel and role in the regional developments. With the beginning of the Syrian civil war, Hezbollah's discourse towards actors and events in the region, its strategies and involvement in the civil war caused challenges in the traditional security paradigm and perception of the threat of the organization. The organization calls the Syrian opposition as *takfiris* without exception. After it intervened in the civil war, there have been criticisms against the organization that it has lost the sight of resistance against Israel, made sectarianism in Syria and carried the civil war into Lebanese territory. On the other hand, the organization

declared its Lebanese identity and its protection of Lebanon against the *takfiri* threat.

CHAPTER 5

HEZBOLLAH NEGOTIATING ITS PRESENCE IN SYRIA WITH LEBANESE ACTORS: AN ANALYSIS OF WIN-SETS

This chapter analyzes what kind of win-sets Hezbollah developed in order to justify its position in Syria to the Lebanese actors. The following part will examine Putnam's two-level game theory and win-set formation, and its use in negotiating international developments to the domestic public.

The influence of foreign policy on domestic politics or the relationship between domestic and foreign policy is a frequently discussed issue in the literature. Although it has recently been accepted that non-state actors influence foreign policy or are important characters of domestic and foreign policy, the scope of the studies is generally limited with the states as the main actors. According to this, states are independent actors and non-state actors are involved in their policy-making as a cause, effect factor or output. By non-state actors, I mean here hybrid actors, including Hezbollah, and other non-state, intergovernmental, armed or non-governmental organizations. As mentioned earlier, this study, encouraged by the increasing role of non-state actors in international politics, questions whether hybrid actors such as Hezbollah can take an independent role in foreign policy and domestic policy interaction. In this context, it is claimed that non-state actors are among the main actors of this field, based on a belief in the eroded priority of states. In this context, Hezbollah is highlighted as a hybrid and main actor. On the other hand, in the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy, it is

seen that the effects of domestic politics on foreign policy are frequently emphasized and significant studies have been revealed in this context. On the other hand, a comprehensive study on the effect of foreign policy on domestic political processes is limited. This study aims to look at the foreign policy-domestic politics relationship from a different perspective, based on the effects of Hezbollah's operations in Syria on its policies in Lebanon, and the strategies that the organization planned or changed from this point of view. However, while doing this, Robert Putnam's two-level game approach was considered as the explanation unit and it was decided that it would be more appropriate to explain the strategies in question by borrowing the win-set concept and negotiation processes, which are the basic elements of this approach.

There have been several contributions of scholars in the literature of two-level games, but there has no generalizable theory. There have been studies displaying impendence of the elections increase the chance of reaching a negotiation, the strict procedures in the ratification processes increase the possibility of negotiation's failure, and domestic actors opposing the negotiations can influence the likelihood of negotiations. Although these contributions define several characteristics of the theory, there are still deficiencies in the application of theory on the armed/non-state and hybrid actors. As claimed by the contributions to the literature of two-level game theory, scholars discuss the approach throughout the security, economy and environmental issues. While they use the state as the main actor, they make a very limited emphasize on non-state actors. Non-state agents emerge as understudied actors that bargain with states, who are the only actors deciding the last cause. Jeffrey Knopf's argument that "a state's alliance partners may constitute a critical third level of actors, interacting with, and affecting, both

level one and two actors, proves highly relevant in this case" (Knopf, 1993, p. 611).

While borrowing from Putnam, several explanations should be made about this thesis' usage of his concepts about win-sets and bargaining. Putnam emphasizes the bargains between negotiators in Level I. However; he overlooks the influence of interdependence between actors and their positions in the international system. Thus, in my model, I will adopt a policy-making process including the influence of foreign policy over domestic politics, which has reflections on Hezbollah and the Lebanese actors through collaborations, interactions, rivalries and repercussions.

Putnam attaches importance to the role of the state, the statesman and international bargaining. Statesmen are important actors. They seek to manipulate both domestic and international politics at the same time. Strategies of the statesmen and the fate of negotiations are constrained by things that states will accept and the things that domestic constituencies will ratify. According to Putnam (1988, p. 456), the chief negotiator, or statesman, is the only formal link between Level I and Level II, and has no independent policy views. In other words, Putnam ignores the preferences of statesman himself. As Moravcsik (1993) claims, partial autonomy of chief negotiators allows them to favour possible agreements following their own independently specified values that is they have options to choose regarding their preferences. Besides, Putnam's model is heavily state-centric that there is no adequate attention to the reciprocal influence of non-state actors and the structures forming the identities of these actors. Role of non-state actors on international politics is a frequently mentioned issue that actors operating in

the international system have their conceptualizations of the world. Similar to states, they also have interests and identities, which are socially structured (Adler, 1997, p. 336). Thus, I will replace the state in Putnam's model by a non-state actor, Hezbollah in this case, and the chief negotiator by the secretary-general of the organization, Hasan Nasrallah, who represents the organization, and any committee representing Hezbollah and Nsrallah. By exploiting control over information, resources and agenda-setting concerning his domestic polity, the statesman can open up new possibilities for international accord or bargaining advantage (Moravcsik, 1993, p. 15). However, in my model, I will question the strategies of the statesmen or the negotiators, and the negotiations in Level I. There are several discourses that many actors in Syria share. They summarize their goals as fighting against terrorism and sectarianism, protecting Syria's territorial integrity, liberating Syria etc. In other words, the strategies and negotiations of each actor involved in Syria are unclear. As one of the actors in the field, Hezbollah is an RHA that intervenes in armed conflicts. Its strategies are not clear that no one knows about its negotiations with other actors engaged in the Syrian conflict. Also, as a result of existential limitations of Hezbollah, that is to say, it is not a state, there is no formal negotiation process.

Putnam (1988, p. 437) introduces "win-sets for a given Level II constituency as the set of all possible Level I agreements that would 'win' (gain the necessary majority among the constituents) when simply voted up or down". In this sense, a 'win-set' can be defined as a state's room for 'maneuver' both in domestic and international politics that with fewer constraints what it can demand, offer and realize. Within this context, 'win-sets' are dependent on the distribution of power, the structure of legislative institutions, a coalition of

constituencies, ethnic and religious composition of the state, and public's consent. Agreements are possible only if win-sets both in Level I and Level II overlap. As Putnam defines the concept of 'win-set' as the set of all potential international agreements that would be acceptable at the domestic level, through the lenses of my model on Hezbollah, 'win-sets' will be defined as a composition of relations between Hezbollah's institutional structure/decision-making mechanisms and its involvement in the civil war in Syria and reflections of its allies and Lebanese actors on this involvement. Hezbollah is a Lebanese political party represented in the parliament. It acts in legal, political processes in Lebanon, an armed organization struggling against Israeli occupation to protect the territorial integrity of Lebanon, and a part of the axis of resistance allying with Syria and Iran against the US and Israel (Roy, 2008, p. 103). It has three claims: A Lebanese political party, a nationalist organization, and a resistance movement. In this frame, it has to claim both of these three while performing both in domestic and international realms. In this regard, I claim a win-set as the factors that catalyze the possibility of a decision, agreement or move. I propound one win-set for Hezbollah: A national win-set as the set of its actions that are acceptable at the national level including organizational management, 8 March and 14 March Alliances, the Lebanese state apparatus, and the Lebanese public.

As illustrated in Table 1, the line from X_1 to X_2 and X_3 displays Hezbollah's changing strategy towards Syria in time. Following this line, Hezbollah involved in the civil war in Syria step by step firstly through political rhetoric and then armed intervention. As it moved away from the Y_M, the Lebanese state's official stance against the Syrian issue, no chance stayed to reach an agreement between Lebanon and Hezbollah. As the distance between two

actors increased and Hezbollah exceeded the last point, Y_1, no deal is reached. Before the uprisings started in Syria and Hezbollah joined to the armed conflicts, Hezbollah had a positive reputation both in Lebanon and the region. Before 2013, Hezbollah did not have dissidents with strong preferences that oppose its activities thanks to its resistance role against Israel and support for the Palestinian cause. That means it had no domestic constraints. Its purpose was, therefore, unquestionable by a vast population. After 2013, however, the organization acquired opposition groups with keen interests in the Syrian civil war, as well as polarized and incompatible visions of a solution, which caused suspicions on itself.

Lastly, domestic politics can be counted as internal constraints and lead governments to pursue unsatisfactory results. The classical two-level game theory defines the domestic limitations as institutional features or domestic agents that can tie the hands of negotiator and give him a bargaining advantage. In normal conditions, statesmen pretext the domestic constraints and say "I cannot persuade my domestic audience if these conditions do not change. If you want to reach an agreement, it is better to think in the frame of our terms of agreement". In other words, in Putnam's model, domestic constraints are more favourable conditions for the state with more significant restrictions that it is closer to be the beneficial side of the negotiation (Asgeirsdottir, 2008, p. 11). If there are few domestic constituencies to persuade, it means there are fewer domestic constraints. As a result, "decision-makers may feel that they can safely ignore domestic politics while they concentrate on international interactions" (Ganguly and Thompson, 2011, p. 196). In this regard, authoritarian regimes are more advantageous than democratic administrations. The accountability of the governments and the

statesmen and the elections cause them to take domestic considerations into account. On the other hand, in the Hezbollah case, electoral considerations have minimal influence on the outcome of negotiation processes. Hezbollah is an organization seeking legitimacy and support. Its representation and number of chairs in the parliament are constant with the share of the Shiite population. However, it needs legitimacy and consent of many segments of the Lebanese public.

5.1. Basic Arguments and Findings

5.1.1. Opportunities and Barriers of Hezbollah's Win-Set Formation

As the analysis on the win-sets shows the national level is the influential and determining factor that Hezbollah justifies its acts, policies and attempts in foreign relations.

There are three control variables to monitor the influences of the domestic level. One is the weakness of the paternal states. The weaker the state, a larger win-set for the non-state actors. The other is the structure of actors that the more powerful the non-state actor is, a larger win-set it has to operate its policies. Last control variable is the reputation of non-state actors both in the paternal state and region. However, there is no direct relationship between the prominence of a non-state actor and its win-set formation.

Against this background, this chapter offers opportunities and barriers in the formation of Hezbollah's win-sets.

5.1.1.1. Lebanese State and Political Structure: Opportunity

Due to its confessional system based on religious and sectarian divisions, the Lebanese state system is deeply divided, causing a weak authority of state institutions. Hezbollah is seen as a "state within a state" with its full-fledged social movement, military capabilities and well-structured organization that enables it to act independently from many actors including its supporters and the opposition in Lebanon. Hezbollah's power over Lebanon comes from the social services it provides, which helps it to be embedded in Lebanese society. It is a significant provider of social services that build schools, hospitals, and offers agricultural services. Social policies provide extensive support and legitimacy over Lebanese society to Hezbollah. Inadequacies of the Lebanese state to provide social services and security to all of the public have facilitated Hezbollah's role, strengthened it and expanded its influence over the Lebanese society. As a result of these, the organization gains reputation not only among the Shiite populated areas but also around all of the Lebanese territory. It also has an armed force that aims to defend Lebanon against external threats, which Israel is placed on the top. Its military power is equal, maybe more substantial than, to the Lebanese national army. As the state is weak in Lebanon and unable to defend itself against aggressions of Israel, Hezbollah declares that it will not give up its arms as long as Israel continues the invasion in Lebanon, and it will maintain to protect the country. The Lebanese army is not capable of protecting the country, which strengthens Hezbollah as "the guardian of the nation" and legitimizes it on the eyes of certain parts of the Lebanese public regardless of religious differences, which creates a deep-seated legitimacy problem in Lebanon.

Moreover, Hezbollah does not want a powerful state apparatus in Lebanon, because increasing power of the state prevents Hezbollah's control of the country. In this regard, Hezbollah sought to avert state services from reaching to the people in south Lebanon and suburbs of Beirut during reconstruction policies of Rafiq Hariri in the 1990s. Therefore, Hezbollah acts as an organization providing security and social services instead of the Lebanese state. Hezbollah has the support of almost 80-90 % of the Shiite in Lebanon. As long as the confessional system maintains in the existing a non-proportional order, the radicalization of the Shiite and their support for Hezbollah will increase.

The weak state apparatus enables Hezbollah to act more independently from the state. Against the decisions taken in Baabda in 2012 and criticisms of the Lebanese actors, Hezbollah was able to intervene in the civil war in Syria. As a result, a weak state apparatus of Lebanon causes a larger win-set for Hezbollah, and it enables the organization to take decisions independent from the state.

5.1.1.2. Hezbollah's Organizational Power: Opportunity

Hezbollah has a unified structure that controls the organization's complementary elements. The decision-making organization of Hezbollah is structured as a hierarchical pyramid, which is headed by the Secretary-General. Under the Secretary-General, there is the Consultative Assembly including subordinate councils throughout their functions: The Executive Council, the Judicial Council, the Political Council, the Political Advisor, and the Jihad/Military Council. There are also several operational desks under these councils. Each of these desks is responsible for specific topics. According

to Naim Qassem, the Deputy Secretary-General of the organization, Hezbollah has a single leadership that "all political, social and jihad work is tied to the decisions of this leadership, which directs the parliamentary and government work also leads jihad actions" (Daragahi, 2009). Therefore, firstly, despite the criticisms for its intervention in Syria, Hezbollah has legitimacy in certain parts of the Lebanese groups as a resistance movement and Lebanon's protection. Within the context of its Lebanese identity, it maintains to emphasize its Lebanonization in the Syrian issue. It claims to protect Lebanon and prevent sectarianism. While doing this, Hezbollah acts as a "wolf in sheep's clothing". In conflictual issues, international actors can bifurcate their actions, staying steady on their positions at the international level while changing their rhetoric to please the domestic audience. Hezbollah follows a similar way that it underlines its Lebanese identity and the role of protecting Lebanon against external threats while maintaining its military presence in Syria. In this way, it claims that it still has the sight of protection of Lebanon and resistance against Israel. Secondly, the uniform decision-making structure of Hezbollah enables the organization to take prompt decisions and implement them. In this regard, the sturdy organizational structure of Hezbollah provides a large win-set for it. Hezbollah acts by itself that it disregards criticisms sets its agenda and implements it.

5.1.1.3. Hezbollah's Reputation: Dual Role

Although its ties with Iran have fostered negative views on Hezbollah, its war and military successes against Israel have enabled it to increase its dignity and recognition in the Middle East. However, with the beginning of the civil war in Syria, the organization's relations with Iran have

overshadowed its fight against Israel. The claims of making sectarianism have taken the place of the reputation and fame of the organization that it gained thanks to its anti-Israeli policies. With Hezbollah's involvement in the civil war, its relations with Iran that stayed under the shadow of its war against Israel, and related to this, the agenda around the claims about its being "Iran's proxy in the region" and "a part of the Shiite crescent in Lebanon" has been revived.[11] Although the organization defined itself as a Lebanese national actor and claimed the maintenance of its program and rhetoric within the framework of the Lebanonization, criticisms arise from its involvement in the civil war and its close relations with Iran increased. As a result, Hezbollah's legitimacy in Lebanon began to be questioned. This negative view on Hezbollah in the context of sectarianism and close relations with Iran is also reflected in the surveys. According to Pew Research Center's research in 2014, the public opinion on Hezbollah was negatively affected during the period between Hezbollah's victory against Israel in 2006 and its intervention the civil war in Syria. According to the survey covering the period between 2007 and 2014, opinions against Hezbollah increased about 20% in Turkey, 40% in Egypt, 35% in Palestine, 40% in Jordan and 20% in Tunisia. In Lebanon, no significant change is observed. The reason behind this is the strict division among the Lebanese groups and the concern of spreading of the civil war into Lebanon. And Hezbollah claims that its intervention into the civil war aims to prevent the conflict from spreading Lebanon. Some of the Christians and Shiites appreciate that.

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[11] A literature on Shia crescent and Lebanon has been prominent in almost last ten years. There are specialists and scholars writing analysis about this issue. For a late example see Hanin Ghaddar's piece on https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/shia-vs-shia-crescent

On the other hand, Hezbollah's involvement in the civil war in Syria has created a negative perception in the region. With these increasing negative views, Hezbollah's struggle against Israel remains in the background. On the other hand, its relations with Iran have started to come to the forefront with the claims of sectarianism. Hezbollah needs Sunni approval to be the leading force of Muslims, which it declares as one of its aims. The Arab uprisings were a chance for Hezbollah to gain the support of Sunnis in the region. The party supported the protesters in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Bahrain and Yemen without using any sectarian discourse. However, its stance against the protesters in Syria harmed the opportunity to reach out to Sunnis. In this regard, it can be claimed that Hezbollah's reputation has a dual role in its win-set formation. While it gained in Lebanon through its fight against Israel and social services that provide a larger win-set for the organization in domestic, its intervention in Syria became a barrier to Hezbollah's reputation in the region.

5.2. Hezbollah in the Civil War in Syria

Taylor Fravel underlines two conditions that encourage political actors to declare war or intervene against neighbouring and rival states:

> The first condition is the presence of an opportunity for escalation, namely a salient issue around which leaders can increase social cohesion or demonstrate their competence and frame the use of force as legitimate, serving national and not private interests. The second condition is the possession of military capabilities sufficient for the execution of a limited aims operation (short of war) over the salient issue, which depends on assessments of military hardware and strategy. When these two conditions are present, leaders should be more likely to respond to the onset or intensification of domestic strife by pursuing conflict abroad. When these conditions are weak or absent, diversion is unlikely even when domestic conflict occurs (Fravel, 2010, p. 313).

From a different perspective, Robert Putnam (1988, p. 446) alleges a general rule that the groups that have the most significant interest in a particular issue are likely to hold the most extreme position in that issue. In this regard, Hezbollah considered the initiation of the civil war in Syria as "a forced choice" that it could play its "Lebanese" role and explain its justifications to the Lebanese public and political actors without going out of its Lebanonization project.[12] It would protect Lebanon from the civil war and against the increasing threat of sectarianism and *takfiris* that no Lebanese actors would oppose it. Its fight against the *takfiris* was called as an existential battle (Daher, 2016, pp. 183-184). Hezbollah would directly protect its *raison d'etre* in Syria and serve to the axis of resistance, which generates its existence. It could justify its intervention in Syria to the Lebanese public and its opponents and protect its presence and position in Lebanon. On March 29, 2014, Nasrallah displayed that intention of Hezbollah and said:

> What would be the case if the *takfiri* trend takes control? The *takfiri* does not accept anyone within itself… The *takfiri* terrorism should be defeated in Syria. If the axis gains victory in Syria, all the Lebanese will be safeguarded (Nasrallah, 2014).

On the other side, Hezbollah also perceived the beginning of the civil war in Syria as an existential threat. When Putnam's argument is interpreted within the Hezbollah case, it seems that groups have the possible damage from a particular issue or likely results of a specific event, they become more enthusiastic about involving this precise issue. In this way, Hezbollah framed

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[12] There are also studies in the literature that interpret this in different ways. According to these approaches, if it were in the hands of Hezbollah, it would not want this civil war to take place or it would not want to be involved in the civil war at such a high level. Because the civil war was defined as a development against his resistance discourse, anti-Israel and Lebanonization.

its intervention and use of force in Syria as legitimate, serving national, not private, interests. It was an accurate and timely action to protect Lebanon. In this regard, the organization aimed to expand its public support, provide legitimacy for its intervention in Syria and, as a result, have a more significant win-set position, and a foreign policy issue emerged as a determinant in domestic politics.

It should be asked why the organization did not act against Israel in such a way as it did against the ISIS. It can be said that Hezbollah pays attention to the power advantage against its rivals. Since 1982, it has been fighting against Israel, but its aggressive attitude towards Israel is minimal. Although Hezbollah is usually the first side shooting the first ballot through kidnapping Israeli soldiers or suicide bombings, Israel is often the initiator of wars and the aggressive side. As Prins (2005, p. 344) claims, the larger the power advantage an actor possesses over its potential adversary, the more likely it is to use force in international crises. In this regard, it is clear that Hezbollah does not choose to attack directly to Israel[13] as it does against the *takfiri* targets in Syria.

