AN ANALYSIS OF HEZBOLLAH'S POLITICAL PRAGMATISM AT THE
DOMESTIC AND REGIONAL LEVELS IN THE FRAME OF LIMINALITY

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ABSTRACT

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Hezbollah, as a non-state actor, has been a part of the Lebanese political sphere for more than 30 years. However, how to define Hezbollah has been a dilemma because of its complex state of existence. Confining the group within the borders of previously set categorizations may not lend credence since Hezbollah is most likely to continue practicing unexpected and conflicting policies and overstep the limits of the assigned identity. Emancipating Hezbollah from a binary understanding, therefore, is able to give a full understanding of the organization's intricacy without facing obstacles. Since liminality is a broader and less restrictive concept, the frame of "liminality", hereby, is used to replace the concept of "transformation" in the literature. This thesis, which is a single case study, is intended to analyze the political pragmatism of Hezbollah at both domestic and regional levels. The political maneuvers of Hezbollah are made through the room created by the consequences of liminality of Lebanese state as well as Hezbollah itself. Since Hezbollah, as a non-state actor, was born into a state of liminality, it was endowed with no necessity of a clear definition of itself because of the suspended state structure. Hezbollah's victory as a surviving and as the most benefitting one is a consequence of a good reading of the liminal

periods and the political acumen. The political developments in Lebanon, in this context, has shaped the group's mission according to the conjuncture. Hezbollah's political pragmatism at the regional level, on the other hand, is explained by three cases: Israeli Invasion of Lebanon, Participation to the Lebanese electoral system and the 2019 October Uprising. Hezbollah's political pragmatism at the regional level is elucidated with its reliance on Iran, its alliance with Syria, and lastly, the Arab Spring & Syrian Civil War. Secondary sources such as news from media outlets and the periodic speeches of Nasrallah were utilized. Critical Discourse Analysis is used for the speeches of Nasrallah to analyze the changes in the narrative of Hezbollah.

Keywords: Lebanon, Hezbollah, political pragmatism, liminality

ÖZ

HİZBULLAH'IN YEREL VE BÖLGESEL DÜZEYDEKİ SİYASİ PRAGMATİZMİNİN EŞİKTELİK ÇERÇEVESİNDE İNCELENMESİ

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Hizbullah, 30 yılı aşkın bir süredir Lübnan siyasetinin bir parçasıdır. Ancak Hizbullah'ın nasıl tanımlanacağı konusu örgütün karmaşık varoluşu sebebiyle tartışmalıdır. Hizbullah'ın beklenmedik ve çelişkili politikalar uygulamaya devam etmesi ve ona "atanan kimliğin" sınırlarını aşması muhtemel olduğundan, grubu daha önce belirlenmiş kimlik sınırları içinde tutmak zor olagelmiştir. Bu nedenle Hizbullah'ı ikili bir anlayıştan kurtarmak, örgütün karmaşıklığının daha geniş bir çerçevede incelenmesine olanak sağlayabilir. Bu tezde "eşiktelik" kavramı daha kapsamlı ve daha az kısıtlayıcı bir kavram olduğundan literatürdeki "dönüşüm" kavramının yerine kullanılmıştır. Bir vaka çalışması olan bu tez, Hizbullah'ın siyasi pragmatizmini hem yerel hem de bölgesel düzeyde analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Hizbullah'ın siyasi manevraları, aynı zamanda Lübnan'ın kendisinin de eşikteliğinin sonucu olarak ortaya çıkan boşluk sayesinde yapılmaktadır. Hizbullah'ın da örgütlenmeye başladığı bu eşiktelik sürecinde askıya alınan yönetim yapısı Hizbullah'ın kendini keskin bir çerçevede tanımlaması zorunluluğunu ortadan kaldırmıştır. Hizbullah'ın zaferleri, eşik dönemlerini iyi okumasından ve bu dönemlerdeki iyi planlanmış çıkar faaliyetlerinden kaynaklanmaktadır. Lübnan'daki siyasi gelişmeler bu

bağlamda grubun misyonunu konjonktüre göre şekillendirmiştir. Hizbullah'ın bölgesel düzeydeki siyasi pragmatizmi ise üç vakayla açıklanmaktadır: İsrail'in Lübnan'ı işgali, Lübnan seçimlerine katılımı ve 2019 Ekim Ayaklanması. Hizbullah'ın bölgesel düzeydeki siyasi pragmatizmi ise, İranla olan ilişkileri, Suriye ile ittifakı ve son olarak Arap Baharı ve Suriye İç Savaşı ile analiz edilmektedir. Nasrallah'ın yaptığı düzenli konuşmalar ve medya organlarından alınan haberler gibi ikincil kaynaklardan yararlanılmıştır. Nasrallah'ın konuşmalarında Hizbullah'ın anlatısındaki değişiklikleri analiz etmek için Eleştirel Söylem Analizi kullanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Lübnan, Hizbullah, siyasi pragmatizm, eşiktelik

To the little kid who raised herself

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The concept of "identity" has been the core of the Hezbollah- related articles and has become the ground for many diverse theses. Many labels have been attributed to Hezbollah so that its politics could be rationalized and be analyzed on a cause-affect relation. The question "Who/what is Hezbollah?" has led the arguments by urging the academicians to categorize Hezbollah to define it. Here arises the problem: None of the identities as solely or merged is satisfying enough to define the group and answer the questions such as "Is the resistance movement of Hezbollah is Islamic in nature?", "Is Hezbollah a legitimate resistance group or a terrorist group?" or "Is Hezbollah legitimate as a political party?". To answer these questions, sticking on one or several pre-determined identities barely help us to come to a decision since they fall short of counter claim because of Hezbollah's pragmatic politics, which manifest exceptions, caused by its state of flux. As Karakoç claims, "identity may matter, but it is not the only determining factor in shaping one's political attitudes and behaviours in the Middle East".[1]

Since its foundation, there has been no implication or declaration of separation in Hezbollah regarding its military or political wings which has been constructed by the academia and states. The belief that Hezbollah has different wings is a fiction that many states continue to adhere to, even though Hezbollah itself says "there is only one, fully integrated organization under single leadership".[2]

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[1] Karakoc, Ozcan, & Alkan Ozcan, *Beyond Identity: What explains Hezbollah's Popularity among non-Shia Lebanese*, 24.

[2] Burchill, *Germany: A "Retreat" for Hezbollah.*

Then, who is the Hezbollah? Who owns the truth? Should we follow the principal of statement? Or should we continue claiming the academic truth which diagnoses "identity split" in Hezbollah? I have realized that confining the group within the borders of previously set categorizations, as the literature does, will not lend credence to readers of academia since Hezbollah is most likely to continue practicing unexpected and conflicting policies and overstep the limits of the assigned identity.

Broadly, the literature endows Hezbollah three main identities: the religious identity, the resistance identity and lastly, the national identity. These pre-determined identities have been formed by academia and used as a tool to define Hezbollah and rationalize its politics in parallel to its identities. In some cases, two or more identities are combined to include the siloed politics of Hezbollah since one identity lacks in providing a functioning playground for it. While some states and non-state actors such the US, Australia and the Arab League accept Hezbollah as a unified identity with its military, religious and political wings, and have included it into the terror list, the EU recognizes Hezbollah in regard to its political wing. "The European strategy aims at keeping the egg-shell intact in order to give the zygotes within the freedom to work through a process of democratic and political reform – padding out the empty space."[3] In between, "New Zealand issued Resolution-1373 in which *Al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya* is referred as "military wing of Hezbollah" [4] and included in the list of terrorist designations.

Hezbollah's first decade has been likely to be explained in the frame of political radicalism. "The factor leading to the formation of Hezbollah was the increasingly secular character assumed by the AMAL movement after Sadr's

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[3] O'Sullivan, *Road to Proscription: The EU and Hezbollah since the Arab Spring*, 12.

[4] New Zealand Police, *Resolution 1373*.

disappearance".[5] Therefore, it can be safely claimed that Hezbollah constructed its religious identity over the Shia Islam. "The religious element serves to bolster the political aims of the organization".[6] Hezbollah often employs the instruments of religion and this enhances the symbolic influence of the Party over the Lebanese State and the political agenda projected by Hezbollah to better serve and safeguard Shi'ite status in Lebanon (especially through social services) reflects a religious element found in the Shi'ite sect.[7] Aside from the Shiism as Hezbollah's religious ideology, according to Kramer, "Pan-Islam has emerged as the most widely accepted theme of political discourse in Hizballah".[8] In this regard, Hezbollah's alliance with Iran can be attributed to the ultimate objective of Islamist expansionism. "Iran played an important part in the emergence of Hezbollah, and it supported Hezbollah's development and profile".[9] "The reorientation of the foreign and security policy of the state of Iran, following the Islamic Revolution of 1979, was one of the factors that led to the emergence of Hezbollah".[10] Also, for Constructivists, "the axis of resistance is in the operation of shared religious (Shia) identity".[11]

On the other hand, the "resistance" is also brought into focus in some academic works and claim an understanding of Hezbollah based on the assumption that resistance was the main propulsive force of emergence of the organization rather than a radical religiosity with rigid limits. "The emerging phenomenology, which

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[5] Saad-Ghorayeb, *Factors Conducive To The Politicization Of The Lebanese Shīʿa And The Emergence Of Ḥizbuʾllāh,* 303.

[6] Childs, *From Identity to Militancy: The Shīʿa of Hezbollah*, 455.

[7] Farida, *Religion and Hezbollah: Political Ideology and Legitimacy*, 19 & 45.

[8] Kramer, *Redeeming Jerusalem: The Pan-Islamic Premise of Hizballa*h, 107.

[9] Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Program*, 34.

[10] Șoimaru, *Hezbollah between Myth and Reality*, 95.

[11] Calculli, *Self-Determination at All Costs: Explaining the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah Axis,"Annals of the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi. An Interdisciplinary Journal of Economics, History and Political Science*, 97.

the new nomic structure of Hezbollah constructs is an identity that is focused on the fight against the Israeli occupation of that country along with a version of "Islamic nationalism"".[12] "From its inception, Hezbollah defined itself as the tip of the spear against Israel, and its forces became progressively more skilled and able to conduct an array of sophisticated military operations against the Jewish state".[13] "It defines Israel as aggressive, racist, expansionist, anti-humanist and cancerous state".[14] "Hezbollah's combatant identity established during the civil war was thus built on the notion of being a vanguard movement fighting oppression/occupation/aggression, responding to injustice and emphasizing the importance of steadfastness, patience, self-sacrifice and altruism".[15]Although Hezbollah's resistance was shaped in a Lebanese framework that operations out of the Lebanese territories were barely observed, "the party's hostility towards Zionism and occupation illustrates the movement's commitment to jihad, not only as a military struggle, but also an ideological one, grounded in fighting imperialism and oppression".[16] "Reputation of Hezbollah as a formidable resistance organization against western domination, especially the United States and Israel, enables it to project a positive image across Lebanese society beyond Shia community".[17] Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian civil war, on the other hand, was aimed to be waged against the infidels threatening both Lebanon and Islam. "Once it had revealed its active military engagement in Syria to the

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[12] Polizzi, *Toward a Phenomenology of Terrorism Beyond Who is Killing Whom*, 184.

[13] Hasan, *Israel And Hezbollah*, 716.

[14] Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Program*, 145.

[15] Berti, *War, Resistance, and 'Combatant Identity:' Hezbollah's Political Identity and the Legacy of Conflict*, 4.

[16] Elbenhawy, *Hezbollah as a Norm Entrepreneur: Reconstructing Resistance and Legitimacy*, 53.

[17] Karakoc, Ozcan, & Alkan Ozcan, *Beyond Identity: What explains Hezbollah's Popularity among non-Shia Lebanese*, 9.

public, Hizbullah presented itself as an authority with legitimacy to fight on foreign territory, in relation to its religious and national identities".[18]

Lastly, almost all the literature affirms that the never-ending conflict with Israel has damaged the Shia community more than other sects in Lebanon since the southern Lebanon has been mostly inhabited by the Shia community. The deprivation and displacement caused by the conflict resulted in less schooling, less wealth and less human development for the Shia community and played a catalyst role for a social mobilization. In parallel to Hezbollah's social mobilization, "their political mobilization started in mid 20th century by joining active nationalist parties such as the Ba'ath Party, the Nasserites or Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party".[19] "Hezbullah began as a movement of armed resistance to this Israeli occupation in the mid-1980s, and has since developed into the major political face of the Shi'i Islamic mobilization and a legitimate political party that works within the post-civil war Lebanese state". [20] "Events that took place after 1992 including the unilateral exit of Israel from southern Lebanon in 2000, the war with Israel in 2006, struggle in 2008 to secure an independent Hezbollah telephone line and other issues to the central government, and the newly established image of activism (or moderation) improved Hezbollah's reputation as an organization that has integrity in the Lebanese political system".[21] "By politicizing itself, Hezbollah gained opportunities to broaden its constituency beyond its traditional Shiite base while continuing to pursue to its objectives within a politically respected forum and in a socially

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[18] Kızılkaya, *Hizbullah's Moral Justification of Its Military Intervention in the Syrian Civil War,* 219.

[19] Wahab, *Syria's Sect-Coded Conflict: From Hezbollah's Top-down Instrumentalization of Sectarian Identity to Its Candid Geopolitical Confrontation*, 5.

[20] Deeb, *Exhibiting the "Just-Lived Past": Hizbullah's Nationalist Narratives in Transnational Political Context*, 375.

[21] Simbar & Mehdi, *Political Islam: Moderation or Radicalism? Case Study of Political Islam with Respect to Lebanon Hezbollah* , 84.

acceptable manner". [22] For Azani, by November 1995, "Hezbollah had achieved the goals it had set itself when it entered the parliament in 1992".[23] "From Biqa' to Beirut, to the south, Hizbullah became an increasingly important and legitimate political force".[24] Kurzman explains that as "its electoral program included the resistance against Israel, whose occupation of Lebanon had not ended yet, reforms in the level of education, administration and culture, and a change for the political system of Lebanon".[25] Hezbollah, as a radical movement, is being caught up in the game of conventional politics: "Hezbollah's "Lebanonisation" entails a gradual dismissal of the party's pan-Islamic horizon in favor of what is termed "Islamic nationalism" and it has given up its radical agenda and is integrating into national politics with a pragmatic strategy".[26] "This strategy, which is designed to preserve Hizballah's uniqueness and source of power within Lebanon, rests largely on the continued ability of the movement to credibly confront its enemies and pursue its ideological objectives".[27]

As a consequence of this deadlock, I have wondered if there is any way in which Hezbollah can be analyzed as a whole without leaving out any exceptional political maneuver of the group. I have decided to chase the possibility that could both rationalize the group's paradoxical policies and discharge it from invalid expectations and sided anticipators. This thesis will fulfill my academic desire.

The concept of "liminality" appeals my attention since it looks promising to facilitate new horizons for the identity puzzle of especially non-state actors. Since it interfaces the identity construction with the political conditions in which

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[22] Early, *Larger Than a Party, yet Smaller Than a State: Locating Hezbollah's Place Within Lebanon's State and Society*, 121.

[23] Azani, *The Hybrid Terrorist Organization: Hezbollah as a Case Study*, 911.

[24] Hamzeh, *Lebanon's Hizbullah: From Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accommodation*, 335.

[25] Kurzman, *Parliamentary Elections Program*.

[26] Harb & Leenders, *Know Thy Enemy: Hizbullah, 'Terrorism' and the Politics of Perception*, 185.

[27] Ranstorp, *The strategy and tactics of Hizballah's current 'Lebanonization process,* 104.

the non-state actors thrive, it shows an exclusive approach to those who haven't reached a stability yet and have shown a complex unity of existence. Therefore, actors do not necessarily acquire a certain pre-assigned identity which is restrictive in nature rather their vacillatory experiences in turbulent times are also counted as a part of their identity. Concerns over security, recognition and development may lead the actors to minimize the risks and benefit the opportunities, and by doing so, they may deviate from their core principles and policies. In the case of Hezbollah, claimed to be a radical Islamist group, it can be asserted that the political pragmatism withholds the group to be stick to its radical values and prevents it to be more radicalized. The mild version of the radical group, therefore, follows policies that have not been expected within the borders of an assigned identity. Overall, I claim that political pragmatism is likely to be seen in liminal groups which had been born in crisis.

Liminality, representing the rituals of passage throughout human life, remarks the important transitions of one's in relation to the group in which they live. The ritual of passage traces back to the earlier communities, and it is seen as a common heritage of history of mankind, and it consists of the birth, puberty, adulthood, marriage, and death for human life circle. Arnold Van Gennep, an anthropologist, realized that "different kinds of occasions can have a similar form when there are events that bring together not only simple groups but the entire society or the community".[28] These occasions can be exemplified as the religious ceremonies, harvest season, weddings, funerals, graduation, moving into a new year and so on according to the priority of the community. Correspondingly, each example of the rites of passage may hold less or more importance based on the interest attributed to it within the boundaries of the specific characteristics of the community.

Gennep theorizes this social phenomenon with "rite of passage". According to his theory, the rite of passage has three stages, and following through with these

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[28] Saglietti & Thomassen, *The Crisis of Modernity from Permanent Liminality to Limivoid.*

three stages, one finally accomplishes major changes in their life. The first step, named as "rites of separation", begins with alienation by leaving the familiar due to some internal or external reasons, and this dissociative act leaves them weak and vulnerable. The separation is followed by the second stage "rites of transition" in which one contains within itself both strength and weakness. This stage serves as a bridge between the old form before the transition takes place and the reshaped form after the transition. There is a great uncertainty which suspends the personal status in hierarchy until it reaches a level of stability. The last stage is "incorporation" in which change is being observed in one's social status with some physical and psychological indicators.

Liminality, as an anthropological concept, has been brought to the social sciences by Zygmunt Bauman and Eisenstadt. "It can be defined as a reconstruction of identity in which the sense of self is significantly disrupted in such a way that the new identity is meaningful for the individual and their society".[29]

As human history has shown us so far, some of the societies, which named as transitory societies, have the tendency to evolve and adopt the ongoing changes in the international order while others resist the new arrangements and values by sticking on their conventional historical practices. The incentive for the progressiveness may take root in the popular discontentment with the existing rule or the greed for a surpassing order sui generis. Therefore, the path transitory societies are following is also claimed to be serving to the purpose of modernization. The transition which is unavoidably required by the transformation of the societies involves in a turbulent flow and does not necessarily trace a smooth transitional stage with steady developmental steps. The passing phase is also predisposed to crises since it is triggered by a rupture. The liminal period can develop out of civil wars, revolutions and social movements and regime change. All these bear power struggle, political

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[29] Beech, *Liminality and the Practices of Identity Reconstruction*, 287.

manipulation, and birth of new leaders, and with respect to this, it yields some common consequences such as suspended power, competing sides, a spent force and rising opposition at the same time. At this juncture, uncertainty and monachopsis emanate from the liminal space and ambiguate the identities until they gain a newly reregulated rationale for their being. In an ongoing period of change, it cannot be expected the identities to remain faithful to their raison d'etre and offer resistance to transformation in the name of fidelity, and therefore, orienting the future of the community towards the new order by allowing for the circumstances to shape it provides benefit for survival.

However, it is also being observed in some cases that the liminal period may be in the wind of a permanent discourse, and it gains acceptance with its advantages and challenges over the time. "Permanent liminality" has become an increasing common phenomenon as the lines blur between what is war, what is civilization, what is military, what is domestic and what is global".[30]

The concept of liminality, as an anthropological term, has been brought into the international relations domain recently. Although the International Relations domain tends to strictly identify the entities and categorize them by leaving minimum space for counter argument, this urge may not provide clear cuts for newly occurred non-state actors. Therefore, the problem of "identification" arises with a large variety of claims over the identity of the non-state actors including their own self-declaration, which is likely to evolve in time. Restricting an influx situation for the sake of naming it hardly takes us to a reliable conclusion since the arguments will lose validity/become invalid when the non-state actors maneuver to stay in the system by adopting unexpected policies. In such an inconstant condition, it is not possible to freeze the time and the balance in the domestic, regional, or international order. Therefore, "liminality" looks promising to provide answers to the deadlock discussions of IR.

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[30] Mcneice, Between Islam and the Sea- A Case Study of Hezbollah through the Lense of Liminality, 18-19.

It can be claimed that the concept of "liminality" and the classical International Relations theories show contradicting characteristics, and they are barely compatible. While IR theories are in search of a universality and likely to be progressive, "liminality" tends to descend into particularity, principally centering on evolutionary/transformational processes of actors. Kurki's thoughts over this distinction deserves attention and they place my hope in liminality: "What should be central to the investigation of the workings of the world politics are not prefixed categories and their deterministic interaction, but rather their complex emergence, factual and discursive structural contexts".[31] Relatively giving of the praxis of structures, which is regarded as "IR's intrinsic fetish" by J. Walker, and limitations, the exclusivity can be brought out through the historical development processes. "That looks promising, because liminality could become the bridge concept along which to deepen the interdisciplinary theoretical dialogue between the fields such as Postcolonial Studies, International Political Theory, Critical Geopolitics, Cultural Theory and so on".[32] Therefore, liminality offers an exciting opening in which being categorized is not demanded or stipulated.

Besides, there is an inner ongoing discussion about whether it is possible to apply the concept "liminality" to all human communities regardless of their features such as size and the level of modernity. "Far from only focusing on small-scale societies, van Gennep made systematic references to and comparisons with historical societies, like ancient Egypt, Rome, and Greece".[33] On the other hand, some scholars argue that liminal situations can be brought in only if small-tribal communities are the actor/agent of the situations. Turner has contributed to this academic discussion by stating that "referring to the advanced societies as liminal could be a mistake since they are only in "liminoid" or

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[31] Kurki, Causation in International Relations: Reclaiming Causal Analysis, 245-88.

[32] Mälksoo, The Challenge of Liminality for International Relations Theory, 483.

[33] Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern Living through the in-Between* 45.

"liminal like" situations"[34] which granted the field an alternative view to analyze the situations.

In this thesis, I argue that Hezbollah, as a non-state actor, cannot fit in pre-determined identities as it was born in a liminal period and since then, it has been engaging itself in constructing an identity according to the domestic society and regional and international actors. Hezbollah, as an actor assuming liminal characteristics, functions effectually in the Lebanese system pervaded by liminality. Although the group has been relatively stable in some context, a certain identity has not been acquired yet throughout its history, and physical and ontological securities have led the group to adopt diverse commitments. I explain in the frame of "liminality" how the political pragmatism promotes survival of Hezbollah, as a political-armed group born into a liminal period, by providing a room for political maneuvers. This study attempts to show that Hezbollah's conflicting policies are not necessarily consequences of the claim "multiple identities", rather, Hezbollah only enjoy the profit of political pragmatism and its exclusive limitlessness.

This thesis consists of an introduction, two chapters, and lastly a conclusion. The second chapter starts with a short history of Lebanese Shia in periods of Ottoman Empire, the French Mandate, aftermath of the Independence of Lebanon and the Civil War. Then, Hezbollah's political pragmatism in domestic level will be explained in three affirmative cases: Israeli Invasion of Lebanon & Israeli Unilateral Withdrawal from Lebanon (1), Hezbollah's Participation in Lebanese Electoral System (2) and lastly, the Unfinished Revolution: October 2019 (3).

The third chapter will focus on Hezbollah's pragmatic politics at the regional level. First, reliance on Iran will be covered over the years from Hezbollah's foundation to today (1), secondly, the relations with Syria will be analyzed under the governance of Hafiz Al-Assad and Bashir Assad respectively (2). Lastly,

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[34] Szakolczai, *Political Antropology*, 6.

Hezbollah's changing political attitude towards the Arab Spring and Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian Civil War will be explained separately.

