Balancing the Scale:
Hezbollah’s Engagement in Syria

By

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Balancing the Scale:
Assessing the implications of Hezbollah’s Engagement in Syria for Lebanon

Maya Breau

ABSTRACT

Corporate consociationalism may drive actors to exploit political opportunities to consolidate their predominance. Lebanon’s corporate arrangement has provided a fertile ground for Hezbollah to expand its influence through its participation in the 2011 civil war in Syria. Hezbollah’s military engagement in the Syrian war has strained Lebanon’s communal relations, destabilizing the Lebanese balance of power. At the same time, Hezbollah’s role in the Syria has not resulted into an intra-state conflict within Lebanon as it would be anticipated. The findings of this study show how the role of Hezbollah as a challenger must be embedded in a more complex reading of Lebanon’s corporate model. This thesis sets the stage for new way of thinking on how actors behave in the context of corporate consociational dynamics, and how they draw on external crises, challenging the system’s rigid parameters.

Keywords: Hezbollah, Syria, War, Consociationalism, Corporate Consociation, Power-Sharing, Security Dilemma, Military, Group Dynamics
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Chapter 1

Introduction

*Where the willingness is great, the difficulties cannot be great*- Machiavelli

1.1 The Participation of Hezbollah in Syria

In 2011, the world witnessed an unexpected phenomenon: uprisings in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. A wide set of social movements were launched across the MENA region, traditionally ruled by authoritarian regimes. The Arab uprisings became a turning point as it challenged the authority of governments in power, which led to the collapse of several Arab states. Approximately more than eight countries were part of the cascading wave towards democracy including Syria. The insurgences created opportunities for individuals and Islamist parties to gather against the oppressive state. Although some governments made concessions, the majority refused to adopt the democratic political rule. Most targeted regimes responded with aggression against its people.

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6 Salamey, “The Double Movement,” 188.
citizens’ demand for reforms. Consequently, several Arab states spiraled into domestic and regional conflicts as is the case of Syria.⁸

In March 2011, peaceful demonstrations were held in the streets of Syria in resistance to the government led by the Bashar al-Assad regime.⁹ Protests erupted by reason of the confinement and persecution of young Syrians who covered school walls with graffiti unsympathetic to the Syrian government.¹⁰ Security forces began a crackdown across towns and cities in Syria in retaliation resulting in a high number of civilian casualties.¹¹ The domestic conflict had since risen between the Assad regime and the Sunni rebel groups in opposition to the Alawites government. The confrontations have then escalated to a large-scale strife, one that solicited support from foreign countries. Part of the complexity of the multi-layer conflict derived from the multiple layers and the plurality of actors engaged in the Syrian war. The spread of violence and blood spill led the internal conflict to erupt and escalate to a civil war enticing the involvement of various adversaries

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aligned with external proponents. The war in Syria widened into a regional and international crisis as Andrew Tabler recounted the protracted conflict as “the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II and the largest battlefield and generator of Sunni-Shia sectarianism.” The political instability has consequently created a spillover into neighboring countries particularly Lebanon. The Syrian crisis alongside the Jihadist threat have fostered the involvement of various players namely the Lebanese Shiite Islamic militant group Hezbollah (‘The Party of God’).

Hezbollah, a Shiite militant group and a political party based in Lebanon, was established in response to the 1982 Israeli invasion. The main incentive for its emergence dated several years prior, in the course of the politicization of the Lebanese Shiites. The former was the product of deprivation and marginalization on the political and economic levels causing the Lebanese Shiites to mobilize in the 1975 Lebanese civil

17 Ibid., 477.
war.\textsuperscript{18} The 1982 Israeli invasion in Lebanon was an additional occasion that gathered different Shiite groups to start a military operation against the Israelis.\textsuperscript{19} As a matter of fact, Hezbollah was created under Iranian sponsorship which assisted Hezbollah in reinforcing its development and increasing its power in Lebanon.\textsuperscript{20} Hezbollah used the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as a means to recruit, to train, and to propagandize.\textsuperscript{21} The victory of Hezbollah against the invasion of Israel in 1982 was a new beginning for the resistance movement. In later years, Hezbollah revealed its military power once again in the 2006 July war. The defeat of Israel led Hezbollah to gain popular legitimacy on the national and regional levels.\textsuperscript{22} Hezbollah became a predominant force in Lebanese national security and political affairs. Through the years, Hezbollah evolved as an actor thanks to its hybrid character. Hezbollah continuously shifted its behavior according to its identities based on the following four elements: religion, military, socioeconomic, and Iran’s ally.\textsuperscript{23}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Ibid} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
The initial engagement in Syria of Hezbollah was done covertly in 2011. Since the outbreak of the Syrian war, Hezbollah, an ally of Syria, supported the Assad regime as an advisor. As the conflict progressed, the role of Hezbollah deepened. Two years of war elapsed before the survival of the Assad regime was put into question. The Syrian government was losing ground to the rebels. This was confirmed when the opposition took over the Sunni city of al-Qusayr in mid-2012. From a strategic standpoint, winning the battle in al-Qusayr was essential for the Syrian government. Losing control of al-Qusayr would endanger Assad’s central line of communication and the Shiite villages along the Syrian-Lebanese border. As a result, Hezbollah reaffirmed its position by publicly announcing its first military engagement in al-Qusayr on May 19, 2013.

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The Syrian conflict transmuted into three types of wars, civil, sectarian and proxy.\textsuperscript{32} First, the war in Syria started as a civil war between the Syrian government and the rebel fighters. Iran, Hezbollah and Russia backed the Assad regime while the United States, Saudi Arabia and Turkey assisted the revolutionaries.\textsuperscript{33} Second, the Syrian war has heightened pre-existing sectarian tension between Sunnis and Shiites. The Sunnis were backed by Gulf States, rebels and jihadist groups, whereas the Shiites were backed by Iran, Hezbollah and Alawites. While the internal battle progressed, an external one had already begun among the regional rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran.\textsuperscript{34} The final layer is a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran,\textsuperscript{35} which has been reflected in ongoing foreign battles in the MENA.\textsuperscript{36} The Arab uprisings have transformed the region into a “competing struggle of bipolarity between two opposing forces, the old regimes, and the Islamic fundamentalist opposition forces.”\textsuperscript{37} The political instability in Syria facilitated the emergence of non-state actors particularly the rise of the Salafi movement.\textsuperscript{38} These non-

\textsuperscript{32} Gilsinan, “The Confused Person’s.”
\textsuperscript{33} Council on Foreign Relations “Civil War in Syria.”
\textsuperscript{34} Carpenter, “Tangled Web,” 4.
\textsuperscript{35} Gilsinan, “The Confused Person’s.”
\textsuperscript{37} Vidya Venkat, “Arab Spring has now Turned into a Winter,” Interview with Gilbert Achcar, The Hindu, December 23, 2014, http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/interview/quotarab-spring-has-now-turned-into-a-winterquot/article10958060.ece
state actors sought the Syrian crisis as a political opportunity\textsuperscript{39} to gain a strong political position and spread their influence in the region.\textsuperscript{40} Accordingly, existing groups such as Al-Qaeda have strengthened and new groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)\textsuperscript{i} have developed\textsuperscript{41} adding to the entanglement of the Syrian war.

The victory of Hezbollah against the rebel fighters in Syria reasserted the Syrian army’s control over the territory shifting the faith of the Assad regime.\textsuperscript{42} Following the al-Qusayr event, Hezbollah amped up its assistance on the battlefield through its military capability reversing its original role in the Syrian war.\textsuperscript{43} Since its participation Hezbollah has taken a proactive stance in Syria through defensive missions and offensive operations.\textsuperscript{44} Therefore, the role of Hezbollah has been essential to the survival of the Syrian government despite raising concerns on international, regional and local scales.\textsuperscript{45} As Robert F. Worth described: “Hezbollah has become a kingmaker and spoiler in Lebanon’s politics as well as in decisions of war and peace.”\textsuperscript{46} Such statement illustrates the

\begin{itemize}
\item[40] Salamey, “The Double Movement,” 196-197.
\item[44] Ibid., 5.
\item[45] Hiyan Al-Qusayfi, “Hezbollah: The International Community’s Sole Concern.” \textit{Al-Akhbar}, March 5, 2015, \url{http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/24067}
\end{itemize}
controversial role of the Shiite Islamist movement in Lebanon’s domestic affair. The same reasoning can be applied to the case of Hezbollah’s involvement in Syria’s civil war.

1.2 Research Question

The spillover of the 2011 Syrian war prompted players to participate in the conflict. Hezbollah’s engagement in Syria initially began as an advisory role gradually evolving into a military position.\(^47\) Since then, Hezbollah became a pivotal non-state actor in Syria\(^48\) and strengthened its position as a powerful player in the Middle East.

This thesis seeks to answer the following: What have been the implications of Hezbollah’s involvement in Syria? How has Hezbollah’s participation in Syria interacted with and impacted Lebanon’s consociation system? Why has the military engagement of Hezbollah not resulted in an open conflict in Lebanon given the fragility of the Lebanese confessional system? This thesis seeks to assess the interaction of the military involvement of Hezbollah in Syria with power-sharing dynamics in Lebanon. More specifically, this research study highlights how the participation of Hezbollah had negative implications for

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the Lebanese power-sharing balance as it has fomented inter-elite and inter-communal tensions particularly Sunni-Shiite confrontations. This thesis also argues that Hezbollah’s challenging power is to be embedded in Lebanon’s context-specific political dynamics.

The Lebanese political structure is a corporate consociation, a political structure by which power positions are predetermined based on “confessional and sectarian” associations. In Lebanon, the position of president is assigned to a Christian, the prime minister to a Sunni and the speaker of parliament to a Shiite. The power-sharing system lies on the foundation of securing power shares of all relevant groups, majorities and minorities. The corporate model provides a foundation for competition among constituent communities for power. Its rigid structure of accommodation strengthens ethnic identity of groups. Consequently, divisions are established making accommodation and cooperation among diverse groups problematic. On that account, the corporate model may drive actors to exploit political opportunities, be they external or internal, to consolidate their predominance in a rigid political system.