In this part, I will allege that territorial claims have a better capacity to evoke the feelings of threat, solidarity and unity than other issues such as trade, cultural interactions and humanitarian intervention. In this way, Hezbollah attempted to expand its win-sets in the domestic realm and sought to "market" its decision in foreign policy, involvement in Syria, to the Lebanese actors and public within the frame of Lebaneseness. In other words, it used a kind of scapegoating to justify its intervention. In the general use of scapegoating,
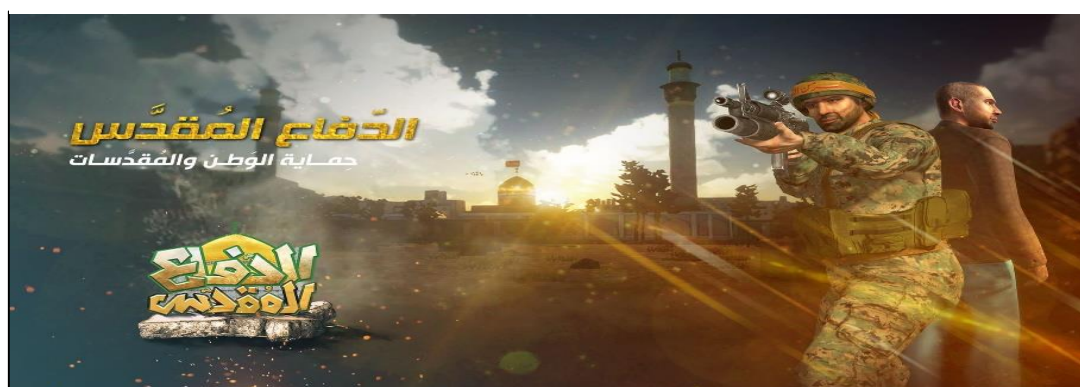
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[13] By saying "Hezbollah does not attack directly to Israel", I mean a total war initiated by Hezbollah against Israel. I do not define Hezbollah's hit-and-run attacks as moves that can initiate wars.

there is an external foe used to divert the public's attention from domestic to foreign problems. To consolidate the audience behind the leader, territorial claims outside the country are introduced, and leaders seek for an enemy to damn the reasons of domestic problems on it. According to Jack Levy (1988, p. 657), a ruling elite or leader see the war with an external power as the last chance for a state to overcome the internal problems. Jaroslav Tir (2010, p. 413) points a similar point that "unpopular leaders use foreign policy crises to divert the public's attention away from the discontent with their rule and empower their political status". In the case of Hezbollah, it is clear that the criticisms from domestic realm have increased after it intervened in Syria. The organization was criticized due to its armed wing in Lebanon and its close relations with Iran, but its role as a resistance movement against Israel and its position in the Palestinian cause overshadowed its armament and private relations with Iran. After it intervened in the civil war in Syria, several criticisms emerged not only within the Sunni and Christian communities of Lebanon but also within the Shiite population, which is the most important base of the organization. In this context, I claim that Hezbollah diverts the influences and criticisms in Lebanon that increased after its involvement in the civil war in Syria. In other words, while diversionary strategy, in general, is applied, territorial claims are introduced, and an external foe is founded after the increase in domestic problems. However, Hezbollah uses scapegoating after a foreign war occurred. As a response, it highlights the significance of its fight in Syria as a requirement for Lebanon's territorial integrity, civil peace and the Palestinian cause. It emphasizes its Lebanese identity by protecting the boundaries of Lebanon. In this way, it tries to expand its base of win-sets in Lebanon that aims to justify its decisions.

One of the bases the organization attempts to expand its win-set is using the narrative of Crusades and historical Islam-Christianity dispute. Hezbollah justifies its involvement in the civil war through the historical continuity of the Crusades and tensions between Muslims and Christians. In 2014, Mohammad Fneish, a Hezbollah official and minister, linked the civil war to the Crusades. He said:

> The effect and influence of Jabal Amil's geographical location were both active and reactive, as it has not departed from its position of resistance to invaders throughout its historical periods… [T]his Jabal's Sectarian peculiarity retains its uniqueness in understanding, belonging and commitment to the Ummah's unity and causes, and remains a force and a guarantee in preserving identity, defending rights, rejecting prejudice and facing falsehood (albatel) and authoritarianism. The role of this Jabal in resisting the Crusaders' invasion, the Ottoman injustice, confronting French colonialism and the Zionist project and its occupation of land, the support of liberation movements and standing against takfiri crimes and deviations (in Syria). This continued history's connection to the present is not a continuation of those frozen in past glories… it is the continuity of those knowledgeable of the reality's equations, committed to their apostolic goals, and exerting every effort, useful for the homeland and the entire nation, even if this requires sacrificing souls (Al-Manar, 2014 cited in Hage Ali, 2015, p. 112).

Figure 3: Holy Game: Hezbollah's video game on the civil war in Syria

Source: https://www.newsweek.com/new-video-game-lets-you-kill-isis-hezbollah-fighting-syria-lebanon-816978

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In this way, the organization aimed to get the support of the Muslim community in Lebanon. It firstly sought to soften the Sunni opposition against its involvement in the Syrian civil war. Consolidation of its Shiite base was the second purpose of Hezbollah.

The organization even released videogames to emphasize the link between its Lebanese roots and the war in Syria. The videogame titled "The Holy Defense: Protecting the Homeland and the Holy Sites" was released in February 2018 (Figure 3). It allows players to fight to protect religious sites of the Shiite against the ISIS fighters (Jones and Markusen, 2018, p. 3).

Territory refers to the homeland and elicits to the feelings of people directly in terms of consolidation and national identity. "Humans' attempts to define themselves as territorial creatures" is a general feeling inherited from cultural and genetic past (Tir, 2010, p. 416). "It is seen in the willingness of people to fight and die for territory. People become socialized and emotionally attached to the territory, they think of as belonging to them, and they believe the land as an integral part of their identity" (Tir, 2010, p. 416). Many people devote their lives for their homeland or fight for a territory, where their government has an irredentist project.

To conclude, territorial claims influence to excite the public's attention. Disputes on territories divert the interest of public from material issues such as economic crisis, social and cultural depression etc. to the territory/homeland issue. Also, territorial claims can mobilize the public's feelings about their national identity. The potential invasion of the homeland by an external foe causes the public to come together and unite behind the leading actor. In the end, territorial claims enable the ruling elite and the

leadership with some significant advantages such as consolidation of power, taking public's support and fortification of the current position (Tir, 2010, p. 413).

By territorial claims, I do not refer to Hezbollah's territorial claims out of the boundaries of Lebanon that Hezbollah's acts and policies since its formation already have not any irredentist tendencies. Instead, I refer to the Lebanese territory, which Hezbollah claims to be a part of it and protect it from any external threats. Hezbollah defines Lebanon as a homeland, and it has engaged in harsh wars against Israel in recent years to protect it from Israeli aggression and invasion. Here, I argue that Hezbollah's involvement in the civil war in Syria is claimed to be as a result of increasing *takfiri* threat, which is expected to spread to the Lebanese territories and cause a civil war within Lebanon, which can return the country to bloody years between 1975 and 1990. Against this background, Hezbollah highlights its Lebanese identity, roots and its role of resistance against Israel in the Palestinian issue. It diverts the increasing criticisms about its involvement in Syria coming from the Lebanese actors that is because "international conflict may divert the public's attention away from the issues that caused the dissatisfaction in domestic realm" (Sobek, 2007, p. 31). By acting as a Lebanese organization, it forms a diversionary war through attributing sanctity and immunity of Lebanese territories. By doing so, it aims to decrease the criticisms coming from domestic, strengthen, or at least protect, its current position in Lebanon and prepare the public to its armed role in Syria.

In addition, the waning domestic win-set in the Lebanese context causes Hezbollah to return its traditional rhetoric of security and threat. According to

Putnam (1988, p. 440), a smaller win-set in the national level is sometimes an advantage for the chief negotiator, who pursues the international relations of its institution. In such a condition, the chief negotiator claims that ": "I'd like to accept your proposal, but I could never get it accepted at home" (Putnam, 1988, p. 440). On the other hand, the same process should be read backwards in the case of Hezbollah. The decreasing domestic win-set of the organization means decreasing support for its actions or failure of its "justification" policies, which pushes the organization to its factory defaults.

This can be analyzed through speeches of Nasrallah between 2011 and 2016. Looking at Nasrallah's use of words such as "Lebanon", "Lebanese", "*takfiri/i*" and "Israel/i". It is seen that there is a change in Hezbollah's discourse and rhetoric parallel to its policies in Syria (Graph 2). As mentioned in the graphic, Hezbollah's use of the word "*takfir/i*" started in 2012 and increased to a large extent after its involvement in the Syrian civil war. Parallel to this, its usage of the words "Lebanon" and "Lebanese" increased at a considerable rate. It can be concluded that Hezbollah seeks to overcome domestic critics about its involvement in Syria. As it is defined earlier, Hezbollah's activities in Syria are perceived within the context of sectarianism that the Lebanese public criticized the organization because of waging war against the Sunni Muslims. It can be said that Hezbollah increased the usage of these words related to its Lebanese identity to overcome these criticisms. Another essential indication the graphic shows is the usage of the word "Israel/i". While usage of "*takfiri/i*" increased between 2011 and 2013, the usage of the word "Israel/i" decreased dramatically until 2013 and began to grow after then. As one of the criticisms of the Lebanese public against Hezbollah is the loss of the sight of resistance against Israel, Hezbollah started to use its Israeli opposition to divert the

reactions against its involvement in Syria. As a result, usage of the words "*takfir/i*" and "Israel/i" increase in parallel with each other. In other words, due to the decreasing support and "non-persuasion" of the organization's favoured policies, Hezbollah was obliged to turn its factory defaults. As a result, it returned to the anti-Israeli rhetoric.

Figure 4: Usage of Concepts in the Speeches of Nasrallah between 2011-2016
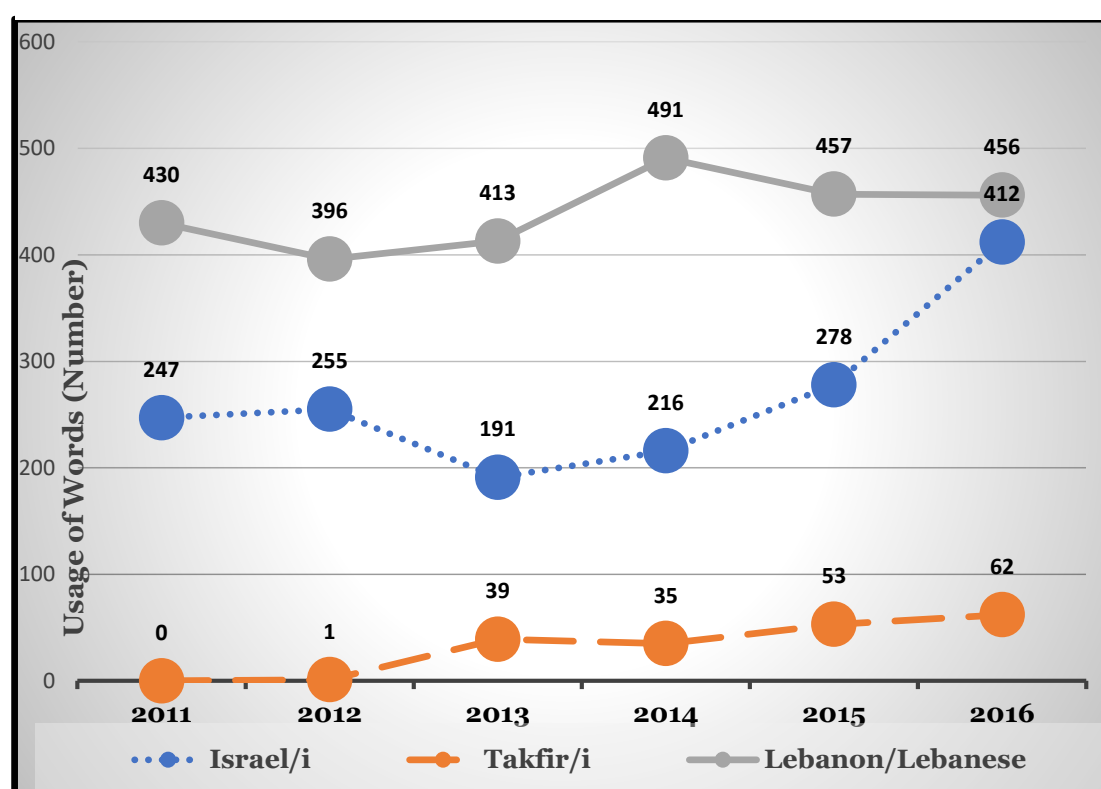
In this way, Hezbollah aims to achieve the following: To divert the public's attention from the suspicions on itself; prove its Lebaneseness as a national actor; instigate nationalist sentiments of the Lebanese people and rallies them behind itself, or at least de-escalate intenseness of criticisms against itself; decrease the severity of the blames for internal problems attributed to itself; restore its image in Lebanon through highlighting its Lebanese identity and its

role of 'protector of Lebanon' associated to itself and expands its win-set formation in the national level advantageously.

Against this background, the following part will argue Hezbollah's win-set formation at the national level through its relations with domestic actors, the Lebanese public and the Lebanese Shiite. It will be argued that Hezbollah's win-set structure is based on eleven factors that enable the organization to expand its base of justification against the Lebanese actors. The next part will claim that the organization grows its win-set through *realpolitik* that it behaves as a rational actor, which uses the fear, sectarianism, terror, military power and national history to divert the national level. It will be discussed under eleven topics. Under these topics, Hezbollah's creation of a new narration based on the shared history and common threat perceptions of Lebanese people will be explained. Hezbollah's usage of several policies to persuade the Lebanese public for its involvement in the Syrian civil war will be argued. Its usage of advantageous position of its structure, presence in the Lebanese political system and relations with international actors in Syria will be explained. It will be claimed that the organization uses these advantages to expand its win-set size and place itself in an appropriate place in the sight of the Lebanese state, actors and public.

5.2.1. Advantages, Policies, and Strategies

5.2.1.1. Pragmatism

Pragmatism is a lesson that Hezbollah learned in the earlier years. In its Open Letter in 1985, it declared its will to establish an Islamic state in Lebanon. Based

on Islamic principles, it rejected the Lebanese political system. However, it changed its "otherizing" tone with patriotic terms in the following years.

Hezbollah has not a dogmatic ideology. Certain concepts like *wilayat al-faqih* consist of the driving force for Hezbollah; the organization is not constant on these concepts. For instance, the party considered to participate in elections in 1992 and get permission from Ayatollah Khamenei. In this regard, it harmonized ideology and politics. Another example is Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005. After the Syrian departure, the organization needed domestic protection than before and so; it decided to participate in the cabinet. In this way, it would defend its armed wing against the opponents.

Hezbollah is flexible in the issues directly threatening its reason for being. As Naim Qassem, the vice secretary-general of Hezbollah, claims "the dominance of interest over principles is unacceptable but considering interests to be in the framework of maintaining principles is acceptable". Hezbollah's stance against the first uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya during the Arab Spring and its pre-emptive strike against the rebellion in Syria displays the harmony between the principles and interests. Encouraged protesters to establish democratic systems, Hezbollah declared its solidarity with protesters during the first months of uprisings. Hasan Nasrallah, the secretary-general of the organization, defined the riots in the Arab world as the revolutions not only against the US and Israel but also against corruption, oppression and hunger. However, the beginning of the uprisings in Syria caused challenges for Hezbollah. The organization publicly supported the Assad regime in Syria and opposed to the protesters.

According to Putnam (1988, p. 434), players in a two-level game are rational actors that they are in pursuit of their interests. As Putnam argues, actors negotiate or postpone their meetings. However, what happens at the end of the day is whether there is a negotiation or not. Hezbollah, in this respect, is a rational actor who attempts to instrumentalizes any option to reach its purpose. As Putnam claims, in a two-level game or negotiation on prices of anything, prices increase or decrease at the end of the day. Similarly, Hezbollah's two-level game in Lebanon whether becomes successful or fails.

On the other hand, pragmatism is not a zero-sum game, which one side takes everything. According to Putnam (1988, p. 444), the understanding of "the more, the better" is inimical to reach a negotiation accepted by all sides.[14] In this context, "the more, the better" approach would result in unintended consequences. Therefore, pragmatism emerges as a solution that actors run the processes through pragmatic policies. As they are supposed to be rational policymakers, they change and adapt their strategies throughout the emerging conditions. Hezbollah, in this regard, reformed its rhetoric and policies through the political atmosphere in Lebanon. The organization used distinctive discourse towards the public. In the first weeks of the civil war in Syria, it denied its involvement in the civil war despite the existence of many fighters crossed the frontiers to Syria. The organization stage by stage admitted its intervention in the Syrian civil war. It declared that it intervened in Syria to protect the Lebanese citizens living along the Syrian-Lebanese

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[14] After the First World War, the allied powers imposed aggravated circumstances to Germany. That was putting the victorious powers in a more advantageous position against the Germans, bıt could not prevent the domestic unrest and the German reactions. As a result of severe conditions dictated by the Versailles Treaty, the German domestic politics empowered the ultra-nationalist movements, which brought the Nazis to the rule and concluded in the Second World War in 1939.

border firstly, defend the Shiite population and shrines, secondly, and provided the Assad's remain in the office, lastly.

Moreover, the beginning of the civil war in Syria caused influences in Lebanon especially in the positioning of Hezbollah. As the pressure of opposition over the Assad government increased, Syrian political support and assistance to Hezbollah began to decline, which led Hezbollah to follow a more cooperative policy in Lebanon. This showed the organization's limited alternatives within the Lebanese politics when compared to before and how the organization attempted to expand its win-set at the domestic level:

> This shows its dramatically reduced room for manoeuvre in Lebanese politics. It is the outcome of both Hezbollah's desire to stay part of the political structure, as well as its generally weakened position in a regional context (Dingel, 2013, p. 76).

After the beginning of the civil war in Syria, as Hezbollah faced the risk of losing one of its allies in the region, Bashar al-Assad's Syria, the organization attempted to soften the tensions. Nasrallah opened a new dialogue process to March 14 Movement, but emphasized that Hezbollah would maintain to keep its arms. Nasrallah insisted on that Hezbollah's arms issue was about the protection of Lebanon, which closed the doors to any disputes regarding Hezbollah's weapons. As the Syrian forces took the control of many areas over the opposition groups, Hezbollah realized that its position in Syria was not declining, which caused the organization's policies changing in a more aggressive way.

5.2.1.2. Cultivating Image of Threat

Nasrallah asserts that:

> It was not a battle for toppling the regime (Assad), but rather a battle that aimed at imposing demographic changes in the region… ISIL and Al-Nusra wanted to eliminate certain groups that have been in the region for centuries, not just the minorities, but even the Sunnis and anyone who opposed their project (Nasrallah, 2016a).

He claims that "Hezbollah will keep monitoring the conditions of the Zionist enemy and its weaknesses and strengths, stressing that the 'army-people-resistance' formula is going to protect Lebanon from the Zionist and *takfiri* dangers and threats" (Nasrallah, 2016b). Claiming the opposition groups in Syria as supported by the US and Israel, the organization not only 'prove' itself still has the sight of resistance to protect Lebanon from Israel but also points the intention of *takfiri* groups when they invade Lebanon. In this way, the organization shows the *takfiri* threat as death to the Lebanese public, especially to the non-Muslims. It addresses their fears and feelings and persuades them to follow its line of politics both in Lebanon and in Syria. However, defining the opposition as *takfiris* and non-religious carries the risk of alienation to the Sunni public in the region and falling into the trap of sectarianism.

Through cultivating the image of fear, Hezbollah aims to establish possible coalitions with the Lebanese actors at the national level. Putnam argues that the players in a two-level game seek alliances to expand their size of win-sets. Within this context, they aim to gain support within the public and expand their base of popular support. In the Lebanese context, Hezbollah warns the Christian population against the *takfiri* threat in Syria. While doing this, it highlights the brutal executions of the jihadi organizations such as beheading and mass killing videos of the ISIS in Syria. Then, the organization points the threat of civil war's spreading to Lebanon.