CHAPTER 2

POLITICAL PRAGMATISM OF HEZBOLLAH AT THE DOMESTIC LEVEL

To understand and analyze Hezbollah, one must be informed well about the conjuncture that gave a rise to such an entity. In the case of Hezbollah, by following the historical background of Lebanese Shia, the power revival of the group can be observed clearly. The first part of this chapter aims to find answers to the questions such as "What was the characteristics of the state in which Hezbollah was born into?", "What was the status of the Lebanese Shia had in Lebanon before Hezbollah was established?", "Was Hezbollah an old, deep-rooted organization?", "What catalyzed the emergence of such an organization?". In the second part of the chapter, after locating the Hezbollah in Lebanese domestic politics, pragmatism of Hezbollah which has been allowed by the liminality will be discussed at the domestic level.

2.1. Lebanese Shi'a Under The Ottoman Empire & The French Mandate

"The economic mobility in Beirut was causing problems since it served as an open door for Westerners to penetrate and influence the political atmosphere"[35]. On the other hand, the competition among the Druze families and their broken alliance with Maronites made its mark in late 17th century. Sects and their exclusive affinities with external powers placed Ottoman in difficult position in aspect of governance in 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries.

The Druze revolt lasting for almost half of a century led to a weak administration of Mount Lebanon resulting in relinquishing the control of the region, known as

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[35] Harris, *In the Levant: A Fractured Mosaic*, 138.

Shuff. Execution of governors and the political competition among the Druze families left its mark in this period until late 17th century. "The hegemony of Druze on Mount Lebanon was on the decline during the governance of Emir Mansur Shihap and they increased their political and military power in Kesrivan".[36] It can be safely claimed that after converting to Maronite Christianity, the political practices of Shihab family over the Druze such as disarmament of the Druze or seizing the properties of the Druze who were forced to leave escalated the tension between the Maronite administration and their subjects. The conflict ended when the Ottoman Empire seized the control of Mount Lebanon in the first half of 19th century and centralized it by assigning a new governor who was not a local figure.

As a result of continuing conflicts and the ongoing interest of Western powers in the Levant, Mount Lebanon was disassociated from Saida and Damascus and centralized as a third district by virtue of "Cebel-i Lübnan Nizamnamesi", a resolution offered by France, Britain, Prussia, Australia, and Russia in 1861. It forced Ottoman Empire to recognize the Self-Governance of Mount Lebanon. Resolution had bred the conflicts and deadlocks because of the fact that quintessentially different entities were confined under the same authority, which sow dissent and opened the door of foreign intervention, for 53 years until the First World war broke out.

What the Lebanese Shi'a constitutes of during the Ottoman rule was mostly the Shiite who were settled around the Awali River and Beqaa Valley. There has been some increase in the population of Shiite over time caused by the regional affairs such as the persecution of the Iranian clerics by the Shah regime. The Lebanese Shiite was being overshadowed by the Druze and the Maronites for the most part of the years under the Ottoman Empire and developed a relationship with the more powerful sects ran by politically exposed families. In the 17th century, "the Harfush emirate of the Beqaa Valley and the Hamadas of Mount

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[36] Tur & Ayhan, *Lübnan: Savaş, Barış, Direniş ve Türkiye ile İlişkiler*, 33.

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Lebanon rivalled the territorial extension and power of the Druze emirate of the Shuff, and unlike the Druze, the Shiite emirs were regularly denounced for their religious identity and persecuted under Ebu Suud's definition of "Kızılbaş heretics".[37] After that Lebanese Shia has constructed a more edgy and definable identity compared to those years, and distinguished itself in the late 19ᵗʰ century, and early 20ᵗʰ century.

French mandate started in 1920 and lasted until the independence of Lebanon in 1946. The formation of the Lebanese State deserves attention to analyze in terms of both the never-ending French interest in Lebanon over the years, and the internal political conflicts of Modern Lebanese State in which the power struggle between the Maronites and Muslims still exists. It must be remembered that even before the foundation of Lebanon to today, France had always favored the Maronites over the Muslim and Druze communities.

French interest in Lebanon has a long history which lays behind the desire to control the Eastern Mediterranean cost along with political and the economic concerns. Therefore, France has engaged in both cultural and financial involvements in Lebanon since early 19ᵗʰ century. Maronite community best functioned as a tool for the French missionary activities in Lebanon. By availing itself of this opportunity, "French interest in Lebanon also increased with the military intervention to protect the Maronite community in 1860"[38] , and it has still been maintaining the tenacious interest in Lebanon recently.

San Remo Conference granted France the state of Syria and Lebanon in 1920, and the Great Lebanon was founded by France in the same year. The artificial borders gave a rise to a deprecative reaction and unrest from southern Lebanon since they expected to be ruled by Damascus rather than Mount Lebanon. On the other hand, Druze community which were divided into two, in Syria and

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[37] Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1788*, 31.

[38] Tur & Ayhan, *Lübnan: Savaş, Barış, Direniş ve Türkiye ile İlişkiler*, 47.

Lebanon, provoked disturbance so as to unite the divided community against strengthening Maronites. By harmonizing all the components in Lebanon to execute the plan "Great Lebanese State" France made a tremendous effort to prevent a probable partition. Recognizing Shia as exclusive and independent entity smoothed the way of reaching an understanding with regime. Although Lebanon demanded and declared independence in 1941, France showed resistance until 1943. Eventually French siege in Lebanon were fully ended with withdrawal of troops in 1946.

Lebanese Shia's desire to be distinct from Sunna was on the rise under the French mandate and their autonomy was shaped not by a notion of value but French's sectarian way of divide and conquer. "During the 1920s and 1930s, Shi'i religious and political leaders continued to demand protection for Shi'i waqfs as distinct from Sunni charitable endowments and property in Lebanon".[39] To receive an approved identity whether to gain a political and economic power or to be a part of Lebanese multiculturism, Lebanese Shi'a has had to practice sectarianism in several ways after the independence of Lebanon, too.

2.1.1. The Naissance of Hezbollah: After the Independence & Lebanese Civil War

It can be safely claimed that the Lebanese independence can be counted as a phenomenon since it was one of the very rare moments when all the Lebanese entities stood together for the same mission: to end the French Mandate. After the independence, the French Mandate lost its ground to Lebanese well-established families. The Independence never offered a radical solution to the internal conflicts, neither did Khoury governance. The electoral system was already established on a sectarian order, but the emerging competition among the leading families within each sect crowned the habituated tension and catalyzed a malevolent transformation of Lebanese political society. Khoury's election

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[39] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism*, 139.

campaign had supported by the Sunni family Sulh, the Druze family Arsalan, the Shia family Hamadeh and the Maronite family Faranjieh, and it was refragated by the Druze family Jaumblatt, the Maronite family Gemayel and the Sunna family Ahdab.

Lebanese foreign policy pursued a friendly approach to the West during the presidency of Shamun between 1952-1958 who succeeded Khoury, and this was not welcomed by both the Druze and the Muslim block of Lebanon. While Kamal Jumblatt, who labored over the election of Shamun, was standing up for agrarian and labor law reforms at the national level, "the Sunna was demanding a promoted relations with Arab States and particularly with the rising Arab nationalism by Nasser".[40] However, approvement of the Eisenhower Doctrine by Shamun, which aimed at lending support to Arab States for the fear of the spread of Communism escalated the tension. Shamun's the alliance with the occupant power in Suez Crisis and the deployment of US troops in Lebanon triggered the internal power struggle and paved the way of First Lebanese Civil War.

The short bright era of Lebanese history falls upon the presidency of Chehab in 1958-1964. Under the presidency of Chehab, several political moves improved the internal integrity, and the political impasse was relatively resolved until the Arab-Israeli conflict gained momentum. Raising a harsh objection to sectarianism, he centered his policies on coexistence in which reforms actually laid the foundation of Modern Lebanese State. Lebanon became a hub for banking and international finance, constructions and investments raised the social welfare in Shia inhabited neighborhoods, Lebanese army was institutionalized extensively including the military education and confined within a certain border to emancipate politics from military pressure. He was succeeded by Charles Helou in 1963 who was of the same mind. Yet instability reappeared when 6 Days War broke out in 1967.

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[40] Tur & Ayhan, *Lübnan: Savaş, Barış, Direniş ve Türkiye ile İlişkiler*, 74.

After the independence of Lebanon, Lebanese Shia was mobilized by Sayyed Musa Al-Sadr to pursue the aim of improving the standard of living for the Shiite, who were suffering in deprivation and poverty, and territorial defense of southern Lebanon against Israel. He commanded the moderate social uprising from a single center which had a religious characteristic. He established the first Supreme Islamic Shia Council in 1967, whose members were Shia intelligentsia. Institutionalization of Lebanese Shia facilitated a united enlarged entity and brought political influence and gains. The Council paved the way of establishment of AMAL soon after.

Arab-Israeli conflicts have shaped the distribution of population starting from early 1970s in Lebanon. The fragile dynamics in Lebanon based on the population count was unbalanced by the rising Muslim population, which mainly caused by the migration of Palestinians. Along with the changing social and economic order, the demands of Muslims in the aspect of political representation came to surface, and inevitably, the power struggle ended up in the most violent way: a civil war in 1975. Lebanese Civil War resulted in a weaken state in which power was suspended and a political vacuum occurred. Uncertainty brought by a crisis offered an opportunity for political play and new formations. Many militant groups unfolded to spread region-wide and acquire a prevailing influence. Apart from that, the spatial distribution of the Lebanese Shia was also changed by the rising PLO activities in mainly southern Lebanon, which was hosting the Lebanese Shi'a for a long time. Israel conducted several operations in southern Lebanon to make an attempt to eradicate the PLO. Israeli attacks led to an internal migration and changed the spatial distribution of Lebanese Shia. On the other hand, Druze took arms against Lebanese government with the support of Christians, Muslims, and Syria. By 1984, the Lebanese army was completely dissipated, and the war continued for five more years. Taif Accords gave an end to the war in 1991 and ensured the dissolvement of all the militant groups and reestablished the Lebanese army in a non-sectarian order. However, Taif Accords bestowed a privilege on Hezbollah, and Hezbollah became the only militia group left disarmed to resist against Israel. A crucial triumph was

achieved, and Hezbollah asserted its military wing, which has remained legitimate and untouched till today.

After the Civil War, Hezbollah was thriven by a cleric, who migrated to southern Lebanon from Iran because the persecution performed by Iranian Shah regime and got married to a Lebanese. Musa Al-Sadr started a social mobilization called "*Harakat Al-Mahrumeen*" and assembled a militia group named "*Afwaj Al-Muqawama Al-Lubnaniya*" in 1975. AMAL was an umbrella organization in which both radicals and moderates co-existed. A rupture causing disunion among AMAL members occurred when Nebih Berri lent a hand to Lebanese government. In the wake of the protests, Hezbollah was brought into existence by separatist radical Shi'a members. The Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979 had also an influence over the widened schism between secular and radical Shiite. The tension and the power struggle to establish a hegemonic control in southern Lebanon between the Shia sides left its mark in the years of 1988 and 1989.

Overall, based on the historical records, it can be safely claimed that Lebanese Shia hadn't have a strong political power dating back to the establishment of the state compared to the Lebanese Maronites and the Druze and Sunna Rather the group acquired the power thanks to a skilled leadership and its political pragmatism from its establishment to today.

The main characteristics of liminal periods can be well observed in the case of Hezbollah since it was born into a period in which crises were reproduced ceaselessly during the Lebanese Civil War and Lebanese political structure was suspended. Since Lebanese State and its apparatus became dysfunctional, the hollowed out political arena was replaced by several militias. Liminality bore an efficient organizational domain for emergencies and a diffusion area in which they could thrive and continually make their presence perceived. Hezbollah's legitimate justification backed up well by its political manifest and was accepted by public in return. The "*Harakat al-Mahromeen*" evolved into a social movement, soon after got armed and created a small-scale structural change in

domestic politics of Lebanon. That can be given as an example to the other characteristic of liminality which can be observed in the case of Hezbollah: the capacity of political maneuvers that the entities can perform.

This short historic summary aimed to provide a general understanding of the group. How Hezbollah used the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon and Israeli unilateral withdrawal, and how Hezbollah benefitted to the Party of God in the frame of political pragmatism will be covered in the following parts of this chapter.

2.2. From Israeli Invasion of Lebanon To Its Unilateral Withdrawal

Palestine has been a theatre of war for more than a century. The sporadic but lasting conflict is based on the reclamation of land by two main actors: Israelis who predicate their occupation on historicity and reclaim the lands "they already historically own" and Palestinian Arabs who have become deprived of the land that they put down the roots for centuries. While Israelis institutionalized consistently even before they mass migrated to Palestine and then, established a state in Palestine, Palestinian Arabs failed to resist the occupation. Resistance against spreading Israeli invasion was performed by Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), founded in 1964, and with the increasing pressure, PLO had to leave for Jordan and Lebanon respectively to combat against the occupying power. Southern Lebanon became a military base for the PLO members to deploy and fight against Israel. PLO did not limit itself to the boundaries of southern Lebanon, rather, it spread across Lebanon, and the many refugee camps were created with the aim of sheltering a large number of refugees escaping the conflict.

In 1982, The Jewish state made the decision to cross the border and eradicate the existence of PLO in Lebanon and secure the Israelis. The so-called "Operation Peace for Galilee" led to an international indignation because of the nature of the conflict in which the confronting parties and their powers were asymmetric. The

objective for the operation was set to only 40 km reach from the border, however, when it was achieved, the operation underwent a change for further gains. Diminishing the Syrian influence in Lebanon and restructuring the Lebanese political system in favor of Maronite dominancy were added to the objectives by the Begin government. PLO was left alone on the face of Israeli uncontrolled aggression. Even the Muslim population wasn't eager to be directly involved. Syria revealed its unwillingness to intervene the conflict and signed an armistice with Israel. Ensuring Syrian refrainment, Israel advanced in its objectives and besieged Beirut. For almost two months, Beirut was heavily bombarded and devastated. As stated by Tessler, Israeli community was sure that "The cabinet itself, and to an extent even the prime minister Itzhak Begin, had been manipulated by Sharon."[41] With the siege of Beirut, the PLO banished from Lebanon, and the protection of Palestinians civilians was guaranteed by Israel. In addition to eliminating Syria and neutralizing the PLO bases, with the help of Israel, Maronite hegemony was recovered as well assigning Bashir Gemayel as the president, who was close to Israel, in 1982.

Israeli touch in Lebanon did not offer peace or serenity but trouble and blood. In 1982, the refugee camps Sabra and Shatila in Beirut were raided and shattered by the Phalange army under the observation of Israel. Thousands of civilians including women and children were killed although their protection was assured. International community showed a huge response to the massacre next day when the media footage leaked in the morning. Israel, which was alarmed to attract the attention on itself, launched an official investigation. The findings of Kahan Commission, formed to inquire the massacre, showed that "Israeli authorities permitted Phalange forces to enter Sabra and Shatila without giving proper consideration to the danger of a massacre, which, under the circumstances 'they were obligated to foresee as probable'." [42] The issue led to the resignation of Ariel Sharon, who was the defense minister then.

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[41] Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,* 578.

[42] Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,* 593.

Israeli occupation of Lebanon and its inhuman treatments created a triggering effect in establishment of Hezbollah. The tension between Muslims and Israel with the Israeli backed Phalangists escalated. The sectarian conflicts in addition to the inter-sect power struggles left its mark in Lebanese history, and every inch of the country was conflict-affected. The resolution to the internal conflict was brought with the Taif Accords which was signed in 1989.

Taif Accords did not introduce a new structure into the Lebanese system; on the contrary, it was a restatement of the previous sectarian political dynamics with some additional dimensions for the benefit of Muslims such as equal representation of Christians and Muslims. Additionally, with Taif Accords, Syrian existence in Lebanon was acknowledged and officially gave a rise to the close watch of Syria on Lebanese politics. On the other hand, Lebanese state was encouraged to recover from the "failed-state" position and rose out of chronic dysfunctionality of decades.

Taif Accords required the reestablishment of the national Lebanese army and achieved unity in disarmament of militant groups except Hezbollah. Israeli aggression in Lebanon, especially after the several cases of violation of human rights, frightened the Lebanese society. It can be safely claimed that having an armed force available whose objective was to protect the territorial integrity against an aggressor was somehow acceptable by most of the Lebanese. Therefore, Taif Accords legitimized Hezbollah with its armament, and allowed the group to pave the way of what makes to be Hezbollah today. It can be regarded as a turning point, one of lots, in history of Hezbollah.

Since it was a liminal period which was able to conceive many new formations and alternations, it was not easy to predict that Hezbollah would not only prevail in domestic politics but also become an undeniable regional non-state power which has been challenging the most sophisticated army, the Israeli army, in the region. Therefore, the Israeli occupation of Lebanon had a tremendous impact on Hezbollah's constitutive ideology from the very beginning since one of the

contributory elements of the liminality in Lebanon has been the Israeli intervention.

Lebanon witnessed the close combat between Hezbollah and Israeli army throughout the 1990s. Hezbollah's developing practices of defense war, combined with the Iranian and Syrian ammunition aid, accredited its potential and capabilities. Thus, it raised the hopes of its supporters, and even received silent consent from the non-supporters. What contributed to the Hezbollah's rising popularity was not Hezbollah's intended show of strength but Israeli persistent existence and aggression. Hezbollah leaned back on its very legitimate cause: a national resistance against the oppressor.

Since Taif Accords could only lead Israeli army off the central Lebanon, Israel deployed its army in southern Lebanon and this region remained under occupation for 18 years. The destruction and inconvenience caused by Israelis created a bond among Shia in which the rage fed the public sentiment as preponderant feeling. The occupation of southern Lebanon was quite important as it served for 18 years as Hezbollah's *raison d'etre*. Hezbollah shaped its narrative around the victimization, and some other subordinate motives such as injustice and humiliation during this period.

Hezbollah engorged itself on an anti- Zionist ideology in which the dynamics between the oppressed and the oppressor gave a reasonable context to maintain the conflict for both sides. According to Hezbollah's anti-Zionist ideology, the State of Israel was founded thanks to the Zionist expansionism, and every Israeli citizen shares the purpose of Israel's survival. With this way, Hezbollah rationalized its military activism against Israeli army and Israeli civilians. The group barely launched any operation out of Lebanese territories until 2000s as its objectives were set to watch the borders and provide security. Its military activism was kept limited in terms of operational zone, but the resistance was performed in diverse tactics and arms of offense. On the other hand, although Hezbollah militias were not trained enough to combat against a conventionally

trained state army before the Israeli invasion, they were brave enough to risk their lives for the sake of resistance. With the civil war experiences and repetitive small unit operations under the Israeli occupation, its fighters soon became trained enough to challenge the occupier. Kidnapping Israeli soldiers was not only ruining Israeli prestige and leaving it in awkward position against the Israeli society, which caused reaction inside, but it also strengthened the hand of Hezbollah in exchanging prisoners. It must be kept in mind that, in Jewish fundamentalism, there is a superiority attributed to Jews, and everything must be done for the sake of saving life of a Jew. Although committing suicide is strictly forbidden in Islam, suicide bombing was another tactic utilized by Hezbollah a bunch of times against Israeli soldiers, and it caused controversy and criticism for some. In some cases, suicide attacks are regarded as a part of "Taklif Shari", which is an unnegotiable request charged by the religious leader Hassan Nasrallah during critical junctures.

Hezbollah's survival between 1980s and 2000 directly depended on how it associated itself in the Lebanese context. This "defender" association was best showed through the counterattacks, which exceeded one thousand in number each year until 1990, and it doubled between 1990s and 2000.

Hezbollah's anti-Zionist ideology is also related to its anti-Imperialistic approach to the regional affairs. "Shared memory of humiliation and betrayal at the hands of the US and the West is the main reason for the rise of alliances (between Irani Syria and Hezbollah)."[43] The unfair treatments accumulated and gave a rise to anti-Imperialism, and a popularity for Hezbollah in return. Therefore, as stated by Karakoc, "those who have negative views about Israel and the United States are likely to hold positive attitude toward Hezbollah."[44]   "The Resistance

[43] Calcull, *Self-Determination at All Costs: Explaining the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah Axis*, 95.

[44] Karakoc, Ozcan, & Alkan Ozcan, *Beyond Identity: What explains Hezbollah's Popularity among non-Shia Lebanese*, 9.

Movement has treated US as the 'Great Satan' and the Zionist entity, which is Israel, in Palestine as 'Little Satan' ".[45]

Following the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the U.S. was increasingly involved in Lebanese politics. The U. S. should not be downgraded as only an external hegemon, as stated by Calcull, "The United State is an integral part of the power configuration of the region."[46] Therefore, the United States' unconditional and everlasting political, military and economic support for Israel has created many watersheds for Israeli progress as a regional power. Hezbollah's military operations against Western powers in Lebanon started in early 1980s.

 The U.S. Embassy was attacked by a suicide bomber in 1983, and almost 70 people were killed including Lebanese. The U.S. Marine barracks were also exploded on October 23, 1983, and 241 American service personnel were killed. French force was also targeted on the same day by Hezbollah, and 58 French military personnel were killed when a building was hit. With the ceaseless attacks, President Reagan ended the American peacekeeping force task in 1984 and American forces left Lebanon.

Although Hezbollah was on firm ground in the matter of treating the U.S. as an enemy, Hezbollah's reaction to U.S. foreign policy in the region was always well-calculated to incapacitate any probable direct targeting by the U.S. For instance, Although Hezbollah displayed its discontent about the invasion of Iraq by the U.S, the group did not declare jihad against the U.S.

Overall, the organization was evolving into a more powerful entity with its large-scale operations, and, on the other hand, it was transforming the Shia community into a more assertive and apparent one. While Hezbollah was waging an anti-

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[45] Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Program*, 117.

[46] Calcull, *Self-Determination at All Costs: Explaining the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah Axis*, 103.

imperialistic war against the U.S. and multinational forces, it also simultaneously combatting in the Israel front under the name of national resistance. Hezbollah's narrative of 'national resistance' would be deprived of its valid reasoning with an unexpected political move of Israel soon.

Israel withdrew its forces to southern Lebanon and deployed there for 18 years to create safe area to protect northern Israel from military activism of Hezbollah. It must be remembered that after the Taif Accords, there wasn't any paramilitary force of PLO that could jeopardize the Israeli safety. In addition, Southern Lebanese Army, commanded by Lahad, also undertook operations in a partnership with Israel, and committed itself to protect Israeli force from Hezbollah's increasing military actions. However, despite the subsidiary forces and active field involvement, Israel failed in its intelligence gathering activities and was not able to impede Hezbollah's attacks. The attacks were brushfire in nature, and always ended with causalities like in the case of Hezbollah's 1997 attack on Israeli navy in Sayda, in which 12 Israeli soldiers were killed. The increasing death toll was never welcomed by Israeli society, and the legitimacy of the occupation became invalid in the eyes of the Israelis day after day. Anti-occupation protests broke out in Israel. On the other hand, Israel had to budget for the war expenditures which hit record high in time. Therefore, "remaining forces in Lebanon was at the top of Israel's agenda".[47] In 1999 elections, the most important promise of Ehud Barak, who was a member of Labor party, "reaffirmed the campaign pledge to end Israel's long military presence in Lebanon and bring its soldiers back within a year". [48] Ehud Barak became the prime minister and declared the withdrawal as promised. The Israeli unilateral withdrawal ended the 18 years of occupation in southern Lebanon, and the control of the abandoned areas was seized by Hezbollah.

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[47] Tur & Ayhan, *Lübnan: Savaş, Barış, Direniş ve Türkiye ile İlişkiler*, 169.

[48] Naaz, *The 1999 Israeli Elections: A Watershed!* 818.