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50 Ibid.


The Lebanese corporate consociation plays the role of an enabler, allowing actors to exploit its shortcomings for self-interest. Over the years, Hezbollah sought the Lebanon’s political infrastructure to its advantage. Hezbollah’s military power and the region’s insecure environment bolster the security dilemma in Lebanon facilitating Hezbollah’s decision-making throughout its political career and most significantly its engagement in the Syrian war.

Against this background, the thesis shows how Lebanon’s corporate arrangement has provided a fertile ground for Hezbollah to expand its influence in Lebanon’s domestic politics through other means, mainly its involvement in the Syrian war. From this perspective, the participation of Hezbollah in Syria provides insights into how actors may behave in corporate consociations particularly when it comes to acquiring more leverage and challenging predetermined shares of power through extra-institutional means. While Hezbollah’s engagement in the Syrian war stirred domestic contention in Lebanon, an intra-state conflict has not resulted as it would be anticipated. Furthermore, this thesis shows that how inter-elite dialogue processes may have contributed to mitigating tensions.

This thesis makes a contribution to the literature on consociational political systems and offers a new perspective on how actors behave in the context of corporate consociational
dynamics, and how they draw on external crises, challenging the system’s rigid parameters.

It is worth noting that few academic works have directly investigated how the military participation of Hezbollah in Syria has affected Lebanon’s equilibrium particularly its power base and its political and communal relations in the country. More specifically, little research has addressed how actors challenge the “static” system of the corporate consociation by capitalizing on political opportunities with aim of maximizing their power.

1.3 Structure

To develop the research problematique, this thesis will be structured in six core parts. In addition, to the present introduction which fleshes out the research question and methodology, chapter one, which sets the theoretical context, will explore corporate consociationalism, its limitations and how actors behave within such a power-sharing arrangement. This chapter will also explain how corporate consociationalism provides challengers with a window of opportunity to contest the system. The second chapter will set the empirical context, exploring the role of Hezbollah within Lebanon’s power-sharing system before and after the outbreak of the 2011 Syrian civil war. This includes tracing
the principal pillars of power-sharing throughout Lebanese history until the present day while examining the interactions of Hezbollah with Lebanon’s power-sharing model. The third chapter will analyze the participation of Hezbollah in Syria before exploring the interaction of its military entanglement with the Lebanese political system. This chapter sheds light on how Hezbollah legitimized its involvement in the military conflict and consolidated predominance in Lebanese politics. To showcase the evolving power of Hezbollah, this chapter maps additionally the group’s progressive influence within Lebanon’s domestic politics prior to and after its participation in Syria. It will also explore how Hezbollah’s military entanglement incited inter-elite disputes and communal tensions. At the same time, reasons probing into why the Hezbollah’s military entanglement has not resulted into an intra-state conflict within Lebanon will be elucidated. Chapter four will discuss the findings of the study particularly the idea of Hezbollah as a challenger in a corporate consociation and the security dilemmas brought by power-sharing arrangements. The conclusion will show that the involvement of Hezbollah in Syria has not only increased its political and military power but also strained Lebanon’s communal relations. At the same time, it shows how the role of Hezbollah as a challenger must be embedded in a more complex reading of Lebanon’s corporate consociationalism.
1.4 Methodology

The thesis draws on a theory-guided single case study where the theoretical framework of corporate consociation will be applied to explain the role of Hezbollah as a challenger in Lebanon’s political system. Relying on qualitative research, the study will draw on a variety of sources, including desk research, policy review of actors’ statements, and a systematic media analysis since the involvement of Hezbollah in the Syrian conflict. Additionally, over a dozen expert interviews have been conducted in September 2017. Interviewees are political members and parties from across the political spectrum as well as high profiled clerics of opposing faith, and prominent scholars and experts. Leaders and high-ranking members of Lebanese political parties who have taken part in this study are Samir Geagea and Elie Baraghid of the Lebanese Forces (LF), Samy Gemayel of the Lebanese Phalanges Party (LPP), Walid Jumblatt of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), Ayoub Hmayed of the Amal Movement (AM), Nawar Sahili of Hezbollah, Nicholas Sehanoui of the Free Patriotic Movement (FMP) and Hassan Sakr of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP). Sheikh Abbas Jawrari from Bekaa valley and Sheikh Firas Ballout from Tripoli have also participated in the study. Interviewed scholars and experts are Bassel F. Salloukh from the Lebanese American University, Hilal Khashan from American University of Beirut, Michael Young from Carnegie and Ben Hubbard from the New York Times. The findings of these interviews will provide insight into how
Hezbollah’s participation in the Syrian war has been perceived by its political peers and other members of the Lebanese society.

1.5 Research Limitations

The thesis encountered research limitations with regards to the interviews and limited sources.

In the interviews, some Lebanese political figures communicated very ambiguous stances on the role of Hezbollah in Syria. This has prevented me from collecting a representative appraisal of how Hezbollah is perceived by my respondents. Moreover, few works address the role of military actors within corporate arrangements specifically the role of Hezbollah and the Lebanese power-sharing system. Further inquiry is necessary to acquire a more focused understanding of how actors behave within corporate consociations and how they challenge the power-sharing system for their self-interests.

The historical trajectory of Hezbollah will also be reviewed prior to its engagement in Syria’s war as its past actions have facilitated the participation of Hezbollah in Syria. This study will also require a multi-level analysis in order to acquire a better understanding of the influence of Hezbollah in Lebanese politics prior and subsequent to its participation.
in Syria. On the local level, Hezbollah is an Iranian-backed social movement and an advocate of the Shiite community. On the national level, Hezbollah is the fighting force defending the sovereignty of Lebanon against the threats of Israel and ISIS while playing a key role in governance as a political party. On the regional level, the organization is a member of the axis of resistance, which relies heavily on the support of Syria and Iran.  

One cannot justify the growing influence of Hezbollah in Lebanon without considering the regional players as the Lebanese political culture is deeply entrenched by the involvement of external players on various platforms. The Syrian war provided Hezbollah the opportunity to simultaneously play all three roles. Consequently, the outcome of the war in Syria affected the military strength and political status of Hezbollah in Lebanon and in the region.


55 Ghaddar, and Pollak, “Transformative Experience.”
Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

2.1 Consociationalism

measured by social cohesion which, according to McGarry and O’Leary, is the ultimate path to attain political stability. The conventional power-sharing system is characterized by the following four elements: “government by a grand coalition; mutual veto or concurrent majority rule; proportionality as the principle of representation; a high degree of autonomy for each segment to run its own internal affairs.” Such way of living can be found in postwar societies.

2.2 Corporate Consociationalism

Features of consociational democracy have altered throughout the years. The consociational theory was reformed by Lijphart and later by McGarry and O’Leary. The power-sharing arrangement evolved into the emergence of two segments: corporate and liberal. Each consociation is based on the prominence of ethnic identities and its way of governing. The main distinction lies on how power shares are assigned to particular

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64 Nagle, “Between entrenchment, reform,” 1144.
groups in society.  

Corporate unlike liberal reflects the traditional version of consociationalism that accommodates groups based on factors such as ethnicity or religion. In fact, these positions in power are predetermined based on this criterion. The power-sharing system lies on the foundation of securing power shares of both majorities and minorities. Such agreement created an all for one and one for all setting for competitors to stimulate cooperation and compromise for the elite in the political system. Additionally, corporate consociational settlements are generally created in postwar societies or societies transitioning from a majoritarian to a power-sharing system. In a peace agreement, power-sharing arrangements have the ability to fend off the possibility for an armed conflict to take place once more. Ottmann and Vüllers confirm that “both conflict parties to credibly commit to the negotiated settlement and demonstrate their continuing loyalty to the peace process.” The members of a constituency must swear by the belief system for an equal balance of power to last since corporate consociations provide a foundation for competition among constituent communities for power.

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70 Salamey, “Failing Consociationalism in,” 85
71 McCulloch, “Consociational settlements in,” 511.
2.2.1 Constraints

Corporate settlements are criticized for political immobilism, rigidity, embedding divisions, and further prolonging political instability. Political paralysis can lead corporate consociations to prevent possibilities for change and reform to occur. Corporate systems enable executive formation and legislative decision-making to become periodically extended leading the legislative procedure and the establishment of a government to stalemate. For this reason, according to Nagle, the opportunity for serious reform is restricted by corporate principles. Corporate settlements are more rigid than their liberal counterparts due to its fixed seat allocation based on ethnicity in the government. Future governance is then derived from a structural composition founded on divisive identities. The corporate model embeds these divisions by securing representation in the government. Horowitz illustrates that the secure representation of ethnic identities does not provide a solution, yet allows ethnic cleavages to remain. Such

75 McCulloch, “Consociational settlements in,” 507.
76 Nagle, “Between entrenchment, reform,” 1145.
77 McCulloch, “Consociational settlements in,” 508.
81 Ibid., 1153.
83 Ibid., 502.
84 Horowitz, “Explaining the Northern,” 200.
power-sharing mechanism reassures the preservation of identities in institutions, making the elimination of these ethnic cleavages a difficult task. 85 Consociation by itself does not suffice to overcome all divisions. On the contrary, corporate consociation as Wolff notes, “entrench and institutionalize preexisting, and often conflict-hardened, ethnic identities.” 86 Corporate consociations are found in divided and postwar societies 87 where group identities are most dominant and polarized. 88 McGarry & O’Leary state that corporate consociation “accommodates groups according to ascriptive criteria, such as ethnicity of religion, on the assumption that group identities are fixed and that groups are both internally homogenous and externally bound.” 89 For this reason, corporate consociations can solidify ethnicity in divided societies. Under these circumstances, a common identity among principal groups becomes strongly unfavorable, 90 impeding consociational settlements. Corporate consociations also consider group-based identities in which collectivity is the primary focus particularly in political participation. Corporate rules categorize individuals only as group members. 91 Fixed quota and voting rolls within corporate arrangements that are based on ethnicity forces citizens to vote “within their

own ethnic community for their own ethnic parties.” Group identity, thus overshadows individual identity. At that moment, the freedom of the individual to politically participate and to politically choose who they want to champion for, is restricted at first hand. Corporate settlements do not guarantee representation for those who do not associate themselves with a particular group based on ethnicity. This being said, not all members are keen to be politically affiliated or identified with their ethnic community. This is because not all members will experience the same level of intensity. The marginalization or underrepresentation of such identities can further solidify outsiders and trigger political instability.