Furthermore, players attempt to restructure the game by altering others' views on a specific issue in a game theory analysis (Putnam, 1988, p. 454). By doing so, players aim to expand their win-set. A kind of persuasive rhetoric and policies become the primary means of suasion. Hezbollah tries to persuade the non-Muslim Lebanese public through cultivating an image of fear. It constructs a system and rhetoric which is based on brutal and inhumane actions and tactics of jihadi groups in Syria. In this way, it paves the way for justification of its involvement in the civil war in Syria and the Christian support in Lebanon. In other words, Hezbollah shows the civil war conditions in Syria and the imminent danger for Lebanon. Then, it seeks the help of the Lebanese public, especially the Christians, in its pre-emptive strike in Syria. Therefore, it can be said that Hezbollah win-set in terms of non-Muslim domestic support increases, which motivates the organization.

Hezbollah's cultivating image of fear among the non-Muslim Lebanese seems to be successful in several areas. Tınas (2016, p. 264) states that, based on the information he obtained from the interviews he conducted in the field, it is said that Hezbollah protects the Christian settlements on the Lebanon-Syria border from attacks. Again, according to Tınas (2016, p. 264), Maronite Patriarch Rai said "if Hezbollah was not in Syria, ISIS would have been in Jouneiyh". Lebanese Christians were concerned about the activities of organizations such as ISIS and Al Nusra and their gaining power in Syria. This has increased the opposition among Christians to the opposition in Syria. According to Filippo Dionigi (2016), "the Christian factions are concerned about the Syrian Issue because they fear that refugee presence may alter the sectarian composition of Lebanon in favour of the Sunni Muslim community". In addition, Free Patriotic Movement, the Christian Party of Aoun, uses a

similar rhetoric to Hezbollah in order to convince the Christian population in Lebanon and gain upper hand against other Christian parties. It labels the Syrian opposition and Muslim Brotherhood as a threatening element for the Lebanese Christians. According to the party, if the Assad regime loses its power and the opposition takes the control, an Islamist regime will be formed in Syria, which will treat Christians as second-class citizens (Assi, 2016, p. 663).

5.2.1.3. Cultivating Shiite Loyalty

Hezbollah has cultivated an image of credibility in Lebanon thanks to its actions, including the wars against Israel and socio-economic aids towards the deprived regions. Since its inception in the early 1990s, Hezbollah has deployed a discourse that emphasizes its Shiite and Lebanese roots as well as its commitment to improving the position of the Shiite community in the face of forced marginalization in Lebanon. In this sense, Hezbollah benefited from the discourse of Iranian revolutionaries of Islamic Revolution and Shiite clerics including Musa Sadr, Hussein Fadlallah, Khomeini and Khamenei.

Hezbollah has formulated a religious-historical narrative of Shiism as a social, cultural and political force that can serve as the basis for individual empowerment to create an imagined community. Within this context, the participation of Shiites to development of living conditions of the Shiite population in Lebanon, development of justice in the system and resistance against Israel are religious and civic obligations. Commemoration of Karbala, Ashura, publishing and broadcasting of Hezbollah fighters died while fighting against Israel, and becoming a martyr are event empowering the cement of Hezbollah's imagined community. In TVs and other media outlets of the organization, the martyrs are commemorated, and interviews with their

families are done. In this way, martyrdom is honoured and imagined community is strengthened. However, martyrdom while fighting against Israel and the one while fighting against the Syrian opposition groups have differences in the minds of the Shiite in Lebanon. Several objections are coming from families, who opposes sending their children to fight against Muslims in Syria.

In order to appease the criticisms coming from its main base, the Lebanese Shiite community, Hezbollah applied to re-invent the tradition. It began to re-sanctify martyrdom in public meetings and used holiness of sacrifice in its media outlets. According to Bianchi, reports of dreams involving martyrs and sacrifice have been mentioned at least six times more in pro-Hezbollah media since 2013 (Bianchi, 2018, p. 67). Formerly, Hezbollah served as a cross-communal rallying force within Lebanon and beyond, particularly when fighting against Israel. However, as regional polarization increased, "Hezbollah has come to rely more on its Shiite constituency, operating within an increasingly sectarian local order and contributing to it" (Pollak, 2016, p. 13).

Hezbollah sends public and prominent figures to the funerals of fighters, who were killed in Syria (Pollak, 2016, p. 13). These figures include high-ranking officials, parliament members, and religious leaders. Hezbollah, in this way, aims to show how it backs and embraces the losses.

Hezbollah also uses motherhood in its policies towards the Lebanese Shiite. As there were reactions against Hezbollah's fight in Syria, where many Shiite youths were killed in the war against the Syrian opposition groups, from the Shiite, Hezbollah introduced mothers as a bond between the party and the

community (Bianchi, 2018, p. 20). It displays songs, which includes pleasantries for mothers, and posters carrying mottos related to maternity. In this way, on the one hand, the organization aims to appease the mothers among the Shiite community, who lost their sons in Syria. Martyrdom is an outstanding factor in this context that Hezbollah gladdens mothers' hearts through declaring their sons as martyrs. On the other hand, through using martyrdom, Hezbollah calls other mothers to send their sons to the holy fight in Syria and to be a martyrdom.

As mentioned before, the Shiite of Lebanon has been at the lowest level of socio-economic life. It is one of the reasons behind politicization and radicalization of the Lebanese Shiite and formation of Hezbollah. Hezbollah has been the significant organization serving to the Shiite interests in Lebanon. In addition to its representation in the political scene, it also has been an essential contributor of the Shiite throughout its social, economic and cultural supports. That provides the organization to gain the support of the Shiite. Hezbollah has been the chief representative of the Shiite in Lebanon thanks to its activities mentioned above. It is, therefore, the organization receives the Shiite support in its war in Syria. It has a large win-set among its constituents at the national level. On the other hand, the increasing economic burden of involvement in the civil war in Syria caused decreasing in the amount of financial and social aids, which the organization provides for the Shiite community in Lebanon, and salaries that are paid for servants and employees, in the upcoming years of the civil war in Syria (Pollak and Ghaddar, 2016). This compels the organization to find alternative economic sources to continue its socio-economic activities. It is therefore the organization makes more pressure on the political system in order to gain several ministries.

On the other side, the civil war in Syria unveiled a threatening factor between Hezbollah and its Shiite base. There are many veteran Shiite militants left the organization because of its loss of holy war perspective against Israel. It was the ideological tie connecting these fighters to the organization. With the increasing economic depression and rising sectarianism in Lebanon after the civil war in Syria, Hezbollah was obliged to shift its efforts and financial resources to Syria. As a result, it decreased the provision of services, which it provided for the Lebanese Shiite. As the economic problems that already existed in Lebanon affected the relations between the sects, which became strained due to Syria, unemployment started to emerge especially among the Shiite youth. Most of these young people chose to earn money by fighting in Syria as Hezbollah militants. In other words, as Lewitt (2018) stated, Hezbollah's fighters in Syria started to consist of those who went to fight for economic needs rather than ideological reasons. This is one of the most crucial problems waiting Hezbollah in the future wars and functionality of ideology in the organization cadres.

5.2.1.4. Perception of External Threat

Against the criticisms to its intervention in the civil war, Hezbollah defined the external threats both against Lebanon and the organization itself. It aimed to underline its action within the boundaries of Lebaneseness and rightness of its involvement in Syria. In this way, it attempted to expand its support and win-set size. In the frame of two-level game analysis, the more public support leads to negotiation. In this context, Hezbollah aims to justify its decision.

Before and during the civil war in Syria, there have been threats against Hezbollah and Lebanon that declared their hostility. In December 2011,

Burhan Ghalioun, head of the Syrian National Council (SNC), announced that the new regime that will be formed after the Assad regime's fall would review relations with Hezbollah (A. Daher, 2015). The Free Syrian Army (FSA) official Ammar al-Wawi threatened Hasan Nasrallah, the secretary-general of Hezbollah, and said that he would be judged for his actions by the revolutionary courts after fall of the Assad regime and the victory of the Syrian opposition (A. Daher, 2014). Similarly, Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, the leader of the Syrian al-Qaeda affiliate, al-Nusra Front, claimed that Hezbollah would dissolve after the fall of the Assad regime in Syria (Young, 2015). In addition to these, Majid al-Majid, the head of al-Qaeda in Syria, threatened the organization in 2012 and said that tourist sites in Lebanon would be targeted (A. Daher, 2014). The FSA made a similar threat that it will initiate war in the southern Beirut, one of Hezbollah's strongholds if the party "maintains to support the regime in Syria (A. Daher, 2014).

Moreover, Saudi Arabia's tactics inflaming sectarian sentiments, and financial and political support for the Salafi groups increased the sectarian tensions in the region. Rise of sectarianism in the region turned the civil war in Syria into a Sunni-Shiite war. Rise of sectarianism in Syria and strengthening of the Salafi and jihadi groups along the Lebanese-Syrian border sandwiched Hezbollah between two enemies-the Salafi and jihadi groups along the Syrian border and Israel in the south (Mikaelian and Salloukh, 2016, p. 140). It should be noted that explanations and policies of states in the region and the Salafi and jihadi groups in Syria were based on a sectarian language emphasizing anti-Shiite sentiments. Existence of the external threats is an essential factor that strengthens the organization within the Lebanese Shiite. The Lebanese Shiite supported the uprisings in Syria in the beginning. However, attacks of the

Syrian rebels on Shiite-dominated cities reduced the Lebanese Shiite's sympathy for the opposition movements and caused consolidation of the Shiite behind Hezbollah (Lob, 2014, p. 6). Furthermore, broadcast videos of executions and beheadings of the ISIS caused some parts of the Lebanese public to support Hezbollah's intervention in Syria.

5.2.1.5. Pendulum of Reputation

According to Putnam (1988, p. 446), the decision-makers need to make tradeoffs to preserve their win-set sizes in acceptable lines or to keep other actors on the negotiation table. While intervening in the civil war in Syria, Hezbollah risked its reputation gained after its resistance against Israel. It was referred to make sectarianism and killing Muslims in Syria. Hezbollah's victorious past in its fight against Israel, its support to the Palestinian issue and its reputation as the protector of Lebanon have been an advantageous condition for Hezbollah and strengthened its bargaining position against the Lebanese state. In this way, it was exempted from the results of the Taif Agreement, which ordered disarmament of the militias, under Syrian protection. Hezbollah stayed as the only armed group joined the Lebanese civil war and maintained to keep its arms after the end of the civil war in 1990. Its 'glorious' past as a Lebanese resistance organization provides a larger win-set, which enables it to follow a more autonomous strategy when the security of Lebanon is the issue. However, there are ups and downs in the reputation of Hezbollah both in Lebanon and the region. While support for the organization increases during and after the wars against Israel, there are several periods such as the assassination of Hariri in 2005 and the civil war in Syria that damaged the fame of the organization.

From the beginning, although Hezbollah's relations with Iran caused suspicions about the organization, its 'war of resistance' against Israel and military successes helped its public recognition and prestige across the Arab world. However, with the beginning of the uprising in Syria, its close relations with Iran precluded its war against Israel. The reputation and fame that the organization has gained in the region with its opposition to Israel have left its place to a situation that it began to be known with sectarianism. Hezbollah's relations with Iran that were in the shadow of the war against Israel in the previous years aroused with its intervention in the civil war in Syria and an agenda around the claims of 'Hezbollah is a proxy of Iran in the region' and 'it is a part of Shiite crescent in Lebanon' followed its involvement. The civil war in Syria revived the agenda of sectarian cleavages and the organization's fight for the survival of the Assad regime and war against the opposition groups, which are mostly Sunni, polarized the political climate. Hezbollah's intervention in the civil war in Syria and armed support for the regime tarnished its local and regional reputation, mostly among Sunnis and other Arab populations (Lob, 2017, p. 524). After its involvement in the Syrian quagmire, its resistance against the Israeli aggression and its role in the Palestinian cause was overshadowed by claims of making sectarianism in Syria, killing Sunni Muslims and its close and 'private' relations with Iran. Moreover, even it defines itself as a Lebanese actor. It claims to maintain its Lebanonization project, its role in Syria caused questioning of its status and legitimacy in Lebanon, loss of sight of resistance against Israel, loss of its role in the Palestinian cause, spreading the civil war in Lebanon and making sectarianism and criticism of its relations with Iran.

Table 5: Views on Hezbollah

Countries	Unfavorable (% of people)	Favorable (% of people)	NA
Jordan	43	55	2
Lebanon	46	52	2
Nigeria	26	45	28
Indonesia	30	43	27
Egypt	66	30	4
Pakistan	12	19	69
Turkey	74	5	21
Source:https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2010/12/02/muslims-around-the-world-divided-on-hamas-and-hezbollah/			

As the polls conducted between 2007 and 2014 display, Hezbollah had lost its support in the region as well as in Lebanon. Even in the countries, where a third of the population is consists of Shiite such as the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, it had only 13–15 per cent approval (Pollak, 2016, p. 14). In Jordan, where Hezbollah was perceived as a positive actor in 2010 with 55 per cent favourable ratings, its support decreased in 2013 to only 25 per cent (Pollak, 2016, p. 14). In the following years, it is seen that the number of people in favour of Hezbollah maintains to decrease as a result of its role in Syria. According to the Pew Research Center's survey conducted in 2014, the number of people unfavourable of Hezbollah has been rising (Table 5). For instance, while only 41% of Egyptians had an unfavourable view of Hezbollah in 2007, but it raised to 83%. In Jordan, 44% of people were unfavourable of Hezbollah in 2007, but seven years later it increased to 81%.

Similarly, negative opinions of Hezbollah have raised in Turkey from 66% in 2007 to 85% in 2014 and Tunisia from 33% in 2007 to 53% in 2014. Interestingly,

the number of people unfavourable of Hezbollah increased in Palestine between 2007 and 2014 from 20% to 55%, which shows that Hezbollah has lost its support in one of its pillars of legitimacy.

Table 6: Support for Hezbollah among Sects in Lebanon

Sect/Religion	Unfavorable (% of people)	Favorable (% of people)	NA
Shia	12	87	1
Sunni	90	8	2
Christian	75	24	1
Source:https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2010/12/02/muslims-around-the-world-divided-on-hamas-and-hezbollah/			

Opinions are steady in Lebanon between 2007 and 2014 that unfavourable views on Hezbollah fall from 64% to 59%. It can be related to the Lebanese public's fear of the spread of the civil war into Lebanon and the rise of sectarianism in Lebanon. Besides, it can be seen that there is a sharp division between religious groups. While a significant majority of the Shiite, almost 87%, have a favourable view of Hezbollah, the ratio falls to 8% among the Sunni population and 24% among the Christians (Table 6). In addition to the opinions on the organization's profile, the popularity of the leader of the organization, Hasan Nasrallah, seems to decrease in the region. While Nasrallah was ranked as one of the most popular leaders in the Middle East in a poll conducted in 2008, his popularity dropped after Hezbollah intervened in the civil war in Syria (Dacrema and Talbot, 2019, p. 18). However, the recent survey published on Washington Institute related on the Lebanese opinions on Hezbollah shows that positive views on Hezbollah decreases between 2017 and 2020 (Pollock, 2020).

To avoid the claims of making sectarianism, Hezbollah's discourse on the uprisings in the Arab world was cloaked in nationalist terms. In so doing, it sought to capitalize on an opportunity to reach out to a broad audience all over the region. On the other hand, as the protests across the region gained momentum and spread to Hezbollah's ally, Syria, Hezbollah's position began to transform and marginalize in rhetoric and politics. Even though the organization supported the movements across the region, the Muslim Brotherhood's coming to power in Egypt and Tunisia, and the increasing power of the opposition in Syria challenged its attitude against the uprisings. To avoid appearing as practicing double standard towards the movements in the region, it declared two criteria that were crucial points in the organization's attitude towards the movements: "First, the regime's stance on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; and second, the readiness of regime to engage in reform" (Daher, 2016, p. 173).

In this regard, it highlighted the Palestinian issue in addition to its Lebanese identity to regain its popularity. Moreover, it pointed the Western interventions in the popular uprisings and claimed that the western powers with their Arab allies, want to detract Arab populations from the Islamic world and the Palestinian issue (Daher, 2016, p. 173).

The Arab Spring had stolen the limelight from the organization and shattered and pulverized its status and reputation in the Arab streets as the sole representative of Arab dignity (Khatib, 2014b, p. 116). As a result, Hezbollah lost its prestige and began to be perceived as a divisive actor. Even though Hezbollah witnesses a crisis of popular legitimacy after its intervention in Syria, its full-grown patronage network and propaganda apparatus, its

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declared pre-emptive strike against the *takfiri* threat, and its comparative advantage over internal competitors enable it to protect its dominant status and dominance in Lebanon (Lob, 2014, p. 7).

Although the polls displaying support for Hezbollah were high in Lebanon when compared to other countries in the Middle East, Hezbollah's loss of regional support from the Arab streets across the region influence governments' attitudes against the organization. According to Pollak (2016, p. 14), as the Arab public's support for Hezbollah declined, governments' decisions towards the organization negatively changed. In other words, declining sympathy for Hezbollah showed its effects on governments' views on the organization. For instance, the Gulf Cooperation Council and Arab League labeled Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. According to Pollak, such a labelling would be more difficult 10-15 years ago because of public's oppositions.

Although the organization cared its language in Lebanon towards the uprisings across the region, its rhetoric used to motivate its fighters and the Shiite coming from other parts of the world had differences. It drove its soldiers with a legacy of Shiite history and religion. As it claimed, what was happening in Syria was a repetition of what happened in Karbala many years ago (Daher, 2016, p. 184). Even though there has been no *fatwa* from a Shiite cleric, fighting in Syria was presented as a religious duty. As *takfiris* were attacking to the Shiite shrines and holy places in Syria, protecting these places was Hezbollah fighters' ethical obligations. "It was not uncommon to see Hezbollah soldiers fighting in Syria wearing headbands embellished with the phrase 'O Hussain', an exaltation of Hussain ibn Ali" (Blanford, 2013). As

Daher (2017) argues, there has also been a rise of numbers of photos and songs glorifying Shiite religious symbols, and the martyrs died in Syria. While highlighting the community bonds and religious motives within the Shiite community, it used a general discourse addressing the Lebanese identity and Lebaneseness towards the Lebanese public.

5.2.1.6. Heterogeneity of the Opposition Front

According to Putnam (1988, p. 444), the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the domestic constituents influences the win-set formation of institutions. In a homogenous structure, the chief negotiator would receive internal opposition due to intergroup interest conflicts, or other groups can unanimously oppose it. In such a condition, the chief negotiator would receive its constituents as hawks taking a stand against his/her decisions. When it is applied to Hezbollah case, it is similar to the condition in hawks vs doves. The opposition front that Hezbollah fazes against its involvement in Syria has a heterogeneous structure that there is no unified consensus. Therefore, Hezbollah has a chance to find "doves" among the "hawks" camp. In other words, the domestic division and confessional system in Lebanon enable Hezbollah to break the siege, which is against its actions in Syria. In this regard, its policies of cultivating itself as a resistance movement protecting Lebanon would result in domestic support that would expand its win-set size.

5.2.1.7. Relations with International Actors

In Syria, Hezbollah fights within the same front with Iran, the Syrian regime, Iraqi Shiite groups and Russia. Hezbollah ideologically follows Iran and Iran's religious leadership, *wilayat al-faqih*, or guardianship of jurisprudent, which is

one of the pillars of Hezbollah's ideology. Since 1982, it has been receiving moral, political and materialistic support in all possible and available forms from Iran (Nasrallah, 2012). Syria has an essential effect on the continuity and effectiveness of Hezbollah. In the war against Israel, Hezbollah is the frontline and Syria is the rearguard. Assad regime is a safe haven for Hezbollah that it harbours training camps of the organization. Also, Iran sends weapons to Hezbollah via Syria. The Assad regime plays a vital role in the transfer of firearms, money and equipment. As Conduit (2014, p. 102) analyzes 'if Iran is Hezbollah's oxygen tank, Syria would be the air hose'.

When Russia intervened in the civil war to support the Assad regime, power balance in the field has changed in the advantage of Syria, Iran and Hezbollah. As the organization cooperated with Russian forces in several areas, it strengthened militarily. On December 2014, Mikhail Bogdanov, Russian President Vladimir Putin's special representative and vice president of the Russian Foreign Minister had a meeting with Hasan Nasrallah. It was the first time for Hezbollah that a foreign power saw the organization as a regional power. According to Russia, Hezbollah is not a terrorist organization. Hezbollah is defined as an adequate critical power in the war against terrorism in Syria. It is claimed to be an "official socio-political organization" by the Russian delegate.