It can be safely claimed that the Israeli unilateral withdrawal crowned Hezbollah's national resistance and bestowed a victory to the group. At one point, the national defense was ultimately achieved and that must have been satisfying for the group, but the nature of the Resistance was so comprehensive that the repelled 'infidel' was still target even beyond border. The unilateral withdrawal took Hezbollah off guard, and Hezbollah had to change its military strategies since the enemy was no longer within its reach. Hezbollah had overmastered in abducting soldiers or sending suicide bombers to their bases over the 18 years of occupation by the time Israel disengaged its army from Lebanon. Now, its tactics were of no use unless the group crossed the border, which was quite adventurous and venturesome. Another problematic aspect of the withdrawal was that Hezbollah was left to twist in a liminal situation in which its raison d'etre was irrelevant to the context. Therefore, the resistance narrative had to be rearranged so that Hezbollah's legitimacy and its armament possession could be justified again. Otherwise, demand for disarmament of Hezbollah would have been inevitable like in the case of disarmament of other militia groups with the Taif Accords. Hezbollah had a hold on another dispute to sustain the perpetual conflict: the Sheba farms. IDF, Israeli Defense Force, only ended its occupation in southern Lebanon, and Hezbollah rechallenged Israel by claiming the fact that Israel should have returned the Sheba Farms since it belonged to Lebanon, and Hezbollah wouldn't stop until all Lebanese territories were reclaimed. Israel was never open to negotiation in this particular subject since Israel claimed Sheba Farms was invaded during 1967 War, and it belonged to Syria rather than Lebanon. Thanks to this rearranged narrative, Hezbollah reglorified its existence and found a new playground for its dynamic political maneuver. So, indeed, years between 2000 and 2006 witnessed the clashes for Sheba Farms between IDF and Hezbollah. Hezbollah broke a new ground and started cross-border raids to kidnap soldiers and sending fedayeen to infiltrate in Israel.

As it is seen, Hezbollah's political pragmatism gave it a room for flexibility in which there was always a chance to act and react according to changing domestic and regional circumstances without being trapped in stiff and brittle forms.

2.3. Participating In Lebanese Electoral System

Lebanon is a state in which sects created bunching of settlement for their communities. The whole state is divided into neighborhoods dominated by one sect or another, and city planning was unavoidably taken the shape of multi-sectarian Lebanese society. Likewise, Southern Lebanon mostly has been a home to Shia for centuries. Therefore, since there is a correlation between wars and deprivation, it can be claimed that Lebanese Shia has been the one struggled most compared to other sects because of the Israeli Occupation of Lebanon lasted for 18 years. Of course, Shia had been suffering from deprivation even before the Israeli Occupation as Civil Wars also caused destruction and ill-spending of financial sources especially for armament. Destruction of infrastructures, schools, hospitals, and other centers providing social services deprived locals from a wealthy life, and it ended up in less human development, less schooling, and poor quality of life. Radicalization can also be interpreted as a consequence of the mentioned deprivation. Another factor contributed to this comprehensive deprivation was the fact that Lebanese Shia was displaced many times to escape because of the repetitive, never-ending attacks.

Obviously, the relative deprivation, which struck the Lebanese Shia, contained within itself a room to claim its right to legal remedies. It started as a social movement but gained momentum soon in a time of war. As mentioned before, crises such as wars are full of opportunities in terms of creations since the boundaries are ambiguous because of the suspended political structures. Newly formed entities usually have an easy time of gathering reactive masses around their political rhetoric as solution is the most demanded need in time of a war. With a good leadership and influential mobilization, Musa Al-Sadr, leader of the *Afwaj Al-Muqawama Al-Lubnaniyye*, awakened the Shia from a social lassitude,

and channeled their rage into a meaningful activism, which reinforced their existence in return.

As mentioned in the previous part of the chapter, when radical Islamists disassociated themselves from AMAL, they reassembled under the name of Hezbollah, and paved the way of becoming a commissive military group. The group was allowed to keep its armament with Taif Accords, and Hezbollah began to rise as a domestic power.

Although Hezbollah achieved and acclaimed itself, another strategically rational decision was taken by the group: Hezbollah was now entering the Lebanese political system. That decision was a dilemma. It was not only problematic with regard to religion, but also for the good of Lebanon in the big picture. By participating in Lebanese political system, Hezbollah acknowledged the legitimacy of the parliament which consisted of non-Muslim members as well. According to the religious aspect of democracy, shared by some, Shura, the council, can only be comprised of Muslim members. Mawdudi believed that "All administrative matters and all questions about which no explicit injunction is to be found in the Shari'a are settled by the consensus of opinion among the Muslims." [49] However, in the Lebanese political system, whose almost half was spared for non-Muslims, Muslims are treated equally with non-Muslims. This compromise deserves attention since it would provide the group benefits and ensure its survival with increasing power.

On the other hand, it can be claimed that this political move was definitely pragmatic, and Hezbollah was pursuing more gains for some reasons. First, although Taif Accords allowed for the continuation of Hezbollah's armed force, it wasn't certain whether its armament would be welcomed by others in the future. What would happen in the case of a fully withdrawal of the occupier was obscure. In such a case, the one- dimensional existence, which was constructed

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[49] Esposito & Donohue, *Islam in Transition: Muslim perspectives*, 265.

only on a resistance, would have amounted to almost nothing. In fact, this is exactly what happened; Israel withdrew unilaterally from Lebanon in 2000, and Hezbollah kept functioning since it didn't rein itself into being only a military force. Second, having seats in the parliament would give an opportunity to Hezbollah to have a voice for Shia in addition to the other Shia party "Amal Movement" while making laws. This would strengthen the hand of Muslims against the Maronites. It must be also mentioned that while Hezbollah's "claimed" oppressor for the resistance was Israel outside Lebanon, political Maronism was what Hezbollah saw as an internal threat according to its ideology. Political Maronism was favored by Western powers in Lebanon for years, and many interferences were made for the sake of maintaining the Maronite supremacy. Therefore, participating in the Lebanese political system would offer Hezbollah another sphere of activism to withstand against Maronites without engaging in any armed conflict. Lastly, participating in Lebanese political system would at least assure several material sources spared for Lebanese Shia. The deprivation that catalyzed this social movement now could be handled by utilizing the state budget to reconstruct the infrastructure, hospitals, and schools. Although the social services have been performed by Hezbollah even from its emergence thanks to its own sources and funding, being represented in the parliament would shoulder a part of the burden Hezbollah had.

However, making the decision to participate in 1992 parliamentary election was not an ordinary development since, as I mentioned before, it was in contraction with the Islamic frame. Therefore, some reforming adjustments were to be taken. At this point, it must be remembered that Hezbollah constructed itself over the Shia Islam, in which Imamate, Jihad and Velayat al-Fakih were the main pillars. Velayat al-Fakih, as a solution-oriented theory developed by Ayatollah Khomeini, gave an authority to the religious leader to guide the believers in the way of imams. Hezbollah's long-declared commitment to Velayat al-Fakih opened the doors of a new path for its own history. Before announcing participation in elections, Hezbollah consulted this pragmatic political move to

Khomeini, and, with his approval, Hezbollah ended up in a democratic pluralistic system as a sectarian political party.

The starting point of Hezbollah showed tremendous changes with gaining a democratic value, which will be covered in detailed in the following pages. As a radical Islamist group, Hezbollah had a more intimidating course of action and different purposes at the outset. Hezbollah, as a radical movement, had had an expansionist Jihadist inclination. Since establishing an Islamic state, as might be expected, is the ultimate and the most desired objective of Islamic movements, Hezbollah also shared the value of an Islamic governance as the most valid and functional one. However, the group's aim conflicted with the reality of the Lebanese state as 25% of the population was Christian. On the other hand, it might not have been achievable for the group to unite the Muslims of Lebanon around the idea of an Islamic State because of the fact that Muslims were all divided into sects and each sect was represented by several parties, and also some had secular ideologies. This unignorable reality led Hezbollah to revise its political aims. The "Open Letter" was released by Hezbollah in 1985, and it showed very clearly the altered direction of state:

> (We) permit all the sons of our people to determine their future and to choose in all the liberty the form of government they desire. We call upon all of them to pick the option of Islamic government which, alone, is capable of guaranteeing justice and liberty for all. Only an Islamic regime can stop any further tentative attempts of imperialistic infiltration into our country. … We don't want to impose Islam upon anybody, as much as we that others impose upon us their convictions and their political systems. We don't want Islam to reign in Lebanon by force as is the case with the Maronites today.

Hezbollah's survival, as it is seen in the above quote, takes its roots from a constant development and alteration. From a Jihadist radical movement to being a part of a democratic body, the group has gone through many shifts, which were all offered by its liminality. Hezbollah's adaptation skill and survival drive urged it to pursue pragmatic politics, and those well-calculated moves, like in the case of retreating from idea of Islamic State, prevented it to face disappearance; on

the contrary, the group grew stronger by acquiring immense influence both in domestic and regional politics.

1992 general elections provided a broad and sophisticated perspective to Hezbollah to secure itself.

1992 election campaign run by Hezbollah was comprehensive enough to reflect nationalistic values, and therefore, Hezbollah from now own, asserted very clearly that it headed to claim responsibility for the whole state rather than limiting itself in a sectarian course. After that "policy devices used by Hezbollah have enabled their leaders to manipulate normative rules in a pragmatic fashion."[50] Such pragmatic campaign ran by Hezbollah definitely showed that Hezbollah had the pragmatic capacity long before it reached a certain level of political power. On the other hand, the pragmatic capabilities were performed in the form of compromises through political negotiations, which were considered well by the group since they were quite convinced for sacrificing to some extent to acquire more power in the election. The Party of God assumed a negotiable and responsible manner by moderating its objectives to reach domestic political goals. "Infitah", which means a democratic initiative or insight, refers to the compromises of Hezbollah such as acknowledging the pluralistic Lebanese system as a national value and being a supporting part of it. Hezbollah established dialogues across the other sects, which shows that their door was open to each element of this "Lebanese Mosaic", and they were also willing to discuss the delicate issues of the state by sharing the same concerns.

Another example to the "*Infitah*" was nominating non-Muslim candidates. That was the ultimate point of political pragmatism that Hezbollah could reach, as a radical Islamic party. Fadlallah, who could be regarded as a religious spirit or guider of Hezbollah although he has never acknowledged a direct responsibility for the group, supported the initiative, and he stated one of his speeches in 1997

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[50] Dagher, *Hamas and Hezbollah: Between Ideology and Political Pragmatism.*

that "they carried on a dialogue with Christians without imposing any belief and without any prior conditions."[51] After the approval of the senior clerics, nominating non-Christian candidates idea was also embraced by the Muslim supporters of Hezbollah by taking the possible political gains into consideration. That successful but controversial decision could be interpreted as ceasing or repressing the sectarian tendance of Hezbollah for a certain context and time. On the other hand, this pragmatic move would ensure the dissolution of a possible Christian unity against Hezbollah, which could be regarded as a tool for the resistance against Political Maronism. Possibly, it would avert a possible Israeli reinforcement for a Christian party, like it was during the Israeli Occupation of Lebanon. Another outcome of nominating a Christian Candidate was the exculpation it would provide to the group in the eyes of international community. Since Hezbollah was blamed to be an Islamic radical terrorist organization by Western powers and Israel, the Christian candidates of Hezbollah somewhat invalidated these accusations of them. In 1992 elections, Hezbollah won eight seats out of 128, in a coalition with other different sects.

In 1998, Hezbollah participated in municipal elections for the first time, and it was an opportunity for Hezbollah to both reveal its local power in micro level such as villages and towns and receive a recompense for its state-like social services that it had been providing for years to Shia neighborhoods. In its electoral campaign, there were no hyped political promises in large scale, rather, it directed its focus on the drawbacks in locality, and the group linked the solution for the radical problems in local government to its designation for mayorships. Hezbollah was well-known for its non-commissioned but practical subnational administrations, and it excelled at efficient allocation of resources according to the need of the inhabitants. Therefore, Hezbollah didn't restrict itself with Shia neighborhoods, wisely, it expanded to the non-Muslim peripheries as well since it had already provided such social services in those neighborhoods. "Hezbollah collaborated with Maronite representatives so as to

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[51] Dagher, *Hamas and Hezbollah: Between Ideology and Political Pragmatism.*

ensure a safe return of the Christians to Harat Hreik, a district in which a number of Christians were displaced during the civil war."[52] As it is seen, Hezbollah once again suspended its sectarian incentive for the sake of its political interest.

Hezbollah also didn't hesitate to join the coalitions which contained non-Muslim characteristics, and, it is worthy of commendation, the group carried out what it took to be a political party without falling to the trap of a political isolation caused by sternness. "Hezbollah deputies behaved responsively and cooperatively, and they have often built political alliances in the parliament on pragmatic grounds."[53] In 1999, Hezbollah formed a coalition with left wing parties such as the Communist Party.

During its democratic journey, some political developments have forced the group to change and readopt its agenda, and political objectives. For instance, Israeli unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, which was mentioned in detail in the previous part, created a gap in causality principle in resistance since it was one of the promises covered in election manifest of Hezbollah. Another political development that outmaneuvered Hezbollah was Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005 following the assassination of the Rafiq Hariri. Syria had a tremendous influence on Lebanese politics since the Taif Accords, and it was an unreplaceable ally of Hezbollah since Syria was guiding the legislative processes for the good of the Party of God. Syrian's influence on Lebanese politics will be covered in detail in the third chapter.

On the other hand, a political solidarity between Hezbollah and Free Patriotic Movement has been sustained since 2005, which emancipated Hezbollah from losing its power after the Syrian withdrawal. "The alliance between Hezbollah and Aoun's party was effective in terms of their political influence in the Lebanese system since they were able to dictate certain conditions to the

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[52] Coporale, *Janus-faced: the waving identity of Hezbollah among Iran, Syria and "Lebanonisation"*, 13.

[53] Norton, *Hezbollah: From Radicalism to Pragmatism,* 156.

government."[54] This has been a profitable political cooperation since "Hezbollah has become over time one of the most important political actors in Lebanon holding a large parliamentary bloc of no less than 10 deputies since the first post-Civil War legislative elections in 1992, and a minimum of two ministers in every Lebanese government since 2005". [55]

Overall, Hezbollah has left behind 30 years of political participation in Lebanese system, and the Party of God now is a notified body of the Lebanese legislative system since its legitimacy has been approved irrecusably by being elected democratically during this period. What must be mentioned in this context is that Hezbollah has been insisting on ascending to eminence steadily in domestic politics by following a moderate and relatively peaceful political stance despite its capacity and overwhelming odds against its political inclusion. It must be remembered that Hezbollah's military capacity, as a non-state actor, has been surpassing not only the one Lebanese State has but also other domestic actors that are possible to form armed forces. Nasrallah's words in a speech he gave in 2006 testifies to this argument:

> Hezbollah with its huge military capabilities and the result of its allies, who were and still are forgeted, could have staged a military coup and taken the control of the country. Could we not?[56]

Although Hezbollah has made its military capacity felt from time to time when a crisis has taken place because of the unnegotiable issues, it is obvious that the strategic moves have always been measured well not to lead to another civil war but to deter its opponents from taking an action against its interest. The case of 2008-airport and telecommunication network crisis can be given as an example to Hezbollah's rare-seen power shows.

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[54] Karakoc, Ozcan, & Alkan Ozcan, *Beyond Identity: What explains Hezbollah's Popularity among non-Shia Lebanese*, 12.

[55] Daher, *Hezbollah, Neoliberalism and Political Economy*, 1.

[56] Farida, *A Casuistic explanation to Hizbullah's realpolitik: Interpreting the re-interpreted.* 169.

Another internal crisis in which Hezbollah's political pragmatism and rare-seen power show can be observed clearly is the revolution attempt in 2019. This political development will be analyzed in the following part.

2.4. The Unfinished Revolution: October 2019

Lebanese economic crisis has been grappling with political impasse since the start of Civil War of 1975, and the post-Civil War governments have failed to conceive profound policy adjustments to reinvigorate the economy. The post war economy's pillars have been constructed in favor of the political elites' interests, and the middle and lower classes have been carrying the burden of the worsening economy. "Nearly 80 percent of Lebanon's population lives under the poverty line". [57] The fragile and unstable Lebanese economy has been caught off-guard by some political developments and mismanagements at regular intervals in post-war period such as the assassination of Rafiq Hariri, which instigated an uprising against Syrian presence and influence in Lebanon, Arab Spring, which gave a rise to a mass migration of Syrians to Lebanon for shelter, and sanctions implemented on Hezbollah by the US, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia because of Hezbollah's involvement in Syrian Civil War. On the other hand, the high level of systemic corruption done by the political elite also contributed to the buildup of financial crisis since they had been benefitting the system in which they successfully wriggled themselves out of accountability and transparency for years.

There have been some initiatives lending a helping hand, but they have been all conditional for awaited reforms. For instance, "$11 billion was pledged to Lebanon to boost Lebanon's economy in 2018" [58] and it wasn't provided since the State encountered a political gridlock.

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[57] Human Rights Watch, *Lebanon.*

[58] Amnesty, *Lebanon's October 2019 Protests Weren't Just about the 'Whatsapp Tax'.*

The declaration of economic state of emergency by the Prime Minister Saad Hariri in 2019 did not provide benefits. The rate of unemployment, rising inflation, depreciation of Lebanese lira, 3-hour power cuts, water outage, limited municipal services especially trash collecting which caused another crisis in 2015, food shortage and inaccessible medicines all accumulated in Lebanese despair. In such an atmosphere, the combat against the budget deficit was intended to be done by tax boost. The telecommunication service is provided by only two companies in Lebanon, and the uncompetitive nature of companies make use of the necessity of public by maximizing the prices for communication. Therefore, Lebanese mostly use free charged communication applications which only consume internet. In 2019, a taxation including charging WhatsApp was announced by Ministry of Information and brewed up the tension the public had been carrying for a long time. Protestors took to the streets to show their displeasure without being organized at first, and the Unfinished Revolution of Lebanon started. The masses flocked to the squares in the capital of Lebanon, Beirut, and then, the protests spread to each corner of the country from Nabattiyye in the south to the Tripoli in the north. It astonished the world since the Cedar Revolution was the last time when masses were on the streets, and most importantly, the masses were not guided and commanded by any party. People were sick and tired of being belittled and were reclaiming their dignity. They chanted with a single voice which was about a shared feeling: "*Khalas*!" (enough). Soon later, it was requested not to bring any kind of party flags to prevent the divisions and avoid shaping into a sectarian and partisan way. The only flag could be seen waving in the hands of the Lebanese or hanging on the street-lighting poles was the official Lebanese flag. Demands of the protestors were somehow shared by all until a moment. They claimed the change of economic ruling class and end of the sectarian political system by replacing the traditional political powers with a renewed political structure. Apart from these, basic human rights such as right of education and health, and equal citizenship were also reclaimed by protestors.

During the first days of protests, cancellation of tax was announced by the Minister of Communication. However, protests apparently were not intended for a withdrawal but radical changes for radical problems. Noticing the determination of the protestors after their rejection for abandoning the streets, Prime Minister Saad Hariri persisted in negotiations. His calls were not reciprocated with reconciliatory attitude by protestors and protests continued with intensified resistance and civil disobedience. Protestors were furious and demanded resignation of politicians.

They stormed around the state buildings and banks were shut down. The uniformity of the uprising soon decomposed, and clashes among supporters of different parties started to be observed. Some of the representative offices of the political parties turned into a target such as Hezbollah, Free Patriotic Movement and Amal Movement. Spread of the violence caused education, transportation and health services to suspend. Resignations of four ministers of Lebanese Force Party formed a ray of hope for protestors, and this led them not to leave streets by espousing the civil resistance faithfully. However, the provocations and instigations withheld the peaceful rally, and thugs soon became visible on the streets attacking the tents and stands of protestors. By attacking on those who blocked the roads to airport and statehouse, and wheeling around the bus station El-Cola, thugs played to the audience to scare the protestors for performing over the line. The clash of sides didn't cease, and the army made its appearance on the streets by shouting at the first martyr of the 2019 protest. Although some right minded exerted great effort to maintain the unity and solidarity, such as forming a 170 km long human chain binding the northern city Tripoli to the southern city Tyre, division overshadowed the uprising and impeded the potential gaining.

The reactions and ensuing attitude of the political forces to the revolt were diverse and precarious to some extent. While some political parties opted for a moderate policy while pursuing their strategic interest, others demonstrated harsh and strict opposition to the demands of uprising either in a direct way or with a covert and clandestine nature. Having high hopes of some political gains

later, Future Movement abstained from luculent discourse and factored in the grievances of the protestors in their speeches and counteracted with resignations. Although the Islamic Group (*Al Jama'ah aş-Islamiyye*) did not have an official political representation in the parliament, it was one of the effective collectives cooperating and functioning in the social movement. "The social base of the group and its members participated in the popular movements in all regions of Lebanon, with varying degrees of presence, whether as part of larger Lebanese society or in their personal capacity".[59] On the other hand, despite acknowledging the complaints and demands of the protestors in his speech, the President Michel Aoun and his party the Free Patriotic Movement eschewed confrontations and confined themselves into the current status-quo by reposing hope in the preservation of the traditional political structure. Taking side with formers, Nabih Berri, the leader of Amal Movement, which is an ally of Hezbollah, was also an abstainer when chants of protests pointed the finger to him. He, described as the "quintessential crooked Lebanese political dinosaur" by Bitar [60], will be reelected later as parliament speaker for the seventh time consecutively by holding this position from 1992 to today. Hezbollah has been met on the common ground with some of demands of the protestors in hits election manifesto since its first participation in the Lebanese electoral system. Corruption and extricating the state from the financial crisis have been mentioned several times both in the speeches of the secretary general Hassan Nasrallah and the election programs of local and general elections. The group's firm stance against the refuting internal matters has attributed to its alleged inbuilt nationalization. However, the group, contrary to the common purpose, considered the matter from a complex angle.

Hezbollah was demanded to lend countenance to the uprising by its own partisans and received criticism for its hesitation and tardiness to respond the social mobilization. It was observed that the insurrection spread to the Shiite

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[59] Choucair, *The Islamic Group and Lebanon's popular Uprising.*

[60] Escalonilla, *Nabih Berri, symbol of sectarian power-sharing in Lebanon.*

dominant neighborhoods too before being intervened by authority, such as Nabatiyye, Beqaa, Sidon and Tyre. The uprising, which is, in its nature, open to evolve and gain diverse values each day it survives, transformed into a more complicated and untenable movement in ideological terms soon later. The unexpected crisis caught Hezbollah unprepared, and the speech-acts of Hezbollah which is usually threat-oriented, thus, had to be well calculated as misguided policies were able to bear unwanted consequences. Those consequences ranged from serious outcomes such as a civil war having caused by provoked sectarian strife to a more small-scale impact in which Hezbollah would have fallen from grace and lost its popularity. The civil war scenario would have counted against the group if it had been forced to combat despite its undefeatable military capability compared to other possibly armed groups. Also, all its legitimate and democratic achievements to date would have been ruined. On the other hand, losing its popularity would have put the group into a tight corner in which Hezbollah would be overwhelmed by the dominant aggression of other parties and would compromise some of its *sine qua non*.

All aside, Hezbollah could have provided a complete support to the protest, as the last possible case which would have been in favor of protestors but at Hezbollah's expense. However, that act would have brought the end of the Hezbollah since one of the demands of the protestors was the disarmament of the group. To survive and maintain its existence, Hezbollah succeeded to stand in balance admirably while performing on both sides of the conflict. While the top-level figures in Hezbollah mostly used a cautionary and solemn rhetoric with elaborative explanations based on reasoning, the local figures tend to share the cry of protestors without being involved directly. Those tactical two-dimensional reactions unbraced slightly the de facto accusation of Hezbollah for being counterrevolutionary. It also strengthened the hand of Hezbollah by providing a wide field for political maneuvers during the liminal period whose aftermath was unpredictable.