Political immobilism, rigidity, and embedding divisions provide challengers the possibility to contest the system by exploiting such limitations and further advance their political influence. Under these conditions, groups capable of exploitation will seek to gain more power. The nature of corporate consociation causes these groups to be dependent on each other for the preservation of power. On the one hand, insecure and less powerful groups feel threatened. The unbalance of the power-sharing scale can lead

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95 Ibid., 508.
96 Nagle, “Between entrenchment, reform,” 1150.
to a series of unfortunate events such as civil war. Preventing the collapse of the power-sharing system becomes then a high priority for participating groups to guarantee their security and power shares among their communities. Groups in societies characterized by weak governments seek to fortify their commitment to corporate consociation settlements. Shortcomings within the corporate approach have led scholars to advocate for a more progressive version of power-sharing in preference to the traditional model.\(^97\) In spite of that, components of corporate consociationalism remain apparent in present-day conflict arrangements.\(^98\) Despite its poor adoption rate,\(^99\) the corporate model is more likely to be selected in negotiated settlements.\(^100\) Numerous peace agreements have proven to be commonly based on corporate rules including the 1989 Taif Agreement in Lebanon.\(^101\)

### 2.2.2 Actors

Consociationalism is brought to promote cooperation among actors.\(^102\) Principles of power-sharing in divided societies are characterized by weak central authority. In such

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\(^{97}\) Verheij, “Reforming the Consociational,” 31.


\(^{100}\) Ibid., 505.

\(^{101}\) Ibid., 507.

volatile environments, actors feel compelled to seek their own resources. Anarchic conditions encourage security dilemma at which any type of action can be misinterpreted even peaceful ones to strengthen the security of a group by other groups as a threat, provoking a reaction. According to Ottmann and Vüllers, the essential obstacle in power-sharing arrangements is the “security dilemma.” Security dilemma is defined as a state “in which each party’s efforts to increase its own security reduce the security of the others.” In international relations, security dilemma does not only apply to states, yet also to ethnic groups including circumstances that can inflict serious damage. In times of insecurity, “groups and their representatives are unlikely to settle for anything other than a strong guarantee of their share in power, regardless of electoral prospects.” In “under-institutionalized” multi-ethnic countries, ethnic groups are in charge of their own security. The other group may perceive such protective measures as a threat. When one group increases its security, the insecurity of the other group increases along with it. For minority groups, insecurity makes them willing to request for overrepresentation in

the power-sharing arrangement. The organization of the corporate model guarantees security to each pertinent group, majority or minority, through power shares. Any adjustment to the political system is thus perceived by the groups as a threat to such protection and as “expediting a loss of power in favor of their political rivals.” Theoretically, adversaries would feel invulnerable to the disarmament, yet each side is alarmed by the other’s desire to violate their commitment. When both parties in dispute have reached consensus to bargain, it becomes difficult to persuade the two parties to disarm and move forward to compete politically in peace. For this reason, high security dilemma is fostered in the corporate model. Corporate arrangements remain a desirable choice particularly for those who have concerns about “the security of the communities they represent.” These corporate arrangements are accommodated by minorities in society. Furthermore, majorities in the process of becoming minorities favor corporate settlements to secure their share of power. In Horowitz’s views, “divided societies with ethnically based parties that ordinary majority rule usually results in ethnic

111 Nagle, “Between entrenchment, reform,” 1157.
114 McCulloch, “Consociational settlements in,” 505.
domination.” Although corporate consociations secure power for relevant members through fixed power positions, these hold a power ceiling. Ethnic elites from rival factions are then encouraged to put forward radical requests. The presence of hardliners may lead moderates to become extremists even when the latter is more powerful. Radicals are more prepared to withdraw from negotiations instead of going after the security provided by the corporate model. These hardliners utilize violence as an action plan to increase their share of power. In brief, security becomes a priority for actors in a power-sharing arrangement. In times of insecurity, actors may seek opportunities to maximize their security and power by challenging the rigid political system. A limited power-sharing structure propels actors to seek alternatives outside the parameters of the corporate model. Under these circumstances, actors will attempt to alter the unfavorable conditions and stretch the boundaries of the power-sharing system to the extent of going against the very purpose of it, from cooperation to competition.

119 Ibid., 512.
Chapter 3

Literature Review

3.1 Hezbollah’s Role within Lebanon’s Consociation

The debate over consociationalism has been long-lasting.\textsuperscript{121} For advocates, post-conflict state building serves as an optimistic model of governance in fragmented and postwar societies. For critics, power-sharing arrangements have become a millstone.\textsuperscript{122} Since the inception of Hezbollah, Lebanon’s confessional system played an essential role in the launch and further development of the political career of Hezbollah. Various scholars have addressed the role of Hezbollah within power-sharing pillars in Lebanon before and after the outbreak of the Syrian war in 2011.

\textsuperscript{121} Wolff, “Post-Conflict State Building,” 1796.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 1777.
3.1.1 Hezbollah Before the Syrian War

The conventional literature centers on specific features of Hezbollah and the timeframe of its history. Prior to the 2011 Arab uprisings, scholars have portrayed Hezbollah within frameworks associated with the recurrent themes of resistance, religious ideology, social actions and political activities. An abundance of studies described the emergence and development of Hezbollah in the 1990s, and its gradual progression in the Lebanese private and public spheres in the early 2000s. Scholars have generally assessed Hezbollah with regards to its role in the Israeli withdrawals from Lebanon, in terrorist activities, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) and the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war. Further studies have focused on the theological doctrine of Hezbollah in relation to its political position. Alagha analyzed the identity of Hezbollah by examining its mobilization activities focusing on the Islamic aspect of identity. Most works relied on secondary sources instead of primary sources and documents. In addition, some works

123 Worrall et al, Hezbollah From Islamic, x.
131 Joseph Alagha, Hizbullah’s DNA and the Arab Spring (KW Publishers, 2013), 183.
demonstrated evidence of bias. Noe combined the speeches of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and interviews dating from 1986 until 2006. It is important to note that the materials were proofread and approved by Hezbollah.\textsuperscript{132} The famed work of Naim Qassem addressed the recurrent themes of Hezbollah’s experiences in his book “The story from within.” The title itself suggests that the author aimed to make an academic contribution from an insider’s perspective. It is noteworthy to consider political partisanship as Qassem is a member of Hezbollah as the Deputy Secretary-General.\textsuperscript{133} Works earlier than 2011 do not address the role of Hezbollah within the current changing environment of the Middle East particularly within the Arab uprisings, and more significantly the civil war in Syria.

Saad-Ghorayeb addresses the ideopolitical transition of Hezbollah that succumbed to the establishment of a consociational settlement in Lebanon. The 1943 National Pact allocated positions in parliament, in government, and in public service founded on an official Lebanese population count in 1932. The distribution of power greatly affected most of the Shiite minority by alienation\textsuperscript{134} through inadequate representation\textsuperscript{135} in the Lebanese executive and legislative branch as well as in civil service.\textsuperscript{136} The alienation increased the

\textsuperscript{133} Naim Qassem, \textit{Hizbullah: The Story from Within}, Translated by Dalia Khalil (London: SAQI, 2010), 10.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 26.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 8.
grievances of Lebanese Shiites and advanced radicalization within their community.\textsuperscript{137} Given the context of the Shiites’ political marginalization, \textsuperscript{138} Hezbollah felt compelled to address the shortcomings of the Christian Maronite dominated political system. Hezbollah did so by seeking potential refuge in the notion of a non-religious and democratic system.\textsuperscript{139} Hezbollah initially opposed the political system prior to the establishment of the Taïf arrangement. According to Hezbollah, the sectarian nature was more troubling than the hegemony of Maronites of the “sectarian privileges.”\textsuperscript{140} The discourse of a non-sectarian system was a newfound political opportunity for the Lebanese Shiites. The Shiites’ political mobilization and the development of Hezbollah took place through “non-Islamic avenues” where many Shiites aligned with “Arab nationalist, socialist and communist groups such as the Nasserists, the Ba’ath Party, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) and other Arab nationalist parties.”\textsuperscript{141} It was under the leadership of the second secretary-general of Hezbollah, al-Sayyid Abbas al-Mussawi, who sought Hezbollah to partake in the confessional system of Lebanon in 1990.\textsuperscript{142} Early claims that it is necessary to apprehend the structure and character that distinguishes the state to create a better understanding of the correlation between Hezbollah and the Lebanese state,\textsuperscript{143}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 7.
\item \textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 8.
\item \textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 8.
\item \textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 2.
\item \textsuperscript{143} Early, “Larger than a Party,” 116.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The 1975 Lebanese civil war led to the increase of influence in sectarian communities due to the lack of central authority.\textsuperscript{144} For this reason, groups attempted to challenge the Lebanese political system. Characterized by its sectarian nature between Christians and Muslims, the causes leading to the civil war in Lebanon were rather political.\textsuperscript{145} Muslim and Druze groups allied with Palestinians to challenge the Lebanese political system dominated by Maronites.\textsuperscript{146} The former perceived the political system to be working in favor of those in power mostly Christians, whom perceived the system as the “sole safeguard of their social, economic and political interests.”\textsuperscript{147} Accordingly, any acceptance or resistance to the Lebanese formula was perceived as a threat to the survival of each ethnic group. According to Irani, the end of the civil war did not result in reconciliation among Lebanese sectarian communities. The Christian community felt vanquished and double-crossed while the Muslims, Shiites, and Sunnis, gained more authority within the Lebanese government.\textsuperscript{148} Hezbollah exploited the 1975 civil war as an opportunity to realize the “functions and responsibilities” of the Lebanese state. Hezbollah gained social and political leverage from this political vacuum. The aftermath

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.,’119.
of Lebanon’s civil war allowed the Shiite community to be “more strongly united than ever before and with one of the most comprehensive social sectors within the country.”