Before the civil war in Syria, Hezbollah relied on military and logistics support coming from Iran, and it was fighting against Israel through the Lebanese soil. After the civil war, Hezbollah increased the number of supplies supporting it and opened a new front against Israel. It moved from an entity always fighting the same enemy in the same place to multiple new war theatres. While it has

been practicing a war of defense against Israel, this role evolved with the civil war in Syria. Defensive strategy of Hezbollah changed to the seizure and holding of territory in Syria.

5.2.1.8. Opening New Battlefronts for the Resistance

As Hezbollah's increasing fighting capabilities with the civil war mentioned above, the war in Syria has also enabled Hezbollah to expand its regional role and empowered its stance from a guerilla organization to a regional actor. While fighting against Israel was the main reason of being before the civil war, Hezbollah expanded its capabilities through forming new groups allied to the Resistance in the region and training existing Shiite fighters coming to Syria from Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Besides, Hezbollah supports the Houthi rebellions in Yemen. It seems that Hezbollah appears to have extended its reach to include Syria, Iraq and Yemen through the Shiite fighting groups. Moreover, it aims to open a new front against Israel within the Syrian territories, as mentioned above.

5.2.1.9. Political Power

According to Robert Putnam, the greater autonomy of central decision-makers from their Level II constituents enables a larger 'win-set' and opens the door of achievement of agreements. In the case of Hezbollah, there has been a complex relationship between the Lebanese state and Hezbollah. Hezbollah has no claim of independence. Legitimacy and staying within the boundaries of legal processes have been the points Hezbollah gave attention. Therefore, although its interests conflict with that of the Lebanese actors or the state, Hezbollah pays attention to protect its legitimacy. In this regard, a working

government in Lebanon is important for the organization, because it is one of the pillars of Hezbollah's legitimacy bases. Under the condition that it stays within the boundaries of legitimacy, due to its interests and perception of threat, Hezbollah sometimes has been acted independently from the state and political actors. Its intervention in the civil war in Syria is an example that, to the contrary, the Lebanese state's decision of neutrality, the organization involved in the conflict.

Putnam claims that the unified structure of the decision-making mechanism strengthens the win-set of the chief negotiator. However, the power of chief negotiator in the domestic level provides a more vigorous win-set formation. The larger win-set size in the national level is derived from the greater autonomy of decision-maker from domestic actors (Putnam, 1988, p. 449). In terms of the state strength, Putnam argues that the more energetic state can change the policies of actors within the domestic sphere. He gives an example of diplomats of a country under the rule of a dictator. Diplomats would be less able to negotiate with their foreign counterparts because of their lack of autonomy. In other words, the existence of a more substantial Lebanese state, which is capable of influencing the domestic actors within Lebanon, would prevent Hezbollah to act independently from the state.

Difference between Hezbollah's discourse and policies after the Arab Spring started, and it spread to Syria was seen as contradictory by the Lebanese and regional public. It was defined as a double standard that on the one hand, the organization backed the uprising in the region in general and supported rights of masses against their brutal governments, on the other hand, it helped the dictator in Syria (Suechika, 2018, p. 91).

There have been criticisms in Lebanon against Hezbollah since its involvement in the civil war in Syria. The Lebanese government, in time, called for non-intervention in the events in Syria (A. Daher, 2014). It called Hezbollah to stay within the boundaries of the Baabda Declaration that signed by various Lebanese political groups in 2012. This arrangement underscored Lebanon's neutrality about the developments in the Middle East and aimed to distance Lebanon from the civil war in Syria to avoid a spillover effect (Dakroub, 2013). Fouad Siniora, the former prime minister of Lebanon, claimed that Hezbollah's taking action in Syria was very dangerous and undermining national laws and principles, the Constitution, the Baabda Declaration and international agreements (Daily Star, 2013b). Michel Suleiman, the former president of Lebanon, called on Hezbollah to withdraw its fighters out of Syria and said that involvement in the civil war in a neighbouring country would cause instability in Lebanon (News24, 2013). He claimed:

> Hezbollah is a resistance (...) This resistance is present in the ministerial statement as part of the phrase 'the army, the people, and the resistance.' So how can the resistance act unilaterally without the army and the people? It is they who departed from that triplet (the army, the people, and the resistance). They took the part that concerns them and acted on their own (Rammal, 2013).

Saad Hariri, the Sunni prime minister and the strongest figurehead of 14 March Alliance, criticizes Hezbollah of 'dragging' fires of Syria to Lebanon and carrying sectarianism to Lebanese territories (CBC, 2015). He alleges that Hezbollah's claim of fighting against sectarianism in Syria is no more than making sectarianism. Several videos showing Hezbollah fighters carrying black flags on which the words "O, Hussein", were written in red, around a mosque in Qusayr around a Sunni settlement have also empowered these claims of Hezbollah's making of sectarianism (Matar, 2014, p. 186). Hariri also

claimed that since it heard voices only coming from Iran, Hezbollah would not hear the call of the Lebanese people. Waleed Jumblatt, the Druze leader, claimed that Hezbollah was acting under the Iranian command and made a call to Hezbollah to stop its activities in Syria. Besides, Subhi al-Tufeyli, the first secretary-general of Hezbollah, claimed Hezbollah as an organization killing its people and supporting the Syrian regime, which did nothing for the Palestinian cause.

Furthermore, he claimed that Hezbollah fighters, who were killing children in Syria, would go to the devil. Additionally, there have been protests in Lebanon opposing Hezbollah's involvement in Syria. As they are reflected in the press, protestors condemned Hezbollah's role in Syria, claiming that Hezbollah kills the Syrian people in a way, which is illegitimate (Dockery, 2013).

After it intervened in Syria to fight in the side with the Assad regime, there have been attacks in Lebanon. These attacks are organized by, the mostly Sunni, Syrian rebels and jihadi groups including al-Qaeda and the ISIS and many Lebanese people have been killed in these attacks (Kais, 2015). Hezbollah, in this regard, is criticized because of dragging Lebanon into a war, which it has no stake. Hezbollah's intervention in Syria against mainly Sunni Muslim rebels has further inflamed sectarian rivalry in Lebanon (News24, 2013). As Lebanon had an unpleasant experience of civil war between 1975 and 1990, there is a concern of returning to a civil war between sects as a result of Hezbollah's intervention in the civil war in Syria. There have been fights between Sunni and Shiite groups in consequence of the Syrian civil war (Kais, 2015). The recent polls show that the Lebanese public is the most fearful community among the Middle Eastern states. According to Pew Research

Center's survey conducted in between 2013 and 2014, when compared to the other countries in the region, the Lebanese people are more worried about the extremist threat than they were a year ago (Table 7). With clashes escalating along the Syrian-Lebanese frontier, almost 95% of the Lebanese public is concerned about the spread of violence to their country (Table 8). The three significant religious communities (99% of Christians, 95% of the Shiite and 91% of Sunnis) share the fear of violence. That also explains the Lebanese public's opposition to Hezbollah's involvement in the civil war in Syria. Additionally, according to a survey conducted by Sofres Liban Polling Agency in 2014, the majority, almost 56%, of the Lebanese respondents oppose Hezbollah's intervention in Syria, 28% support it, and 9% and 7% had no opinion and did not answer, respectively (Now Media, 2014). Among the religious communities, 60% of the Shiite supports the intervention, while 82% of the Sunni population, 61% of Christians and 63% of the Druze community oppose it.

Table 7: Increasing Concerns about Extremism in the Middle East

Country	Years	
	2013	**2014**
Lebanon	81%	92%
Tunisia	71%	80%
Egypt	69%	75%
Jordan	54%	62%
Turkey	37%	50%
Source:https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2014/07/01/concerns-about-islamic-extremism-on-the-rise-in-middle-east/		

Hezbollah's intervention in Syria also opposed because of creating economic and social turmoil in Lebanon. The worsening security situation negatively influenced the financial condition and business and investment climate, especially in the border areas. In the cities, restaurant and shopkeepers had a decline in sales. Due to the increasing number of migrations, residents attempted to sell or rent their apartments and relocate to other parts of the city, driving down property values (Lob, 2014, pp. 3-4).

While Christian and Sunni communities oppose and criticize Hezbollah's intervention in Syria, there were criticisms among the Shiite community, which is the most prominent supporter of the organization. Although the Lebanese Shiite sees the Assad regime as a strategic ally for Hezbollah, they supported the opposition movements in their fights against tyranny, oppression, and injustice at the beginning of the uprising in Syria. As a result, many Shiite in Lebanon initially questioned, if not opposed, Hezbollah's involvement in the civil war (Lob, 2014, p. 3). Hezbollah's deaths in Syria caused a sense of dissatisfaction among its Shiite supporters (Daher, 2016, p. 188; Lob, 2017, pp. 523-524). Before Hezbollah's officially intervention in the civil war in Syria, there were dead bodies of Hezbollah fighters coming from Syria in 2012. Although Nasrallah claimed that they were individual soldiers went to the Syria-Lebanon border to protect the Lebanese boundaries from the rebels, it was becoming more difficult for the organization to hide its intervention in Syria (Daher, 2016, p. 182). Increasing casualties triggered criticisms from inside and uncertainty among the Shiite population regarding Hezbollah's involvement in the civil war. The families whose sons died in Syria began to question the wisdom of fighting against Muslims in Syria. As Randa Slim (2013) points, their ambivalence and suspicions to the intervention

increased after they witnessed the growing number of body bags and funerals of Hezbollah fighters. They were also afraid of widening of the civil war and the Sunni-Shiite rift towards Lebanon (Dettmer, 2013). As the attacks against the Lebanese Shiite increased, they realized that Hezbollah's actions in Syria were subjecting them to physical and material harm (Lob, 2014, p. 3). The criticisms eventually subsided after the Syrian rebels, and Sunni extremists launched armed attacks in areas, where the Shiite population intensely lives, and Hezbollah's efforts that its fight was for the sake of Lebanon's future and to prevent sectarianism from coming in Lebanon. Besides, some of the allies of the organization in Lebanon also refused to fight in Syria and criticized the organization's decision to intervene in the civil war. Moreover, organization's allies in Palestine criticized its attitude towards Syria. For example, the Palestinian Ansar Allah group forced its secretary general to resign, and members of the Lebanese Resistance Brigades refused to fight for Assad (Daher, 2016, p. 189). The organization and Nasrallah confronted to the criticisms and declared that Syrian opposition's attacks in Lebanon were organized by Israeli and American agents infiltrated to Al Nosra and ISIS. Furthermore, Nasrallah pointed to Saudi Arabia as the power behind these attacks. He claimed that Hezbollah was fighting to protect Lebanon against these Western and pro-Western powers and if it does not make provision against them, the bombs will maintain to kill the Lebanese people. However, the lack of a convincing alternative within the Shiite community against Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Hezbollah's control over the Shiite population prevents the growth of discontent. The Shiite population is obliged to support Hezbollah that weakening of the organization would cause weakening of Shiite's living standards and political situation.

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Table 8: Fear of Spreading Violence in Lebanon

Sects	Very Concerned (%)	Somewhat Concerned (%)	Total Concerned (%)	Nor Concerned (%)
Christian	75	24	99	1
Shia	60	35	95	5
Sunni	65	26	91	9
Lebanon	**68**	**27**	**95**	**5**
Source: https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2014/07/01/concerns-about-islamic-extremism-on-the-rise-in-middle-east/				

After it intervened in Syria, Hezbollah also secured its position in Lebanon. Its allies, including President Michel Aoun, are in government, while its long-term rival, the March 14 Alliance, has fractured and its leader, Saad Hariri, is weak (Philips, 2018). In May 2014, the Lebanese parliament was failed to elect a president and, from that time, there has been no president until the election of Michel Aoun as the president on October 2016. Hezbollah and 8 March Bloc backed Aoun. Election of him is defined as a victory of Hezbollah. Hezbollah emphasizes its Lebanese and pacifist rhetoric in the election of Aoun. As Aoun was elected with the support of Hezbollah and its allies, the organization points its alliances as based not only on political interests, whether they are strategic or tactical, but also on mutual trust, respect, and friendship. As Nasrallah claims:

> (...) Our relations have an emotional aspect. There is friendship, affection, and respect. So it is not all about politics and interests. It is not sheer calculations and buying and selling and profits and losses. We take pains to build relations between political forces and religious factions in Lebanon on the bases of internal confidence, serenity, and peace (Nasrallah, 2016b).

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In Aoun's election, Nasrallah points out that Hezbollah had a consensus with its political allies in Lebanon:

> (...) at least all our allies were informed that we would talk with General Aoun, and we would inform him that we support his candidacy... We informed all our allies of this, and they know that for a year and a half we have been seeking, and we are still seeking (Nasrallah, 2016b).

After Aoun's election, Hezbollah held a military parade at Al-Qusayr[15] in Syria in November. Many believed that the party might have been announcing its transformation from a militia with a supporting role to a full-fledged army in actual control of territory. Becoming a leading actor of the Lebanese political life and controlling the Syrian border against anti-Assad opposition groups has given Hezbollah an unprecedented status. By introducing Aoun, it showed its ability to control the government and institutions. Having proven its political power, it paraded its military power and supremacy over the Lebanese state security forces by demonstrating its military capabilities at Al-Qusayr. The demonstration justified its involvement in Syria and reinforced its role as the defender of Lebanon against the war spreading to its territory. Difference between rhetoric about domestic alliances (Hezbollah's two different actions towards political allies about Syrian intervention and Aoun's election) indicates that the organization is intended to act independently when it comes to its survival. However, it is clear that the organization still needs to refer to its Lebanese identity.

After years of political uncertainty, the Lebanese public went to the polls in May of 2018. Hezbollah has dragged its feet on holding the election (overdue

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[15] Al-Qusayr is the symbol of Hezbollah's success in Syria. It gained a military victory against anti-Assad opposition groups in 2013.

since 2014) to neutralize criticism toward its involvement in Syria (Calculli, 2018). It was precisely the Lebanese Parliament's lack of confidence that enabled the organization to cross the Syrian border and join the conflict in Syria. The election in May 2018 strengthened Hezbollah that the organization and its political allies gained a position to forge a narrow majority in the Lebanese parliament. It can block any legislation it dislikes (Ghitis, 2018). Composition of the new parliament displays that Hezbollah will not be forced to disarm and armed wing will remain far more potent than the Lebanese army. According to Ghitis (2018), election results show that Hezbollah has managed to survive the war in Syria without any significant political wounds at home.

5.2.1.10. Military Power

Hezbollah's military power and capabilities increased after its involvement in the civil war in Syria, preserving the powerful and autonomous situation of the organization. Although there are adverse effects of the civil war, such as increasing casualties and financial losses for the organization, on the other side, it secured the Syria-Lebanon border as well as gained military experience. "The sectarian nature of the civil war in Syria and the operations against the jihadi movements within Lebanon enabled Hezbollah to bolster its national security narrative in Lebanon and the region" (Nerguizian, 2018).

Hezbollah's involvement in Syria increased its military capabilities as Hezbollah emerged as one of the significant forces on the ground in Syria, where it leads battles and train its fighters. Pollak (2016, p. 1) claims that the organization's intervention in Syria has amounted to the most extensive military campaign in its history. When compared with the post-2006 situation,

its involvement in Syria has enhanced the organization's capabilities in terms of warfare tactics and conventional skills that it acquired training and experience in conducting both offensive and defensive operations (Berti, 2016). Although the organization followed a defensive strategy, which includes keeping fighting as long as it could, against Israel, by contrast, its policy transformed to an offensive one in Syria that provides for taking and holding territory and defeating the enemy (Pollak, 2016, p. 7). In the Lebanese scene, especially the political protests in Lebanon in last two years displayed that military power of Hezbollah provides an exit road for the organization in the political crisis (Ghaddar, 2020). The organization's autonomous structure and its dominance over the Shiite community of Lebanon are also factors that enable its survival.

Syria is the first offensive battlefield experience of Hezbollah (Pollak, 2016, p. 7). The civil war added several military achievements. According to Daher (2016, p. 186), Hezbollah's intervention in Syria strengthened the organization in the military level that it became more potent than ever and transformed into a conventional army. According to Christopher Philips (2018), the Syrian civil war was different from the wars against Israel since the 1980s that forced the organization to adapt and learn new technics:

> It now has experience in urban warfare, fighting inside enemy territory, working with air support, and collaborating with non-Hezbollah groups, including major state militaries, such as Russia, and non-Arabic speakers, such as Afghani and Pakistani Shiite militias (Philips, 2018).

The war in Syria provided battle-tested militants for the organization. Furthermore, Hezbollah has used drone technology for both intelligence purposes and attacks in Syria. For instance, it used armed drones to bomb an

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al-Nusra camp along the Syria-Lebanon border in 2014 (Pollak, 2016, p. 8). Its close relationship with Russia and Iran in the ground enables Hezbollah to learn more about drone technology and improve its capabilities.

In terms of arms and military supply, the organization increased its capabilities and number of arms. It included armed drones, short-range ballistic missiles and anti-tank missiles in addition to approximately 130.000 rockets compared with 15.000 in the 2006 war against Israel (Philips, 2018).

In September of 2015, Russia intervened in the civil war in support of the Assad Regime. Russia's involvement in the civil war changed the direction of the war in the advantage of the Syrian regime, Iran and Hezbollah. In addition to the Russian intervention's determination of the war, it also had a significant impact on Hezbollah's fighting capabilities.[16] The organization received weapons from Russia (Ezzi, 2020, p. 19). As the organization fights with the Russian army against the Syrian rebels, it develops its military experience: "On the macro level, Hezbollah will be exposed to Russian military thought, which entails sophisticated operational concepts and advanced military planning skills" (Katz and Pollak, 2015).

Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese media reported a meeting between Russian senior military officials and Hezbollah field commanders, whereby the two sides agreed to continue conferring frequently and meet regularly (Alahed

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[16] It should be noted that Russia does not consider Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. Mikhail Bogdanov, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, explains Russia's stance: "They (Hezbollah) have never committed any terrorist acts on Russian territory. Hezbollah was elected by people to the Lebanese parliament. There are cabinet members and ministers, who are from Hezbollah in Lebanon. It's a legitimate socio-political force. Some say Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. We maintain contacts and relations with them because we do not consider them as a terrorist organization" (Taher, 2015).

News, n.d). Moreover, the leadership of Hezbollah welcomed Russia's military buildup in Syria in support of the Assad Regime. Nasrallah said that the organization "welcomes any force which intervenes and supports the axis in Syria, because through its participation, it will contribute to pushing away the major dangers that are threatening Syria and the region" (Davison and Karouny, 2015).

As Corbeil claims,

> the group is learning how a world-class army gathers intelligence, makes plans, and executes operations. Working side-by-side with Russian officers[17] is sure to refine Hezbollah's modern military strategy, and reports indicate that there are at least two joint Russia–Hezbollah operation rooms in Latakia and Damascus (Corbeil, 2016).

On the other hand, increasing military and political relations of Russia and Hezbollah have created vigilance both for Israel and Lebanon.[18] Israel estimates that the increasing interaction between Russia and Hezbollah[19] decreases Hezbollah's likelihood of war with Israel soon. Russia is expected to restrain Hezbollah's response against Israel because of its crucial role in Syria. On the other hand:

> Hezbollah-Russia military interaction in the long term is worrying for Israel that a newly offence-minded Hezbollah, capable of more complex operations, could deal heavier blows to the Israeli army in a confrontation

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[17] One of the commanders of Hezbollah in Aleppo accepted that his organization was allying with Russians. He said that Hezbollah's relations with Russia are better than excellent (Track Persia, 2017).

[18] There were Russian interests and projects in the Middle East including Syria, Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas before the civil war in Syria (Talal, 2008).

[19] Hezbollah field commanders in Syria say, "they are receiving heavy weapons directly from Russia with no strings attached. The commanders say there is a relationship of complete coordination between the Assad Regime in Damascus, Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia. At the same time, they say the direct interdependence between Russia and Hezbollah is increasing" (Rosenfeld, 2016).

along the southern Lebanese border and it may even attempt to enter Israeli territory, as Hamas did in the 2014 conflict, albeit in a more capable manner (Corbeil, 2016).