The first days of protests witnessed Shia participation in the protests until the Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah broke the silence with his long-waited speech. His speech had a relatively moderate tone showing respect to the protestors. He expressed that Hezbollah respected and appreciated, and more than that they understood the protestors and applauded what they have done and the excellent results they achieved. In his first speech, Nasrallah, rationalized the decision of not participating in the protests with the fact that Hezbollah's involvement in the movement would make it take another course by acquiring a political dimension linked to regional issues, regional conflicts, and the likes.[61] He acknowledged the power of the protests with these words:

> …You can take to the street because you do not belong to any particular side, and are a variety of popular bodies. You can stay for a day, two, three, a week. Whether you fulfilled all your objectives or some of them, you can leave whenever you please…

On 25th October, "Hezbollah's media officials had called on their supporters to leave the streets to wait for Nasrallah's speech, which began around 4 p.m."[62] Hassan Nasrallah gave his second speech whose narrative discourse was reshaped by the changing atmosphere in Lebanon. It was weightier with sense and contained warnings and concerns about the future of the uprising. The seditious explanations evoked the counter-revolutionary activity among its partisans, and right after the speech, supporters of Hezbollah and Amal poured into the streets with party's flags in their hands. Aggression continued on 29th October too as the partisans of the Shi'i duo Hezbollah and Amal Movement stormed at the areas of protest in central Beirut, leveled the tents and counters which were positioned in certain areas to regulate the mobilization and supply the needs such as water, food and free therapy sessions.

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[61] Alahed News, *Sayyed Nasrallah's Full Speech on Recent Developments Regarding Lebanon Protests.*

[62] France24, *Hezbollah leader rejects calls for Lebanese govt to resign, warns of 'chaos and collapse'.*

Nasrallah's agenda in his second speech included mainly warnings against intention of protests, funding assertions, and a possible civil war notice. Nasrallah changed his previous opinion about how he defined the protests, and he grounded it on a malign basis this time. At first, he stated that he found the popular movement sincere and spontaneous since it transcended sects and regions by not being subjugated to any party. However, his second speech directly served as a warning against taking part in the protest since, according to him, the protests turned out to be a setup made by Israel and the US. He blamed the US embassy for funding the protests to guide it in favor of its interest, and gave both his supporters and the protestors a sudden fright by implying an upcoming civil war case in Lebanon:

> …I want to warn. This happened in other countries (civil war). God willing, this is not being planned for in Lebanon. At the very least, I would like to tell the people to be aware that it might be a possibility…Don't believe what the embassies say. Today the American ambassador and the embassies say no, we don't want the overthrow of the government or for it to resign. What they say is not important. What they do is what is important… What is important is what the CIA and the intelligence agencies are doing…

Another turnabout can be observed in the subject of road blockings. Since the protestors didn't allow circulation in the roads going to the state buildings and the airport, supporters of Hezbollah clashed with the protestors to reopen the roads. Their actions were in line with Nasrallah's speech since he claimed the road blockings prevented people to go to work and earn a living for their families. The reasoning must be analyzed well since Hezbollah has blocked the roads in the capital several times in its history to achieve its aims. In 2008, Hezbollah supporters blocked the roads and airport was closed when the group was blamed to install surveillance cameras around the airport, and a communication network owned by Hezbollah was being investigated by the government.

On the one hand, Hassan Nasrallah strongly emphasized that Hezbollah had a common ground with the protestors, and shared the claim with the protestors that the politicians were corrupted by saying the following:

> …You are introducing yourselves as an alternative and that you don't want to take the country into a vacuum, tell the people how much money you have…Tell the people where you got that money from. This is how we offer a decent alternative to which people pin their hopes on and their aspirations are fulfilled…

, and he made it clear that if protestors wanted to topple the regime and bring an end to political sectarianism, Hezbollah would be the first standing with protesters. However, on the other hand, Nasrallah firmly objected to the resignation of the cabinet as well. Nasrallah's bidirectional speeches can be attributed to the fear of being on the wrong side since "Nasrallah was also scared by the political gain which may be achieved by the Lebanese Forces and the Progressive Socialist Party if the government resigned".[63] Protestors made no concessions about excluding Hezbollah, and they hang a halter around the neck of a Nasrallah poster. They were chanting "All of them means all of them, Nasrallah is one of them." The courage of the protestors was remarkable since the political oppression before the uprising wouldn't have allowed such a bold action. Nasrallah uttered his discontent by stating that he wished the demonstrators who shared the brotherly position would avoid insults and cursing.

The 2019 Uprising ended with the resignation and suspension of political career of the Prime Minister Saad Hariri after two weeks of protests on 29th October, and Hassan Diab, an academic, was appointed as the new prime minister to form a government. The next technocratic cabinet, as expectedly, was formed under the shadow of Hezbollah, and was blamed to be "one colored" by protestors. Protestors were not satisfied with the new appointment since Hassan Diab was also claimed to preserving the old corrupted political system.

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[63] Safieddine, *Hezbollah and Lebanon's 2019 Revolution*.

The Lebanese state has been exposed to some unfortunate incidents in the following years. A warehouse in port in which a huge amount of ammonium nitrate was stored improperly exploded in 2020. The port was situated near a commercial and a residential area, and it was totally devastated by the explosion since it was one of the most damaging explosions in recent history. The devastating blast killed 285 people and injured thousands of people, and the reason of the explosion is still unknown. Speculations over the blast disrealized the truth lying behind the blast. Some claims put Hezbollah at the target while others point the finger to the foreign powers such as Israel. The disaster ended the Diab's cabinet, which was forced to combat the financial crisis after years of neglect.

In the following year, the wildfire caused by high temperatures hit Lebanon. It sparked the Lebanese's rage since the state was caught unaware again without any cautions and was unable to take the fires under control because of lack of tools. With the help of Cyprus by sending fire helicopters and public support, Lebanon combatted the wildfires. Since 2019, protests in Lebanon have been observed occasionally when a political or social development creates a rupture and triggers a social mobilization.

2.5. Conclusion

As it is seen, the balance held between Hezbollah's strategic interest and its ideology has been serving for its political pragmatism for its 40 years of history. Even though Hezbollah is not an actor that could be relegated easily in the near future, the precautious nature of the group has led it to consider every probability in this permanent liminal context to maintain its survival. By reregulating the speech acts and securitization of other territories, Hezbollah was able to bring a new dimension into its "resistance" narrative and rationalized its existence. Besides, political participation has provided Hezbollah a legitimacy shield since it carries a democratic value. The rationale behind the insistency to stay in democratic sphere can be also attributed to the Hezbollah's ongoing needs of

recognition since sanctions are still being applied by Western powers because of its arms possession and its regional politics. Lastly, since it cannot be clearly foreseen how a change in Lebanese political structure would affect the status of Hezbollah, Hezbollah hasn't been able to maintain its support for 2019 Uprising in the fight against sectarianism, corruption and so on.

CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL PRAGMATISM OF HEZBOLLAH AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

Hezbollah, as a non-state organization, hasn't constrained itself only as a domestic actor, rather it has enhanced and become a deterrent force whose influence can be observed in the regional politics. Hezbollah's rising power brought along far-reaching political interests. Therefore, Hezbollah has been in need for pursuing political pragmatism at the regional level to be able to voice authoritatively. To endure the challenges at the regional dynamics, Hezbollah established yielding alliances with Syria and Iran. The nature of this alliance and the impact of each ally on the development of Hezbollah will be analyzed separately in the following parts of the chapter.

3.1. Relations with Iran

Hezbollah's affiliation with Iran had been analyzed as being a proxy by many scholars including Byman and Olsen until very recently. To understand the relation of Hezbollah and Iran today, untreading their engagement must be done thoroughly not to fall into misanalysis. In this part of the chapter, the alliance between Hezbollah and Iran will be analyzed under two main questions: "How did the alliance start?" and "How does this alliance benefit Hezbollah?".

The relations of Lebanese Shia and Iran started a way much earlier than the establishment of Hezbollah. Although establishment of Hezbollah is sometimes attributed wholly to Iran mistakenly, it is a fact that the leader of the Shia organization of AMAL, which was the core institution of Lebanese Shia, was of

Iranian in origin. To approach this very controversial topic objectively, sides must be analyzed in their own exclusive trajectories.

Sayyid Musa al-Sadr was an Iranian Shi cleric who came to Lebanon in the 1950s, and he involved in Lebanese social and political sphere. Since he came from a known family, he did not have trouble in becoming a leading figure in his new surroundings. He was chosen as the leader of the Supreme Council of Shia, which can be regarded as the very early steps of political mobilization of Shia in Lebanon. The 1960s and 1970s witnessed his prominent efforts to politicize the Shia community and reserve a place for them in a to-be fair and equal political system. Musa al-Sadr was politically active and in interaction with the leaders of the regional powers. In one of the trips to Libya with his companions to meet Qaddafi in person, they disappeared. It was claimed that Qaddafi shared his intentions to establish a political rapport with the Iranian Shah, who was quite hostile towards Khomeini, and he started a heated debate. After the killing of Qaddafi during the Arab Spring, the disappearance of Sadr was enlightened by the confessors of the old regime that, as claimed by the Turkish official news outlet AA, "Sadr and his companions were brutally killed in the presence of Qaddafi."[64]

The disappearance of Sadr and the speculations were of importance and related to a shared belief of the Iran-Hezbollah alliance. Hezbollah's ideology is based on the Shia Islam, and it reposes on three main components: Imamate, Jihad and Wilayat al-faqih, which enhanced the alliance since they are shared by Iran as well. According to the belief of the Imamate in Twelver Shiism, after the death of prophet Mohammad, the Twelve Imams were in charge of guiding the believers in the light of the Islam. The twelfth Imam disappeared and has been long waited to return by the Shia. Wisely, the leading Shia clerics have made an analogy between the Twelfth Imam and al-Sadr to create a narrative for years that could consolidate the faithfulness of the Shia community and the guidance

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[64] Anadolu Agency- Akman, *Şiilerin Kayıp Lideri Musa Sadr.*

of the religious leaders in the meantime. After overthrowing the Qaddafi regime, Libya officially claimed responsibility for the killing of al-Sadr in 2014 and charged Qaddafi with the crime. After revealing of the truth about the disappearance of Sadr, it is noteworthy that AMAL continued to have suspicions about Sadr's death since the previous narrative was benefiting the party. AMAL rejected to believe the result of the investigation by claiming that Sadr's grave hasn't been found yet while Hezbollah accepted the findings of the investigations conducted by Libya outright.

As another component of the shared ideology of the alliance, "Wilayat al-faqih" is closely related to the belief of Imamate. Wilayat- al-faqih is a theory established by Khomeini and adopted by Hezbollah. According to Wilayat al-faqih, when the twelfth Imam returns from the disappearance, he is believed to found an Islamic state. Until he comes and takes over the power, a convenient order must be created in the light of Islam. Therefore, in the absence of the Imam, Khomeini assumed his mission of leadership of the Shias. Hezbollah acknowledged this leadership and latched onto it. Although Hezbollah has been accused of being in the service of Iran by the Lebanese parties, the Secretary General Nasrallah has never hesitated to explicitly utter their ideological dependence on Iran.

The last pillar of the shared religious ideology is the "Jihad". Jihad is to be performed against anti-Islamists. Both Iran and Hezbollah have had an accumulation of humiliation for years because of the interventionalist policies of Western actors. The religious activism of Iran and Hezbollah against the U.S. was the consequence of the rejection of what they see as the hierarchical imperial order that was deemed suitable for the Middle East. The struggle has been performed in both in intellectual labor as propaganda and in military field. Israel has also been targeted by the Jihadist ideology since it has been seen as the extent of the U.S in the region. In other respects, "Washington's regional collaborators launched a regional campaign to stigmatize and securitize the 'Axis

of Resistance".[65] As both Hezbollah and Iran have been threatened by these two states, protective and pragmatic policies have been adopted of necessity by them. National security has become their prior concern. A shared military intelligence as a bilateral contract, in this respect, may have decreased this alliance's vulnerability.

On the other hand, the liberation of Palestine is one of the shared cohesive objectives related to the Jihad against the infidels, and martyrdom for the sake of the divine resistance, in this case, has been used by the alliance as a tool to extol the dearly won struggle in the eyes of the Shia community to recruit fighters and expand the scope of the believers.

The alliance also offers an alternative order to the Western-dominated one in the region. The jihad serves the purpose of Pan-Islamism. Although the idea of importing the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran to Lebanon allured the group at first, Hezbollah soon renounced the idea of establishing an Islamic order in Lebanon.

Overall, although Hezbollah is able to adopt a policy of a moderate Islamic tendency compared to Iran, it skillfully utilizes the religious nuances by instrumentalizing the Shiism. The political-religious maneuvers are being done in a way in which either it is presented as an emergency response, or it is shown as in accordance with the religion by creating a necessity in a religious realm. The group has created a religious network and re-narrates it each time when necessary, according to the return expectations. The religious network does not only destine itself for being involved in the domestic affairs to response and make its existence be felt, but it also functions as a stimulator that is able to mobilize and politicize the Shia community. It is significant as the religious tools enables Hezbollah to enlarge its popularity among Shias and raise its political

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[65] Calculli, *Self-Determination at All Costs: Explaining the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah Axis,"Annals of the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi. An Interdisciplinary Journal of Economics, History and Political Science*, 112.

power by staying still in the democratic sphere. As a result, the main doctrine of the alliance takes its power from religious fundamental principles.

However, the dimension of the alliance is a controversial topic in the literature since there have been many diverse analyses of the dynamics between Hezbollah and Iran. Although 1979 Iranian Revolution had tremendous impact on the mobilization of Lebanese Shia since it became a social ideal for the Lebanese community, emergence of Hezbollah cannot be brought down to the claim of an Iranian creation. It is noteworthy that the social mobilization of the Lebanese Shia had started quite before the Iranian Islamic Revolution, and as argued by Amal Saad, "The historic relationship was set in motion by religious influence spreading from Lebanese Shia to Iran, rather than the convert."[66] On the other hand, the answer for the question "whether Hezbollah would have been what it is now if Israel hadn't occupied Lebanon in 1982" can be asserted as another counterargument to refute the "proxy claim". As Israeli invasion of Lebanon became a catalyzer for the immense politization of the Lebanese Shia, Hezbollah might not have achieved the popularity and power. Another strong argument against the "proxy claim" is the Hezbollah's implementation of an autonomous policy. For instance, although Hezbollah received consultancy from Iran over its decision to enter the Lebanese electoral system, the group did not demand a close guidance for succeeding in the elections. Contrary to the expectations, Hezbollah pursued an independent course blended with domestic motive with regard to its electoral campaign, candidates and electoral strategies without abiding by Iran. Equally importantly, Hezbollah has been also claimed to have persuaded and encouraged Iran to involve in Syrian Civil War. In a proxy relationship, which shows asymmetrical power characteristic, it is expected from the dominating one to influence the less powerful one rather than the reverse.

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[66] Saad- Ghorayeb, *Challenging The Sponsor -Proxy Model: The Iran -Hizbullah Relationship*, 630.

Hence, "the Janus-faced profile of the party of God is more than a simple proxy for Iranian and Syrian interest".[67]

Considering all these, it can be concluded that, as indicated by Nasrallah, "They received moral, and political and material support in all possible forms from the Islamic Republic of Iran since 1982, and Iran had not issued orders to Hezbollah since the movement was founded 30 years ago".[68]

The nature of the alliance must also be analyzed to understand the rationale behind the unending consociation since alliances between a state and a non-state actor are observed to remain as a short-term profitable relationship throughout the history unlike the case of Hezbollah and Iran. The cultural unity in this alliance, in which religion and the religious practices shaped the main collective behaviors, may help to explain its sustainability. For instance, marriages between the Iranians and the Lebanese Shias may have worked as an effective strategy to maintain the shared cultural transmission and reproduction. Having no separate interest has promoted a unity and prolonged the cooperation as well. Otherwise, in case of conflicting interests, Hezbollah and Iran would have had self-centered decision-making mechanisms leading diversified trajectories. The principle of transparency, additionally, is a joint approach of the sides in terms of political aims and military capacities, and it paves the way for planning a common defense policy successfully despite the regional obstacles. The degree of the commitment to the fundamental principles of the alliance has created an authentic trust, which helps it survive to operate. The occasional emergence of the regional crisis also gives rise to mutual interest, therefore, holds the cooperation and coordination alive. Lastly, the autonomy that Hezbollah practices in its domestic policies has been acknowledged and respected by Iran and, in return, it reinforces the high fidelity. For instance, although Hezbollah has been receiving the financial aid from Iran, the expenditures of the group

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[67] Coporale, *Janus-faced: the waving identity of Hezbollah among Iran, Syria and "Lebanonisation"*, 15.

[68] Bassam, *Hezbollah says gets support, not orders, from Iran.*

aren't arranged by obeying Iran's a certain spending policy, and the expenses are not being audited by Iran. A part of the resources funded by Iran has been expended for the purpose of social services such as opening schools, district hospitals, reconstruction of the public spaces after the wars especially in Shia dominated neighborhoods of Lebanon. It must be pointed out that Hezbollah's power shouldn't be wholly attributed to the military victories since its popularity also roots in its state-like capabilities. Additionally, Hezbollah makes good use of the Iranian fund for recruitments by both paying salaries to its fighters and putting veterans' families on the payroll when they lose their lives.

An important aspect of Iranian support to Hizballah is financial. Although "the annual budget of Hezbollah is unknown…most recent estimates indicate that the Iranian support constitutes around 70 percent to 80 percent of Hezbollah's budget, which is approximately equal to $700 million".[69] Iran's economic support for Hezbollah goes along with the military support. The group's military inventory has been diversified since the Lebanese Civil War. It has formed air defense system by acquiring unmanned air vehicles and missiles that are long range with the help of Iran. The smuggle of weapons are conducted in water transfer, airway and over the land. Therefore, having control on all three is a vital importance of Hezbollah to access its weaponry. The Masnaa Border Crossing between Lebanon and Syria is on the route of the over the land smuggling arms. The 2008 Crisis started with an accusation of Hezbollah on having camera surveillance system along the way of the airport by the Siniora's cabinet. Hezbollah vindicated itself of the allegation by claiming that the cameras had been installed by Jihad al-Bina, which is a Hezbollah affiliated organization of construction, to monitor its storage. Another case that led to trouble because of the multilateral surveillance, Hezbollah was imputed of the 2020 Beirut Port Blast, in which tones of ammonium nitrate exploded and became one of the largest non-nucleic

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[69] Bakir, *Hezbollah's Finances Are Its Achilles' Heel.*

explosions in the human history, because of its immense control on the sea lane.

Hezbollah's upsurge of the armament has alarmed Israel, which has the most sophisticated army in the Middle East. Therefore, Israel has been sparing a majority of its budget for armament race against Hezbollah as it presents a nonnegligible danger for Israel.

Although Iran is aware of the fact that its generous support for Hezbollah is being punished unavoidably through the medium of sanctions by the U.S., it sustains the support. Iran's support of Hezbollah can be regarded as investment since the Resistance Axis is the only assurance of Iran that could defend it against the U.S. Therefore, Western powers' anti-Iran policies have led Iran into bracing its long-standing alliances. Nasrallah has always brought up this issue in his regular speeches. He has repetitively warned the Trump administration that in case of a war against Iran, the war won't be able to be limited within the borders of Iran.

The alliance has witnessed three major warfare so far, and it has come out of the struggle stronger. Firstly, the Lebanese Civil War bore witness to a naissance and continuous development of the alliance. The generous material aid and spiritual support of Iran for a newly created organization can be analyzed in this context of the coinciding timing of the Lebanese Civil War and the regime change in Iran. It deserves attention since the new regime was gunning for a consolidation of power by seeking for proponents of the regime. It is also noteworthy that before the secession, the radical members of the AMAL headed to Iran to side with the Islamists against the Shah regime for the 1979 Revolution. Since early 1980s, the resistance against Israel, as an ongoing conflict, has been the main cause of the alliance during the developmental period of the alliance up until the Syrian Civil War. In 1982, the Iranian army Iranian Revolutionary Guard sent its soldiers to Beqaa Valley where Hezbollah had trained its militants. On the other hand, the UNIT 1800, which is controlled by

Hezbollah, was claimed to be formed upon the request of Iran to rally the Islamist Palestinian groups in the West Bank and Gaza. Since the intensifying competition among the Muslim states over the claim of the leader of the Muslim World is subject to the question of "Who claims responsibility for the liberation of Palestine?", Iran attaches importance to this dispute against Saudi Arabia. Additionally, as the current period of the alliance, involvement in the Syrian Civil War has endowed the alliance a priceless opportunity to empower the cooperation. Not only has the alliance reformed their narrative but also it has functioned as a military training opportunity for the militants of the alliance to practice a pitched battle, which sharpened their fighting skills. In a speech given by Nasrallah, he used a witty rhetoric, which clearly explains the importance of the involvement in the Syrian Civil war for the alliance: *"Our brothers in Quneitra were killed in a clear assassination, in a decision taken by Israel,"* Nasrallah charged, adding that *"the mix of Lebanese and Iranian blood on Syrian soil in Quneitra represent the unity of our battle and fate".*[70]

The bilateral relation between Hezbollah and Iran has turned gradually into a trilateral cooperation with the convergence policy of Syria. Syria's compatible political attitude and indirect incitement with the Hezbollah and Iran created a solidarity and named as the Resistance Axis. The Resistance Axis has rooted in political pragmatism of these three states whose political, material, and ideological supports to the corporation enable each of them to reach their own objectives in their domestic and regional politics. Hezbollah's affiliation with Syria and Syrian assistance to Hezbollah will be analyzed in the following part of the chapter.

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[70] *Staff & Miller, Nasrallah: Hezbollah is not Afraid of War with Israel.*

3.2. Hezbollah's Relations with Syria Under The Al-Assad Rule

Syria has always been maintaining an importance for regional affairs, and its internal politics has been having repercussions in the region. Lebanon is a state in which Syria's political impact is at its most, and Lebanese politics cannot be analyzed bereft of the Syrian intervention policies. Before the First World War, both Syria and Lebanon were controlled by the Ottoman Empire. In Sykes Picot Agreement, the two were granted to France. Despite the struggle waged by the states, and the efforts made by Arab nationalist entities in the region, French Mandate of Syria and Lebanon lasted for almost 20 years until General Charles de Gaulle made the declaration of independence of both. However, even after independence, Syria didn't perceive Lebanon as a separate formation from itself, and Syria had shaped the Lebanese domestic and foreign politics by guiding them in line with its own interest consistently until its withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005. Syrian withdrawal can be claimed to be a starter of a period in which Syrian influence on Lebanon fell into a decline.

It is an undeniable fact that Syrian expansionism was serving for Syria's political interest, but Syrian prolonged presence in Lebanon can be claimed to be a consequence of a mutual opportunism of both Syria and a Lebanese Islamist entity. Hezbollah not only had cleared the way for making room for Syrian presence, but it had also ensured of a Syrian support in return, which was vital for its survival during its early years. Therefore, although the powers were asymmetric, political pragmatism yielded advantages for both actors to achieve their aims.

In this part of the chapter, Syria- Hezbollah relations will be analyzed by following the periods of Lebanese Civil War and Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Taif Accords & Post-Taif, and lastly the 2005 Syrian withdrawal respectively.

The Assad regime, which has been holding power since 1971, affiliated itself with Hezbollah in early 1980s during the Lebanese Civil War. Before the

emergence of Hezbollah, Syria had been in close contact with AMAL. However, after the secession of radical members of AMAL to form Hezbollah, Syria fluctuated between these two contenders. While providing monetary backing to AMAL, Hezbollah was emerging an alternative to AMAL for Syria. However, Hezbollah demanded Syria not to assist AMAL in civil strife in a tête-à-tête meeting. In parallel to yearning desire of Hezbollah, Syria established a supportive and cooperative mutual affinity with the group towards the end of Lebanese Civil War. One of factors that maintained Syrian interest in Lebanon was the Israeli invasion of Lebanon since Israel was threatening the region with its expansionist policies since its establishment.