Social and political removable of Hezbollah from the Lebanese state posed a challenge to Lebanese society. Hezbollah is actively engaged in government and in civil society particularly in its social-welfare programs. Hezbollah’s newly found legitimacy did not prevent Hezbollah to pursue independence in Lebanese politics.

Hezbollah’s political course took on a new path since the establishment of the Taïf Accord. In 1989, the Taïf Accord was created to re-establish and to improve living conditions between communities in Lebanon. Similar to the consociation model, the distribution of power of the Taïf Accord is predetermined among the largest sects in the country. The presidency must be occupied by a Christian, the position of the prime minister by a Sunni and the speaker of parliament by a Shiite. The Taïf agreement pressured Hezbollah to adopt a realistic evaluation of its objective, identity, and future position in Lebanese society. According to Hamzeh, although Hezbollah received the

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150 Ibid., 119.
151 Ibid., 122.
152 Ibid. 120.
155 Early, “Larger than a Party,” 120.
Taïf, the agreement was not welcomed with open arms particularly the notion of a sectarian arrangement.\textsuperscript{156} Since the beginning of its leadership, Hezbollah advocated to enter and secure a position in the Lebanese government. From this move onward, Hezbollah would interact with political leaders outside the Shiite political party.\textsuperscript{157} Hezbollah gave up the idea of “integrating” Lebanon into a greater Islamic State in order to accommodate more cooperation.\textsuperscript{158} This moderate shift known as the “Lebanonisation of Hezbollah” served as a better alternative.\textsuperscript{159} A dialogue was then pushed with other sectarian communities such as Christian and Muslim Druze. Hezbollah officials advocated for the formation of a secular state without giving clear meaning to its terms. The details of the design were to remain undecided due to a difference of opinion.\textsuperscript{160} In this case, addressing a non-confessional state would force Hezbollah to abandon the Wilayat al-Faqih theory. This kind of change was not an option as the support base of Hezbollah was built in favor of the Islamic political doctrine. The Wilayat al-Faqih theory would continue to persist only within Hezbollah since it raised doubts among Sunnis and was not welcomed by all Druzes and Christians.\textsuperscript{161} In contrast to its earliest vision, Hezbollah expressed commitment towards a pluralistic course of action. Hezbollah continued to put

\textsuperscript{156} Hamzeh, “Lebanon’s Hizbullah,” 321.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid.,324, quoted in Mohammad Shukayr “al-Louba al-Siyassiyah li-qiadat Hizbullah Fi Libnan,” (The political game Hizbullah’s leadership in Lebanon) in Al-Wasat, (2 March 1992): 10-13.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 323.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid.,324, quoted in Mohammad Shukayr “al-Louba al-Siyassiyah li-qiadat Hizbullah Fi Libnan,” (The political game Hizbullah’s leadership in Lebanon) in Al-Wasat, (2 March 1992): 10-13.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid, 324.
forward the latest political agenda despite the death of Sayyid Abbas al-Musawi. The agenda continued with the successor of Abbas, and current leader of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah. Nasrallah motivated the organization to take part in the 1992 Lebanese parliamentary elections. The goal was to eradicate political confessionalism through the representation of Hezbollah in the Lebanese government. In 1992, Hezbollah and its allies secured twelve seats, eight of which belonged to the Shiite community. Norton confirms that the decision of Hezbollah to participate in the political sphere was overwhelmingly positive among the Shiite community considering the years of feeling politically deprived. The outcome would result in the provision of additional government resources and gained Hezbollah legitimacy as a political organization in Lebanon. Opponents have accused Hezbollah of using religion as an instrumental tool; however, during the political campaigns of Hezbollah, non-confessional subjects were raised. Evolution instead of revolution became the new policy of Hezbollah. Devore & Stähli states that the militarization of Hezbollah began in 1982 because of the Israeli occupation in Lebanon. The occupation later led to the withdrawal of Israel in 2000. During this time, Iran contributed as a key sponsor to the development of Hezbollah through financial,

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164 Hamzeh, “Lebanon’s Hizbullah,” 325.
refuge and political support. Since then Hezbollah projected its new focus to strengthen its political position in Lebanon’s confessional system.

The assassination of Rafiq Hariri in 2005 led the United Nations to adopt Security Council Resolution 1559 calling for the disarmament of Hezbollah. In this context, the military wing of Hezbollah no longer correlated to the Israeli occupation in the southern part of Lebanon. On the contrary, Hezbollah justified its reason to carry arms on the basis that Israel continued to occupy the Shebaa farms. For Nagle, a new movement started in 2005. After the Syrian army withdrawal from Lebanese territory, two political blocs dominated the Lebanese political scene. The first, March 14, is composed of Christian and Sunni members with a pro-western political orientation. The second, March 8, is composed of Shiite parties including Hezbollah and AM and Christian parties such as the FPM with a pro-Syrian allegiance. Since 2005, Lebanese politics have shifted towards a Shiite and Sunni divide despite the establishment of the Ta’if Accord.

The power-sharing formula remained intact despite being on the verge of destabilization in a regional conflict as shown by the Hezbollah-Israeli war. On July 12, 2006,

166 Ibid., 351.
170 Tamirace Fakhoury-Mühlbacher, “The July war and its effects on Lebanon’s power-sharing: the challenge of pacifying a divided society,” *Journal of Peace & Development*, (March 10, 2007): 4,
Hezbollah struck Israeli territory resulting in the death of eight Israeli fighters while two were held hostage.\textsuperscript{171} Israel retaliated with force leading to a large number of casualties and destruction on both ends.\textsuperscript{172} The war came to an end in a ceasefire after thirty-four days through the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701.\textsuperscript{173} The UNSCR 1701 ceased the aggression between Hezbollah and Israel and requested “full implementation of the relevant provisions of the Taef Accord” disarmament of “all armed groups in Lebanon.”\textsuperscript{174} Hezbollah characterized the outcome of the July war in 2006 against Israel as a “divine victory.”\textsuperscript{175} As Hazbun states, the July 2006 war provided Hezbollah an opportunity to exploit its resistance identity against the Israeli threat.\textsuperscript{176} Moreover, Hezbollah became notorious for its welfare programs according to Baylouny.\textsuperscript{177} These programs were established to compensate for damages caused by the wars and provide services such as sewage, water, and electricity.\textsuperscript{178} Hezbollah contributed enormously to the reconstruction of the war particularly in Shiite-
dominated regions of Lebanon. The Hezbollah-Israeli war tested the Lebanese confessional system by interfering with the National Dialogue procedure. The action plan reconvened after 15 years to confront paramount issues such as the withdrawal of Hezbollah’s weapons. Pledges were never executed and no advancements were made regarding the disarmament of Hezbollah. Since 1982, Hezbollah has been the mascot of resistance against the occupation after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The victory of Hezbollah in the July war overshadowed the efforts of March 14 to advocate the disarmament of Hezbollah. Hezbollah came out of the war in July 2006 as a significant political player on a local and regional levels. The July war magnified the existing clashes between both anti-Syrian and pro-Syrian coalitions. Political fragmentation became evident at the beginning of the war. The Lebanese government accused Hezbollah of instigating a reaction from Israel. The Lebanese government eventually shifted its standpoint to turn against Israel when Hezbollah became actively engaged in the conflict. The July war came to an end with the assistance of the Lebanese government and the

179 Ibid., 340.
181 Ibid., 5.
183 Ibid., 9.
186 Irani, “Irregular Warfare and,” 5.
international community.\textsuperscript{189} The enmity between Hezbollah, the Lebanese government, and March 14 worsened after the UNSCR 1701 was established.\textsuperscript{190} Hezbollah perceived those in support of the UNSCR 1701 as a failed attempt by March 14 to conspire with Israel and the West to declare war. Hezbollah also believed that the Lebanese government wanted to exhaust Hezbollah through its disarmament\textsuperscript{191} and the formation of the STL.\textsuperscript{192} Nevertheless, March 14 held Hezbollah accountable for provoking Israel to start a war in Lebanon. March 14, also accused Hezbollah of causing economic and social damages as a consequence of the unneeded aggression.\textsuperscript{193} In response, Hezbollah assembled crowds of supporters to protest against the current administration. A massive camp took place in downtown Beirut with an attempt to overthrow the government of PM Fuad Siniora.\textsuperscript{194} The political divisions became more apparent as the tension between Hezbollah and the Lebanese state escalated from political rivalry to political violence.\textsuperscript{195} In May 2008, Hezbollah militants took over the western part of the capital city. In retaliation, the Lebanese government made the decision to close the telecommunication network of Hezbollah.\textsuperscript{196} The chief of airport security who was considered to be an associate of

\textsuperscript{189} Salem, “The after-effects,” 16.  
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid.,18.  
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid.,16.  
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.,18.  
\textsuperscript{193} Irani, “Irregular Warfare and,” 5.  
\textsuperscript{195} Salem, “The after-effects,” 23.  
Hezbollah was also discharged.\textsuperscript{197} The outcome of the 2006 July war led to a series of events in Lebanon. Divisions on the political and sectarian levels deepened instead of reinforcing national unity and dialogue.\textsuperscript{198} Consequently, the notion of resistance in Hezbollah gradually became part of the Lebanese government and in the belief system of the national army and its applications.\textsuperscript{199}

Hezbollah justified its military engagement in Syria by providing protection and security against Israel and the takfiris.\textsuperscript{200} The growing external threats became a matter affecting all political parties in Lebanon and their foreign supporters. Hezbollah enticed greater collaboration among opposing political parties including the coalition March 14 regarding national security in spite of their difference. The advancement of Sunni extremists has shifted security politics within Lebanese borders. Accordingly, Hezbollah and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) have been cooperating against the common threat of takfiri. In this event, groups opposing Hezbollah favored the cooperation to prevent the collapse of the power-sharing and security systems in Lebanon. The security strategy against Sunni extremists gained international recognition.\textsuperscript{201} The Lebanese state upheld a