On the Lebanese side, Lebanon is worried that Hezbollah's increasing military capabilities can exceed the Lebanese army, which is suspended by the US and Saudi Arabia. As Corbeil points, this supports:

> "Hezbollah's argument that it is the only force capable of defending Lebanon from Israeli aggression and the radical Sunni threat. Already bolstered politically by the survival of the Syrian regime and the success of its own efforts in Syria, the group will further push its agenda on crucial decisions regarding the Lebanese presidency, changes to parliamentary election practices, and security appointments. Training of Hezbollah by Russia may stop with the end of the conflict in Syria, but its impact will continue to reverberate in Lebanon and the region (Corbeil, 2016).

Although the LAF is the only national army with its capabilities thanks to international collaborations with the US and Saudi Arabia, it is unable to unilaterally oppose to the threats in the post-Syria period against the Israeli aggression and rebel attacks coming from Syria:

> In turn, Hezbollah benefits from its preeminent role in Lebanon's post-war political order. No state institution – including the LAF – will openly challenge Hezbollah's domestic credibility with its own Shiite constituency, and the group's Resistance operations and expeditionary campaign in Syria have further strengthened Hezbollah's domestic legitimacy (Nerguizian, 2018).

Interactions with Russia can bolster Hezbollah's image in Lebanon and present it as the recipient of growing recognition and support as a legitimate operational actor in the Syrian arena (Mansharof, 2016, p. 2). As there are criticisms both from the Shiite and non-Shiite to Hezbollah about its presence in Syria, the establishment of a direct channel with Russia can overcome objections at home that the number of fatalities from the fighting in Syria could

be reduced no longer. Besides, by building an alliance with Russia, Hezbollah not only strengthens the axis of resistance against opposition groups in Syria and the West but also increases its military capabilities and competence, which can be used against Israel in the future. Both strengthening axis of resistance and the army power against Israel are the bases, which Hezbollah justifies itself in domestic. When its alliance with Russia is considered with criticisms to its presence in Syria, which claimed Hezbollah lost its sight of war against Israel, it can be said that domestic concerns are more important for Hezbollah than the international ones. However, this does not mean its alliance with Russia will not bring global gains for Hezbollah.

After its involvement in the civil war in Syria, Hezbollah's regional influence has also increased. It is useful not only in Syria but also in Iraq and Yemen:

> Up to 500 Hezbollah specialists have been sent to Iraq since 2014 to train the Hashd al-Shaabi against the Islamic State and others, while Nasrallah plays a regular mediating role between Iraqi Shiite factions. An unknown number of Hezbollah operatives have also been sent to Yemen to train Houthi fighters, while Hezbollah now has direct relations with Russia, at both an operational and political level (Philips, 2018).

To sum up, the result of its involvement in the Syrian civil war has empowered Hezbollah showed its transformation again from a local Lebanese organization to a regional armed player. It can be said that Hezbollah has consolidated its role as a significant player in the Middle East. Even, ironically, the movement can transform its prominence from being an organization that was internationally recognized as a terrorist group to an organization that is an 'internationally recognized' anti-terrorist force. As the LAF's inability to protect Lebanon from the external threats, Hezbollah has proved itself as the resistant struggling for the good of Lebanon. In this way, it seeks public

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support from the Lebanese public. According to El-Masri and Corbail (2017), as the Lebanese state undermines its role of security, Hezbollah justifies its existence and armed purpose as a resistance movement to the Lebanese public. Hezbollah's activities towards the protection of Lebanon and its discourse composed of nationalist statements increased confidence in Hezbollah. The organization used these past developments to justify its involvement in Syria.

> It can spread a general feeling among Lebanese that its continued armed role is necessary. With several years of experience in Syria, Hezbollah is portraying itself as the protector of Lebanon from jihadi threats and in any future conflict with Israel (El-Masri and Corbeil, 2017).

5.2.1.11. Economic Advantages

The civil war in Syria influenced the Lebanese economy. Lebanon's economy is based on three main pillars including tourism, sale of real property and diaspora's expending. The beginning of the Syrian civil war harmed all of these sectors. While the revenue from tourism declined due to the insecure environment originated from Syria, and then the Covid-19 pandemic, sales of properties and expending of diaspora declined dramatically due to decrease in the value of national currency. Moreover, the Syrian migrants became an extra financial burden on the Lebanese economy. In addition, as a result of the civil war in Syria, Lebanon's relations with its financial partners, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries, fell into decay. These countries, who were critical about Hezbollah's efforts in Syria, showed their reactions via cutting financial aids and assistance to Lebanon and imposing sanctions (Itani, 2013). They called on their citizens not to travel to Lebanon. In addition, they brought the selling of their properties in Lebanon into forward. In this way, they aimed to compel Lebanon to make sanctions on Hezbollah. In other words, they punished

Lebanon in order to prevent Hezbollah's activities. The deteriorations in the Lebanese economy were resulted in mass protests. People appeared in the streets to protest economic conditions, corruption, and decreasing living standards. The status quo actors were blamed as responsible and offenders of corruption.

The civil war in Syria also influenced Hezbollah's economy. As the organization intervened in Syria, the increasing expenditures caused Hezbollah's decreases in its social aids towards the Lebanese Shiite. Moreover, the civil war also affected the money flow from Iran, Hezbollah's main backer, to Hezbollah. The weakening economic condition of Hezbollah led the organization to create alternative sources of money and to find new ways in order to maintain its social provisions, which have been one of the pillars of its legitimacy in the eyes of the Lebanese public, especially the Lebanese Shiite.

Hezbollah's alternatives to invigorate its economic functionality can be explained in two fields: in Lebanon and in Syria. In Lebanon, Hezbollah used alternatives in almost every sector including health, finance and trade. For instance, the organization used Ministry of Public Health in order to provide pharmacies at low prices to its base locations such as Beqaa and suburbs of Beirut. The medications were usually provided from Syrian and Iranian companies. Moreover, Hanin Ghaddar claims that Hezbollah's demanding of Ministry of Public Health was a strategical step:

> Rather than hoarding cabinet seats for itself, Hezbollah is taking a calculated approach to the situation, allowing its opponents to form a government headed by Hariri while giving its allies control over most of Lebanon's sovereign ministries. This may help Beirut avoid some of the international pressure that could ensue if significant portfolios are directly controlled by a terrorist group; it could also help Hezbollah

sidestep domestic blame if these ministries are mismanaged. Even as it yields sovereign portfolios to other parties, Hezbollah seems intent on directly controlling a key service portfolio itself: Ministry of Public Health (Ghaddar, 2018b).

Ministry of Public Health has the fourth largest budget among the other ministries in Lebanese political system. While other ministries make payments through salaries, Ministry of Public Health funds are mostly spent directly to the public. Hezbollah aims to reach this money and, in this way, spend it in the areas, where it was unable to meet the needs including social and economic aids. Since the civil war in Syria harmed the financial flow from Iran and caused a big financial burden on the organization, Hezbollah's need for money increased. Although Hezbollah is insistent on Ministry of Public Health, it maintains to influence other critical ministries including Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, and Defense through its allies. Hezbollah allies including Amal and Free Patriotic Movement take these ministries, which means Hezbollah has an indirect control on these ministries.

In order to provide financial income, the organization built groceries, called *Al Nour* Markets, across the country, where Iranian and Syrian goods were sold. In order to provide campaigns of low prices, the organization formed a security system, which includes a card, called *Al Sajed*. By using this card, Hezbollah members and employees had the chance to make shopping at lower prices. In this way, on the one hand, the organization aimed to preserve its role as a social aid provider and consolidate its base among the Shiite population. On the other hand, the organization sought to distance itself from the economic depression in Lebanon and create alternative sources of making money.

The political vacuum in Syria after the civil war and Assad government's loss of control on borderlines and transition points left an open space for non-state actors in Syria. Hezbollah has been one of the actors that exploited the authority gap and gained economic advantages. Hezbollah's financial activities in Syria and along the Lebanese-Syrian border can be concluded in three fields: Smuggling of people, weapons, and products (1), drug dealings (2), and real estate trades (3).

Since the 1980s, there have been illicit trade of products and goods along the Lebanon-Syria border. Hezbollah operated it under the control of the Syrian government. According to Ezzi (2020, p. 11), Hezbollah increased its smuggling activities in the border, and the volume of trade reached almost 2,5 billion dollars at the end of 2018. Besides, Hezbollah sells weapons to the Syrian opposition forces that it fights in the Syrian arena. In addition to the smuggling of goods and arms, the organization also makes illegal transit passes of people in the region. In this way, it provides military power for its operational forces in Syria.

As the war created a lack of authority in Syria, Syrian territories became one of the major suppliers of drugs and stimulants. Hezbollah produces cannabis and hashish in the areas in Syria controlled by itself in addition to fields in Lebanon. Even, it is claimed that the organization employs many Syrian refugees in Lebanon as a labor force (Ezzi, 2020, p. 12). Drugs produced by Hezbollah are exported to Jordan and Gulf countries through using Syrian territories. The money coming from the drug trade is used to buy weapons for the militia in Syria (Fernandez, 2020).

While the organization uses the Syrian territories along the Lebanese border for smuggling and illicit trade, it is also active within Syrian boundaries, where it controls or stays side by side with the Syrian national army. In the areas controlled, such as al-Qusayr and southeast of Damascus, the organization dominates the sales of real estates and agricultural lands. These real estate properties belonging to Syrian citizens, who quitted the region during the civil war and did not return. In accordance with the Syrian government, Hezbollah sells these real estates and even provides convenience in taking proprietorship certificates. The Lebanese Shiite bourgeoisie is the primary customer of these properties. The goals of the organization in these sales are firstly gaining money and financing its war in Syria; secondly, empowering its Shiite base in Lebanon and consolidation its power among them. Moreover, the organization aims to mobilize the touristic attractions in the region, especially around Sayyidah Zainab region. In this way, it built infrastructure and roads in the area to attract pilgrimage tourism.

Economic advantages that Hezbollah gained from the Syrian territories strengthen its win-set in Lebanon. Firstly, the organization earns money from the drug trade, smuggling and real estate deals that it compensates the burden of civil war losses in Syria. Secondly, the illicit trade in Syria provides the organization to buy weapons. Thirdly, the organization consolidate its power and position among the Lebanese Shiite that Shiite living in Lebanon benefit from purchasing of real estates and securing of Sayyidah Zainab Shrine.

5.3. Chapter Conclusion

This chapter explained Hezbollah's foreign policy as a regional hybrid actor and operations in Syria and its influence on Lebanon through borrowing the

concept of win-sets from Robert Putnam's two-level game analysis. Although Putnam's theory is specifically for states, this chapter has shown that non-state actors in the form of regional hybrid actors, as Hezbollah is defined, can have the ability to create foreign policies and reflect their foreign policy behavior to the domestic political context. In this regard, this study used several concepts of Putnam's approach on Hezbollah case in order to explain its state-like practices.

As borrowed from Putnam, Hezbollah's win-sets are built on its relations with the Lebanese state, Lebanese actors and the public. In the research, there have been several factors that influenced the win-set size of the organization. These are presented as barriers and opportunities of Hezbollah in the win-set formation. In this regard, the structure of the Lebanese state and Hezbollah's organizational structure and strategies are defined as opportunities before Hezbollah's expanding of its win-set size. On the other hand, Hezbollah's reputation is claimed to have a dual role that it served as an opportunity until the civil war in Syria, but as a barrier after its involvement in the civil war. Hezbollah used these opportunities to expand its size of win-set, and there have been several policies and strategies within this context. Some of these are based on Hezbollah's policies towards the Lebanese state and domestic actors and the public (pragmatism, cultivating an image of threat, cultivating the Shiite loyalty, heterogeneity of the opposition, the pendulum of reputation and perception of external threat). Others are based on its capabilities that affected its political and military role (relations with international actors, political power and autonomy, opening new battlegrounds for the resistance and the army power). Against this background, this study claims that Hezbollah attempted to endure criticisms increased in the domestic sphere

and produce a new narrative to justify its involvement in Syria for the Lebanese public. To achieve this, it aimed to use effective policies and organizational structure. In this way, it sought to expand its win-set and gain support behind itself. It has become partially successful in this context that while there have been actors supported its policies in cross-border territories, there were others maintained opposing the organization. Whether or not its strategies in the domestic have been successful, it is clear that the Syrian civil war transformed Hezbollah's role in Lebanon and in the region and expanded its influence as a regional actor. After it intervened in the civil war, it increased its military capabilities, military experience and political power in Lebanese politics.

CONCLUSION

This thesis examined how a Lebanese actor, Hezbollah, justified its involvement in the neighboring country, Syria, as its civil war started. By using Putnam's win-sets as an analytical tool, it analyzed how its involvement in another country confirmed Hezbollah's regional identity and its capacity to intervene in another country without an initial national consensus confirmed its hybrid actorness. Thus, the thesis defined Hezbollah as a regional hybrid actor and questioned how it negotiated its involvement in the Syrian Civil War with the Lebanese actors.

The thesis looked at the emergence of Hezbollah as a military and political force in Lebanon from a historical perspective. Since its evolution, Hezbollah's identity has been under scrutiny. Considering its close relations with Iran and Syria, it was considered as a regional actor since its formation. However, from 1992 onwards, with its participation in the Lebanese political system it also became a domestic/Lebanese actor. The thesis showed at a time when Hezbollah was being considered to be moderating and thus underlining its Lebanese identity more than ever the beginning of the Syrian Civil War once again transformed the organization's orientation and confirmed its regional identity. Thus the thesis defined Hezbollah as a regional hybrid actor at times stronger than the Lebanese state itself.

By looking at the relationship between politics and foreign policy, the thesis analyzed how non-state actors get involved in active foreign policy actions and justify and negotiate their decisions in the domestic politics. How the foreign policy decision of intervening into the Syrian Civil War affected

Hezbollah's strategies, policies and partnerships in domestic politics has been interesting to observe. By using Putnam's two-level game approach and borrowing the concept of win-sets from it, the thesis not only tried to understand how Hezbollah explained its role in Syria to other actors, but also questioned how non-state actors could utilize this framework in similar cases.

In this context, the literature on Hezbollah is reviewed in Chapter 2 and the need for its redefinition was expressed considering its domestic and international activities. Thus, Hezbollah is defined as a regional hybrid actor. Chapter 3 analyzed the Lebanese political history for the last 200 years by focusing on the radicalization and politization of the Lebanese Shia. The importance of this process in the emergence of Hezbollah is underlined. In this chapter, after the establishment of Hezbollah, its relations with Syria and Iran were discussed and it is claimed that the explanation of its emergence with the support of non-Lebanese actors makes the organization ahistorical. Iran and Syria are important actors for Hezbollah. Hezbollah benefits financially and politically from these two states. However, explanations are incomplete regardless of Lebanon's political history and the transformations that Lebanese Shiites have undergone in the process. Chapter 4 covered the period when the Arab Uprisings began in 2010 and Hezbollah was involved in the civil war in Syria. This chapter focuses on Hezbollah's changing discourses and strategies in the process. The position of Hezbollah in this period is explained by dividing it into four periods. While the changing strategies and rhetoric of Hezbollah are discussed under the title of each period, the criticisms caused by its involvement in the Syrian Civil War in Lebanon and Syria are also discussed.

The last chapter focuses on Hezbollah's explanation and legitimation of its presence in Syria to the actors in Lebanon and the policies it followed after its involvement in the civil war. In this framework, Putnam's win-set concept is borrowed as a means of explanation. While forming the win-sets of Hezbollah, the structural and political weakness of the Lebanese State and the Powerful structure of the organization itself were defined as advantages. It has been claimed that the role of being the protector of Lebanon, which Hezbollah "gained" during the wars against Israel, is counted as an advantage on the one hand, and on the other hand, it is claimed to be a disadvantage due to the sectarian claims that emerged with its involvement in the civil war in Syria. It has been argued that Hezbollah's fight to protect a non-Lebanese regime in a neighboring country is not related to its role as Lebanese.

As demonstrated in the thesis Hezbollah's win-set formation showed that it built its win-sets through a perception of realpolitik and behaved as a rational actor that perceives fear and uses national history to construct its policy at the national level. As it is shown, Hezbollah traditionally have built its narrative on defending and liberating Lebanon from Israeli occupation and threat. As the 1982 occupation is still relevant in the minds many Lebanese, Hezbollah used this legacy and established a position of defending Lebanon this time from takfiris. Also defining the Syrian civil war as a part of a larger project led by the West to capture Lebanon in its next face after Syria, Hezbollah argued that it was defending Lebanon from the general Western aggression and therefore feeding on the discourse of access of the Resistance in the region. As it is shown in the thesis in the fourth chapter Hezbollah also used a discourse where it portrait the civil war in Syria as a continuation after the Crusades. In this way, Hezbollah framed its intervention and use of force in Syria as

legitimate; serving national, not private, interests. In this way, Hezbollah aimed to expand its public support and have a more significant win-set position. But to what extent Hezbollah's involvement in Syria confirmed its Lebaneseness and worked to increase its popular support remained controversial. Hezbollah also tried a diversionary strategy emphasizing its Lebanese identity and claimed to be protecting the boundaries of Lebanon. In looking at the speeches of Nasrallah, the word, takfir/i, has been used but parallel to it an emphasize on Lebanon and Lebanese identity increased. This can be read as Hezbollah's intention to overcome criticisms at home. In parallel to the using of the word, takfir/i, and justifying Hezbollah's presence in Syria to counter the critics, Nasrallah began to use Israel and Israeli threat increasingly after 2013. This can be read as a response to domestic concerns that Hezbollah was weakening its Resistance against Israel at the expense of fight against radical Sunnis. By emphasizing its tradition policy of resistance against Israel, it aimed not only to underline its Lebanese identity but also respond to critics on its sectarian behavior. As the civil war in Syria evolved and prolonged Hezbollah's win-set formation also changed. Initially from 2011 to 2013, the stage of verbal support, Hezbollah's win-sets composed of takfiri threat and fight against a "regional remaking" by the West to Syria. From 2013 onwards, as this stance led to domestic criticism regarding Hezbollah's commitment to regional rather than the domestic issues and its sectarian stance, Nasrallah began to underline Hezbollah's Lebanese character as well as the its unshakable resistance against its enduring enemy. Thus the win-sets evolved and adjusted to the circumstances and interestingly as Hezbollah got more deeply involved in active fighting in Syria, it used a

stronger discourse underlining its Lebanese identity and fight against the Israel.

As the thesis showed in details, the win-sets have mostly been successful in negotiating and justifying Hezbollah's presence in Syria. As Hezbollah's win-sets were built on providing security and protecting Lebanon, it received by support not only among Hezbollah's traditional allies despite criticism from opposing camps ie. the Sunni bloc. Yet its involvement in the civil war in Syria strengthened Hezbollah's position in Lebanese politics tremendously despite the opposition from the Sunnis as the thesis argued at a time when the Lebanese state has been weakening in regional politics. Due to a series of domestic and regional developments, Hezbollah has managed to play an important role in the presidential process and bringing in Michel Aoun, its ally in the March 8 Coalition, to the presidency in 2016. This strengthening in Lebanese domestic politics shows that despite criticism the win-sets have worked to a great extent to justify Hezbollah's role in the Syrian Civil War to the Lebanese constituents.

The thesis underlined that Hezbollah's involvement in Syria since 2013 has no doubt confirmed its regional character and hence made it, as thesis defined, a regional hybrid actor. It was generally observed that Hezbollah would naturally act "to save" the Assad regime because Hezbollah would have lost its major ally and would face difficulties in maintaining its standing in Lebanon. As the thesis demonstrated, while Hezbollah has been instrumental in keeping the Assad regime in power, especially considering its critical military victories against the opposition, so through its intervention in the civil war unlike the previous period, where Hezbollah seemed depended on Syria,

power relations changed. The developments which underlined Hezbollah's presence in the southern Syria in the following periods seem to empower Hezbollah in the Syrian context as well underlining its hybrid actor character. In looking at relations with Iran, Hezbollah seem to increase its autonomy. Parallel to Hezbollah's expanded military capability in Syria and its growing political influence in Lebanon Hezbollah seem to be and ever a more valuable ally for Iran in the regional context than before. Although Hezbollah is still dependent on Iran militarily, it seems at the same time it is more autonomous politically from Iran than before. The military victories in Syria seem to play the most important role in this development. Hezbollah began to be a trainer of Shia militias along the region, which empowers its regional role. There are even claims that Syrian army forces in some cases are taking order from Hezbollah commanders. However, Hezbollah's growing position vis a vis Syria and its increasing autonomy from Iran in decision making process does not decrease Hezbollah's vanguard role vis a vis Israel. To the contrary it increases its power in the long run Hezbollah's the possibility of to turn its attention strongly against Israel. Hezbollah, which will continue to stay in Syria, have strengthened its relations with Syria and Iran and have proved its worth for its allies and what is more successfully justified its position to the Lebanese actors. Hezbollah seems to have gained from the Syrian Civil War. As Hezbollah claims that it has achieved a sufficient level of military capability in the Syrian Civil War, a possible war with Israel might be in sight. In line with the analysis used in this thesis, it is not difficult to predict that it would be easier for Hezbollah to create win-sets and use them successfully to justify a possible war against Israel in the near future.