Syria had become cognizant of the fact that Israel was an unvanquishable regional actor during the 1967 War. The 1967 defeat, therefore, thought two things to Syria: first, as long as Israel was supported by the U.S., it would maintain its survival; and secondly, Syria was not able to prevail against Israel alone, rather it would only take more of a risk. The circumstances of 1967 can be claimed to lead Syria to follow peace-keeping policies by avoiding direct confrontations. On the other hand, since Syria was not capable to battle a straight fight with Israel, it was pursuing pragmatic policies that could both provide room for its indirect resistance against Israel and to gain leverage in Lebanon. For instance, Syria deployed the "Arab Deterrent Force" in Lebanon during the Civil War to cease the clashes between PLO fighters and Phalangists, who were receiving covert support of Israel. Therefore, Hezbollah, Iran and Syria met on a common ground and created an affinity axis. "The primary arena of Syrian-Iranian collaboration and success during this period turned out to be the Levant due to new challenges that emerged on the Arab-Israeli front".[71] Their common cause centered on resistance against Israel, and Resistance Axis made concerted efforts in high-intensity conflict in Lebanon.

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[71] Goodarzi, *Syria and Iran: Alliance cooperation in a changing regional environment*, 42.

On the other hand, Hezbollah was alone in its resistance against Israel by being claimed to be adventurous by the Arab states. Following Jordan, Sadat regime in Egypt had been also involved in a reconciliation process with Israel. In case of an involvement in a war with Israel, Hezbollah was deprived of an Arab solidarity, and therefore, cooperation with Syria and Iran was fulfilling Hezbollah's much-needed alliance. To understand the importance of this alliances, it is important to realize how isolated Hezbollah has been in its resistance against Israel. The uncooperative attitude of Arab States can also be observed in 2006 War in which Hezbollah was left alone against an asymmetric hostile force since Saudi Arabia blamed Hezbollah for initiating the war, and Syria, on the other hand, provided its support for the group. Hezbollah's Pyrrhic Victory of 2006 War was crowned its resistance while proving the lack of diplomatic success. It is noteworthy that the group's political isolation reached a peak in interstate level with its involvement in Syrian Civil War, which will be explained in detail in the next part of this chapter. After making an official announcement for the Syrian involvement in 2013, Hezbollah was declared to be a terrorist organization by Gulf Cooperation Council, which is consisted of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. As claimed by AA, a state media outlet in Turkey, "the residence permits of Hezbollah members and supporters would be cancelled as well as their trade activities would be closely followed as part of the precautions taken against Hezbollah in the Gulf countries".[72] Following the decision of GCC, Arab League, which is comprised of 22 members labelled Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. Almost all member states approved the proposal except Lebanon and Iraq. Overall, the more politically isolated Hezbollah has become, the more reliance on Syria has become vital for Hezbollah on its survival against Israel.

Syria wasn't always peaceful and in coordination in Lebanon, and it was able to get violent according to the circumstances. In 1987, "23 were killed because of the refusal to obey an order by a Syrian officer to remove a West-Beirut check

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[72] Anadolu Agency, *Gulf Countries to deport Hezbollah Supporters.*

point".[73] Syrian presence in Lebanon was a way more than being a political influence, rather, it was decisive and aim-oriented. Hafiz Al-Assad read the conjuncture in Lebanon wisely and utilized the circumstances according to Syria's interest. The division in Lebanon bestowed a golden opportunity on Syria by enabling Syria to take advantage on the sectarian and inter-sect strife, and Syrian vigorous effort was simplified thanks to infeasible unity of Lebanon. Hafez Al-Assad managed to maintain its alliance with Iran by maintaining its presence in Lebanon and continued its war against the U.S. and Israel. The Syrian insistence on abiding in Lebanon stabilized its gains, and securitized Syrian interests against a probable formation of an anti-Syria regime in Lebanon. For instance, the Elias Sarkis presidency, which lasted from 1976 to 1982, was in line with the Syrian interest and objectives. Therefore, this period can be claimed to be under the shade of Syria. However, since the foreign policy of Lebanon was pro-US during the successive presidency of Amil Gemayel between 1982 and 1988, Syria needed more leverages to sustain its presence in Lebanon. The timing of the pro-US policies of the presidency of Amil Gemayel overlapped with the emergence of Hezbollah as a new Shia entity. Therefore, it can be safely claimed that Hezbollah's constant rising as a powerful organization in Lebanon, which was also backed up by Iran, showed a lot of promise for Syria to invest in an anti-U.S. Lebanese entity against a pro-U.S. Lebanese government.

Lebanese Civil War ended with the Taif Accords, which was regarded as a milestone for Syrian existence in Lebanon since it officially allowed Syria to maintain its military presence. Although the terms of the Syrian involvement in the agreement received harsh opposition especially from Maronites regarding to letting Syria take control of Lebanon, Syria attained power over the Lebanese Civil War. By guaranteeing its position in Lebanese system, Syria increased the political influence gradually. Not only did the Lebanese Civil War make the regional actors militarily alert but also the Gulf War, as another political development of the same period, caused the similar political reactions. Syrian

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[73] Coporale, *Janus-faced: the waving identity of Hezbollah among Iran, Syria and "Lebanonisation"*, 6.

support for the anti-Iraq coalition was rewarded by the U.S. with a benign neglect over Syrian expansionist policies in Lebanon. Likewise, Hezbollah's military capacity was preserved by the Taif Accords to continue its resistance movement since Lebanon was still under Israeli occupation. It is noteworthy that Syrian covert support for preserving Hezbollah's armament was one of the factors that accelerated rise of Hezbollah. Therefore, these two political allies achieved the best of the political agreement and were hand in hand after the Taif Accords in the aspect of their military activities. This alliance enhanced both their own strength and the quality of their combat against Israel. Syria and Hezbollah provided mutual military intelligence for years which had direct impact on the success of their military operations against Israel. However, the dispute over the armament of Hezbollah didn't cease after the Taif Accords and has become the main allegation of the opposition against Hezbollah. There always had been a probability of emergence of a Lebanese unity against Hezbollah's armament as all other militias were disarmed right after the Taif Accord.

Therefore, the claims and threats forced Hezbollah to securitize its military capacity by leaning over the alliance with Syria. The more Hezbollah was driven into a corner by the domestic opposition, the more it clung on the Syrian political support. Syria continued to be the vigorous advocate of Hezbollah's armament until the last day of its occupation of Lebanon.

Syria held out hope for an interest-based community until 1991 when the treaty of "Brotherhood, Coordination and Cooperation" was signed. While Article 5 was promoting a clear distinction of the two states, it also incentivized military and economic cooperation and coordination:

> Accordingly, the Governments of the two countries shall endeavour to coordinate their inter-Arab and international policies, to achieve the fullest

cooperation in inter-Arab and international institutions and organizations and to coordinate their positions on the various regional and international issues.[74]

Complimentary to this, the treaty also served as an opportunity for Syria to widen its political field, which was the detriment of Lebanon as it allowed Syrian infiltrations on a legal ground. The legalized Syrian presence in Lebanon bred a strong opposition of Maronite community. They were unwilling to accept a Syrian hegemony regarding to the fact that Syrian military force were already present in the majority of the Lebanese land. Apart from Maronites, since the treaty guaranteed a military cooperation, it also perceived as a threat by Israel, and caused Israel to amplify its military capacity in its occupied Lebanese territories.

Syrian presence in Lebanon continued until 2005 when Rafiq Hariri, the ex-prime minister of Lebanon, was assassinated by a suicide truck bomb. In the previous year, Syria put pressure on Lebanon to extend the term of presidency of Emile Lahoud, who was following pro-Syrian policies. Although Rafiq Hariri had no acquiescence of it, he approved and adopted the amendment. For the 2004 presidential election, a resolution was released by the U.N Security Council. It sent ultimatum to Syria to withdraw its troops from Lebanon to have a fair and safe election process. The necessity of Hezbollah's disarmament was also implied in the resolution. A month after the resolution, Rafiq Hariri steeped aside from premiership. The tension caused by the political dispute paved the way of the assassination of Rafiq Hariri.

Assassination of Rafiq Hariri escalated into a new period in Lebanese history known as "the Cedar Revolution". Street protests broke out against the Syrian presence in Lebanon since Syria was claimed to be the enforcer behind the assassination. However, Syria never accepted an involvement in the assassination. Omar Karani, the then-premiere, couldn't withstand against the

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[74] United Nations, *Treaty for Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination between Syrian Arab Republic and the Lebanese Republic.*

pressure and resigned. On March 13, Hezbollah evocated the supporter of both AMAL and Hezbollah to take to the streets to support Syria against the Lebanese opposition. Although the necessity of a solution to the Lebanese sectarian was exposed itself with the 2005 protests once again, the conflicting sides came up with a deadlock which offered further isolation and polarization of the Lebanese society around the sectarian division. The sectarian strife reached an advanced stage, and Lebanese were agrised by the fear of another civil war case. The UN released another resolution and repeated its proposal for the necessity of Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. The reactions from the West inosculated in Lebanese anti-Syria opposition. Syria, which was unable to bear more pressure, resolved the by deciding over drawing off Lebanon.

Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005 created unprecedented changes in Lebanese political atmosphere. Lebanese political arena divided into two mainstream movements: March 8 and March 14 Blocks. Those who had an anti-Syrian tendance formed the March 14 Alliance, and they were the Future Movement, which was taken over by Rafiq Hariri's son, Saad Hariri, after the assassination of his father, Progressive Socialist Party, led by Walid Jumblatt, Phalange, and the Lebanese Forces. The March 8 Alliance was composed of Hezbollah, AMAL, and the Free Patriotic Party.

The dispute between the blocks became the dynamic of the Lebanese politics afterwards. The Anti-Syria coalition came out victorious in 2005 election by gaining 34 seats. On the other hand, it can be claimed that the fear of going out of existence after the 2005 election made Hezbollah to graft away to stay in the political scene. The presence of Hezbollah came into sight more assertively. The following year witnessed the 2006 War between Israel and Hezbollah, in which Hezbollah was the only Lebanese force combatting while Israel was attacking to not only the Hezbollah's military basis but also the civilian infrastructure in Beirut. "Assad adopted Nasrallah's interpretation of the war as a conflict between oppressors and oppressed, and strongly criticized the Arab leaders who

did not take the part of Hezbollah in the struggle".[75] Hezbollah's invincibility brought domestic political power and international credit in its wake.

Following Syria, Hezbollah was also pointed as a target for the accusation over the killing of Hariri. The international tribunal and its investigation to shed light on the assassination of Hariri caused tension among the blocks. In the upcoming years, four Hezbollah affiliated low operatives were claimed to be involved in the assassination. Hezbollah denied the allegations in getting involved in the crime since the very beginning of the investigation. The group also asserted that the international tribunal was under the guidance of the U.S and Israel, and therefore, the judicial decision of the international tribunal could not be accredited. In 2011, Hezbollah demanded Saad Hariri, who was the successor of the assassinated Sunni leader, to put an end to the ongoing investigation of the international tribunal accusing Hezbollah. Since Hariri rejected the demand, Hezbollah made another political maneuver to create a deadlock to maintain the permanent crisis. March 8 Block ministers resigned from the cabinet, and the dispute over the investigation of the assassination ended up in the fall of government.

The dispute over the assassination between the blocks had held the boards until a regional affair that would exert an impact on Lebanon appeared: the Syrian Civil war. Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian Civil War ignited another dispute in Lebanese political arena.

In brief, the Syria-Hezbollah relations embarked upon a pragmatic enterprise at the very beginning, and it evolved into a mutual necessity for their diverse political agendas in time. Both Syria and Hezbollah leaned back each other to stay in the political arena of Lebanon. For Syria, as a functioning state, losing its capacity to fight in a pitched battle wouldn't have turned it upside down; however, for Hezbollah, as a newly formed a non-state actor, the meaning of the

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[75] Coporale, *Janus-faced: the waving identity of Hezbollah among Iran, Syria and "Lebanonisation"*, 9.

conflict was more than gaining leverage rather surviving to operate in Lebanese political system. The meaning they attributed to one another transformed into a coexistence in which absence of one side in the partnership would endanger the other's existence in Lebanon. Therefore, in light with the regional and domestic political developments, they both revised their policies to adopt the conditions of the liminal period in Lebanon, and compromised, if need, to stay in the system by gaining power. The side profiting more from this partnership became Hezbollah in the borders of Lebanon since Syria's field of operation was restricted to its own border with the 2005 Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. However, the Assad regime availed itself of the perennial solidarity of Hezbollah and Iran in the Syrian Civil War, which will be analyzed thoroughly in the following part of this chapter.

3.3. The Arab Spring & The Syrian Civil War

Arab Spring started as a promising and progressive movement in Arab States. What the movement pledged was democracy, human dignity, end of corruption, and fair distribution of wealth. The protest broke out in Tunisia in 2010 and spread in waves to other Arab countries such as Morocco, Egypt, Bahrein, Syria, and Libya. The excitement reached the hearts of masses since it was offering a brave new world, and a new social and political structure idea had never been so achievable before.

The consequences of the uprisings have been diverse: while Arab Spring sparked an unflinching riot and resulted in regime change in some countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, it was either repressed somehow or turned into a war in other countries such as Libya, Yemen and Syria. Therefore, there have been ongoing discussions in academia over the questions "Has Arab Spring been successful?" or "On what scale can the achievements of Arab Spring be measured?"

On the other side of the coin, other Arab countries, which were not affected by the Arab Spring yet, were under pressure, and perceived it as a threat since it was a more democratic and libertarian wind. In the case of Lebanon, it was a bit more complicated than other Arab Muslim states thanks to its multinational and multi-religious society. It is a useful reminder that majority of the Lebanese Maronites declare themselves as offspring of the Phrygians, and they are not Arab in nationality. Therefore, It can be claimed that both the religious diversity and also the absence of a complete Islamic governance guarded Lebanon from such a social mobilization. However, Hezbollah's attitude to Arab Spring must be analyzed separately from Lebanon since it has its own agenda and interest, which is mostly not necessarily parallel to Lebanon as a whole.

Hezbollah went through a tough decision-making process, and its response to the Arab Spring revealed in the form of a moderate and laudative stance. In this case, Nasrallah's speeches can serve well to grasp the nuances of the Hezbollah's narrative and to understand on what kind of basis Hezbollah legitimized the protests that broke out in several countries.

After the first wave of protests in Tunisia, in his speech, Hassan Nasrallah made it very clear that Hezbollah was siding with the protestors without knowing that the uprising would be a regional phenomenon: "We (Hezbollah) must congratulate the Tunisian people on their historic revolution, their struggle, and their uprising".[76]

On 27th January 2011, Arab Spring spread to Yemen; Nasrallah spoke against the riot control operations and embraced the protests in Yemen to by stating that: "It is not possible to keep silent about killing and oppressing the demonstrators. We praise the steadfastness of the Yemeni people and their

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[76] Dabashi, *Arab Spring Exposes Nasrallah's Hypocrisy.*

commitment to their peaceful movement, although we know that Yemen is full of weapons".[77]

When the Arab Spring reached Bahrain on 14th February 2011, this time, the leader of Hezbollah preferred to switch from an inclusive, liberal tone to more of a sectarian-coded one. Although Nasrallah gives the impression that Hezbollah does not contain strong sectarian inclination, he has been frequently instrumentalized Shi'ism, like he did in the case of Bahrain:

> Why is the movement [in Bahrain] condemned and the injured accused? Just because they are Shias... Nobody asked about the confession and sect of the Tunisian and Egyptian peoples; we have an obligation to stand by the downtrodden. Iran stood by the people of Palestine, Tunis, Egypt, and Libya; was this based on secular considerations? I find it very weird to hear some people calling on Egyptians to take to the streets, Libyans to kill Gaddafi, but when Bahrain is involved, their ink dries out, and their voices dampen.[78]

On the following day, Libya also witnessed the street protests, and Hezbollah welcomed the uprising in Libya too. The case of Hezbollah's support for Libya can be categorized differently since the desire that Hezbollah had for a regime change in Libya might have underlain a past incident that directly affected the Shiite movement in Lebanon. Musa Al-Sadr, the then leader of AMAL, went to a trip to Libya to meet Libyan officials in 1978, and he did not return to Lebanon. Since the Gaddafi regime did not shed light on the disappearance of Musa Al-Sadr, the regime was held responsible. The tension between Hezbollah and Gaddafi regime remained sharp but passive.

In his speech regarding the situation in Libya, Hassan Nasrallah chose to instrumentalize the 1982 Israeli Occupation of Lebanon, and he corroborated the discourse by creating a direct similarity between Libya's current circumstance and dispersed Lebanon during the Israeli occupation:

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[77] Dabashi, *Arab Spring Exposes Nasrallah's Hypocrisy.*

[78] Dabashi, *Arab Spring Exposes Nasrallah's Hypocrisy.*

> A group of young men and women rose and they were faced with bullets; war was imposed on the popular revolution. What is taking place in Libya is war imposed by the regime on a people that was peacefully demanding change; this people was forced to defend itself and war broke out in the east and the west, with warplanes, rocket launchers, and artillery. It brought back to our memory the 1982 invasion of Lebanon and all of Israel's wars. Such serious crimes should be condemned and the revolutionary people of Libya should be helped so as to persevere.[79]

Yet, the bold and vocal attitude of Hezbollah for Arab Spring, overall, reposed on the fact that its support for the protestors was in aid of changing the regimes of the states which were allies of the United States. Therefore, the social mobilization in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, and Libya raised Hezbollah's hope with possible a power shift in those countries that could reverse the regional dynamics in favor of Hezbollah. In the best case, the pro-U.S. regimes would fall, and the "Resistance Axis" would strengthen its hand against not only the Western powers but also Israel. However, Hezbollah's sympathy for the regional phenomena changed when the Arab Spring spread to Syria against the Ba'athist government.

Hafez Al-Assad rose himself in rank with an intra-party coup in 1970, and the Al-Assad' regime has been in power since 1971. As it is mentioned in the previous part of the chapter "Hezbollah's relations with Syria under the al-Assad rule", Syria has been showing political solidarity with both Iran and Hezbollah for a long time; but on what kind of basis could that solidarity be grounded? It can be claimed to be constructed over political pragmatism since Syria's "Alawite identity" was not comprehensive enough to defend the idea that it was based on a religious unity for some reasons. First, Alawiteness shows differences from Twelver Imam Shi'ism in practice, and cannot be considered as the same. On the other hand, Al-Assad regime has identified itself as secular in contrast to both Iranian regime and Hezbollah's ideology. It is important to remember that Baathist regime preferred to support AMAL instead of Hezbollah during the Lebanese Civil War because of Hezbollah's religious extremism. After the 1992, the relations between the Ba'athist regime and Hezbollah made progress since

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[79] Dabashi, *Arab Spring Exposes Nasrallah's Hypocrisy.*

they were both being threatened by a Western-backed regional actor, Israel. As mentioned in the previous part, Syrian influence on Lebanese politics had favored Hezbollah, and granted the group with political advantages. Syrian political solidarity with Hezbollah also had helped the group intimidate the Political Maronism until the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon.

Taking the historicity and the political gains into consideration, Hezbollah had to make a political maneuver to back down from its positive and supportive attitude for the Arab Spring as a change in Syria was able to affect the regional dynamics, and, inevitably, position of Hezbollah.

Hezbollah's involvement in Syria started in 2011, and it was declared as a defensive military move to watch the Lebanese border and to repel the ISIS. However, in 2013, Hezbollah officially declared its support for the Syrian regime, and its involvement in Syria took on a new meaning thereafter. It increased the military presence in Syria by deploying fighters in Al-Qusayr, Qalamoun and Homs. This pragmatic demarche deserves a close look since it contained within itself a contraction in terms. First, considering Hezbollah's great efforts for both Pan-Islamism and Pan-Arabism, such a schismatic emprise may have seemed that Hezbollah moved away from its fundamentals. However, is this concern sufficient to accuse Hezbollah not to be sincere in its commitments? In retrospect, it can be safely claimed that Hezbollah has never been radical enough to engorge itself on a dogmatic theology, rather, it has always been adaptive in fluid situations from its emergence. What the group aimed with the Syrian involvement, therefore, can be regarded as a struggle for survival rather than a pursuit of Islamic veracity. In sum, as Wiegand states, "Hezbollah has focused its efforts on one or two roles, and downplayed or ceased other roles altogether, depending on the political conditions of the time".[80]

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[80] Wiegand, *Reformation of a Terrorist Group: Hezbollah as a Lebanese Political Party*, 669.

Equally important, the "national resistance movement", which had been centered on defensive war and almost always remained limited within Lebanese borders, was now converted into a war of aggression and passed over the Lebanese borders. Prior to this, Hezbollah's target for the "military war against the infidel" had been only Israel. Combatting actively against ISIS, Hezbollah portrayed an Islamic entity as infidel, and broadened out its scope of resistance.

On the other hand, since Hezbollah went beyond the domestic affairs, arguably, it was claimed that Hezbollah was damaging its legitimacy. As argued by Tinas & Tur "As Hizballah became more involved in the conflict in Syria, both its Lebanese identity and its role in the resistance against Israel came into a question".[81] The March 14 Block accused Hezbollah of being distracted from its justification regarding to the Israel front because of its involvement in Syrian Civil War. Besides, the years 2013 and 2014 witnessed both attacks close to the Syrian border and bombings in Beirut in which a local leader of Hezbollah was killed. Although no one claimed responsibility for the Beirut attacks, they were alleged to be done in retaliation of the group's activities in Syria. Not only did political parties and incidents put pressure on Hezbollah but also social reactions placed Hezbollah in a difficult situation. There were several cases of Anti-Assad protest in the streets of Lebanon. With regard to the impeding situations, a rumble among the Shia community became visible from time to time because of the direct consequences of the involvement. The main reason for the communal perturbation lay behind the high confidentiality of Hezbollah, which is also a part of its psychological war against its opponents. Since trainings and recruitment of militants are conducted in a strict confidence, only reveler incidents can give the locals a clue about Hezbollah's activities. For instance, since the death toll of Hezbollah's fighters was not declared openly by Hezbollah due to the confidentiality, it created a feeling of insecurity and, to some extent, a desire to question the necessity of the involvement among its supporters.

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[81]Tınas & Tur, *Lebanon and the Syrian Civil War: Sectarian Perceptions and Positions*, 329.