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{197} Hazbun, “Assembling security in,” 1061.  \\
\textsuperscript{198} Salem, “The after-effects,” 18.  \\
\textsuperscript{199} Hazbun, “Assembling security in,” 1054.  \\
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 1063.  \\
\end{flushright}
“security system” in the face of political instability without resulting into conflict since 2005.202

3.1.2 Hezbollah After the Syrian War

The engagement of Hezbollah in the Syrian war has shifted scholars’ interest. Scholars diversified their research by shedding light on Hezbollah from various angles given the post-Arab uprisings. DeVore & Stähli recognize the success of Hezbollah by its organizational skills and its political leaders. The military cadres of Hezbollah have been proven to be crucial to the effectiveness of the group.203 Worrall takes an unorthodox approach to analyze Hezbollah as an emancipatory actor by utilizing Critical Security Studies.204 This outlook provides an alternative to studying the identity of Hezbollah. Lob looks at the legitimacy of Hezbollah and how its involvement in Syria aggravated a crisis of legitimacy that started in the mid-2000s.205 Daher explores the political economy of Hezbollah through a historical and materialist perspective of Political Islam.206 Dionigi focuses on the impact of international norms on Islamist politics by investigating

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204 Worrall, “Reading Booth.”
Hezbollah as a case study and its relation to the STL. Levitt evaluates the emergence of Hezbollah and its covert activities across the globe. Azani assesses Hezbollah within the theoretical framework of social protest movements at which Hezbollah adopted different frames for its audiences. Alagha states that Hezbollah socially constructed its identity by offering a new interpretation of Wilayat al–faqih [guardianship of the jurisprudent]. Hezbollah’s intifah [opening-up] policy led the group to become a key player in Lebanese politics. Worrall, Mabon, & Clubb explore the position of Hezbollah in the post-Arab uprisings including the engagement in Syria. The authors emphasize on the identity of Hezbollah particularly its resistance identity by which its legitimacy has been challenged. Norton added an afterword to the 2014 paperback edition extending from 2006 to 2014. This includes the 2011 Syrian war, the participation of Hezbollah in the “Syrian Entanglement,” and the widening rifts between Sunnis and Shiites in Lebanon.

Recent articles have examined the role of Hezbollah in the 2011 Syrian war through the following factors: objectives (Jenkins 2014; Gagliardini, 2015; Christophersen, 2015; Dionigi. *Hezbollah, Islamist Politics, and International Society.*


Alagha, *Hizbullah's DNA,* 96.

Worrall et al, *Hezbollah: From Islamic.*

Bilal & Blanford 2016), the Axis of resistance (Gilsinan, 2015), skepticism from the Shiite constituency (Ghaddar & Pollak 2016), gains and losses (Choucair, 2016), popularity & legitimacy (Lob, 2014; Byman, 2016), military strategy and experience (Sullivan, 2014; Pollak, 2016), consequences (Berti, 2015; Berti, 2016), narrative (Slim, 2014), political dominance (Nader, 2013; Daher, 2015; Daoud, 2017; Salamey, 2016), sectarian component (Baker, 2013; Zelin & Hegghammer 2013; Seftel, 2016) and finally the geopolitical dimension (Scham, 2016).

Few authors have addressed an in-depth analysis of the military participation of Hezbollah in Syria. Salloukh explains the repercussions of the Syrian conflict on Lebanon. First, Hezbollah’s participation in the Syrian war had a detrimental effect on communal dynamics exacerbating tension particularly between the Sunni and Shiite communities in Lebanon. The increasing tension led to violent outbreaks on the streets.213 The terrorist attacks in Lebanon were fueled by Sunni extremists,214 which reinforced the security narrative of Hezbollah by legitimizing its role in Syria.215 Second, Hezbollah’s role in Syria had deeply caused divisions among the Lebanese elite particularly within the Sunni

214 Ibid., 70.
215 Ibid., 71.
community. Hariri’s weak leadership resulted in the rise of radical Sunnis, political loss in its stronghold of Tripoli in Lebanon, and in the growth of the Madinati movement in the district of Beirut. Finally, the Lebanese power-sharing system underwent a long-lasting paralysis characterized by the delays of parliamentary elections and a presidential deadlock of over two years. According to Darwich & Fakhoury, Hezbollah justified its military engagement in Syria based on the rhetoric of security. Hezbollah’s role in the Syrian conflict was a response to existential threats of takfiri and Israel. Hezbollah exploited on “pro-Shiite allegiances” by identifying the rise of Sunni extremists as an “existential threat” to the country. Hezbollah created a strong correlation between the threats of the 2011 Syrian war and the 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli war. Hezbollah took calculated and cautious measures to employ sectarian terms such as Sunni and takfiri to justify its entry to Syria. The reasons for Hezbollah’s participation in the Syrian war derived from external threats. The militant group “securitizes” sectarianism for self-seeking purposes. These purposes include strengthening its military stance against Israel, rationalizing its use of force, and diverting

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216 Ibid.
217 Ibid., 73.
218 Ibid.
219 Ibid., 72.
220 Ibid., 73.
221 Ibid., 74.
223 Ibid., 11.
224 Ibid., 10.
225 Ibid., 3.
the political aspect of the Lebanese political system. Hazbun demonstrates that Hezbollah rationalized its military participation in Syria by fighting Israel and takfiris. Hezbollah’s engagement led to greater collaboration among the LAF and opposing parties along with their foreign supporters despite differences. Consequently, Hezbollah’s engagement in the Syrian crisis caused a shift in security politics within Lebanon.

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226 Ibid., 10.
228 Ibid., 1064.
Chapter 4

Analysis

4.1 The Involvement of Hezbollah in the Syrian War and its interaction with Lebanon’s Consociation Formula

Hezbollah initially opposed any form of power-sharing based on sectarianism and advocated for a non-confessional state.\(^{229}\) Hezbollah’s reasoning altered since the establishment of the Taïf Accord in 1989.\(^{230}\) The establishment of the Taïf Accord aimed to provide a “better” alternative for co-existence between the sectarian communities in Lebanon. The Taïf Accord lessened the power of the Maronites by reversing positions with the Shiite minority over time due to demographic change. The Maronites, once majority in the pre-Taïf days, became minority in the post-Taïf period contrary to the Shiites who began as a minority group and then became the “fastest growing community” due to the growth in the Shiite population.\(^{231}\) For that reason, Hezbollah’s early years

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\(^{230}\) Joseph Daher, “Hezbollah, the Lebanese Sectarian State, and Sectarianism,” Middle East Institute, April 13, 2017, http://www.mei.edu/content/map/hezbollah-lebanese-sectarian-state-and-sectarianism

centered on establishing its power base in Lebanon. The focus of Hezbollah prior to the 2011 Syrian war was to act as a social and resistance movement and a religious group. These roles have drawn the pathway for Hezbollah to transition into a political party and to launch its political career in 2005. Hezbollah came to a realization that the group needed the cooperation of other communities in order to politically advance and prosper in this power-sharing system. According to Hilal Khashan, “the Lebanese political system is accommodationist, any decision has to be made by consensus, not by majority. This is why the cabinet does not meet regularly and does not deal with divisive issues rather easier issues, the Lebanese system has been created to balance.” Cooperation within the Lebanese political system is a necessity because “any political group representing a major sect needs to affiliate with a counterpart from another major sect in order to navigate the turbulence of the political system.” Hezbollah’s political participation and its secure power shares granted Hezbollah legitimacy and the opportunity to become more active in Lebanese politics.

Hezbollah’s political career accelerated after entering the Lebanese government in 2005. The victory of Hezbollah against Israel in the 2006 July war led the popularity of the

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234 Khashan, “Hezbollah’s Plans for,” 83-84.
group to climax and facilitate its political course by winning local and regional support. Consequently, the political competition in Lebanon reconfigured through the emergence of two political blocs: March 8 and March 14. March 14 is backed by the West and Saudi Arabia led by Sunni leader Saad Hariri. March 8 is supported by Iran and Syria led by Hezbollah. March 8 also includes the membership of Christian parties such as the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) founded by Michel Aoun. Hezbollah acquired a new political influence with the affiliation of March 8. The political alliance allowed Hezbollah to decline or withdraw from any decision-making seemingly unfavorable to its interests.

In March 2006, a sequence of the National Dialogue was hosted. The proceedings were halted by the Hezbollah-Israeli war and later resumed after the conflict. Talks of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559 involving the disarming Hezbollah

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239 Daher, “Hezbollah and the Syrian.”
240 Darwich and Fakhoury, “Casting the Other,” 12.
were left unmentioned for fear Hezbollah would extract from the dialogue.\textsuperscript{243} Hezbollah agreed to take part in the dialogue on the condition that the Lebanese government recognized the group as a “resistance” instead of a “militia.”\textsuperscript{244} The Lebanese government led by Prime Minister Fuad Siniora complied with the request to change the status of Hezbollah.\textsuperscript{245} Regardless of the negotiation effort, no consensus could be reached between March 8 and March 14 on issues regarding presidential candidates.\textsuperscript{246} The 2006 July war came to end through a UN ceasefire declared through the 1701 Resolution.\textsuperscript{247} The UNSCR 1701 also demanded the disarmament of Hezbollah with the support of the Lebanese government led by Siniora.\textsuperscript{248} The former perceived Hezbollah as “responsible for the war” as it violated UNSCR 1559 by the international community.\textsuperscript{249} In response Hezbollah refused to abide by the international resolution, as the Secretary General, Nasrallah, was of the view that “there is no one who can disarm Hezbollah.”\textsuperscript{250} Subsequently to the 2006 July war, Hezbollah strongly advocated for the resignation of PM Siniora and sought the formation of a new cabinet to pave way to acquire more seats.


\textsuperscript{245} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{246} Ibid., 8-9.


\textsuperscript{248} Ibid.,14.