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APPENDICES

A: CURRICULUM VITAE

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1. EDUCATION

2007-2012, B.S, International Relations, Middle East Technical University, 3,25/4,00

2012-2015, M.S, Middle East Studies, Middle East Technical University, 3,25/4,00

2015-2022, Ph.D, International Relations, Middle East Technical University 3,57/4,00

2. RESEARCH AREAS

Middle East Politics

Foreign Policy

Political Islam

Nationalism

3. LANGUAGES

English (Advance), Persian (Intermediate), Turkish (Native)

4. ARTICLES

1. "Banal Nationalism in Iran: Daily Reproduction of National and Religious Identity", *Human & Society*, 6: 1, 2016, 119-136.

2. "Money Talks: Turkish-Islamic Synthesis on Banknotes of Turkey", *Moment*, 3: 1, 2016, 171-189.

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4. "Tarihten Günümüze İran-Hizbullah İlişkileri", (Der.), Orhan Karaoğlu, *Uluslararası İlişkiler Tahlillleri: Küresel ve Bölgesel Konulara Akademik Bakış*, Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi, 2019, 61-79.

5. "Gelenek ve Modernite Arasında İran'da Milliyetçilik: Ulus-Devlet, Ulus İnşası ve İranlılık", (Der.), Lütfi Sunar, *Müslüman Dünyada Çağdaş Düşünce: İran Düşüncesi*, Cilt: 3, 2020, 107-133.

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7. ANALYSIS

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8. FULL TEXT PROCEEDINGS

1. "Hizbullah'ın Değişen Güvenlik Söylemi ve Perspektifi: Suriye İç Savaşı'nın Getirdiği Dinamikler", *XI. Uluslararası Uludağ Uluslararası İlişkiler Kongresi Tam Metin Kitabı*, Uludağ Üniversitesi, Bursa, Türkiye, 14-15 Ekim 2019, 103-118. ISBN: 978-605- 80051-0-5.

2. "Suriye İç Savaşına Giden Süreçte Türkiye ve İran'ın Politik Yaklaşımlarının Karşılaştırılması", *XI. Uluslararası Uludağ Uluslararası İlişkiler Kongresi Tam Metin Kitabı*, Uludağ Üniversitesi, Bursa, Türkiye, 14-15 Ekim 2019, 189-202. ISBN: 978-605-80051-0-5. (Emre ÇITAK ile).

9. CONFERENCES

9.1. International

1. "The Reflections of Iranian Revolution on Islamism in Turkey: Iran-Inspired Islamism", III. Middle East Congress, Sakarya University, Sakarya, Turkey, 11-13 Ekim 2016. (with Agah HAZIR).

2. "Everyday Iranianness: The Political Use of Symbols on the Construction of National Identity in Iran", 22nd Annual World Convention of the Associatıon for the Study of Nationalities, Columbia University, New York, USA, 4-6 May 2017.

3. "Hezbollah and the Syrian Civil War: A Two-Level Game Analysis', BRISMES Conference on Movement and Migration in the Middle East: People and Ideas in Flux, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK, 5-7 July 2017. (with Özlem TÜR KÜÇÜKKAYA).

4. "A Trajectory of Involvement: Hezbollah and the Syrian Civil War", Centre for Syrian Studies 4th International Conference on Syria: "The Syrian War: Later Trajectory and Future Prospects", University of St. Andrews, St. Andrews, UK, 1-4 August 2018. (with Özlem TÜR KÜÇÜKKAYA).

5. "From Devotion to Instrumentalization: Trajectory of Iran-Inspired Islamism in Turkey", International Workshop on Cold War Islamisms, Frei Universitat, Berlin, Germany, 15-16 March 2019.

6. "The Syrian Civil War in The Historical Context: Socio-economıc and Political Roots", Third International Conference on Globalization and International Relations, Gaziantep, Türkiye, 4-7 Nisan 2019.

9.2. National

1. "Türkiye-İran İlişkilerinin Dini Boyutu: İran İslam Devrimi'nin Türkiye'deki İslamcı Entelektüeller Üzerindeki Etkileri", Uluslararası İlişkiler Sempozyumu, Akdeniz Üniversitesi, Antalya, Türkiye, 2015.

2. "İran'ın Uluslaşma Sürecinde Süreklilik ve Değişim: Banknotlar ve Posta Pulları Üzerine Bir İnceleme", International Symposium on Continuity and Change in North Africa, Turkey and Iran, Yıldırım Beyazıt Üniversitesi & İran Araştırmalar Merkezi (İRAM), Ankara, Türkiye, 20-22 Nisan 2017.

3. "İran Devrimi'nin Türkiye'de İslami Yayınlar Üzerindeki Etkileri: Yerleşik Görüş, İslami Devrim ve Evrensellik", 3. İslamcı Dergiler Sempozyumu, İlmi Etüdler Derneği (İLEM), İstanbul, Türkiye, 20-22 Nisan 2018.

4. "Ulusun Resmini Çizmek: Türkiye ve İran'da Banknot İkonografisi ve Milliyetçilik", X. Uluslararası Uludağ Uluslararası İlişkiler Konferansı, Uludağ Üniversitesi, Bursa, Türkiye, 8-10 Ekim 2018.

5. "Komşuyu Propagandalaştırmak: İran Devrimi Sonrasında Türkiye'de Basılan Devrim Konulu Kitaplar", IV. Middle East Congress, Sakarya University, Sakarya, Turkey, 10-12 Ekim 2018.

6. "Hizbullah'ın Değişen Güvenlik Söylemi ve Perspektifi: Suriye İç Savaşı'nın Getirdiği Dinamikler", XI. Uluslararası Uludağ Uluslararası İlişkiler Konferansı, Uludağ Üniversitesi, Bursa, Türkiye, 14-15 Ekim 2019.

7. "Suriye İç Savaşı'na Giden Süreçte Türkiye Ve İran'ın Politik Yaklaşımlarının Karşılaştırılması", XI. Uluslararası Uludağ Uluslararası İlişkiler Konferansı, Uludağ Üniversitesi, Bursa, Türkiye, 14-15 Ekim 2019.

10. PROJECTS

1. Project Name: "Turkish Elites' Perceptions of the UK from 1973 to Brexit", Project Owner: Dr. Yaprak GÜRSOY/Aston University, UK, Funding Organization: British Institute on Ankara, Project Year: 2018-2019, Role: Researcher.

B: TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Hizbullah Genel Sekreteri Hasan Nasrallah, 14 Haziran 2013'teki özel bir gün münasebetiyle yaptığı konuşmada, Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki iç savaşa müdahalesinin gerekçesine dikkat çekmiş ve örgütün Suriye'deki varlığına yönelik eleştirilere yanıt vermiştir. Nasrallah bu konuşmasında Lübnan'ın güvenliğini, istikrarını, iç barışını, birliğini ve egemenliğini en çok önemseyenlerin kendileri olduğunu; Hizbullah'ın farklı olmadığını, ancak milletten olduğunu; yüzlerce yıllık bir Lübnanlı olduğunu dile getirmiştir. Örgütünün ulusal olduğuna ilişkin vurgusunun ardından Suriye'de bulunmalarının nedenini anlatan Nasrallah, Suriye'deki savaşın ve muhalefetin Lübnan'a, Filistin davasına ve Müslümanlar, Hıristiyanlar, Sünniler, Şiiler, Dürziler, Aleviler, İsmaililer, Zeydiler dâhil olmak üzere bölgenin diğer halklarına zarar verdiğini belirtmiş ve orada bulunmalarının haklı olduğunu dile getirmiştir (Nasrallah, 2013a). Nasrallah'ın konuşmasında da görülebileceği gibi siyasi aktörler, dış politikadaki eylemlerini çıkarlara dayandırarak ve aynı zamanda eylemlerinin iç ve uluslararası sonuçlarını hesaplayarak meşru göstermeye çalışmaktadırlar.

Arap Baharı'nın ilk aylarında Hizbullah, ayaklanmaları halkın otoriter rejimlerine karşı demokratik girişimleri olarak tanımlamıştır. Hizbullah'ın bölgedeki müttefiklerinden Suriye'de Mart ayında ayaklanmalar görülmeye başlanınca Hizbullah'ın söyleminde değişiklikler olmuştur. Suriye'deki ayaklanmaların başlangıcındaki rolü, iç savaşa dâhil olmaya ve Suriye topraklarında doğrudan askeri operasyonlara dönüşmüştür. Hizbullah, mezhepçiliğe karşı savaşma ve Lübnan'ı koruma iddiasıyla Beşar Esad'ın

yanında yer almıştır. Diğer taraftan Hizbullah, Suriye'deki çatışmalara müdahil olduktan sonra kendisini Lübnanlı ulusal bir parti olarak kabul ederek programını ve söylemini Lübnan'da sürdürmüştür.

Lübnan'da gergin bir iç ortamda, Arap Baharı ve Suriye'de iç savaşın başlaması, Hizbullah, onun Lübnan'daki politikaları ve Lübnanlı aktörlerle ilişkileri için yeni bir sayfa açmıştır. Örgüt, ayaklanmaların başlangıcında Ortadoğu'daki kitle hareketlerini hevesle desteklerken, ayaklanmalar Suriye'ye sıçradığında söylemini değiştirmiştir. Ayaklanmaların ilk aylarındaki söylem ve politikalarının aksine Hizbullah'ın söylemi, Suriye'de kitlesel protestoların başlamasından sonra farklılaşmaktadır. Suriye, Hizbullah'ın İran'dan yardım alması için geçiş noktalarından olagelmiştir. Hizbullah, önce müdahale iddialarını reddetmiş olsa da ardından müdahaleyi kabul etmiş ve Lübnan-Suriye sınırını, sınır hattındaki Şii köylerini ve türbelerini korumak ve mezhepçiliğin ve iç savaşın Lübnan'a yayılmasını önlemek için Suriye'ye dâhil olduğunu iddia etmiştir. Örgüt, rejim lehine iç savaşa askeri müdahalede bulunmuştur.

İlk başta tereddüt ettikten sonra Hizbullah, rejimi desteklemek için Suriye'ye müdahale etmiştir. Ülke, Suriye yanlısı ve karşıtı gruplar arasında derinden bölündüğü için bu çok tartışmalı bir karar olmuştur. Khazai ve Hess (2013, s. 5)'in 2013'te belirttiği gibi Lübnan nüfusunun %40'ı Esad'ın yanındayken, ona karşı olumsuz görüşe sahip olanların oranı ise %59'dur. Esad lehine Şiiler %91, Hıristiyanlar %36 ve Sünniler sadece %7 oranında destek verirken, "Esad istifa etsin" diyenlerin oranı Şiiler arasında %3, Sünniler arasında %80'dir. Mart 2020'de Suriye'deki gelişmelerin başlamasıyla birlikte birçok kişi Hizbullah'ın nasıl bir tavır alacağını merak etmiştir. Suriye'nin bir müttefiki olarak mı,

bölgesel bir oyuncu olarak mı müdahale etmektedir ya da Suriye'de bulunmasını ebedi düşmanına karşı bir koz olarak görüp İsrail'e karşı güçlenmek için elinden geleni yapacak mıdır?

Bu tez Lübnanlı bir aktör olarak Hizbullah'ın Suriye'ye müdahale etmesinin ardındaki motivasyonları, onun iç savaşa müdahalesini nasıl haklı çıkardığını ve son on yılda Suriye'deki savaşının ve varlığının genişletilmiş rolünü analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Suriye ayaklanmalarının başlangıcından 2020'ye kadar olan sürecin tamamına bakıldığında, Hizbullah'ın Suriye'ye doğrudan müdahalesinin aşamalar izlediği gözlemlenmektedir. Robert Putnam'ın iki seviyeli oyun teorisinden win-set kavramını ödünç alarak, Hizbullah'ın müdahalesini ve Suriye'deki iç savaştaki rolünü nasıl haklı çıkardığına ve bu dış müdahalenin onun Lübnan'daki iç stratejilerini nasıl etkilediğine cevap aranması hedeflenmektedir.

Bu çalışma, Hizbullah'ın Suriye'ye yönelik politikasını nasıl haklı çıkardığını analiz etmeye çalışırken şu soruları da soracaktır: Hizbullah tarafından ne tür kazançlar belirlenmiştir ve Lübnan'daki yerel aktörlerle pazarlık nasıl yapılmıştır? Zaman içerisinde stratejisini oluştururken aşılan kritik aşamalar neler olmuştur? Hizbullah'ın yerli aktörlerle yaptığı pazarlık olmuş mudur ve örgüt bu süreçte stratejisini nasıl değiştirmiştir?

Hizbullah'ı tanımlamak bu bağlamda önemli bir durum olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Hizbullah sıklıkla Lübnan'daki duruşu ve İran ile ilişkileri üzerinden tartışılmaktadır. Hizbullah, sosyal ve ekonomik alanlarda potansiyeli olan bir siyasi parti olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Lübnan'da sosyal bir hareket olarak kabul edilmektedir. Öte yandan İsrail'e karşı direnişin parçası olduğu iddia edilen askeri kanadı terör örgütü olarak kabul edilmektedir.

İran'la yakın bağları, onun İran icadı olarak nitelendirilmesine neden olmaktadır. Hizbullah'ı tanımlamadaki karmaşıklık, onun iç savaşa katılımıyla ilgili açıklamaları da etkilemektedir. Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki iç savaşa katılımına ilişkin literatür, dört başlıkta yoğun bir şekilde tartışılmaktadır. İlki, Hizbullah'ın Suriye'ye müdahalesinin Suriye'nin düşüşünün Hizbullah'ın Lübnan'daki gücünü zayıflatabileceği nedeniyle stratejik bir seçim olduğunu iddia etmektedir. İkincisi, Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki Şii nüfusu ve türbeleri korumak gibi ideolojik nedenlerle Suriye'de olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Bu açıklamalar ayrıca Kerbela anlatısına ve Sünni - Şii ayrımına ilişkin klasik görüşlere de atıfta bulunmaktadır. Üçüncüsü, Hizbullah'ın İran'ın yönlendirmeleri nedeniyle Suriye'de olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Sonuncusu ise Hizbullah'ın Suriye'ye müdahalesini Lübnanlılaşma projesinin hazin bir sonu olarak görmektedir. Ranstrop (2016, s. 41)'un belirttiği gibi, "Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki askeri operasyonlarının Lübnan'daki güç mücadelesinde siyasi mühimmat işlevi gördüğü çok açıktır". Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki iç savaşa müdahalesi, Lübnanlı aktörler arasında "Lübnanlılaşma" ve İsrail'e karşı direniş konusunda şüphelere yol açtı. Ancak örgüt, eylemini İsrail'e karşı savaşla aynı amaca sahip haklı bir savaş olarak meşru kılmaya çalışmakta ve her fırsatta Lübnanlı kimliğini öne çıkarmaktadır.

Marisa Sullivan, 2014 yılında yaptığı çalışmasında Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki iç savaşa müdahalesinin kapsamlı bir analizini yapmıştır. Hizbullah'ın iç savaşa dâhil olma süreçlerini analiz ettiği çalışmasında Hizbullah'ın Suriye'ye müdahalesinin stratejik bir gereklilik olduğunu iddia etmiştir. Suriye, İran'ın önderlik ettiği direniş ekseninin bir parçasıdır ve onun kaybı önemli sonuçlara yol açacaktır. Sullivan (2014, s. 24)'a göre Hizbullah'ın nezdindeki olası riskler,

Suriye'deki eylemsizliğin maliyetinden daha düşük olacaktır. Dara Conduit (2014, s. 102) de benzer bir şekilde Suriye'nin "İran Hizbullah'ın oksijen deposuysa" hava hortumu vazifesi gördüğünün altını çizmiştir. Bu nedenle 1992'den bu yana ikinci kez hayatta kalma Hizbullah için kilit önemde olmuştur.

Khatib ve Matar (2014, ss. 181-182), Hizbullah'ın Suriye'ye silahlı müdahalesinin arifesindeki durumuna dikkat çekmektedirler. Hizbullah, bir yandan müttefiki Suriye'nin kötü bir durumda olduğu, diğer yandan kendinin Lübnan'da muhaliflerine karşı bir "mevzi savaşı" yürüttüğü iki uçlu bir muamma içerisindedir. Bu bağlamda Hizbullah, direniş ve Lübnanlılaşma politikalarıyla elde ettiği imaj ve itibarına verilen zararı azaltmak için reaktif bir politika izlemiştir. Khatib ve Matar (2014, s. 182) örgütün Suriye'ye askeri müdahalesini mağduriyet dilini kullanarak meşrulaştırmak için mezhep karşıtı bir duruş benimsediğini ve müdahalenin Sünni tekfirci cihatçıların oluşturduğu tehdide karşı koymayı amaçladığını öne sürmüşlerdir.

Massaab Al-Aloosy, Hizbullah'ın Suriye'ye askeri olarak desteğini ve iç savaşa katılımını etkileyen üç faktöre odaklanmaktadır: 1970'lerin sonlarında Suriye'nin Lübnan'ın çözülmesini önlediği dengeleyici rolü (1), Suriye'nin "direnişin" bir parçası olması (2) ve Suriye'nin ABD liderliğindeki sözde Yeni Ortadoğu projesini reddetmesi (3) (Al-Aloosy, 2020, s. 143). Al-Aloosy, bu bağlamda Hizbullah'ın Suriye'ye verdiği desteğin ideolojik gerekçelerden çok çıkarlara dayandığını iddia etmektedir. Suriye İç Savaşı'nda Hizbullah'ın İran ile ilişkileri konusunda şüpheli bir görüşe sahiptir. İran'ın Orta Doğu'da diğer ülkelerdeki müdahalelerini karşılaştırarak Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki müdahalesinin Hizbullah'ın kendine atfettiği öneminin bir göstergesi

olduğunu iddia etmektedir (Al-Aloosy, 2020, s. 149). Al-Aloosy'ye benzer şekilde Joseph Daher (2016, s. 180) de Hizbullah'ın Suriye'ye verdiği desteğin iki aktör arasındaki stratejik ilişkiyi gösterdiğini dile getirmiştir. Hizbullah'ın dış ilişkileri, bahsettiği ilkelerden çok stratejik çıkarlara dayanmaktadır. Başka bir deyişle, Hizbullah'ın bölgesel ayaklanmalara karşı tutum değişikliği, kendi çıkarlarının ve müttefiklerinin çıkarlarının, hesaplarında bölge halkının kurtuluşundan daha önemli olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır (Daher, 2016, s. 197). Suriye'deki iç savaştan sonra Hizbullah'ın bölgede artan etkisine işaret edilmektedir. Aurélie Daher (2019) ise Esad sonrası dönemin Hizbullah'ın pozisyonuna yansımalarını ele almaktadır. Daher, Hizbullah'ın Suriye İç Savaşı'na katılımının bir varoluş nedeni olduğu sonucuna varmıştır.

Filippo Dionigi (2013, s. 2), Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki iç savaşa müdahalesi ile 1990'ların başında EMEL Hareketi ile girdiği krizi, 2008'de Beyrut'taki iç karışıklığı ve Irak Savaşı dönemindeki rolü arasında bir karşılaştırma yapmaktadır. Suriye'deki savaşın farklı olduğunun altını çizen Dionigi'ye göre Suriye örneği, Hizbullah ve müttefikleri olan İran ve Suriye için stratejik çıkarların önemini göstermektedir. Hizbullah'ın Suriye ihtilafına dâhil olduğunu kabul ederek bölgedeki kamuoyu imajı olumsuz yönde değişmiş ve Hizbullah karşıtı gruplarda artış olmuştur.