Despite the challenges that Hezbollah faced, it has maintained its military presence in Syria even today by publicizing its involvement successfully. To analyze the involvement thoroughly, the two-folded fulfilment must be covered separately: the stage and the veiled reality. Both are functioning well for the purpose of implementation of political pragmatism. The religious and nationalistic rationalization became the focus of "the stage". Hezbollah deployed on the Lebanese-Syrian border to prevent the war to spread Lebanon and to protect the villages and towns close to the border. As stated by Nasrallah, "Going to fight in Syria was, in the first degree, to defend Lebanon, the resistance in Lebanon, and all Lebanese,".[82] Nasrallah also called attention to another Israeli invasion if the Syria fell in the hands of Western powers or Western-backed groups. The spread of the ideology of ISIS and gaining a place in Lebanon by recruiting the Lebanese was a threat as well as the clashes in Arsal were to attempt to enter Lebanon. Hezbollah backed Lebanese Armed Forces to ward off the ISIS and Al-Nusra affiliated militants. Although Hezbollah was also a radical Islamist organization, it regarded ISIS as a takfiri group, and "ISIS' statement, on the other hand, targeted 'Party of Satan'"[83] by referring to Hezbollah. Differentiating itself from other religious entities, as it was in the case of Taliban, Hezbollah has been acquitted of the idea that Hezbollah is as radical as they are and placed itself in a less threatening position in the eyes of international community. Therefore, even if not a direct support, the possibility of the penetration of the ISIS in Lebanon led the Lebanese to show a benign neglect to the activities of Hezbollah in Syria. Hezbollah's another religious rationalization of the Syrian involvement was the Sayyida Zainab Shrine in Damascus. Since it was a holy site for Shi'ites, Hezbollah assumed the protection of the place assertively. However, all these were not sufficient enough to explain Hezbollah's military presence in Syria. The predominant reason for Hezbollah's nine years of involvement in Syria can be explained with the "veiled reality". Although Syrian Civil War did not start as a

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[82] Al-Arabiya News, *Hezbollah Sees Isis as Threat to Gulf, Jordan.*

[83] Tawfeeq & Smith-Spark, *Islamist Group Isis Claims Deadly Lebanon Blast, Vows More Violence.*

sectarian war, the war acquired a sectarian dimension because of the characteristics of the involved actors in the war and the polarization of Sunna and Shia. Therefore, Hezbollah's involvement served for the purpose of the Shia survival for some reasons. First, a regime change in Syria would create an uncertainty and unforeseen impacts in the region. If the new regime was inclined to follow pro-Sunna policies, that would jeopardize the "Resistance Axis" among Iran, Syria and Hezbollah. Unavoidably, Hezbollah would be affected by the hostile attitude of the Pro-Sunna regime, would receive less logistic assistance and military aid. On the other hand, considering the influence of Al-Assad's regime on Lebanese politics, which is covered in the second part of this chapter, Syria has made great contributions to Hezbollah by smoothing the way with political interventions and guiding the domestic politics in favor of the group. A probable pro-Sunna regime would displace Hezbollah from its strongholds and consolidate the other domestic powers by favoring them against Hezbollah. The accumulation of the historic alliance became internalized, and the possibility of losing it created a fear again as it did with the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. Therefore, as explained by Wahab, "Hezbollah adopted a top-down politicization of sectarian identity, and its primary aim was to prevent the regime's collapse".[84]

Overall, Although Hezbollah has abstained from presenting a sectarian tendency openly, Hezbollah is aware of the fact that most of its strength has been nourished by a sectarian division in Lebanon. The group frequently instrumentalizes the sectarian narrative not only to agitate for a public support but also to secure its interests by grounding it on a solid dispute. Regarding to the Syrian involvement in one of his speeches, Nasrallah wanted his narrative to pivot around a sectarian emphasis by uttering this pre-conditioned rhetoric:

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[84] Wahab, *Syria's Sect-Coded Conflict: From Hezbollah's Top-down Instrumentalization of Sectarian Identity to Its Candid Geopolitical Confrontation*, 1.

Usually I speak as a Muslim, as a Lebanese patriot and Arab nationalist but allow me this one time to speak as a Shi'i.[85]

Although Nasrallah claimed that ISIS did not differentiate for Shiites, Sunnis, Muslims, Christians, Druze, Yazidis, Arabs, and Kurds, and it was a growing danger for all of them, the Party of God's chief motive for the Syrian involvement can be claimed to be because of sectarian concerns, which would be able to risk all its political, military, and economic gains. Hezbollah liked the trend of the demand of dignity and a more democratic governance in pro-US and pro-Israel countries, but it had to revise its policies when the Assad's regime was being shaken by the Arab Spring.

3.4. Conclusion

Hezbollah's affiliation with Iran and Syria has provided benefits for the group for almost 40 years. Hezbollah's history, as analyzed in the chapter, is full of cases where absence of Syria or Iran would be likely to cause harm the group as these two states functioned as a savior in the most needed situations. Although Syria's cooperation and coordination with Hezbollah paled in comparison with the period of Hafez Al-Assad, Bashar Assad took over the Syria's Hezbollah policy from his father. As expected, the assistance to Hezbollah yielded benefits for them in return.

On the other hand, the Resistance Axis has been liable to maintain the state of conflict in the borders of Lebanon since Hezbollah's policies haven't been always in lined with the Lebanon's official domestic and regional politics. The group's exclusive agenda and interests which are defended by Iran and Syria, causes conflicts with the Lebanese government. The conflicts usually serve as a sparkle of political deadlocks in which usually Hezbollah's members withdraw

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[85] Malmvig, *Allow Me This One Time to Speak as a Shi'i: The Sectarian Taboo, Music Videos and the Securitization of Sectarian Identity Politics in Hezbollah's Legitimation of Its Military Involvement in Syria,* 5.

from the cabinet. The political deadlocks are in favor of Hezbollah since they promise uncertainty and political dysfunction. The liminal period constitutes a source for Hezbollah to approach its alliance closer and practice political pragmatism at its most.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Hezbollah, as a non-state actor, maintains its existence and continues to influence a large population in Lebanon for almost forty years. Its capabilities are highly respected in public because of their social utility especially when Lebanese State falls short in meeting the need of the Shia citizens. The rehabilitation related to the representation of the Shia in the parliament and social welfare services have taken the Shia community to respectively an equal position with the other Lebanese sects. To achieve the current state today, the Lebanese Shia has gone through an effective mobilization organized by the AMAL and Hezbollah. However, what made Hezbollah outranked AMAL in progress of time was the institutionalization capacity of the group. Hezbollah's diverse struggle in many fronts in its agenda forced the group be compartmentalized and well-organized. Hezbollah' Majlis al-Shura is composed of 5 sub-units and each one undertakes a certain area of responsibilities such as parliamentary, judicial, executive, jihad-related, and internal politics. In addition to the organizational capacity, compared to AMAL, Hezbollah's rejection to lay down arms and active employment of it for more than forty years contributed to its popularity among Shias. In comparison with Nabih Berri, Hasan Nasrallah has showed more promise in his leadership with his personal traits such as assertiveness and courageousness. The immense impact of the religion cannot be denied in the context of gathering people with religious affiliation to Hezbollah. AMAL failed to succeed sufficing for those because of its secular nature of being.

Counting all in, these characteristics are not sufficient enough for the organization to maintain its existence and remain successfully as a coercive power in the Lebanese political system for a long time. A balance between political interests and its ideology has been the key formula of Hezbollah in its

almost 40-year-old existence. The more power the group has gained, the more the group has deviated from its ideological decisiveness. The fear to lose what it had gained or the desire to expand its power can be claimed to be as underlying causes of its organizational fluidity. However, this deviation has never caused the group to lose the core values of its ideology. Rather, it has been practiced in the form of "nationalization" and the response of the society to the change remained positively. The competence of shifts, on the other hand, is a token showing the ability of smooth transition in the organization. Despite the trumpeted maneuvers, Hezbollah never experienced an internal opposition, and it stayed centralized with a single voice for forty years. This can be attributed to the strict management and control mechanism in the organization.

On the other hand, contextualizing this deviation in the group in the frame of "transformation" might be wrong as the term is beyond restricted and carries an irreversible, one-directional state of development. However, when Hezbollah's course of development is being analyzed, it can be clearly seen that there is not a one-way reinforced course; rather, it is an unpredictable and multi-track process of being.

The introduction of the liminality in this thesis served the purpose of emphasizing the role of flux-state of the Hezbollah and its instrumentalization in the context of political pragmatism. Since liminality is a broader and less restrictive concept in comparison to the "transformation", the frame of liminality, hereby, is used to replace the concept of "transformation" in the literature. Emancipating Hezbollah from a binary understanding, therefore, is able to give a full understanding of the organization's intricacy without facing obstacles. By doing so, it is intended to overcome the conceptual complexity, and cease the scholarly dispute over the question "Is Hezbollah sincere in its transformation?"

The political maneuvers of Hezbollah are made through the room created by the consequences of the liminality. Since Hezbollah, as a non-state actor, was born

into a state of liminality, it was endowed with no necessity of a clear definition of itself because of the suspended state structure. Lebanese State has had a convenient background that several entities to sprout because of the diverse components of the Lebanese society. Religion and multinationalism were the main triggers in emergence of the entities. Hezbollah's victory as a surviving and as the most benefitting one is a consequence of a good reading of the liminal periods and the political acumen. The political developments in Lebanon, in this context, has shaped the group's mission according to the conjuncture in the later years.

Hezbollah's one of the practices of political pragmatism in domestic politics reveal itself in the narratives the group employed for the Israeli armed interventions in Lebanon. The resistance narrative operated well for the military activities of Hezbollah since it had legitimate demands against the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. During the years of invasion when the Israeli threat to national security was the prior concern of Lebanon, Hezbollah centered around the national security to maintain the territorial integrity of Lebanon. When taking the benefits into consideration, the Israeli invasion, which lasted for eighteen years, provided an inimitable reasoning for the early years of the organization. Taif Accord, which ended the Lebanese Civil War in 1989, became the milestone in the history of Hezbollah since it acknowledged the validly existing arms of the group. The Israeli invasion, therefore, created a chaotic political atmosphere in which state was forced to compromise by elasticizing the structure to save a room for Hezbollah's approved resistance against the occupier. Aside from the national professional army, Lebanon gave consent to paramilitary force of Hezbollah with the ratification of the agreement. However, since the boundaries of the room spared for Hezbollah in Lebanese political system contained ambiguity, Hezbollah has been able to manipulate and take advantage of the political plight.

During the years of invasion, Islamic analogy was of assistance to convey the sacred rationale behind the resistance according to the religious principles, and to

expand its sphere of influence in domestic level. The 2000 Israeli unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon, Hezbollah's narrative shifted to border surveillance on behalf of Lebanon and legitimate self-defense for the Shebaa Farms which Israel remained in control.

Another domain that Hezbollah's political pragmatism avails itself is the decision of the group to participate in the Lebanese electoral system. Islamist Movements, as it can be observed in other states too, became aware of the fact that democracy could yield opportunities to them. Therefore, Hezbollah democratized and became a part of the Lebanese political arena. Hezbollah showed more adaptation to the democracy compared to other Islamist Movements by following "infitah" policies. "Infitah" promoted a dialogue between religions and enhancement of the collaboration. Hezbollah also nominated non-Muslim candidates in writ of election and included a reconciliatory attitude in its election campaigns. The election manifest of Hezbollah was designed to be comprehensive, pluralistic, and nationalistic. Coalitions in which Hezbollah joined and the political solidarity established with a Christian entity, Free Patriotic Party, paved the way of "Lebanonisation". Coming to the terms in Taif Accords and acquiring democratic values by participating in Lebanese electoral system, Hezbollah's political activities were contributing to the peace-making process in Lebanon after the years of Civil War. Hezbollah's capacity of pragmatism prevented it to be further radicalized, and thanks to being a part of the democratic system, Hezbollah acquired negotiation and compromising skills. Although Hezbollah has triggered several turmoils directly or indirectly, it can be safely claimed Hezbollah has been still an actor in the peace keeping process with its undeniable military force in the fragile balance of Lebanon. Hezbollah can be claimed to be either seeking for convenient conditions to evolve itself or the group is able to stack the odds in favor of itself in the event of crises. Political pragmatism of Hezbollah has mostly been observed in crisis. The political chaos has enabled Hezbollah to gain more leverages and enlarge the scope of its activities since "the power to create political chaos may allow a non-state actor to coerce a government to come to

the table for negotiations." [86] Indeed, Hezbollah's witty and preemptive political moves has rendered the cabinet helpless in many cases. The 2006-2008 crisis in which Hezbollah and alliances insisted on having a veto right over the government decisions under the Siniora premiership, ended with quitting the government. As it is seen, Hezbollah gave cause to several crises with the intention of fulfilling its political objective. Considering the possible consequences of granting a veto power to the opposition, perseverance not to give Hezbollah such an administering power became meaningful. Later in 2008, Hezbollah and alliances were endowed with the veto power to end the political deadlock. The winner of the abeyance, therefore, turned out to be Hezbollah inevitably.

Therefore, the capacity to drag the Lebanese politics into a deadlock can also be claimed to be Hezbollah's trump card to be used in circumstances. Hezbollah needs both the peaceful state of affairs in which it can have its structural entity and victories recognized, and a chaotic situation in which it can thrive to attain its new political objectives. Playing with the atmosphere wittily, Hezbollah is designed to both create and sustain temporary disorder and bring back the peacetime on the condition that it gains the upper hand. Since the Civil War, the state of chaos has never ceased in Lebanon. Political assassinations, which impedes consolidation of democracy and free speech, have never ended. The political corruption has been impeding the social welfare and the Lebanese society has been immiserating because of the galloping inflation.

Therefore, the trajectory in Lebanon can be named as "permanent liminality". The state of "permanent liminality" in Lebanon has paid dividends most to the one which was born into it. Lebanese State had ongoing problems such as political corruption, sectarian division, limited public services and inflation for a long time. Since these problems had remained unsolved, it created an internal disturbance. The street protests aimed at a reformation in the Lebanese political

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[86] Khan & Zhaoying, *Iran-Hezbollah Alliance Reconsidered: What Contributes to the Survival of State-Proxy Alliance?*, 108.

system, which led the problems to get chronic by not offering a remedy. On the one hand, while the period of disorder and the permanent incapacity of the state served the purpose of Hezbollah, it also conceived another chaotic order in which Hezbollah could take advantage from: The October 2019 Protest was named as "Unfinished Revolution" as it failed to be successful to bring any change that could be promising. Hezbollah appeared to be very cooperative for a comprehensive settlement in Lebanon at first and obtained a strategic position by presenting its support for the "decent and righteous protests". Protestors' demands such as the removal of the sectarian division in political sphere and the end of political corruption were declared to be shared by Hezbollah to create a stable peace in the future. However, the protestors did not bestow a privilege on Hezbollah, and they called the group to be disarmed by chanting "Killon ya3ni Killon" (All means all!)". Hezbollah's strategic move didn't proceed as it had planned. Since Hezbollah foresaw the probable consequence of an accomplished revolution, the group was forced to deprecate against the protestors. Not to contradict itself and to ground its pollical maneuver, Hezbollah reshaped its narrative, and it claimed the protests to be incited the U.S and Israel. By doing so, Hezbollah was able to back down from its previous stance justifiably. Aggressive actions of the Hezbollah's supporters, which drew its strength from the speeches of Nasrallah, caused a low intensity conflict in Lebanon. Another state of chaos was now serving the purpose of impeding the revolutionary protests to reach a success. It can be given as another example of cases in which Hezbollah presented itself as anti-sectarian and anti-corruption but behaved conflictingly by hampering a process that could reach a change in the Lebanese political system.

Hezbollah's rising power at the domestic level redounded on the regional politics as well. In the early years, the organization only had domestic political objectives since its main concern, as a newly established entity, was to survive in the Lebanese system in fear of being exterminated by the other forces in Lebanon. The Taif Accords ceased the inter-communal conflict, and in this way, Hezbollah was able to and direct its attention and attention to more diverse

issues. Although Hezbollah has caused public disorders from time to time until very recently, it must be remembered that those were deliberate and under control-political manipulations. Participating in Lebanese electoral system with the nationalization process contributed to Hezbollah's acknowledgement of its legitimacy and the claim for being an inseparable part of the Lebanese politics. However, after strengthening its hand in domestic politics, Hezbollah wended its way to have a share in regional politics. With rising material capacity and having improved financial standing, the group's agenda was expanded accordingly by including the regional affairs as well. Now, Hezbollah was able to meet the need of being a regional actor. Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of the group, broadened the content of his speeches and spared more time for commenting on the regional affairs. Hezbollah made use of political pragmatism at the regional level as well. What shaped Hezbollah political pragmatism at the regional level was mainly the alliances it established. Being more vocal about regional developments, Hezbollah created a ground for rationalization of its alliances with Iran and Syria in the eyes of supporters. Its alliances at the regional level were established for the purpose of a win-win partnership. The main source from which the strategic partnership was fed was the escalation triggered by the expansionist and aggressive regional politics of Israel. Therefore, Hezbollah has put its regional activities on a valid ground by professing them as legitimate demands. Hezbollah's regional activities can be claimed to show an increasing trend, and this can be attributed to the Hezbollah's assertive attitude in the way of regional ownership against "Western actors, Western backed-Israel, and infidel Islamist entities".

The alliance established with Iran can be linked to the prominent political figure of Lebanese Shia, Musa al-Sadr. Although Sadr was Iranian in origin, he became a prominent political figure for the mobilization and politization of Lebanese Shia by establishing the AMAL. Hezbollah, as a radical organization, broke away from AMAL and formed itself. Therefore, AMAL's relatively moderate Islamic stance created Hezbollah as an alternative for the Shia community. Iran's affiliation with Hezbollah rather than AMAL can be explained on this ground.

This initial ideology, in which religion heavily influenced, appeared as the main instrument connecting these two actors and grounding their relations. Shiism became the main tool connecting these two actors and grounding their relations. Twelver Shiism, which is predominant in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon, carries the tenets accepted by both. The pillars of the shared religious ideology are the belief in Imamate, Wilayat al-Faqih, and Jihad. According to the Twelver Shiism, Imams took over the religious mission of leading the believers after the death of Prophet Mohamad. However, the disappearance of the Twelfth Imam, deprived the faith community of a leader to guide them in accordance with the God's will. Khomeini offered a solution to this deficiency by putting forward a theory: Wilayat al-Faqih. In the absence of the Twelfth Imam, Imam Khomeini assumed the role of guiding the believers, and establishing an Islamic order in the wake of Imams. Hezbollah declared its fully commitment to the Wilayat al-Faqih. Jihad, regarding to this matter, is being practiced creating an Islamic world order by Iran. Although Hezbollah showed commitment to this tenet, Hezbollah later changed his mind by revising the issue of jihad on the axis of Lebanon. Since commitment to the jihad in Lebanon would have tarnished its reputation and led to stigmatization as an undesirable actor. Therefore, Hezbollah had to step back from its decision to maintain its power by designing a relatively peaceful atmosphere in which it could exist. Thus, Hezbollah gave up the idea of establishing an Islamic governance in Lebanon because other Lebanese communities would not consent. For Hezbollah, the establishment of an Islamic government in Lebanon would only be possible with the consent of the Lebanese people. Therefore, the practice of jihad within the borders of Lebanon was out of question for Hezbollah. This strategic maneuver was able to be done thanks to Hezbollah's capacity for change in its undetermined state of being. On the other hand, Jihad was still applicable for the other actors in the region such as the U.S. and Israel. The pan-Islamic ideology was blended with instrumentalization of the Shiism in the regional adversary against them.

The military activism of Hezbollah against Israel was supported by Iran in the Israeli Occupation of Lebanon. Hezbollah's operations against Israel for the sake

of Palestinian cause received immense material support of Iran despite the foreign pressure Iran faced. Hezbollah also received financial support of Iran and spared it in budgeting the requirement of militants and social services it was providing. Hezbollah, as only a social movement, had the chance to practice local administrations with its state like abilities before it reached the political power it has today. Therefore, it can be safely claimed that Hezbollah's previous experiences in social services, or organizational ability helped it to adopt itself smoothly to the institutional structure of Lebanon. The main reason behind the fact that Hezbollah easily stood out from the other actors and appeared as a very old stakeholder of the state was actually its aforementioned local mobility. Compared to Hezbollah, no other stakeholder of the country has had a political purpose mixed with a strong ideological foundation starting from the local level such as developing the region and increasing the welfare level of the people, like Hezbollah.

However, the nature of the alliance avoided Hezbollah to be undermined as a proxy as it applies self-determination in both domestic and regional politics although it demanded for political consultation from Iran. The material and financial support of Iran, obviously, hasn't formed a domination over Hezbollah. In this regard, the nature of the alliance, the room to practice the independency, a common threat perception, trust and the transparency can be counted as the facilitating factors in the long-term partnership.

The other alliance that Hezbollah managed to form by taking advantage of a period of disorder was with Syria. Both Hezbollah and Syria pursued interest-based politics in almost 40 years of long-term partnership. While Syria was trying to dominate Lebanon by applying its expansionist policy, Hezbollah was seeking to perpetuate its existence because it was newly established. Lebanon was not functioning efficiently, and the scope and boundaries of Lebanese politics became indefinable due to the uncertainty. The vulnerability of the Lebanese state because of the intrastate strife made it easier for Syria to penetrate Lebanon's domestic politics during the Civil War years. Thus, Syria preferred to

fuel the conflict by taking sides in the internal conflicts. It supported some of the actors depending on the circumstances of the time. Thus, not only the internal conflicts continued, but also Syria made sure that it would have its own share in a possible victory. Hezbollah benefited from these policies of Syria because the Assad regime adopted a policy in favor of Hezbollah. Israeli occupation of Lebanon coincides with the period when the Lebanese state was not functioning. Syria perceived Israeli invasion of Lebanon as a war it could wage without direct confrontation with Israel. Syria's avoidance of direct confrontations as much as possible stems from the grief it has received from the 1967 defeat. For this reason, this invasion caused Hezbollah to become more dependent on Syrian support and, eventually, to develop a mutual dependency on both sides.

Taif Accords brough the Lebanese protracted conflict to an end. both Syria and Hezbollah emerged as winners from this period of uncertainty. On the one hand, Hezbollah gave political immunity and legitimacy to its paramilitary army. On the other hand, Syria secured its military presence within the borders of Lebanon with the Taif Agreement, with the promise that it would use it as a defense against the Israeli occupation. Despite the opposition of some Lebanese actors, especially the Maronites, to the hegemony that Syria wanted to establish, the parties reached to the agreement by giving concession to ensure stability and reach a friendly settlement. A relative stability was achieved in the period of post-Taif, but Lebanese politics was completely shaped under the influence of Syria. In this process, the partnership of Hezbollah and Syria also provided new gains to Hezbollah. Consolidating its power by participating in the Lebanese electoral system in 1992, Hezbollah became more visible in the Lebanese political arena in parallel with Syria. By the time Syria was forced to withdraw from Lebanon in 2005, Hezbollah's dependence on Syrian support had peaked as its interests in the political system were assured by Syria. Despite this, it can be argued that even in the absence of Syria, the Lebanese political arena continued on the dynamics that emerged after the withdrawal of Syria. Syria, which withdrew from Lebanon after the assassination of Rafik Hariri, caused the formation of two main blocks in Lebanese politics. While those who support

Syria from these blocks constituted the March 8 Block, the March 14 Block was made up of those who followed the anti-Syria policy. Until the Syrian civil war, the main political agenda of the Lebanese state was the conflicts between these two blocks, while Hezbollah's participation in the Syrian Civil War caused the country's agenda to change. Although Hezbollah had been making policy in parallel with the Lebanese state in order to prove its nationalization to the public, it had to take a decision independently of the Lebanese state in order to protect its interests in the Arab Spring that had spilled into Syria. This political maneuver it made was accused of pursuing independent policies in the regional politics by the Lebanese actors.

The Arab Spring instigated a regional phenomenon that did not have any resemblance to any other regional developments. Although the academia and media outlets were dubious about the spreading waves of it, the available data were only the speculations and predictions. The predictions about the course of the unrest were lacking consistency. The scholars were divided into two: those who were enthusiastic about the positive effects of the Arab Spring in the region, and those who were concerned about the possible adverse effects of it. As the discussions about the success of the Arab Spring is going on in the literature, some states, which were caught up in the developments, such as Libya, Syria and Yemen are still in a state of war. The future of the consequences of the revolt has still been controversial.

One of the consequences of the Arab Spring in the region undeniably is the liminal frame of state affairs in which structures were suspended and conflicts broke out. The liminality disturbed the regional dynamics, and it forced the regional actors to revise their political attitudes and international relations. The regional actors who were carrying an Arabic and undemocratic feature were on the red alert and had to consolidate their power not to be dragged into the wave of change. Israel and Lebanon were the exceptions thanks to their distinctive character. Lebanon, for the first time in its short history, can be claimed to get the whip hand of having a multi-national and multi-cultural society. The State of

Lebanon was not engulfed by the conflict and never involved in it directly, but Hezbollah, which was labeled as "a state in a state", did not pursue the same political aim.