\textsuperscript{249} Ibid.,13.

for the pro-Syrian coalition.\textsuperscript{251} Hezbollah threatened the Lebanese government with demonstrations if Hezbollah did not acquire veto power.\textsuperscript{252} Hezbollah kept its promise. In December 2006, thousands of its supporters made a failed attempt to overthrow Siniora’s government in Beirut.\textsuperscript{253} The following year was marked by numerous assassinations at which members from the anti-Syrian camp particularly politicians and journalists were targeted.\textsuperscript{254}

The incidents motivated March 14 to strongly advocate for the formation of the STL.\textsuperscript{255} In May 2007, UN Security Council agreed to establish an international tribunal for those responsible for the death of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.\textsuperscript{256} The March 8 alliance disagreed by leaving government through a parliamentary sit-in.\textsuperscript{257} Accordingly, the parliament averted the selection of a new presidential candidate after the end of President Emile Lahoud’s term in November 2007.\textsuperscript{258}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[257] Hazbun, “Assembling security in,” 1061.
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western government into an 18-month paralysis.²⁵⁹ In 2008, the Lebanese government came to a decision to close Hezbollah’s internal telecommunication system. The chief of airport security of Lebanon was an associate of Hezbollah and immediately discharged.²⁶⁰ In reaction, soldiers of the army of Hezbollah took control of West Beirut with violent clashes resulting into thirty-four casualties.²⁶¹ This event was a turning point due to Hezbollah’s use of force on Lebanese streets. March 8 coalition offered to end the conflict on the condition that the decision of the government would be overturned.²⁶² The Doha agreement brought an end to the political stalemate by nominating the next Lebanese President, Michel Sleiman.²⁶³ At the same time, Hezbollah was granted veto power in the cabinet²⁶⁴ and integrated in the government as an outcome of the settlement. Hezbollah was also granted the authorization to “coexist” with the Lebanese national army.²⁶⁵ The newly formed government legitimizes the “resistance” status of Hezbollah with an official ministerial statement: “the unity of army, people and resistance in their effort to liberate Lebanese territory from foreign occupation.”²⁶⁶ The unwillingness of Hariri to gather the

²⁶³ Ibid.
cabinet and the cooperation of the Lebanese government with the UN led ministers from Hezbollah and its political allies to resign from the cabinet in January 2011.\textsuperscript{267} That being the case, the government collapsed. Hariri was forced out of the cabinet and later replaced by a newly formed government led by Najib Miqati.\textsuperscript{268} The new Lebanese government was largely represented by March 8 members.\textsuperscript{269} Consequently, the polarization between the two political blocs, March 14 and March 8, led the Lebanese government into political paralysis.\textsuperscript{270}

On that account, the original outlook of Hezbollah against the sectarian-based system slowly changed. Over the years, Hezbollah embraced the political system as the political party gained more power due to the very system it had initially opposed. Hezbollah thus became a champion of the Lebanese corporate arrangement.

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\textsuperscript{267} Martin Chulov, “Lebanon reels.”
\textsuperscript{269} David Fankhauser and Olivia Lichaa, “Hezbollah in 2011,” \textit{International Institute for Counter-Terrorism}, January 26, 2012, \url{https://www.ict.org.il/Article/1084/Hezbollah%20in%202011#gsc.tab=0}
\textsuperscript{270} Salloukh, “The Syrian War,” 73.
\end{flushright}
4.2 Hezbollah’s Military Dynamics in the Syrian War

In the 1990s, the political discourse of “Lebanese Resistance” was created by Hezbollah against the occupancy of Israel (Israeli occupation) in Lebanon. The early 2000s portrayed Hezbollah as a militia and a political party as Hezbollah focused on addressing the Israeli threat by military retaliation and participating in the Lebanese cabinet. In 2005, Hezbollah officially came into politics where the main issue revolved around its disarmament. The uprisings across the Arab world in 2011 magnified the status of Hezbollah as a regional player and fortified its power in Lebanon. At the start of the Arab uprisings, Hezbollah supported “every single popular resistance movement in the Arab world with exception to Syria.” However, Hezbollah instantly shifted its opinion of opposing authoritarian regimes when the survival of the Syrian regime was at stake. The Syrian war added a new responsibility to Hezbollah by discreetly dispatching its soldiers and advisors to assist the Syrian government. The battle in the village of Qusayr in 2013 enticed Hezbollah to formally announce its military engagement in the

274 Choucair, “Hezbollah in Syria,”
neighboring civil war\textsuperscript{278} to the public in May 2013.\textsuperscript{279} The announcement came as a surprise as Hezbollah went forward with the decision to enter Syria without the consent of its political peers. Hezbollah’s military engagement in Syria breached the dissociation policy known as the 2012 Baabda Declaration as it broke one of the fundamental principles of power-sharing arrangement. The outcome of the Syrian conflict posed a threat to Hezbollah’s status as a power player in the Middle East and in Lebanon. Hezbollah’s newest commitment in the Syrian crisis raised concerns within its constituency and among different factions.

Hezbollah’s decision to engage in Syria created division within the Shiite constituency.\textsuperscript{280} Some Lebanese Shiites were skeptical of Hezbollah’s military support to the Syrian government for several reasons.\textsuperscript{281} Arabs and Muslims fighting each other provoked a sectarian power struggle between Sunnis and Shiites in the region. Syria’s leader Bashar Al-Assad persecuted citizens who did not comply to the authority of his regime. As a result, Hezbollah’s participation was perceived as illegitimate and unfavorable to the interests of the Shiites in Lebanon.\textsuperscript{282} Some Shiites feared that Hezbollah’s actions in

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\textsuperscript{278} Sullivan, “Hezbollah in Syria,”14.  
\textsuperscript{279} Ibid.,9.  
\textsuperscript{280} Lob, “Is Hezbollah Confronting,”4.  
\textsuperscript{282} Lob, “Is Hezbollah Confronting,”4.  
\end{flushright}
Syria would push the opposition to retaliate in Lebanon.\textsuperscript{283} Some Shiites accused Hezbollah of “mixing priorities” and its engagement in the Syrian war of being a distraction from its main agenda of protecting the Lebanese Shiite community.\textsuperscript{284}

The Shiite community in Lebanon became a target since Hezbollah’s involvement in Syria.\textsuperscript{285} The number of casualties and the increasingly sectarian nature of the Syrian conflict showed discontent among some of the Lebanese Shiites.\textsuperscript{286} These dissatisfactions grew stronger as the number of casualties and funerals of soldiers of Hezbollah increased.\textsuperscript{287} The number of fatalities of Hezbollah fighters in the neighboring war remain undisclosed till today.\textsuperscript{288} Accordingly, Shiites became more vocal concerning the actions of Hezbollah.\textsuperscript{289} Shiites figures publicly denounced the Hezbollah’s role in the Syrian crisis.\textsuperscript{290} On June 2013, a month after Hezbollah’s official announcement of engaging in Syria, confrontations took place in front of the Iranian embassy. The fighting involved supporters of Hezbollah and an opposing Shiite group. The outcome resulted in the death

\begin{footnotes}
\item[283] Ibid., 3.
\item[284] Slim, “Hezbollah and Syria,” 66.
\item[287] Lob, “Is Hezbollah Confronting,” 3.
\item[288] Slim, “Hezbollah and Syria,” 67.
\item[289] Lob, “Is Hezbollah Confronting,” 4.
\item[290] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
of the leader of the Shiite group against the statement of Hezbollah.\textsuperscript{291} However, some Shiites later changed its position due to Hezbollah’s military triumphs and the violent attacks by Sunni extremists. Consequently, these attacks fortified the takfiri threat addressed by Hezbollah.\textsuperscript{292}

Strong concerns were expressed by the March 14 alliance: Christian and Sunni political parties including the LF led by Samir Geagea, the LPP led by Samy Gemayel, and the Future Movement (FM) led by Saad Hariri accused the participation of Hezbollah of jeopardizing the sovereignty of Lebanon. Hezbollah’s military engagement in Syria placed the country in a vulnerable state against external threats\textsuperscript{293} and led to high criticism from the Arab world.\textsuperscript{294} The Sunni community of Lebanon perceived Hezbollah as a threat to its livelihood because Hezbollah targeted mostly Sunni Muslims.\textsuperscript{295} The Lebanese state denounced Hezbollah’s military activities in the Syrian war when President Sleiman publicly requested Hezbollah to withdraw from the neighboring country.\textsuperscript{296} Hezbollah utilized security as the prime factor to advocate and legitimize its military engagement in the Syrian war.\textsuperscript{297} Nevertheless, some politicians feared the effects of Hezbollah’s

\textsuperscript{292} Slim, “Hezbollah and Syria,” 67.
\textsuperscript{294} Lob, “Is Hezbollah Confronting,” 2-3.
\textsuperscript{295} Khatib, “Hezbollah’s Ascent.”
\textsuperscript{296} Dominic Evans, “Lebanese president urges Hezbollah to pull out of Syria,” \textit{Reuters}, June 20, 2013, \url{http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-lebanon-idUSBRE95J0CD20130620}
\textsuperscript{297} Darwich and Fakhoury, “Casting the Other,” 10.
military engagement. Geagea states “the fighting of Hezbollah in Syria would have consequences not only for the present, yet unfortunately it would have lasting consequences in the future even for the next 50 or 100 years.”

4.2.1 Narrative

Hezbollah initially repudiated its involvement in the Syrian war. The fighters of Hezbollah were sent to Syria to advise and train the Syrian army. Slim asserts that the “Syria narrative” of Hezbollah gained the support of the Shiite communities and the “regional audience.” Hezbollah justified its presence in Syria through a narrative based on three premises; the protection of Shiite religious sites and villages; the Israeli-Western power invasion, and the takfiri threat.