Hizbullah'ın Suriye müdahalesini ideolojik bir gerekçe olarak ele alan Armenak Tokmajyan (2014, s.108), onun Suriye politikalarında dini ve siyasi faktörlerin, kitlesel seferberlik ve Hizbullah üyelerinin direniş fikrine bağlılıklarından daha önemli bir rol oynadığını iddia etmektedir. Hizbullah liderliğinin bölgedeki önde gelen ortaklarından birini kaybetmek istemediğine dikkat çeken Tokmajyan, örgütün mezhep çatışmalarının

kurbanı olan Irak Şiilerinin durumunu hatırladığını ve bunun tekrarından kaçınmayı amaçladığını ifade etmektedir.

Sahar Atrache (2014) de Suriye'nin Hizbullah için sahip olduğu stratejik role vurgu yapmaktadır. Ona göre örgüt, artan tekfirci tehdidin ve Esad rejiminin zayıflamasının risklerini görmüştür. Bu nedenle Hizbullah'ın Lübnan'daki konumunu ve kazanımlarını koruması için iç savaşa müdahil olması zorunlu bir eylem olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu konu üzerine Yezid Sayigh ve Makram Rabah dâhil olmak üzere birçok kişinin katkıları ve iddiaları da bulunmaktadır. Rabah (2016; 2017)'a göre Hizbullah'ın Suriye'ye müdahalesi özgürce verilmiş bir karar değildir. Örgütün kendi kararı sonrasında değil, İranlı efendilerinin doğrudan teşviki sonucu Hizbullah Suriye'deki savaşa dâhil olmuştur. Benzer şekilde Suriye'deki Esad yönetimini İran'ın ana müttefiki ve Hizbullah'ın arka bahçesi olarak tanımlayan Yezid Sayigh (2014), Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki varlığını İran'ın bir kararı olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Bu örnekler elbette artırılabilir.

Hizbullah üzerine yapılan araştırmalar daha çok örgütün Lübnan siyasi tarihindeki rolünü ve İran'la olan ideolojik bağlarını açıklamaya odaklanmıştır. Son yıllarda literatür, örgütün iç savaşa katılımını Lübnanlılaşma projesine bağlamaya başlamıştır. Bu katkılardan bazıları, iç savaşın başlamasından sonra örgütün değişen söylem ve politikalarını öne çıkarırken diğerleri, örgütün askeri olarak güçlenmesinin ve bölgedeki Amerikan ve İsrail çıkarlarına karşı önemli bir tehdit olarak ortaya çıkmasının altını çizmektedir.

Ancak Hizbullah'ın iç savaşa dahil olma sürecinde muhalefet grupları, Lübnan içindeki bileşenleri ve bu aktörlerle yaptığı müzakerelerle değişen

ilişkilerine herhangi bir vurgu yapılmamaktadır. Zira Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki iç savaşa adım adım müdahalesi bir müzakere sürecidir. Bu alanda yapılmış çalışmalar dağarcığımızı ve bilgimizi zenginleştirmiş olsa da, Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki iç savaşa müdahalesi üzerindeki yerel ve uluslararası bağlantıların etkisine, İran ve Suriye ile olan "özel" ilişkilerinden ziyade yeterince dikkat çekmemektedirler.

Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki iç savaşa dâhil olma motivasyonlarına ilişkin farklı açıklamalarla katkıda bulunurken, bu çalışma, Robert Putnam'ın iki seviyeli oyunlar teorisinden win-set kavramını ödünç alacaktır. Putnam, iki seviyeli oyunlara ilişkin analizinde, ulusal ve uluslararası seviyeler arasındaki karşılıklı etkileşimleri vurgulamaktadır. İç siyasetin uluslararası düzeyde müzakere süreçleri üzerindeki etkisini ve ülke içinde kısıtlanmış olan müzakereci devletlerin rolünü ele almaktadır. Uluslararası müzakereler, aktörlerin ve kurumların ulusal ve uluslararası etkileşimlerin veya iki seviye arasındaki örtüşmelerin ürünleridir. Putnam, müzakere süreçlerini temel unsurlar olarak gündeme getirmektedir. Bu nedenle onun analizi, bu süreçleri anlamak için önemlidir. Putnam, iki düzeyde anlaşmaların olduğunu söylemektedir. Birincisi, aktörlerin birbirleriyle etkileşime girdiği ve müzakereler yaptığı ulusal düzeydir. Putnam, bu bağlamda bir pazarlık ve anlaşmaya varma birimi olarak win-setleri sunar. Win-setlerin boyutu, müzakerelerin kaderini belirlemektedir. İkincisi, baş müzakerecilerin muadilleriyle bir araya geldikleri ve win-setlerinin büyüklüğüne ve rakiplerinin ve bileşenlerinin görüşlerine dikkat ederek uluslararası anlaşmalar yaptıkları uluslararası düzeydir.

Putnam'ın iki seviyeli oyununu kullanmak tezde olası çeşitli sorunlara neden olmaktadır. Putnam'ın modelini Hizbullah'a uyarlamak için kısmen değiştirmek gerekmektedir. İki seviyeli oyun analizinin hibrit bir aktör üzerinde uygulanması, devlet dışı aktörlerin kamu rızasını, yasal, siyasi süreçleri görmezden geldiği ve güç ve silah yoluyla çözüm aradığı düşünüldüğünde yapay görünebilir. Ancak bu tez, Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki operasyonları ile Lübnan'daki stratejiler arasındaki ilişkiyi açıklamak için Putnam'ın win-set kavramını ve müzakere süreçlerini kullanmıştır. Suriye ve İran ile ulus ötesi bağları olan Lübnanlı, milliyetçi, silahlı bir örgüt olarak Hizbullah, hem iç hem de uluslararası alanların karşılıklı ilişkisinin bir "kavşak noktası"dır. Başka bir deyişle, Hizbullah'ın ulus ötesi bir dini kimlikle etkileşim içinde ulusal bagaj taşıyan bir bölgesel hibrit aktör olduğu iddia edilmiştir.

Çalışma, nitel araştırma yaklaşımı çerçevesine dayalı olup, araştırılan olguyu derinlemesine analiz etme fırsatı sağlayarak araştırmacıya kapsamlı bir bakış açısı sağlamayı amaçlamıştır. Çalışma, masa başı araştırmaya dayalıdır ve kitaplar, makaleler, raporlar, dergiler, projeler, veri tabanları ve tezleri içermektedir. Ayrıca Hizbullah'ın al-Manar ve al-Ahed News gibi medyalarını ve Hizbullah'ın genel sekreteri Hasan Nasrallah'ın 2010-2020 yılları arasındaki konuşmalarını da kullanmaktadır. Bunlara ek olarak Orta Doğu Forumu'nun, Washington Enstitüsü'nün ve Stanford Üniversitesi'nin ortaya koyduğu veriler de kullanılmıştır.

Çalışma, giriş ve sonuca ek olarak dört bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk bölüm, Hizbullah hakkında bir literatür taraması ile başlamaktadır. Hizbullah, son yıllarda üzerinde en çok çalışılan devlet dışı aktörlerden biri haline

geldiğinden, Hizbullah'a ilişkin literatürde bir artış bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışmaların birçoğu organizasyonun farklı yönlerini vurgulamış ve ayrı kanatlarına odaklanmış olsa da, bir bütün olarak organizasyona yeterince odaklanan az sayıda çalışma bulunmaktadır. Bu bölüm Hizbullah'ı Lübnan merkezli bölgesel bir hibrit aktör olarak tanımlamıştır. Bu bölüm, ayrıca Uluslararası İlişkilerde yerel-uluslararası ikilemine ilişkin kavramsal çerçeveyi, devlet dışı aktörlere ilişkin literatürü ve iki seviyeli oyun yaklaşımını tartışmıştır. İç ve dış politika arasındaki etkileşim ve uluslararasının devletler içerisindeki etkisi, uluslararası ilişkiler literatüründe tartışılagelen bir konu olmuştur. Dış politikanın önceliği, özellikle Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesinden bu yana sorgulansa da, iç politika ile dış politika arasındaki karşılıklı ilişkiye, birincisinin ikincisindeki gelişmeleri etkilediğine inanılan tek yönlü bir vurgu yapılmıştır. Bunun bir sonucu olarak, dış aktörlerin iç politikaya etkisi ve iç aktörlerin stratejilerinin gelişimi hakkında sınırlı kaynaklar bulunmaktadır. Bunula birlikte, bu konudaki literatür, devletlerin devlet dışı aktörlere göre önceliğine işaret etmektedir.

Devlet dışı aktörler ile devletler arasındaki farklar da son yıllarda bulanıklaşmıştır. Devletliğin esasları ve mevcut devletlerin fiili koşulları, geleneksel devletlik anlayışını detaylandırmaktadır. Küreselleşmenin devletler üzerindeki artan etkisi, iç sıkıntılar, iç savaşlar, yoksulluk ve yapısal sorunlar gibi devletin otoritesini zorlayan önemli gelişmeler nedeniyle devletler artık yargı yetkilerini gerçekleştirememektedir. Vatandaşları için güvenlik, zenginlik, altyapı ve temel ihtiyaçları sağlayamaz hale gelmektedirler. Devletlerin toprak egemenliği, devletlerin sınırlarını koruyamaz hale geldiği için daha da kötüleşmiştir. Bu durumdaki devletlere başarısız veya zayıf devletler denilmektedir. Devlet dışı örgütler bu

devletlerin içinde ortaya çıkmakta ve devletlerin yerini doldurmaktadırlar. Vatandaşların temel ihtiyaçlarını ve güvenliğini sağladıklarından halk arasında güçlenmektedirler. Sonuç olarak, devletlerin rolüne meydan okuyan aktörler olarak ortaya çıkmakta ve onlara rakip olmaktadırlar.

Ancak Hizbullah'ın, onu diğer devlet dışı aktörlerden ayıran özgün bir yapısı vardır ve bu çalışmada örgütün bölgesel hibrit aktör olarak tanımlanmasının nedeni de budur. Bu bölüm, Hizbullah'ı incelemenin zorluklarını ve farklı görüşlerini göstermiştir. Hizbullah'ı bir bölgesel hibrit aktör olarak belirlemek okuyucuyu bu tezin sonraki bölümlerinde üç şekilde yönlendirmiştir: Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki iç savaşa müdahalesinin ardındaki mantığı kavramaya yardımcı olmak (1), onun ulusal ve uluslararası düzeyde politikalarının ayrımını yapmak (2) ve onun Suriye'deki dış politikasının önemini ve iç politikadaki yansımalarını anlamak (3).

Hizbullah örneğinin gösterdiği gibi, devlet dışı bir aktör mevcut bir devlet içinde toprak ve nüfusun bir kısmı üzerinde daha güçlü bir otorite kurabilir, siyasi meşruiyet kazanabilir ve ülkenin otoritesine meydan okuyabilir (Baran, 2018, s. 12). Hizbullah'ın durumu, Lübnan halkının önemli bir bölümünü güvenlik, ekonomi ve sosyal yardım sağlamaya ikna ederken, bölgesel kimliğini göstermektedir. Devlet, güç kullanımı tekeline sahip olmasına rağmen Hizbullah onun otoritesine meydan okumaktadır. Bu bağlamda, devlet aygıtına meydan okuma gücü sağlayan dış desteğe sahiptir. Hizbullah Lübnan'da dış destekçisi İran'dan bağımsız hareket etme isteğine sahip olsa da, İran desteği Hizbullah'ın Lübnan devletine rakip olarak ortaya çıkmasında hayati bir rol oynamaktadır (Jaber, 1997). Ancak Hizbullah bir yandan Lübnan halkına, diğer yandan dış tehditlere karşı iki taraflı bir oyun oynamaktadır.

Özellikle Suriye'deki iç savaştan sonra Suriye'deki gelişmeler, Hizbullah'ın duruşu ve diğer Lübnanlı gruplarla ilişkilerine ilişkin Lübnan siyasetine yansımalarda bulunmuştur. Hizbullah'ı inceleme konusundaki kısıtlamaların bir sonucu olarak (devlet benzeri yansımalar gösterdiğinden ancak bir devletin özelliklerini tam olarak karşılamadığından), bu bölüm Putnam'ın iki seviyeli oyun yaklaşımından bazı kavramları ödünç almıştır. Bu bağlamda Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki dış operasyonlarının Lübnan'daki strateji ve uygulamalarına etkisini açıklamayı amaçlamıştır. Bu şekilde, bu bölüm, devlet dışı bir aktörün eylemlerini analiz ederek dış politikanın iç politika üzerindeki etkisini açıklama iddiasındadır.

İkinci bölüm, Hizbullah'ın oluşumunu tarihsel, siyasi ve askeri bir bağlamda inceleyecektir. Hizbullah'ın oluşumuyla sonuçlanan tarihsel süreçleri ve onun İran ve Suriye ile olan tarihi, siyasi ve askeri ilişkilerini vurgulamaktadır. Abboud ve Muller (2012, s. 2)'e göre, Lübnan ile ilgili herhangi bir tartışma, tarihi 1860 yılındaki iç savaşa kadar uzanan Lübnan siyasetinin tarihsel bağlamı içinde değerlendirilmelidir. Lübnan ve Hizbullah'ın ortaya çıkışı da Lübnan'ın geç Osmanlı dönemine kadar uzanmaktadır. Fransız mandası döneminden itibaren başlayan bu bölüm, Lübnan'ın sosyo-ekonomik ve siyasi bağlamında Şia'nın siyasallaşmasına ve radikalleşmesine bakarak Hizbullah'ın ortaya çıkışını anlatmaktadır. Bölüm, örgütün oluşumunu, yapısını ve ideolojisini açıkladıktan sonra, 1990'ların başında Lübnan'da nasıl bir ılımlılık sürecinden geçtiğini göstermektedir. Hizbullah'ın kimliğiyle ilgili sorular, İsrail'e karşı mücadelesine odaklanmış olsa da, bölümün odak noktasıdır. Hizbullah'ın Suriye ve İran'la güçlü bağları olan bölgesel bir aktör mü yoksa daha çok Lübnanlı bir aktör mü ve Lübnan çıkarlarının İsrail'e karşı öncüsü mü olduğu bu bölümde tartışılmıştır. Bu iki kimliğin münhasıran ne

ölçüde tanımlanabileceği de sorgulanmaktadır. Hizbullah-Suriye ilişkilerine bakıldığında, bu bölümde Hafız Esad ve Beşar Esad dönemleri ve sözde ittifakta ne ölçüde değişiklik olduğu karşılaştırılmıştır. Daha sonra bu bölüm Hizbullah-İran ilişkilerine bakmış ve İran'ın Hizbullah için ideolojik, siyasi, ekonomik ve stratejik rolünün altını çizmiştir.

Lübnan'ın tarihi, farklı mezhepler ve ideolojik gruplar arasındaki iç rekabetlerden ve dış güçlerin Lübnan iç siyasetindeki etki ve müdahalelerinden oluşmaktadır. Bu bölüm, temel gelişmeleri vurgulayarak Lübnan'ın siyasi tarihini açıklamıştır. Bu tez Hizbullah'ın dış politika davranışını açıklamayı amaçladığından, Hizbullah'ın oluşumunun tarihsel arka planı Lübnan iç siyaseti ve dış güçlerin müdahaleleri analiz edilmelidir. Bu bölüm, Lübnan Şiilerinin Hizbullah'ın ortaya çıkmasıyla sonuçlanan radikalleşme ve siyasallaşma sürecini tartışmayı amaçlamıştır. Bu bölümdeki argümanlar, okuyucuyu Hizbullah'ın ortaya çıkışını, politikalarını ve Suriye'deki iç savaşa katılımıyla Lübnan bağlamındaki gidişatını kavramsallaştırmaya yönlendirmiştir. Ayrıca Hizbullah'ın faaliyetlerini, dış ilişkilerini ve dış politikasını kavramaya yardımcı olmuştur.

Üçüncü bölüm, Hizbullah'ın Arap Baharı algısını ve Suriye'deki iç savaşa katılımını ele almıştır. Bu bölüm, Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki iç savaşa katılımının serencamını incelemiştir. Bu bölümde Hizbullah'ın değişen retoriği, söylemi ve politikaları, Tunus, Mısır, Libya ve ardından Suriye'deki ayaklanmalar karşılaştırılarak anlatılmıştır. Bu bölüm, Hizbullah'ın Arap Ayaklanmalarını anlamasının dört aşamalı bir süreci izlediğini iddia etmiştir. İlk aşamadan son adıma kadar, örgütün Suriye'deki iç savaşa katılımını danışmanlık rolünden askeri müdahaleye kadar geniş bir perspektiften ele

almıştır. Ardından, Hizbullah'ı Esad rejimi lehine iç savaşa girmeye teşvik eden motivasyonlar sorgulanmıştır. Bu bölümün sonunda, Hizbullah'ın Suriye İç Savaşı ile ilgili hem Lübnan hem de Suriye'deki operasyonları ve Lübnan ve Suriye'den örgütün iç savaşa müdahalesine gelen tepkiler tartışılmıştır.

Arap Baharı'nın bir parçası olarak başlayan Suriye İç Savaşı, 2011 yılında Beşar Esad yönetimindeki Baas rejimi, yandaşları ve muhalif gruplar arasında bir savaş olarak ortaya çıkmış ve neredeyse bütün Orta Doğu'yu etkisi altına almıştır. Diktatörlüklerin devrilmesinden sonra Tunus ve Mısır'da başarıya ulaşan bu tür söylemler, Suriye halkına da ilham vermiştir. Ancak Suriye ordusunun muhalif gruplara yönelik acımasız tavrı ve devletin muhalefeti silahla ezme politikası iki taraf arasında silahlı mücadelelere neden olmuş ve Suriye Devleti barışsız bir geleceğe doğru ilk adımlarını atmıştır. Ülkedeki gelişmeler, bölgeden ve bölge dışından birçok aktörün katılımıyla derinleşmiş ve karmaşıklaşmıştır. Savaşa çok sayıda yabancı savaşçının katılması ve IŞİD ve El Nusra Cephesi gibi radikal örgütlerin ülkede güçlerinin artması, Suriye İç Savaşı'nı uluslararası bir veçhe büründürmeye başlamıştır. Rejim değişikliği olasılığı ve sonuçları, siyasi ve ideolojik motivasyonlarla hareket eden devlet ve devlet dışı aktörlerin çatışmaya müdahale etmesine neden olmuştur.

2010 yılında bölgede ayaklanmaların başlaması, Hizbullah'ın hem Lübnan'daki hem de bölgedeki politikalarını etkilemiştir. Tunus'ta başlayıp zamanla Mısır ve Libya'ya sıçrayan ayaklanmalar, halkın ABD yanlısı ve baskıcı rejimlere karşı direnişi olarak tanımlanmıştır. Örgüt, ayaklanmaları dempkratik talepler olmaları iddiası ile desteklemiştir. Ancak Suriye'deki

ayaklanmaların başlaması, Hizbullah'ın strateji ve söylemlerinde dönüşümlere neden olmuştur. Bu bölüm, bu bağlamda, Suriye'deki iç savaşın Hizbullah'ın güvenlik ve tehdit perspektiflerine etkisini dört aşamada tartışmıştır. 2010-2011 yılları arasındaki ilk aşamada örgüt, ayaklanmaların halkın demokratik talepleri olduğunu iddia etmiştir. Bölge halkının baskıcı ve Batı'dan destek alan rejimlere karşı direndiğini ifade etmiştir. Örgütün Arap Baharı'na yaklaşımı bu aşamada İran'ınkine benzemektedir. İran'a benzer şekilde Hizbullah da ayaklanmaların anti-emperyalist ve anti-Siyonist olduğunu ve 1979'daki İran Devrimi'nden ilham aldığını iddia etmiştir. İkinci aşama, Suriye'de iç savaşın başladığı 2011 yıllarını ve 2012'yi içermektedir. Bu aşamada Hizbullah, Suriye'deki ayaklanmanın diğerlerinden farklı olduğunu, Suriye muhalefetinin Direniş'i zayıflatmayı amaçlayan Batı ve İsrail ile el ele olduğunu iddia etmiştir. Ancak örgüt resmen iç savaşa müdahale etmemiştir. Rolü, rejime tavsiye vermekten başka bir şey değildir. Üçüncü aşama, 2013 yılında Hizbullah'ın iç savaşa dâhil olmasıyla başlamıştır. Suriye muhalefeti İsrail gibi tehlikeli bir tehdit olarak algılanmış ve örgüt bu tehdide karşı güvenlik politikaları geliştirmiştir. Dördüncü aşama, Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki gelecekteki konuşlandırmalarından ve İsrail'e karşı yeni olası savaş alanları inşa etmesinden oluşmuştur.