Hezbollah assumed a phase-in approach during the early stages of the Arab Spring as the liminality blurred the visions in the political arena. The group did not see any harm in supporting the rebellious crowds in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, and Bahrain. It must be mentioned that Hezbollah's decision over the open endorsement wasn't shared by the other Lebanese political actors. The main factor in his political move of Hezbollah is the desire to punish the regimes which were developing political relations with Israel such as normalization of diplomatic ties. These regimes were also encouraged by the U.S. with financial aids. Another factor that prompted the attitude of Hezbollah can be claimed to be the promising future of the movement since it was able to upset the regional balance to the detriment of Saudi Arabia.

The turning point for Hezbollah's pro-arguments about the Arab Spring was the spread of the war to Syria. Hezbollah's mistake was that it did not take into account that Syria would also be on target. From that point, Hezbollah did another political maneuver and turned away from its early attitude held for the Arab Spring. Suddenly, the Arab Spring turned out to be a threat for its long-term ally, Assad regime. Not only did the Arab Spring impend the regime in Syria, but it also risked the benefits that Hezbollah was gaining from it. The "Resistance Axis" was also in jeopardy. In the case of replacement of the regime with a Sunni one, Hezbollah would possibly enter an irreversible period because of the following reasons: First, Hezbollah would have received less arms as smuggling weapons through Syria would have been hampered by the new Syrian regime. Secondly, Hezbollah would have been bereft of a strategic partner in its ongoing war against Israel. If the new regime in Syria hadn't been raring to engage in a sedition against Israel, it would have been likely to benefit the Israeli State by creating a less hostile surrounding. Lastly, the newly emerged Sunni regime would have been able to influence the domestic dynamics of Lebanon in

favor of Lebanese Sunni. In long run, such a case may have weakened Hezbollah's domestic power and jeopardize its possible gains. Although the Syrian Civil War was not carrying a sectarian feature at first, it assumed a sectarian cover because of the actors involved in the war. The war was waged for the sake of maintaining "the Alawite regime" for some such as Hezbollah and Iran. Therefore, Hezbollah chose to stand against the Arab Spring wave in Syria in order to prevent the above-mentioned possible outcomes.

Although the war in Syria started in 2011, Hezbollah's involvement in it hadn't become certain until 2013. Hezbollah's involvement in Syrian Civil War became the key dispute among the Lebanese actors afterwards. Hezbollah was blamed to act self-interestedly since it deviated its attention from the Israeli front, which was regarded as a risk taken. On the other hand, supporters of Hezbollah complained about staking reputation over a non-Lebanese cause.

Hezbollah vindicated its involvement in Syrian Civil War with relatively appealing causes. Since the spread of the ISIS was the common fear of the local communities, Hezbollah defended its Syrian involvement on the basis of a preventive intervention. It deployed its forces on the Syrian-Lebanese border "to prevent the infiltration of the ISIS militants into Lebanon." On the other hand, protecting the Sayyida Zeinab Shrine, a holy site for the Shia, served as Hezbollah's justification to enter Syria. Once again, Hezbollah instrumentalized Shiism for its pragmatic objectives.

The liminality in Syrian Civil War enabled Hezbollah to enlarge its sphere of activity by going beyond the borders of Lebanon. The suspended political structure in Syria gave a room for several interest groups. Hezbollah was one of the external actors that were actively participating in war to pursue its political interest. Since "liminal periods" are considered to be a set of transitional processes in the way of a new order and have an end, the regional powers were both alert and concerned about the future of the Syrian State and its repercussions in the regional affairs. The Syrian Civil War, therefore, evolved

into a regional conflict in which each belligerent actor desired to shape the future order in favor of its own interest at the end of the liminal period. With the support for the Assad regime, Iran and Hezbollah saw the war as a sacred duty to glorify Shia.

Therefore, the Syrian Civil War functioned as a tool to reinforce the Shiite narrative of Hezbollah. It also has been a unique opportunity for Hezbollah to practice the warfare skills for its militants in a multidirectional combat outside their own zone. Therefore, Syrian Civil War provided Hezbollah another structural suspension of state affairs in which the group could thrive.

As it was analyzed in this thesis, Hezbollah, whose identity lacks in clear cuts, has been enjoying the liminality in the Lebanese system at the domestic level. On the other hand, the more power it acquired within the domestic political sphere, the more its agenda expanded by including regional affairs. Hezbollah is no longer an impuissant actor. It is able to function self-sufficiently. The power it has today bestowed the group a self-determination in organizational management, and it is under the authority of its own administration independent of its alliances or Lebanon. Its desire to exercise sovereignty out of Lebanon has made the group a regional actor which is able to make an impact on the regional dynamics. It is no longer a only a sub-state actor thanks to its ascending role in the Arab regional politics. Therefore, Hezbollah can be claimed to deviate from its long-acting political tendencies in the regional level and be able to illustrate more indications of liminality in its disposition. When a social movement or civil war occurs in region, it creates liminal spaces, which yield potential for Hezbollah. Hezbollah is on the lookouts for a suitable opportunity in which it can practice political pragmatism to achieve regional gains. Syrian Civil War can be given as one of the examples to this context since Hezbollah was able to involve in Syrian Civil War by infusing Iran into waging war against anti-regime forces. As another example, in Yemeni Civil War, Hezbollah's fighters have been on duty to train the insurgents of Houthis. Lastly, Nasrallah, the leader of

Hezbollah, arbitrated between the followers of Sadr and pro-Iranian militias during a political crisis in Iraq when they engaged in clashes.

Although the future of Hezbollah is being tried to be predicted in the literature, it must be remembered that the Arab Spring has witnessed both the rise and fall of the Islamist parties. Although the scope of this study is only to explain the political pragmatism of Hezbollah at the domestic and regional level in the frame of "liminality", "whether Hezbollah, as an Islamist organization, will return to the radical values by leaving the liberal attitude when it seizes the power" can be studied by expanding the concept of "liminality" to "exclusive liminalities". Regarding to the Hezbollah's dependency on "liminal periods", "Will Hezbollah be able to end its dependency on the permanent liminality?" can also be a research question to be studied to contribute to the literature about Hezbollah. Since the answers for these questions mainly depends on a possible political development that is able to put an end to the liminality in Lebanese political sphere, they will remain as controversial for now.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

"Kimlik" yaklaşımı Hizbullah konulu çalışmaların odak noktası olmuştur. Bu durum, Hizbullah'ı tanımlamak amacıyla gösterilen çabaların bir sonucu olarak yorumlanabilir. Literatür Hizbullah'ı tanımlayabilmek ve siyasal faaliyetlerine açıklama getirebilmek amacı ile genel olarak 3 kimlik geliştirmiştir. Bunlar ulusal, direniş ve dini kimliklerdir. Hizbullah'ı konu alan analizler genel itibari ile önceden sınırları tanımlanmış olan bu kimlikleri zemin olarak kullanmıştır. Bazı durumlarda, Hizbullah'ın siyasal manevraları tek bir kimlik ile açıklamada yetersiz kaldığı için birden fazla kimlik kullanılarak örgütün faaliyetleri analiz edilebilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, Hizbullah'ın siyasi alandaki her yeni gelişimi bu kimlik kalıplarına sığdırılarak açıklanmaya çalışıldığı için Hizbullah'ın bir bütün olarak ele alınamamasına neden olmuştur. Örgütün liderliği tarafından belirtildiği üzere Hizbullah'ın tek merkezli bir oluşum olduğu kabul edildiğinde örgütü çoklu kimlik bakış açısı ile analiz etmek doğru olmayabilir. Bu sebeple bu kimlik yaklaşımını keskin sınırlarından azade edecek ve böylelikle örgütü bütünsel bir yaklaşım ile ele alacak olan "eşiktelik" kavramı çerçevesinde incelemek literatüre katkı sağlayabilir.

Kökeninde antropolojik bir kavram olan eşiktelik, insan yaşamındaki geçiş törenlerini temsil etmektedir. Bu geçiş törenleri, çok eski topluluklardan beri gözlemlendiğinden insanlık tarihinin ortak mirası olarak görülürler. Dini törenler, hasat zamanları, düğünler, cenazeler, mezuniyetler, yeni bir yıla geçiş gibi örnekleri bulunmaktadır. Gennep, bu durumu teorize ederek bu geçiş töreninin 3 aşamada gerçekleştiğini ve bu aşamalar sona erdiğinde kişinin hayatındaki önemli bir geçişi tamamlayıp yeni bir oluşa geçtiğini öne sürmüştür. Bu üç aşama şunlardır: ayrılma süreci, eşiktelik süreci, ve son aşama olarak da bütünleşme süreci. İlk aşama olan ayrılma süreci, kişinin bazı iç veya dış

sebepler yüzünden yabancılaşması ile başlar ve kişinin zayıf ve korunmasız kaldığı bir aşamadır. "Eşiktelik" aşaması ise kişinin hem zayıflığa hem de güce sahip olduğu bir süreç olarak yorumlanmıştır ve kişinin eski varoluşu ile yeni varoluşu arasında bir köprü görevi görür. Bu aşamada kişinin toplumsal statüsünü askıya alan bir belirsizlik söz konusudur. Bu durum, kişi sabit bir varlık kazanana kadar sürecektir. Son aşama olan "bütünleşme" aşamasında ise kişinin sosyal statüsündeki değişim fiziksel ve psikolojik belirtiler ile gözlemlenebilmektedir. Bauman ve Eisenstadt, bu eşiktelik kavramını sosyal bilimlere getiren kişilerdir.

İnsanlık tarihinde görüldüğü üzere, geçiş toplulukları evrilmeye ve değişikliklere uyum sağlamaya eğilimlidirler. Savaşlar, devrimler, rejim değişiklikleri ve sosyal hareketlilikler, eşiktelik durumunu ortaya çıkaran siyasi gelişmelerdir. Tüm bu durumlar güç savaşına, siyasi manipülasyonlara ve yeni liderlerin ortaya çıkmasına olanak sağlar. Bunula birlikte gücün askıya alınması, çekişmeli mücadelelerin ortaya çıkması, yeni güçlerin doğması gibi durumlar da oluşmaktadır. Bu kritik dönemeçte, belirsizlik eşikteliğin oluşturduğu boşluktan kaynaklanır ve kimliklerin yeni bir düzende anlam kazanmasına kadarki süreçte belirsizlik taşımasına neden olur. Bu süreçte, aktörlerin varoluş sebepleri ve değerleri değişim gösterdiğinden önceden sahip oldukları kimliksel özelliklerine bağlı kalmaları beklenmez. Bilakis, aktörün siyasi arenada varlığını sürdürebilmesi için gelecekte oluşacak olan düzene uyumlu bir doğrultuda kendini yönlendirmesi ve şekillendirmesi gerekmektedir. Bazı durumlarda, bu eşiktelik sürecinin süreklilik göstermesinden ve yeni bir düzene erişmemesinden ötürü "kalıcı eşiktelik" düzeninin oluştuğu iddia edilebilir. Savaş ile barışın, sivil ile askerinin, yerel ile küreselin arasındaki sınırın belirsizleştiği bu dönemde kalıcı eşiktelik durumunun daha sık görülmeye başladığı söylenebilir.

Eşiktelik kavramı, henüz bir düzene erişmemiş ve karmaşık varoluş sergileyen aktörlerin varlıklarına özgün bir bakış açısı getirdiği için devlet-dışı aktörlerin analiz edilmesinde umut vaat etmektedir. Böylelikle bu aktörlerin özünde sınırlayıcı olan kimlik tanımlarını edinmeden içinden geçtikleri sürüncemeli

süreçlerde dahi geliştirdikleri politikalar, varlıklarının bir parçası olarak görülebilmektedir. Güvenlik, uluslararası düzende tanınmak ve gelişim üzerine kaygılar aktörlerin değerlerinden uzaklaşmasına ve ön görülmeyen politikalar izlemesine neden olabilmektedir. Bu tezde eşiktelik sürecinde ortaya çıkmış bu aktörlerin siyasal faydacılığa yatkınlık geliştirdikleri iddia edilmektedir.

Bu tezde, eşikteliğin siyasal manevralara olanak sağlayarak bir devlet-dışı aktör olan Hizbullah'ın varlığını nasıl pekiştirdiği açıklanmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, Hizbullah'ı siyasi manevralarının aslında çoklu kimliklerinden kaynaklanmadığı aksine siyasal faydacılığın ve özgün bir sınırsızlığın sonucu olduğu iddia edilmektedir. Hizbullah'ın siyasi faydacılığının eşiktelik çerçevesinde incelenmesi iki düzeyde yapılmıştır: Yerel ve bölgesel. Hizbullah'ın yerel düzeydeki siyasal faydacılığı için üç vaka analizi yapılmıştır: İsrail'in Lübnan'ı işgali, Hizbullah'ın Lübnan seçimlerine katılması ve 2019 Ekim Ayaklanması.

Yahudiler ve Filistinli Arapların, Filistin üzerindeki hakimiyet savaşı, Orta Doğu'nun dinamiğine etki eden önemli bir siyasi gelişmedir. Yahudilerin İsrail göçüne olanak sağlayan kurumsallaşma çabaları İsrail devletinin kurulmasına ön ayak olurken Filistinli Arapların devletsiz ve topraksız kalmalarına yol açmıştır. Filistinli Arapların Yahudilerin bu yayılmacılığına karşın 1964 yılında kurulan FKÖ artan baskılar sebebiyle militanlarını önce Ürdün'e sonrasında ise Lübnan'a konuşlandırarak İsrail işgaline karşı direnişini sürdürmüştür. Lübnan'ın güneyi FKÖ savaşçılarının askeri üssü görevini görmüştür. 1982 yılında, İsrail devleti Lübnan'a girerek FKÖ'yü etkisiz hale getirmeyi amaçladığı Galile Barış Operasyonu'nu yapmıştır. Bu operasyon ile amacına ulaşan İsrail, operasyonun sınırlarını genişletip daha fazla çıkar elde etmeye karar vermiştir. Operasyonun fiziksel etki alanı genişletilip Beyrut kuşatılmıştır. Suriye'nin operasyona müdahale etmeyeceği garantilenmiş ve İsrail ile iyi ilişkiler içerisinde olan Beşir Cemayel devlet başkanı olarak seçilmiştir.

İsrail'in Lübnan işgali bir katalizör görevi görüp Hizbullah'ın oluşumunu tetiklemiştir. İşgalin ülkede neden olduğu kaotik düzen ve ülke içerisinde aktif

savaş yapan militan grupları Lübnan Devleti'ni zayıflatmıştır. Birçok alanda işlevsiz duruma düşen Lübnan siyasi yapısında oluşan boşluklar, yeni oluşumlara faaliyet alanı sağlamıştır. İşgal ve işgalin neden olduğu insanlık dışı uygulamalar, Müslümanlar ve İsrail tarafından desteklenen Falanjistler arasında silahlı çatışmaların artmasına yol açmıştır. Mezhepler arası çekişmelere mezhep içi çekişmelerin de eklenmesiyle Lübnan devleti bir savaş alanı olmuştur. Bu çatışma durumu, 1989 Taif Anlaşması ile sonlanmıştır. Taif Anlaşması ile yeni bir düzene geçiş yapmak amaçlanmıştır. Bu yeni düzende, Lübnan devlet ordusunun yeniden kurulması ve silahlı militan gruplarının silahsızlandırılması sağlanmıştır. Bu uygulamadan Hizbullah muaf tutularak kurulacak olan yeni düzende silahlı bir şekilde varlığını sürdürmesine olanak tanınmıştır. İsrail'in süregelen işgaline karşın bir devlet dışı aktör olarak Hizbullah, umut vaat eden direnişi ile Taif Anlaşma'sında kazanım sağlamıştır. Sürünceme ve belirsizliğin hâkim olduğu bu eşiktelik sürecinde yükselişe geçen Şii grubu Hizbullah silahsızlanmayarak kurulan yeni düzende daha güçlü olacağı bir statü kazanmıştır.

İsrail'in Lübnan işgali 2000 yılına kadar sürmüştür ve Hizbullah ve İsrail arasındaki sıcak çatışmalar 1990lar boyunca sözünü ettirmiştir. Böylelikle Hizbullah'ın İsrail'e karşı yaptığı 18 yıllık direniş faaliyetleri ideolojisinin bir parçası haline gelmiştir. Hizbullah geçerli bir sebeple varlığını rasyonalize edip halktan aldığı desteği artırmıştır. Örgütün Siyonizm karşıtı söylemi, ezen ve ezilenler üzerine kurgulanmıştır ve emperyalizm karşıtlığı ile de ilişkilidir. İsrail'in Lübnan İşgali, Amerika'nın Lübnan siyasetine müdahaleleri de artmıştır. Hizbullah'ın Amerika'nın bölgedeki varlığına karşın tutunduğu siyasi tavır ne kadar kesin ve katı olsa da Amerika'nın hedefi olmaktan kaçınmak amacı ile her zaman dönemin ve bölgenin dinamiğine uygun olarak ayarlanıp ölçülü bir şekilde gösterilmiştir. İsrail'in Lübnan işgali 2000 yılında tek taraflı bir çekilme ile sonlanmıştır. Bu durum tartışmalı bir sonuç getirmiştir. Bir yandan Hizbullah'ın bir devlet aktörüne karşı koyduğu direnişi bir zafer ile taçlandırılmıştır. Bir yandan da bu beklenmedik siyasi hamle Hizbullah'ın siyasi söylemini ve rasyonalize ettiği varlığında sarsıntıya yol açmıştır. Direniş

sayesinde elde ettiği kazanımları sorgulanabilir bir duruma gelmiştir. Bu sebeple Hizbullah direniş söylemine yeni bir boyut getirmek zorunda kalmıştır. Siyasi bir manevra yaparak İsrail'in 1967 savaşında elde ettiği Şebaa Çiftlikleri'nden de çekilmesini talep etmiştir. İsrail'in bu bölgeyi 1967 Savaşı'nda Suriye'den aldığı için bu bölgeden çekilmeyeceğini belirtmesi üzerine Hizbullah'ın direniş söylemi yeni bir alan bulmuştur. Bu sayede Hizbullah yeniden silahlı bir örgüt olarak kalmak için bir sebep edinmiş ve direnişin sürmesi için bir söylem yaratmıştır. Gerçekten de 2000 ile 2006 yılları arasında Şeba Çiftlikleri'nden kaynaklanan çatışmalar süregelmiştir. Hizbullah'ın siyasal faydacılığı, yerel ve bölgesel düzeyde değişim gösteren dinamiğe karşın şekillenebileceği bir esneklik sağlamıştır. Sürekli bir değişim haline sahip olması katı ve kırılgan bir örgüt doğasına sahip olmasını engellemiş ve sürekliliğine katkı sağlamıştır.

Eşiktelik sürecinde Hizbullah'ın siyasal faydacılığını rahatlıkla pratik ettiği bir diğer kriz durumu da Lübnan seçim sistemine dahil olma kararını almasıydı. Bilindiği üzere, Lübnan mezheplerin kendileri için oluşturduğu bölgesel yerleşimlerden oluşun bir kent planlamasına sahiptir. Lübnan Şiileri'nin ülkenin güneyinde varlıklarını sürdürüyor olmaları sebebiyle İsrail ile yaşanan tüm çatışmalarda birincil etki alanında kalmışlardır ve 18 yıl süren İsrail işgalinden diğer mezheplere kıyasla daha çok zarar görmüşlerdir. Okullar, hastaneler, köprüler ve yollar gibi diğer toplum hizmeti sağlayan yapıların sürekli yıkılıyor olması Şii topluluğunun iyi bir yaşam standardına sahip olmasını engellemiştir. Bu sebeple Şiiler, ülkenin geneline göre daha az okullaşma oranına, düşük hayat kalitesine ve az gelişmişliğe sahip olmuşlardır. Bu çerçevede okunduğunda radikalleşmenin de bahsi geçen yoksunluk tarafından tetiklendiği iddia edilebilir.

Bu kısmi yoksunluk, Şiilerin bir savaş döneminde örgütlenmelerine ve bir siyasi hareketliliğin ortaya çıkmasına sebebiyet vermiştir. Daha önceden de bahsi geçtiği gibi savaş gibi kriz durumları, siyasi yapının askıya alınmasından ötürü sınırı belirsiz olan yeni oluşumların ortaya çıkmasına gebedir. İyi bir liderlik ve örgütlenme ile Musa al-Sadr, Şiilerin siyasi ataletini kırmış ve sahip oldukları birikmiş öfkenin bir aktivizme kanalize edilmesini sağlamıştır. Kendilerini

EMEL hareketinden ayrıştıran radikal İslamcılar Hizbullah çatısı altında bir araya gelmişlerdir ve silahlı bir örgüt kurmuşlardır. Bu silahlı örgüt Taif Anlaşması'ndaki silahsızlanma koşulundan muaf tutulunca bir yerel bir güç olma yolunda ilerlemiştir. Hizbullah Taif Anlaşması ile ordusunu garanti altına almakla büyük bir kazanım elde etmiş olsa da stratejik bir karar olarak Lübnan seçim sisteminin bir parçası olmuştur. Böylelikle radikal İslamcı bir örgüt olan Hizbullah hükümetin ve gayrimüslim üyelerinin meşruiyetini kabul etmiştir. Müslümanlar hakkında alınacak kararlarda gayrimüslimlerin söz hakkına sahip olması her ne kadar İslami görüşler ile bağdaşmıyor olsa da Hizbullah neredeyse yarısının gayrimüslim olduğu Lübnan siyasal sisteminde katılarak ılımlı bir politika gütmeyi tercih etmiştir. Bu uzlaşmacı siyasi tavır, örgütün devamlılığını sağlayıp kazanım alanlarını genişlettiği için dikkate değerdir.

Bu siyasi manevra faydacılık üzerinden okunmalıdır. Çünkü Taif Anlaşması her ne kadar Hizbullah'ın silahlı bir örgüt olarak kalmasına olanak tanımış olsa da gelecekte Hizbullah'ın ordusunun tasfiye edilmeyeceğinin bir garantisi yoktu. Nitekim 2000 yılında İsrail ordusunun tek taraflı şekilde Lübnan'dan çekilmesi, Hizbullah'ın direniş anlatısını sarsmıştır. Öte yandan, Hizbullah'ın parlamentoda koltuğa sahip olması Şiilerin siyasi taleplerinin daha kolay duyulmasına ve Şii bölgelerinin kalkındırılması için devlet bütçesinden yararlanılmasına olanak sağlamıştır. Hizbullah'ın ideolojisini şekillendiren yerel nedenlerden birinin Maroni üstünlüğüne karşı mücadele etmek olduğu düşünüldüğünde parlamentoda yer almak Hizbullah'ın faaliyet alanını genişletecek bir kazanım olarak yorumlanabilir.