First, the objective of Hezbollah in Syria was to protect the religious sites of the mosque, the mausoleum of Sayyida Sitt Zeinab, and the Shiite villages along the Syrian-Lebanese border. Nasrallah used the religious aspect to appeal to Shiite sympathizers. Hezbollah strongly emphasized protecting the religious shrines. Hezbollah feared that the Damascus

299 Sullivan, “Hezbollah in Syria.”
300 Slim, “Hezbollah and Syria,” 63.
301 Ibid.
302 Ibid., 64.
shrines would fall into the hands of the Islamists vowing to destroy them since the Islamists destroyed other religious monuments across the country such as Husseiniya in the province. Shiites from territories of Lebanon and Iraq gathered to protect the religious sites in Syria. Hezbollah’s religious discourse aimed to prevent the reenactment of the sectarian violence experienced by the Shiite community of Iraq in 2006. The significance of the Shiite shrines was further exhibited through a propaganda video game created by Hezbollah titled “The Holy Defense: Protecting the Homeland and the Holy sites.”

Second, the prevalence of Hezbollah’s narrative allowed the group to shift its role of resistance to an role of involvement in the Syrian war. Hezbollah accused Israel of being responsible for the Syrian uprising and undermining the axis of resistance by being part of a Israeli-Western conspiracy. Hezbollah utilized the violence to relate the takfiri

303 Daher, “Hezbollah, the Lebanese Sectarian.”
308 Ibid., 63.
309 Ibid., 64.
threat to the Israeli threat directing to the Shiite audience.\textsuperscript{310} Israel played an active role in the Syrian war by leading more than hundred attacks targeting Hezbollah, and Iran in Syria.\textsuperscript{311} The fall of the Syrian regime would be portrayed as a victory to Israel and its Western allies from a geopolitical standpoint. Hezbollah’s engagement in Syria was an attempt made to stabilize the balance of power against Israel and US.\textsuperscript{312} Nasrallah stated, “should Syria fall into the hands of the Americans, the Israelis, the takfiri groups and America’s representatives in the region which call themselves regional states, the resistance will be besieged and Israel would reenter Lebanon, impose its conditions on Lebanon, and renew its greed and projects in it.”  \textsuperscript{313} Hezbollah addressed the necessity to participate in the Syrian war to fight against the continuous threat of Israel\textsuperscript{314} and for the protection of Palestine.\textsuperscript{315} According to Hezbollah, the dilemmas of Israel and the Syrian war are “naturally” linked. \textsuperscript{316}

Third, the participation of Hezbollah in Syria was based on the security rhetoric.\textsuperscript{317}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item [310] Ibid., 67.
\item [312] Ibid.
\item [313] Ibid, quoted in Speech by Hassan Nasrallah, May 25, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3gw60_F28zY
\item [315] Aurélie Daher, Hezbollah: The Political Economy, 184.
\item [316] Aurélie Daher, “Hezbollah and the Syrian Conflict,” Middle East Institute, November 4, 2015, http://www.mei.edu/content/map/hezbollah-and-syrian-conflict
\item [317] Darwich and Fakhoury, “Casting the Other,” 10.
\end{thebibliography}
security rhetoric affirmed Hezbollah as the only deterrent against the takfiri threat and the resistance to Israel. The weakness of the Lebanese state in past conflicts consolidated this idea at which the military capacity of Hezbollah gained legitimacy both domestically and regionally. Hezbollah engaged in the Syrian conflict with the objective of protecting Lebanon against the takfiri groups. Michael Young, editor at Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut, confirmed: “they [Hezbollah] exploited this disarray within the Sunni community in a way to ensure that no one would challenge Hezbollah and they used the fear of extremism as one method that they could use along with the Lebanese state, to neutralize any Sunni groups who might threaten or want to engage in terrorist actions inside of Lebanon.” The attacks by Islamist insurgents in Lebanon took place shortly after Hezbollah publicly announced its military engagement in Syria. Numerous attacks were carried out into Lebanese territory particularly in Hezbollah strongholds in Southern Beirut and the Bekaa valley. On May 26, 2013, rockets hit Dahiye the operations hub of Hezbollah followed by a car bomb killing more than 50 people on March 1.

320 Daher, Hezbollah: The Political Economy, 184.
July 9, 2013. A Sunni Islamist group, the Brigades of Aisha, claimed responsibility on a car bomb killing 20 and injuring over 300 individuals the following month. On November 13, 2013, explosions targeted the Iranian Embassy in Beirut killing more than 20 people. The al-Qaeda branch in Lebanon, Abdullah Azzam Brigade, claimed responsibility for the attack. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) with the assistance of Syria-based jihadists, Jibhat al-Nusra, seized control of the town of Arsal in 2014. Suicide bombings took place inside a church in the village of Qaa in June 2016. A prominent incident marked the abduction of Lebanese soldiers by ISIS. In August 2017, the Lebanese state and Hezbollah took part in negotiations that involved the release 400 ISIS combatants in exchange for the bodies of the Lebanese soldiers held captive since 2014.

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August 2017. The Lebanese government held a state funeral a month later. In June 2017, recent suicide bombings were carried out in the refugee camps near the Syrian border. The incident occurred during a military raid planned by the Lebanese Army. The violence carried out by ISIS and Jabhat Al Nusra legitimized the decision of Hezbollah to enter Syria. Nawar Al Sahili, a Hezbollah member of parliament, stated: “we [Hezbollah] didn’t expect this level of positivity from people, we were shocked. The way people reacted was incredible. The people are convinced that what we are doing is really defending them, defending the country.” As a result, the majority of Lebanese Shiites supported Hezbollah’s military engagement. The Shiites support in Lebanon increased with the rise of ISIS and attacks on Lebanese soil since 2013. According to the 2015 Haya Bina survey, 78.7% of Shiites in Lebanon approved the engagement of Hezbollah in Syria. In the opinion of Abbas Jawhari, the Shiite Sheikh in the Bekaa, “the Shiites felt threatened so they supported Hezbollah to protect the Syrian regime since

Hezbollah exploited the religious, sectarian, resistance, and the nationalist discourse to appeal to the various segments in Lebanon; the Lebanese Shiites, the Muslim community and the Lebanese population, to justify its active role in the Syrian war.  

4.2.2 Military Strength

Hezbollah continued to be the front-runner in the battle against the threat of jihadists in Lebanon due to the lack of better alternative to defend national security in Lebanon. The victory of Hezbollah against the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon in the year 2000 and in the July war of 2006 certified the military power of Hezbollah. Hezbollah became “the most heavily armed group in the region and the only non-state professionally armed group in Lebanon.” The army of Hezbollah remains more powerful than the Lebanese army characterized as small and weak. The Lebanese state and some from the Shiite community in Lebanon relies heavily on the protection of Hezbollah against external threats. Some Shiites perceived neither the state nor the national army as a

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342 Slim, “Hezbollah and Syria,” 64.
344 Christophersen, “Split Personality: Hezbollah.”
345 Filkins, “Hezbollah Widens.”
“guarantee of security” against the jihadist threats. The newly elected President Michel Aoun legitimized Hezbollah’s armament based on the rhetoric of security. The Lebanese head of state reaffirmed that Hezbollah’s weapons do not oppose the Lebanese state because the organization defends the country, “as long as the Army doesn’t have the needed power to fend off [Israel’s] threats...We feel the need for [Hezbollah’s] weapons to be there to complement the role of the Army.” Hezbollah provided assistance to the Lebanese army as the latter was physically incapable of fulfilling its duty of defending the country against external threats. Hezbollah’s request to participate in the Syrian war made by Assad regime led Hezbollah to become a pivotal non-state actor in Syria. According to New York Times’ Ben Hubbard, “Hezbollah plays a large training and coordinating role for the foreign forces that have come out to help the Syrian government.” Moreover, Hezbollah’s participation as a non-state actor elevated its status in the Lebanese state. Hezbollah undermined Lebanon’s status quo by breaching

346 Daher, Hezbollah: The Political Economy, 189.
351 Choucair, “Hezbollah in Syria.”
the 1943 National Pact and the 2012 Baabda Declaration.\textsuperscript{353} The divisions involving Hezbollah use of weapons are still present. Prime Minister Hariri expressed dissatisfaction concerning Hezbollah’s armaments calling it illegitimate.\textsuperscript{354} The LPP challenged the issue of weaponry on the question of the legality of the Lebanese constitution by stating, “only the army and law enforcement must be responsible for defending the country.”\textsuperscript{355} Hezbollah’s announcement to engage in the Syrian war caused a fierce reaction from the international community. The United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon expressed disagreement through social media as Hezbollah violated the UNSCR 1701, which called for its disarmament.\textsuperscript{356} Political leaders including the commander of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, showed solidarity against Sunni radicals by supporting the Lebanese army.\textsuperscript{357} In the face of controversy, Hezbollah, the LAF, and the Syrian army cooperated against the takfiri threat.\textsuperscript{358} Hezbollah oversaw the districts of Hermel and Baalbek in Lebanon,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{353} Sami Nader, “Lebanese independence from 1943 to Baabda Declaration,” \textit{Al-Monitor}, November 26, 2013, \url{http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/lebanon-independence-baabda-declaration-syria.html}
\item \textsuperscript{354} Ellen Francis and John Stonestreet, “Aoun, Hariri’s Hezbollah comments lay bare Lebanon’s political divide,” \textit{Reuters}, February 14, 2017, \url{http://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-politics-hariri-hezbollah-idUSKBN15T2FX}
\item \textsuperscript{356} Lebanese Daily “Al-Akhbar” Attacks UN Special Coordinator For Lebanon Over Opposition To Hizbullah Weapons, \textit{Middle East Media Research Institute}, Special Dispatch No.6783, February 14, 2017, \url{https://www.memri.org/reports/lebanese-daily-al-akhbar-attacks-un-special-coordinator-lebanon-over-opposition-hizbullah}
\item \textsuperscript{357} Laila Bassam and Tom Perry, “Radical threat unites Lebanese and strange allies behind army,” \textit{Reuters}, August 10, 2014, \url{http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-lebanon-security-military-idUKKBN0GA06X20140810}
\item \textsuperscript{358} Nour Samaha, “US, UK join Lebanon’s strange military bedfellows,” \textit{Al-Monitor}, August 27, 2017, \url{https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/08/lebanon-army-offensive-isis-weapons-hezbollah-syria.html}
\end{itemize}
whereas the LAF supervised the Arsal area. The operations proved to be successful. Consequently, terrorist attacks by Sunni radicals made Hezbollah’s disarmament no longer a pressing topic for the Lebanese political actors.