Örgütün iç savaşın dinamiklerine uyum sağlaması gerekmiş ve iç savaş, örgütün güvenlik perspektifinde değişikliklere sebep olmuştur. Hizbullah kendisini Lübnanlı bir aktör olarak tanımlarken İsrail'e karşı direnişi ve Lübnan'ın toprak bütünlüğünün ve güvenliğinin korunmasını varlık nedeni olarak benimsemiştir. Bu bağlamda İsrail'e karşı yürüttüğü silahlı mücadele ve bölgesel gelişmelerdeki rolü boyunca Lübnan siyasi hayatındaki eylemlerini meşrulaştırma şansı bulmuştur. Suriye İç Savaşı'nın başlamasıyla

birlikte Hizbullah'ın bölgedeki aktörlere ve olaylara yönelik söylemi, stratejileri ve iç savaşa dâhil olması, geleneksel güvenlik paradigmasında ve örgütün tehdit algısında değişikliklere neden olmuştur. Örgüt, Suriye muhalefetini istisnasız tekfirci olarak nitelendirmiştir. Örgüt, iç savaşa müdahale ettikten sonra, İsrail'e karşı direniş görüşünü kaybettiği, Suriye'de mezhepçilik yaptığı ve iç savaşı Lübnan topraklarına taşıdığı yönünde eleştiriler almıştır. Öte yandan örgüt Lübnanlı kimliğini ve Lübnan'ı tekfirci tehdide karşı koruduğunu ilan etmiştir.

Dördüncü bölüm, Putnam'ın iki seviyeli oyun analizinden ödünç alınan kavramların Hizbullah üzerinde uygulanmasından neşet etmiştir. Bu bölüm, Hizbullah'ın Suriye ihtilafındaki rolünü, dış politika ve iç politika ilişkilerine referansla kazan-kazan oluşumu ve müzakereler bağlamında analiz etmiştir. Hizbullah'ın Lübnanlı aktörler, devlet ve halk ve bileşenleri ile olan ilişkileri bu bölüm altında tartışılmıştır.

Dış politikanın iç politikaya etkisi veya iç ve dış politika ilişkisi literatürde sıkça tartışılan bir konu olmuştur. Son zamanlarda devlet dışı aktörlerin dış politikayı etkilediği veya iç ve dış politikanın önemli karakterleri olduğu kabul edilse de, çalışmaların kapsamı genellikle ana aktörler olarak devletlerle sınırlı kalmıştır. Buna göre devletler bağımsız aktörlerdir ve devlet dışı aktörler, etki faktörü veya çıktı olarak onların politika oluşturma süreçlerine dahil olurlar. Devlet dışı aktörler derken burada Hizbullah ve diğer devlet dışı, hükümetler arası, silahlı veya sivil toplum örgütleri dahil olmak üzere hibrit aktörleri kastettiğimi belirtmek durumundayım. Daha önce de belirtildiği gibi, devlet dışı aktörlerin uluslararası politikadaki artan rolünden cesaret alan bu çalışma, Hizbullah gibi hibrit aktörlerin dış politika ve iç

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politika etkileşiminde bağımsız bir rol üstlenip üstlenemeyeceklerini sorgulamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, devletlerin aşınan önceliği ve merkezi rolleri inancından hareketle, devlet dışı aktörlerin bu alanın ana aktörleri arasında yer aldığı iddia edilmektedir. Bu bağlamda Hizbullah, hibrit ve ana aktör olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Öte yandan iç politika ve dış politika ilişkisinde iç politikanın dış politika üzerindeki etkilerinin sıklıkla vurgulandığı ve bu bağlamda önemli çalışmaların ortaya konulduğu görülmektedir. Öte yandan, dış politikanın iç siyasi süreçler üzerindeki etkisine ilişkin kapsamlı bir çalışma bulma ihtimali sınırlıdır. Bu çalışma, Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki operasyonlarının Lübnan'daki politikalarına etkileri ve örgütün bu noktadan hareketle planladığı veya değiştirdiği stratejiler üzerinden dış politika-iç politika ilişkisine farklı bir perspektiften bakmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ancak bunu yaparken açıklama birimi olarak Robert Putnam'ın iki seviyeli oyun yaklaşımı ele alınmış ve söz konusu stratejilerin temeli olan win-set kavramı ve müzakere süreçlerini ödünç alarak açıklamanın daha uygun olacağına karar verilmiştir.

Bu bölüm, Hizbullah'ın bölgesel bir hibrit aktör olarak dış politikasını ve Suriye'deki operasyonlarını ve Robert Putnam'ın iki seviyeli oyun analizinden win-set kavramının ödünç alınarak Lübnan üzerindeki etkisinin açıklanmasından müteşekkildir. Putnam'ın teorisi özellikle devletler için olsa da, bu bölüm Hizbullah'ın tanımlandığı şekliyle bölgesel hbirit aktörler şeklindeki devlet dışı aktörlerin dış politika oluşturma ve dış politika davranışlarını iç siyasi bağlama yansıtma yeteneğine sahip olabileceğini göstermiştir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmada devlet benzeri uygulamalarını açıklamak için Putnam'ın kavramları Hizbullah vakasına yaklaşım çerçevesinde kullanılmıştır.

Hizbullah'ın win-setleri Lübnan Devleti, Lübnanlı aktörler ve halkla olan ilişkiler üzerine kuruludur. Araştırmada, örgütün win-set büyüklüğünü etkileyen çeşitli faktörlere dikkat çekilmiştir. Bunlar, Hizbullah'ın win-set kurma esnasında önündeki engeller ve fırsatlar olarak sunulmuştur. Bu bağlamda, Lübnan Devleti'nin yapısı ve Hizbullah'ın örgütsel yapısı ve stratejileri, Hizbullah'ın win-setini genişletmesinin önündeki fırsatlar olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Öte yandan, Hizbullah'ın itibarının, Suriye'deki iç savaşa kadar bir fırsat olarak hizmet ettiği, ancak iç savaşa dâhil olduktan sonra bir engel olarak ortaya çıktığı; bu çerçevede de ikili bir role sahip olduğu iddia edilmiştir. Hizbullah bu win-setleri kendi kazanımlarını genişletmek için kullanmış ve bu bağlamda çeşitli politika ve stratejiler ortaya koymuştur. Bunlardan bazıları Hizbullah'ın Lübnan Devleti'ne ve iç aktörlere ve kamuoyuna yönelik politikalarına dayanmaktadır (pragmatizm, tehdit imajı beslemek, Şii sadakatini beslemek, muhalefetin heterojenliği, itibar sarkacı ve dış tehdit algısı). Diğerleri, siyasi ve askeri rolünü etkileyen yeteneklerine dayanmaktadır (uluslararası aktörlerle ilişkiler, siyasi güç ve özerklik, direniş ve ordu gücü için yeni savaş alanları açma). Bu arka plana karşı, bu çalışma, Hizbullah'ın iç alanda artan eleştirilere cevap vermeye çalıştığını ve Lübnan kamuoyuna Suriye'deki müdahalesini haklı çıkarmak için yeni bir anlatı üretmeye çalıştığını iddia etmiştir. Bunu başarmak için etkin politikalar ve organizasyon yapısı kullanmayı hedeflemiştir. Bu şekilde win-setini genişletmeye ve arkasından destek kazanmaya çalışmıştır. Bu bağlamda, sınır ötesi bölgelerde politikalarını destekleyen aktörler bulunurken, örgüte karşı çıkanların ikna edilmesi kısmen başarılı olmuştur. Ülke içindeki stratejileri başarılı olsun ya da olmasın, Suriye İç Savaşı'nın Hizbullah'ın Lübnan'daki ve bölgedeki rolünü değiştirdiği ve bölgesel bir aktör olarak etkisini genişlettiği

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açıktır. İç savaşa müdahale ettikten sonra Lübnan siyasetindeki askeri yeteneklerini, askeri tecrübesini ve siyasi gücünü arttırmıştır.

Tez, Lübnanlı bir aktör olan Hizbullah'ın, iç savaş başladığında komşu ülke Suriye'ye müdahalesini nasıl haklı çıkardığını incelemiştir. Putnam'ın win-set kavramını analitik bir araç olarak kullanarak, başka bir ülkedeki iç savaşa dahil olmasının Hizbullah'ın bölgesel kimliğini nasıl doğruladığını ve başlangıçta bir ulusal konsensüs olmaksızın başka bir ülkeye müdahale etme kapasitesinin hibrit aktörlüğünü nasıl doğruladığını analiz etmiştir. Bu nedenle tez, Hizbullah'ı bölgesel bir hibrit aktör olarak tanımlamış ve Lübnanlı aktörlerle Suriye İç Savaşı'na katılımını nasıl müzakere ettiğini sorgulamıştır.

Tez, Hizbullah'ın Lübnan'da askeri ve siyasi bir güç olarak ortaya çıkışına tarihsel bir perspektiften bakmıştır. Radikallikten göreli ılımlılığa geçişinden bu yana Hizbullah'ın kimliği inceleme altına alınmıştır. Örgüt, İran ve Suriye ile olan yakın ilişkileri göz önüne alındığında, kuruluşundan itibaren bölgesel bir aktör olarak görülmüştür. Ancak 1992'den itibaren Lübnan siyasi sistemine katılımıyla aynı zamanda yerli/Lübnanlı bir aktör haline gelmiştir. Tez, Hizbullah'ın ılımlı olarak kabul edildiği ve böylece Lübnanlı kimliğini her zamankinden daha fazla vurguladığı bir dönemde, Suriye İç Savaşı'nın başlangıcının bir kez daha örgütün yönelimini değiştirdiğini ve bölgesel kimliğini doğruladığını göstermiştir. Dolayısıyla tez, Hizbullah'ı zaman zaman Lübnan Devleti'nin kendisinden daha güçlü olan bölgesel bir hibrit aktör olarak tanımlamıştır.

Tez, siyaset ve dış politika arasındaki ilişkiye bakarak, devlet dışı aktörlerin aktif dış politika eylemlerine nasıl dâhil olduklarını ve iç politikadaki

kararlarını nasıl meşru gösterdiklerini ve müzakere ettiklerini analiz etmiştir. Suriye İç Savaşı'na müdahale etme kararı özelinde dış politikanın Hizbullah'ın stratejilerini, politikalarını ve iç politikadaki ortaklıklarını nasıl etkilediğini gözlemlemek ilginç olmuştur. Putnam'ın iki seviyeli oyun yaklaşımını kullanan ve ondan win-set kavramını ödünç alan tez, Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki rolünü diğer aktörlere nasıl açıkladığını anlamaya çalışmakla kalmamış, aynı zamanda devlet dışı aktörlerin benzer durumlarda bu çerçeveden nasıl yararlanabileceklerini sorgulamıştır.

Tezde gösterildiği gibi Hizbullah'ın win-set oluşumu, onun kendi win-setlerini bir reelpolitik algısı üzerinden inşa ettiğini ve korkuyu algılayan ve ulusal tarihi kendi politikasını ulusal düzeyde inşa etmek için kullanan rasyonel bir aktör olarak hareket ettiğini göstermiştir. Gösterildiği gibi Hizbullah geleneksel olarak anlatısını Lübnan'ın İsrail tarafından işgali ve onun yarattığı tehditten korunması ve kurtarılması üzerine inşa etmiştir. 1982 yılındaki işgal, birçok Lübnanlının zihninde hâlâ geçerli olduğundan, Hizbullah bu mirası kullanmış ve bu kez Lübnan'ı tekfirci teröristlere karşı savunacak bir pozisyon oluşturmuştur. Suriye İç Savaşı'nı, Batı'nın Lübnan'ı Suriye'den sonra ele geçirmeye yönelik daha büyük bir projesinin bir parçası olarak da tanımlayan Hizbullah, Lübnan'ı genel Batı saldırganlığına karşı savunduğunu ve bu nedenle Direniş'in söyleminden beslendiğini savunmuştur. Dördüncü bölümde de görüldüğü gibi Hizbullah, Suriye'deki iç savaşı Haçlı Seferleri'nin devamı olarak resmettiği bir söylem de kullanmıştır. Bu şekilde Hizbullah, Suriye'ye müdahalesini ve güç kullanımını meşru olarak nitelendirmiş; özel değil, ulusal çıkarlara hizmet ettiğini iddia etmiştir.

Bu şekilde Hizbullah, halk desteğini genişletmeyi ve daha önemli bir pozisyonu elde etmeyi amaçlamıştır. Ancak Hizbullah'ın Suriye'ye müdahalesinin Lübnanlılığını ne ölçüde etkilediği ve halk desteğini artırmak için ne ölçüde çalıştığı tartışmalı olmaya devam etmiştir. Hizbullah da Lübnanlı kimliğini vurgulayan bir oyalama stratejisi denemiş ve Lübnan'ın sınırlarını koruduğunu iddia etmiştir. Nasrallah'ın konuşmalarına bakıldığında tekfir/ci kelimesi kullanılmış ancak buna paralel olarak Lübnan ve Lübnanlı kimliği vurgusu da artmıştır. Bu, Hizbullah'ın ülke içindeki eleştirileri aşma niyeti olarak okunabilir. Nasrallah, tekfir/ci kelimesinin kullanılmasına ve Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki varlığını eleştirenlere karşı meşrulaştırmaya paralel olarak, 2013'ten sonra İsrail tehdidini giderek daha fazla kullanmaya başlamıştır. Bu, Hizbullah'ın zayıfladığına dair iç endişelere bir yanıt olarak okunabilir. İsrail'e karşı geleneksel direniş politikasını vurgulayarak, yalnızca Lübnanlı kimliğinin altını çizmeyi değil, aynı zamanda mezhepçi davranışlarına yönelik eleştirilere de yanıt vermeyi amaçlamıştır. Suriye'deki iç savaş geliştikçe ve uzadıkça Hizbullah'ın win-set oluşumu da değişmiştir.

2013'ten itibaren bu duruşun Hizbullah'ın iç meselelerden ziyade bölgesel meselelere bağlılığı ve mezhepçi duruşuyla ilgili yurt içinde eleştirilere yol açması üzerine Nasrallah, Hizbullah'ın Lübnanlı karakterinin yanı sıra kalıcı düşmanına karşı sarsılmaz direnişinin altını çizmeye başlamıştır. Böylece win-setinin boyutu gelişmiş ve koşullara uyarlanmıştır ve ilginç bir şekilde Hizbullah Suriye'deki aktif mücadeleye daha derinden dâhil olurken, Lübnanlı kimliğinin altını çizen ve İsrail'e karşı savaşan daha güçlü bir söylem kullanmaya başlamıştır.

Tezin ayrıntılarıyla gösterdiği gibi, win-setler çoğunlukla Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki varlığını müzakere etme ve haklı çıkarma konusunda başarılı olmuştur. Hizbullah'ın win-setleri güvenlik sağlamak ve Lübnan'ı korumak üzerine kurulu olduğu için, karşıt kamplardan gelen eleştirilere rağmen, sadece Hizbullah'ın geleneksel müttefikleri arasında değil rakipleri arasında da destek görmüştür. Yine de Suriye'deki iç savaşa dâhil olması, Lübnan Devleti'nin bölgesel siyasette zayıfladığı bir dönemde, tezin öne sürdüğü gibi, Sünnilerin muhalefetine rağmen Hizbullah'ın Lübnan siyasetindeki konumunu büyük ölçüde güçlendirmiştir. Hizbullah, bir dizi iç ve bölgesel gelişme nedeniyle cumhurbaşkanlığı sürecinde önemli bir rol oynamayı başarmış ve 2016 yılında 8 Mart Koalisyonu'ndaki müttefiki Mişel Avn'ı cumhurbaşkanlığına getirmeyi başarmıştır. Lübnan iç siyasetindeki bu güçlenme göstermektedir ki tüm eleştirilere rağmen win-setler büyük ölçüde Hizbullah'ın Suriye İç Savaşı'ndaki rolünü Lübnanlı seçmenlere haklı göstermek konusunda başarılı bir performans göstermiştir.

Tez, Hizbullah'ın 2013'ten bu yana Suriye'deki iç savaşa dâhil olmasının, onun bölgesel karakterini şüphesiz teyit ettiğinin ve dolayısıyla onu, tezin tanımladığı gibi, bölgesel bir hibrit aktör haline getirdiğinin altını çizmiştir. Genel olarak, Hizbullah'ın doğal olarak Esad rejimini "kurtarmak" için hareket edeceği gözlemlenmiştir, çünkü Hizbullah en büyük müttefikini kaybedecek olsaydı Lübnan'daki konumunu sürdürmekte güçlüklerle karşılaşacaktı. Tezin gösterdiği gibi, Hizbullah, özellikle muhalefete karşı kazandığı kritik askeri zaferleri göz önünde bulundurarak, Esad rejimini iktidarda tutmada etkili olurken, bu nedenle Hizbullah'ın Suriye'ye bağımlı göründüğü önceki dönemden farklı olarak iç savaşa müdahalesi yoluyla, güç ilişkilerinde de değişikliklere neden olmuştur. Sonraki dönemlerde

Hizbullah'ın güney Suriye'deki varlığının altını çizen gelişmeler, Hizbullah'ı Suriye bağlamında güçlendirmenin yanı sıra hibrit aktör karakterinin altını çiziyor görünmektedir.

İran'la ilişkilere bakıldığında ise Hizbullah'ın özerkliğini artırdığı gözlemlenmektedir. Hizbullah, Suriye'deki genişletilmiş askeri kapasitesine ve Lübnan'daki artan siyasi etkisine paralel olarak bölgesel bağlamda İran için her zamankinden daha değerli bir müttefik gibi görünmektedir. Hizbullah, askeri olarak hala İran'a bağımlı olmasına rağmen, aynı zamanda siyasi olarak İran'dan eskisinden daha özerk bir konumda bulunmaktadır. Bu gelişmede en önemli rolü Suriye'deki askeri zaferler oynayacak gibi görünmektedir. Hizbullah, bölgedeki rolünü güçlendiren Şii milislerin eğitmeni olarak yeni bir rol üstlenmeye başlamıştır. Hatta Suriye ordusunun bazı durumlarda Hizbullah komutanlarından emir aldığı iddiaları da bulunmaktadır. Ancak Hizbullah'ın Suriye karşısında büyüyen gücü ve karar alma sürecinde İran'dan artan özerkliği, onun İsrail karşısındaki öncü rolüne zarar vermemektedir. Aksine uzun vadede Hizbullah'ın dikkatini güçlü bir şekilde İsrail'e çevirme olasılığı artmıştır. Suriye'de kalmaya devam edecek olan Hizbullah, Suriye ve İran ile ilişkilerini güçlendirmiş ve müttefikleri için vazgeçilmez bir aktör olarak değerini kanıtlamıştır. Daha da önemli bir durum olarak Lübnanlı aktörlere Suriye'ye girişindeki gerekçelerinin ve oradaki pozisyonunun haklı olduğunu göstermiştir. Hizbullah, Suriye İç Savaşı'ndan kazançlı çıkmış görünmektedir. Hizbullah, Suriye İç Savaşı'nda yeterli düzeyde askeri kapasiteye ulaştığını iddia ederken, İsrail ile olası bir savaş da ihtimal dâhilinde kabul edilmektedir. Bu tezde kullanılan analiz doğrultusunda, Hizbullah'ın win-set yaratmasının ve bunları yakın gelecekte

İsrail'e karşı olası bir savaşı haklı çıkarmak için başarıyla kullanmasının daha kolay olacağını tahmin etmek zor bir ihtimal değildir.

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