Hizbullah'ın 1992 seçimlerine katılım süreci örgütün işleyişi hakkında fikir sahibi olunması açısından önemlidir. Hizbullah bu siyasi kararı almadan ideolojik bağlılık gösterdiği ve lider olarak gördüğü Humeyni'den icazet almıştır. Böylelikle Hizbullah, Lübnan'ın çoğulcu sisteminin bir parçası olmuştur. Demokratik bir değer edindikten sonra Hizbullah ideolojisinde birtakım düzenlemelere gitmiştir. Örgütteki bu değişiklik belli bir düzeydeki güce ulaşmadan evvel bile faydacılık doğrultusunda değişebilme potansiyelini

yansıtmaktadır. Aslında "Açılım" adı verilen bu seferberlik liderliğin normatif kuralları faydacı bir tutum çerçevesinde kullanmasıdır. Bu açılım doğrultusunda Hizbullah, Lübnan'ın çoğulcu siyasi yapısını destekleyen politikalar uygulamıştır. Bu çerçevede, Hizbullah'ın gayrimüslimleri aday olarak göstermesi veya gayrimüslim cemiyetler ile diyaloglar kurması açılım politikalarına örnek olarak sunulabilir. Hristiyan adayların gösterilmesi Hizbullah karşısında oluşması muhtemel bir Hristiyan birliğinin de önüne geçebilecek bir adımdır. Öte yandan gayrimüslimler ile yakın ilişkiler içerisinde olan Hizbullah'ın diğer İslamcı örgütlerle kıyasla daha ılımlı görülmesine ihtimal vermektedir. Örneğin, Hizbullah kurulduğu ilk yıllarda İslami bir devlet kurma misyonunu taşımaktaydı. Daha sonraki yıllarda gerek gördüğü üzere bu konuda fikir değişikliğine gidilmiştir. 1985 yılında yayınladığı Açık Mektup' ta Hizbullah Lübnanlıların rızası olmadan Lübnan sınırları içerisinde bir İslam Devletinin kurulamayacağını açıkça ifade etmiştir. Bir eşiktelik döneminin belirsizliğinden yararlanan Hizbullah cihatçı bir yapılanma olmaktan çıkıp ılımlı bir İslami örgüt olma yolunda ilerleyerek hem varlığını pekiştirmiş hem de faaliyet alanını genişletmiştir. Demokratik bir değer kazanan Hizbullah, Hristiyan partiler ile koalisyonlar kurmuş ve Hristiyan bölgelerinde de sosyal hizmetler vererek ulusal bir nosyon kazanmıştır. İlk defa 1998'de yerel seçimlere katılan Hizbullah yıllardır iyi bir şekilde yürüttüğü yerel hizmetleri yasal bir çerçeveye oturtma imkânı bulmuştur. Seçim kampanyası uçarı vaatlerden uzak, gerçekçi ve yıllardır süregelen yerel yönetim problemlerine karşı çözüm odaklı bir çerçeveye oturtulmuştur. 2005'te Suriye'nin çekilmesinden sonra Özgür Vatansever Hareketi ile kurulan siyasi dayanışma Hizbullah'ın Lübnan siyasi sisteminde elinin güçlenmesini sağlamıştır.

Askeri gücünü dönem dönem göstermekten çekinmeyen Hizbullah bunu yerel siyaseti şekillendirmek için bir caydırıcı güç olarak kullanmaktadır. Sonuç olarak Lübnan siyasi arenasında 30 yılını geride bırakan Hizbullah sahip olduğu askeri güce rağmen yasal bir varlık olarak Lübnan'da gücün paydaşlarından biri olarak kalmak konusunda kararlıdır. Dönemin şartları gereği yaptığı siyasi manevralar

ile şekillenen örgütün siyasi kazanımları eşiktelik süreçlerini iyi okumasına dayandırılabilir.

Hizbullah'ın siyasi faydacılığının ve nadir görünen güç şovlarından birinin ortaya çıktığı diğer bir vaka da 2019'da gerçekleşen Ekim Ayaklanması olmuştur. Lübnan ekonomisi 1975'ten beri siyasi çıkmazdan ötürü kötülemiş ve savaş sonrası hükümetler ekonomiyi yeniden canlandıracak adımlar atmakta başarısız olmuşlardır. Kırılgan ve istikrarsız olan Lübnan ekonomisi Rafik Hariri suikastı, Suriye'nin çekilmesi, Amerika, Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri ve Suudi Arabistan'ın ekonomik yaptırımları gibi bazı siyasi gelişmelerden de etkilenmiştir. Öte yandan Lübnan siyasetçilerinin sistemik yolsuzluğa karşı gösterdikleri ilmal de bu süreçte ekonominin iyileştirilememesinin sebeplerinden biridir. Yapılacak reformlar karşılığında dış devletler tarafından ekonomik yardım vaatleri verilmiş olsa da Lübnan'daki siyasi çıkmazlar reformların yapılmasını engellemiştir.

2019 yılında Başbakan Saad Hariri tarafından yapılan ekonomik olağanüstü hâl çağrısı sonucu bütçe açığını kapatmak için vergilendirmede artışa gidilme kararı alınmıştır. WhatsApp adlı ücretsiz iletişim uygulamasını vergiye bağlama kararının açıklanması infiale yol açmıştır. Sokağa dökülen halk Lübnan'ın güneyindeki Nabatiyye'den kuzeyindeki Trablus'a kadar protestolar düzenleyerek memnuniyetsizliklerini göstermişlerdir. Bu karardan geri adım atılmasının açıklanmasından sonra bile protestolar durmamıştır. Sedir Devrimi'nden beri bu denli bir kalabalığın oluşmamasından ötürü protestolar büyük yankı uyandırmıştır. Üst bir örgütlenme olmadan spontane gelişen protestolara parti bayraklarının getirilmesi yasaklanmış ve sadece Lübnan bayrağı kullanılmıştır. Yolsuzluğa, mezhepçiliğe, fakirliğe ve aşağılanmaya bir tepki olarak yapılan gösteriler ekonomik üst sınıfın ve geleneksel yönetim sınıfının yeni bir düzen ile değiştirilmesini talep etmiştir. Partilerin protestolara karşı tutunduğu tavır çıkarlarına ve korkularına göre değişiklik göstermiştir. Lübnan Gücü Partisi'nden 4 vekil istifa ederken Gelecek Partisi istifa karşıtı olduğunu belli ederek çekinceli tavır sergilemiştir. Öte yandan Özgür Vatansever

Parti de kabinenin düşmesini istemeyerek ve mevcut geleneksel yönetim sisteminin muhafaza edilmesi umudu ile istifa karşıtları safında yer almıştır. EMEL hareketi lideri Nebih Berri ise istifa talebini duymazlıktan gelen en eski siyasi aktörlerden biri olmuştur.

Hizbullah'ın protestoları yorumlama açısı ise başlangıç günü itibari ile gözle görülebilir bir değişiklik göstermiştir. Yolsuzluk ve ekonomik durumun iyileştirilmesi, protestolar başlamadan bile Hizbullah'ın ajandasındaki iki önemli konuydu. Buna rağmen, Hizbullah'ın bu konudaki tavrını her gün evirilen protestolara göre iyi hesaplaması gerektiğinden örgüt bir süre sessizliğini korumuştur. Bu sebeple yolsuzluğa bulaşmadığını iddia eden Hizbullah için protestocular bu iki talebi Hizbullah için gayet makul bulunmuştur. Hizbullah lideri Hasan Nasrallah protestolara yönelik yaptığı uzun olan ilk konuşmada protestoculara saygı duyduklarını, yaptıkları direnişi önemsediklerini ve anladıklarını ifade eden ılımlı konuşması ile protestoları destekleyen bir tavır sergilemiştir. Hizbullah'ın iç dinamikler ile oynamamak adına protestolara katılmayacağı Nasrallah tarafından ifade edilmiştir. 25 Ekim'de Nasrallah tüm Hizbullah taraftarlarından protestolardan çekilmeleri talep etmiştir. Nasrallah'ın bu konuşması ilk konuşmasına nazaran daha sert ve uyarıcı bir tona sahip olduğu için sokaklarda bazı EMEL grupları ile Hizbullah taraftarları bayraklar ile sokaklara inmelerine neden oldu. 29 Ekim'de protesto karşıtlarının faaliyetleri şiddetlenmeye başladı ve protestocuların ihtiyaçlarını gidermeye yönelik hazırlanan tezgahlar ve çadırlar, protesto karşıtları tarafından yıkıldı. Nasrallah'ın konuşmaları artık yön değiştirerek protestoların iyi niyetli yapılmadığını ve Amerika Büyükelçilik'i tarafından fonladığı iddia eder hale geldi. Söylemdeki bu dönüşün sebepleri arasında protestocuların Hizbullah'a iltimas geçmemelerinin ve silahsızlanma çağrısı yapmalarının payı olduğu söylenebilir. Hizbullah, İlerici Sosyalist Parti'nin ve Lübnan Güçleri'nin siyasi kazanımlarını artıracağı ihtimaline karşın kabinenin düşmemesinden yana olmuştur. Gardını alan Hizbullah'ın protestoların amacına ulaşmasını engellemeye yönelik eğilimi kendi çıkarlarını tehlikede hissetmesi ile başlamıştır. Hizbullah'ın ideolojisi ile çıkarları arasındaki stratejik dengesi 40

yıldır Hizbullah'ın siyasal faydacılığına hizmet etmektedir. Hizbullah her ne kadar yakın gelecekte Lübnan siyasi arenasından silinmez gibi görünse de örgütün eşiktelik süreçlerini tüm ihtimalleri hesaba katarak iyi bir şekilde okuması örgütün devamlılığı için gereklidir. Lübnan siyasi yapısındaki ufak bir değişikliğin Hizbullah'ın statüsünde nasıl bir etkiye sahip olacağı bilinmediği için Hizbullah 2019 protestolarına desteğini daha fazla sürdürememiştir.

Bu tezde Hizbullah'ın bölgesel düzeydeki siyasal faydacılığını analiz etmek için ise İran ile olan ilişkileri, Suriye ile olan ilişkileri ve Arap Baharı & Suriye İç Savaşı vakaları ele alınmıştır. Bir devlet dışı aktör olarak Hizbullah, kendini yerel bir güç olmak ile sınırlamamış kazanımlarının artması ile birlikte faaliyet alanları bölgesel düzeye doğru genişletmiştir. Bu sebeple Hizbullah bölgesel düzeyde de siyasal faydacılığını müttefik ilişkileri geliştirerek pratik etmiştir.

Lübnan Şiilerinin İran ile olan yakınlaşmaları Hizbullah'ın kurulumundan önce başlamıştır. İranlı bir din adamı olan Musa al-Sadr 1960lar ve 1970lerde Lübnanlı Şiileri ülkenin diğer mezhepleri ile benzer siyasi haklara sahip olabilmeleri için politize etmiştir. Musa Sadr'ın Libya'ya yaptığı bir ziyaretten sonra ortadan kaybolması Şii anlatısı içerisinde kendisine bir karşılık bulmuştur. Hem İran hem de Hizbullah tarafından ortak payda olarak görülen ideolojinin 3 temel ögesi bulunmaktadır: 12 İmam anlatısı, Vilayet'il Fakih ve son olarak cihat. 12 İmam Şii inancına göre, Muhammed peygamberden sonra inançlıları Allah yolunda yönlendirmek imamların sorumluluğundaydı. Bu sebeple 12. İmam'ın ortadan kaybolması Musa al-Sadr'ın yok oluşuna uygun bir alegori olarak kullanılmıştır. İmam inancı Vilayet'i Fakih ile doğrudan ilişkilidir. Vilayet'i Fakih, Humeyni tarafından formüle edilmiş bir teoridir ve bu teoriye göre 12. İmam'ın yokluğunda inançlıları yönlendirmek dini bir liderin görevidir. Bu dini liderliği de Humeyni üstlenmiştir. Hizbullah, Humeyni'nin liderliğini doğrulamış ve kendisine sadakat göstermiştir. Bu müttefikliğe katkı sağlayan son faktör de cihat olmuştur. Bölgede İslam karşıtı faaliyet sürdüren Amerika ve İsrail'e karşı yapılan siyasi aktivism ve entelektüel emek bu cihat anlayışının bir parçasıdır. Filistin'in özgürleştirilmesi Hizbullah ve İran'ı birleştiren

misyonlardan biri olduğu için de bu müttefiki sağlamlaştırmıştır. İran'a kıyasla daha ılımlı bir İslam anlayışına sahip olduğu gözlenen Hizbullah Şiiliği ustalıkla araçsallaştırarak dini nüansları siyasal faydacılığı doğrultusunda yarar sağlar hale getirmiştir. Oluşturduğu bu dini politika ağı Hizbullah'ın hem yerel siyasette Şiilerin varlığını hissettirmesine hem de olası durumlarda bu topluluğu harekete geçirme potansiyelini diri tutmasına imkân sağlamıştır. Böylelikle Hizbullah Şiiler üzerindeki nüfuz alanını hem sağlamlaştırmış hem de bunu zamanla genişletmiştir.

İran ve Hizbullah müttefikliği bugüne değin 3 temel savaş görmüştür. Lübnan İç Savaşı, Filistin'i özgürleştirme mücadelesi ve Suriye İç Savaşı bu müttefikliğin sağlamlaşmasını sağlayan kriz durumlarıdır. İran'daki İslam Devrimi ile güç dengesinin İslamcılar lehine değişmiş olması Hizbullah'ın ileriki yıllarda eriştiği cömert yardımlar açısından büyük önem sahiptir. Hizbullah, İran'ın Hizbullah'a sağladığı ideolojik ve finansal yardımlar sayesinde Lübnan İç Savaşı'ndan kazanımlarla çıkmıştır. Hizbullah'ın İsrail'e karşı süregelen direnişinde de bünyesindeki silah envanterini her geçen gün çeşitlendirmesi İran'ın yaptığı yardımlar sayesindedir. Son olarak Suriye İç Savaşı'na Hizbullah'ın talebi üzerine savaşçı gönderdiği iddia edilen İran'ın Hizbullah ile koordineli mücadele ettiği bir saha deneyimi elde etmesi müttefikliğin elde ettiği diğer bir önemli bir kazanımdır. Suriye'nin silah taşıma yolu üzerinde olması Hizbullah'ın İran ile olan güvenli bağlantısının kopmaması için müttefiklik için stratejik bir önem arz etmektedir.

Hizbullah'ın İran ile kurduğu ilişkinin taşeron etiketi ile açıklanmasına rağmen bu müttefikliğin böyle bir güç dengesinden uzak olduğu kolaylıkla iddia edilebilir. Hizbullah tarafından açıklıkla ifade edildiği üzere Hizbullah ideolojik, finansal ve siyasi yardımlar almakla birlikte İran'dan ültimatom almamaktadır. Bu dinamiğin doğru bir şekilde anlaşılması için müttefiklik doğasının iyi analiz edilmesi gereklidir. Uzun soluklu olan bu müttefikliğin temel değerleri bağımsızlık, güven ve sadakat üzerine kuruludur. Hizbullah, her ne kadar finansal kaynaklarını İran'dan sağlıyor olsa da İran bu kaynakların kullanılacağı

alanlarda Hizbullah üzerinde bir denetime sahip değildir. Dolayısıyla Hizbullah, şehit ailelerinin maaşa bağlanması, militan istihdamı veya Şii ağırlıklı yerleşim bölgelerindeki sosyal hizmetlerin sağlanması gibi konularda önceliklerine göre harcama yapmaktadır.

Hizbullah'ın İran ile kurduğu bu kazançlı müttefiklik hem yerel siyasette yerini sağlamlaştırmış hem de bölgesel dinamiklere etki edecek bir potansiyele erişmesini sağlamıştır. Bu müttefiklik Suriye'deki Esat Rejimi ile yakın ilişkiler geliştirerek Direniş Aksı'nın alanını geniş tutmuştur.

Suriye, Lübnan devletinin kurulmasından sonra üzerinde en büyük siyasi etki alanına sahip devlet olmuştur. Dolayısıyla Lübnan siyasetini, Suriye'nin müdahaleci politikalarını analiz etmeden anlamak mümkün değildir. Birinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra Skyes Picot Anlaşması ile Suriye ve Lübnan'ın yönetimi Fransa'ya verilmiştir. Her iki devlette de süregelen bağımsızlık savaşı ancak 20 yıllık bir Fransız yönetimi sonunda elde edilmiştir. Bağımsız iki devlet kurulmuş olmasına rağmen Suriye'nin Lübnan'ı kendi yapısının bir uzantısı olarak görme hali son bulmamıştır. Suriye'nin Lübnan üzerindeki bu yayılmacı politikası 2005 yılında resmi olarak sonlanmıştır. Bu yayılmacı politika Lübnan siyasetine gölge düşürmüş olsa da devlet dışı bir aktör olan Hizbullah'ın Lübnan devletinden bağımsız bir programa sahip olması sebebi ile Hizbullah'ın yararına olduğu iddia edilebilir. Güç dengesi asimetrik olsa da Suriye'nin yayılmacılığı hem Suriye'nin etki alanını genişletmiş hem de Hizbullah'ın bugün sahip olduğu yerel ve bölgesel güce ulaşmasına destek olmuştur. 1967 Savaşı'ndan yenilgi ile ayrılan Suriye'nin İsrail'e karşı verdiği mücadelede artık çekimser davranması ve İsrail'e karşı yekten bir savaş güdemeyeceği gerçeği ile yüzleşmesi, Suriye'yi Hizbullah'a yakınlaştırmıştır. Lübnan'da kurulacak olan Suriye karşıtı bir hükümetin çıkarlarına balta vurma ihtimaline karşın Hizbullah'ı güçlendirmeyi tercih etmesi kendisinin faydasına olmuştur. Öte yandan Hizbullah'ın İsrail'e karşı sürdürdüğü savaşta diğer Arap devletleri tarafından maceracılık ile suçlanması ve yalnız bırakılması Hizbullah'ı da Suriye'ye yakınlaştırmıştır. Körfez İş Birliği Konseyi ve Arap Lig'i tarafından 2013 yılı itibari ile terörist bir

örgüt olmak ile suçlanan Hizbullah izole edildikçe Esat rejimine olan bağlılığını artırmıştır. Lübnan İç Savaşı'nı sonlandıran Taif Anlaşması, Suriye'nin Lübnan sınırları içerisinde kalmasına müsaade ettiği için Marunilerin karşı çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Bu sebeple bu iki aktör, Taif Anlaşması sonrasında kazanımlarını güvence altına almak ve İsrail'e karşı mücadelelerine etkili bir şekilde devam edebilmek için koordineli politikalar yürütmüşlerdir. Hizbullah'ın askeri olanaklarını güvence altına alabilmesi için Suriye'nin Lübnan sınırları içerisinde kendisine destek çıkması önemlidir. Hizbullah yerel siyasette ne kadar köşeye sıkıştırıldıysa Suriye'ye olan ihtiyacı da o ölçü de artış göstermiştir. 2005'e kadar Suriye'nin Lübnan siyaseti üzerindeki gölgesi Hizbullah'a güvenli bir alan sağlamış olsa da Rafik Hariri'nin suikaste uğraması bu bağımlılığa ket vuran olay olmuştur. Suikast sonrası Suriye, Lübnan sınırları içerisinde istenmeyen bir aktör konumuna gelmiştir. Lübnan siyaseti Suriye yanlısı olan 8 Mart Blok'u ve Suriye karşıtı olan 14 Mart Blok'u olarak ikiye ayrılmıştır. Bu bloklar arası çekişme Lübnan siyasetinin mevcut dinamiğinin temelini oluşturmuştur. Suriye'nin çekilmeye zorlanması ile müttefikini kaybeden Hizbullah, yerel siyasete daha fazla yatırım yapmaya başlamıştır. Bir sonraki yıl meydana gelen 2006 Savaşı'nda İsrail'e karşı göstermiş olduğu etkili direniş ve savunma, Arap devletleri tarafından kınanırken Esat rejiminden destek görmüştür.

Hizbullah'ın faydacı bir teşebbüsle başlayan Suriye ile olan ilişkisi zaman içinde karşılıklı bir ihtiyaca dönüşmüştür. Hizbullah yerel siyasette Suriye'nin yardımıyla öncelikle varlığını pekiştirirken Suriye de İsrail'e karşı savaşını dolaylı yoldan vermeye devam edebilmiştir. Bu sebeple yerel ve bölgesel gelişmelere göre her iki aktör de politikalarını uyumlu hale getirip müttefikliklerinin devamlılığını sağlamışlardır. Lübnan sınırları içerisinde en fazla kazanca ulaşan taraf Hizbullah olurken Arap Baharı'nın Suriye'ye sıçraması ile bu müttefikliğin boyutu değişmiştir.

Arap Baharı iyileştirilmiş demokrasi, barış ve insan hakları, eğitim ve sağlık hizmetleri vaat ettiği için zamanla Arap ülkelerine sıçrayarak dalgalar halinde

yayılmıştır. Arap Baharı Lübnan'ın sahip olduğu çok uluslu ve çok kültürlü yapı sayesinde Lübnan'ı teğet geçmiştir. Buna rağmen Lübnan Devleti'nden bağımsız politikalar sürdürebilen bir bölgesel aktör olarak Hizbullah Arap Baharı'nı yakından takip etmiştir. Bu sosyal ve siyasi hareketlilik rejim değişikliklerine ve güç kaymasına gebe olduğu için oluşan belirsizlikte Hizbullah'ın çıkarına uygun sonuçların oluşacak olması Hizbullah'ın Arap Baharı ile meşgul olmasını gerekli hale getirmiştir. Tunus, Yemen, Bahreyn ve Libya'yı etkileyen toplumsal ayaklanmanın her biri için Hizbullah lideri Nasrallah farklı bir söylem kullanarak halkı ve haklı taleplerini kucaklayan konuşmalar yapmıştır. Hizbullah'ın Libya'daki rejimin değişmesi isteğinin Musa al-Sadr'ın kaybettirilmesi ile ilgili olduğu iddia edilebilir. Hizbullah'ın özellikle Amerika ile iş birliği içerisinde olan devletlerdeki sokak gösterilerini özellikle desteklemesi kurulacak olan yeni rejimlerin bölgedeki güç dengesini lehine çevireceğine olan inancıdır. Hizbullah'ın bu pozitif tavrı Arap Baharı Suriye'ye sıçrayınca değişmiştir. Esat rejiminin devamlılığı Hizbullah'ın kazanımları ve siyasi hedefleri için gerekli olduğundan Hizbullah 2013 yılında Esat rejimini desteklemek için Suriye'ye girdiğini açıklamıştır. Hizbullah'ın öncelikli hedefinin silah yolunun geçtiği Suriye'yi askeri kaynaklarını güvence altına almak adına korumak ve Suriye'de olası bir Sunni bir rejiminin oluşmasını engellemektir. Şam, Humus ve El-Kuseyr'e konuşlanan Hizbullah Suriye'deki varlığını Lübnan sınırlarını korumak ve IŞID sızıntılarını engellemek amacı ile yaptığını açıklayarak rasyonalize etmiştir. Hizbullah'ın Suriye'deki varlığı, yerel siyasette 14 Mart Blok'u tarafından savunma hattının İsrail'den uzaklaşması sebebi ile eleştiri almıştır. Hizbullah savaşçılarının akıbetine dair gerçek sayılar şeffaf bir şekilde örgüt tarafından güvenlik gerekçesi ile paylaşılmadığı için Suriye'ye müdahale konusu, Lübnanlı Şiilerde farklı tepkilere yol açmıştır. Direnişini savunma üzerine kurgulamış Hizbullah için Suriye savaşında saldırı pozisyonunu edinmiş olması da direniş kavramına yeni bir alan açmıştır. Bu savaşta İranlı savaşçılar ile aynı cephede savaşıyor olmak hem savaşçılara saha deneyimi kazandırmış hem de İran ve Hizbullah'ın dini bağı üzerinden kitlelerine sunacakları etkili bir söylem de kazandırmıştır. Suriye iç Savaşı'nın bir eşiktelik süreci olması ve Hizbullah'ın bu süreçte çıkarlarını koruyacak ve yeni kazanımlar elde edilecek

şekilde söylemler yaratmasına olanak tanımıştır. Hizbullah yine bir eşiktelik sürecinde önceki değerleri ile çatışmasına rağmen varlığına yeni anlamlar kazandırabilmiş ve Esat Rejimi'nin devamlılığına katkı sağlamıştır.

APPENDIX B. THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU

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Soyadı / Surname   : İnan
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<u>**TEZİN ADI /** TITLE OF THE THESIS</u> (**İngilizce** / English): AN ANALYSIS OF HEZBOLLAH'S POLITICAL PRAGMATISM AT THE DOMESTIC AND REGIONAL LEVELS IN THE FRAME OF LIMINALITY

<u>**TEZİN TÜRÜ /** DEGREE</u>**:**   **Yüksek Lisans** / Master ☒   **Doktora** / PhD ☐

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