4.3 The impact of Hezbollah’s Role on Lebanon’s Power-Sharing System

The launch of the Syrian war in 2011 left unexpected repercussions in Lebanon. The Lebanese state hosted of the largest number of refugees per capita. The influx of refugees from Syria led to an increase of existing tension among sectarian elites. For this reason, Hezbollah’s predominance is not solely confined to the military dimension, yet extends politically. Hezbollah used the Syrian crisis as an opportunity to exploit the Lebanese power-sharing system for its interest. Hezbollah managed to boycott and challenge any form of political procedure or agreement against its actions in the Syrian war through its veto power. Hezbollah’s power seemed to be no match for the

359 Ibid.
365 Darwich and Fakhoury, “Casting the Other,” 12.
opposition by stretching its influence within and beyond domestic politics.\textsuperscript{366} Hezbollah’s foreign actions impacted the political balance of power in Lebanon by upsetting power-sharing dynamics\textsuperscript{367} and worsening sectarian cleavages.\textsuperscript{368} These sectarian divisions affected elite and grassroots cohesion by creating contention around the issue.\textsuperscript{369}

4.3.1 Divisions between Hezbollah and Lebanon’s political system

Hezbollah’s unilateral decision to participate in the Syrian war tested the Lebanese power-sharing system by entrenching tension between two political blocs: March 14 and March 8.\textsuperscript{370} In 2013, Prime Minister Miqati extended the tenure of office for Internal Security Forces chief Ashraf Rifi.\textsuperscript{371} Hezbollah disapproved of the decision to elect a member of the March 14 coalition and extended the term.\textsuperscript{372} The cabinet voted unfavorable to form a “supervisory electoral body.” As a result, Miqati stepped down from his position as Prime Minister\textsuperscript{373} and the pro-Syrian Miqati government collapsed.\textsuperscript{374} The

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{366} Hazbun, “Assembling security in,” 1063.
\item \textsuperscript{368} Salloukh, “The Syrian War,” 69.
\item \textsuperscript{369} Benedetta Berti, “How Does the Syrian Civil War End for Hezbollah?” \textit{Foreign Policy Research Institute} (2016), \url{https://www.fpri.org/article/2016/09/syrian-civil-war-end-hezbollah/}
\item \textsuperscript{370} Darwich and Fakhoury, “Casting the Other,”12.
\item \textsuperscript{372} Hazbun, “Assembling security in,” 1063.
\item \textsuperscript{373} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{374} Laila Bassam, “Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati resigns,” \textit{Reuters}, March 22, 2013, \url{http://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-mikati-idUSBRE92L0TG20130322}
\end{itemize}
absence of government led into a 10-month gridlock until a new national unity government under Prime Minister Tamman Salaam was formed. 

During the National Dialogue meetings, President Sleiman created a dissociation policy known as the Baabda Declaration in 2012. The objective of the dissociation policy was to ease the tension between both rival coalitions. The official document demanded the Lebanese state to not take part in conflicts outside of Lebanon largely Syria’s internal affairs. In 2013, Hezbollah announced its military engagement in Syria infringing the Baabda Declaration. In response President Sleiman disproved Hezbollah’s argument based on the “army-people-resistance formula,” that legitimized Hezbollah’s engagement in Syria as a resistance group protecting Lebanon from Israeli threats. Hezbollah retaliated by abstaining from series of the National Dialogue where its arms were not open for discussion. The presidential vacuum led the general elections to be continuously extended since the last vote in 2009. The elections were delayed on two separate occasions since June 2013 until Aoun’s presidency in May 2018.

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376 Ibid, quoted in National Dialogue Committee of Lebanon, “Baabda Declaration.”


379 Darwich and Fakhoury, “Casting the Other,” 12.


failed to elect a new successor after the end of President Michel Sleiman’s term on May 2014. The absence of a president led Lebanon into a power vacuum, at which over 20 parliamentary sessions were held to nominate a president. However, the quorum could not be met, as both political blocs blocked the rival’s running candidate each time.

After a two year presidential deadlock, Michel Aoun, an ally of Hezbollah, was elected president on October 31, 2016. The outcome of the election was declared a victory for Hezbollah by Iran. The nomination for presidency came through when Geagea withdrew his candidacy and endorsed the bid followed by Hariri’s support and nomination of Prime Minister. The new and expanded cabinet resulted March 8 to an increase of eight to seventeen seats. The new cabinet paved the way for greater representation among pro-Syrian and Iranian parties. Geagea’s support for the candidacy of Aoun, nevertheless brought reconciliation between the two largest Christian political parties. The

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backing of Geagea allied both competing blocs March 8 and March 14. In June 2017, the Lebanese government passed a new parliamentary election law that replaced the 1960 sectarian-based law with proportional representation (PR). The new law decreased the number of divisions to 15 major electoral districts across the nation. The new parliamentary election law provided minority parties and independent candidates greater opportunities to enter parliament. This new law fortified sectarian-based groups by helping political parties to gain the most benefits. Communities that are majority in population would have more power on deciding who will secure the seats for communities that are minority. For this reason, Hezbollah and its allies advocated for PR during negotiations. The PR system privileged Hezbollah to secure its political authority in Lebanon. Ideally, the PR system creates opportunities for unorthodox parties and minorities. In the case of Lebanon, the PR system worked in favor of the confessional system. The electoral system stimulates the voting of citizens based on sectarian identity.

394 Ibid.
395 Daoud, “Hezbollah’s Latest Conquest.”
Contrary to the principles of corporate consociation, the “electoral districts will be more “homogenous” than before where we can find a decline of the number of mixed-sect districts and decreasing opportunities for cross-sectarian alliances or cooperation.” The PR system outlined the establishment of the status quo at which no great changes are done to those in power. Therefore, the PR system paved the way for greater the support of Hezbollah in governance.\textsuperscript{396} In the 2018 May parliamentary elections, Hezbollah and its allies obtained no less than sixty-five seats, more than half the seats in the Lebanese parliament. The results allowed Sunnis supporting Hezbollah to win seats in districts generally dominated by the opposing March 14 camp.\textsuperscript{397} Following the parliamentary elections, the cabinet resigned\textsuperscript{398} leading to a nine-month stalemate before the new formation of the new Lebanese government on January 31, 2019.\textsuperscript{399}

Hezbollah successfully exploited the Lebanese power-sharing system by politically immobilizing the government on numerous occasions. Hezbollah did so to ensure the direction of its political agenda and its internal and external activities stayed


The presidential deadlock leading to the nomination of Aoun ceased all political activities and processes affecting political institutions. In November 2017, Hariri resigned his position as Prime Minister and fled the country to Saudi Arabia in fear for his safety. Such events demonstrated the fragility of Lebanon’s corporate model. Political leaders including President Aoun and Hezbollah quickly reacted strongly against the resignation of their longtime political rival. Talks with political peers and international intervention including France and Egypt eventually led Hariri to resume his political position as Prime Minister.

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400 Khatib, “Hezbollah’s Ascent and.”
401 Ibid.
4.3.2 Inter-Elite Rifts

The engagement of Hezbollah in the Syrian conflict sharpened inter-elite divisions in Lebanon particularly among the Christian communities.407 Christian leaders from both coalitions, March 8 and March 14, positioned themselves in conflict over the matter. March 8’s Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) feared the arrival of a regime that could threaten the Christian minorities. March 14’s LF recognized the legitimacy of the uprising against the Syrian government.408 Tension between both camps manifested throughout the 2016 presidential elections. Hariri publicly endorsed March 8 member and leader of the Marada movement Sleiman Frangieh for the office of president instead of the March 14 camp running member, Geagea. In response Geagea supported Aoun’s candidacy for president.409 As this surprising act demonstrated peace and reconciliation between both historical warlords, the change was not embraced by all particularly within both rival camps. The nomination of Aoun for president created an internal fragmentation within the March 14 camp. The LPP refused to take part in Hariri’s newly formed government.410

408 Ibid.
Gemayel criticized the political alignment of Geagea with Hezbollah and held Geagea accountable for the fragmentation within the pro-west alliance. Gemayel claimed “Geagea and Hariri facilitated the decision-making of Hezbollah of electing Michel Aoun as head of the state and through the presidential elections Hezbollah managed to put his hands on the presidency and the government.” This political shift reflected a change in the domestic and regional balance of power. Tension between both leading Christian parties persisted. Hariri attempted to form a new cabinet after the general elections in May 2018, yet this proved difficult due to the rivalry between the two Christian political parties, LF and FPM. In addition, foreign minister and leader of FMP Gebran Bassil proposed “revival of political relations” between both capitals of Syria and Lebanon based on economic reasons and expedite the relocation of Syrian refugees to Syria. This statement heightened inter-elite rifts as groups such as LF, PSP and the FM for fear of reliving the Syrian occupation in Lebanon. The opposing political parties

413 Berti, “Re-Shuffling the Cards.”
414 Sunniva, Rose, “Lebanon’s PM Hariri must push on as speaker dashes hope of cabinet agreement,” The National, October 7, 2018, https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/lebanon-s-pm-hariri-must-push-on-as-speaker-dashes-hope-of-cabinet-agreement-1.778162
argued that Bassil’s decision should be made by the government and not by an individual.415

The engagement of Hezbollah magnified the concerns among the Sunni community. The failure of Hariri to overturn Hezbollah’s decision to enter Syria caused the Sunni community to question their leader.416 The Sunni community perceived the reaction of Hariri towards the dominance of Hezbollah as passive. A decrease of Saudi Arabia and Hariri influence moved Sunnis to fear becoming a minority group in Lebanon.417 Sunni civilians voiced their concerns in battle with the rebels in Syria and at the polls. Rifi, a Sunni critic of Hariri, claimed victory by winning majority seats in the municipality elections held in the northern city of Tripoli in May 2016. Rifi’s win raised new concerns in the stronghold of traditional Sunni leaders Hariri and Miqati.418 The victory mirrored the Sunnis growing dissent towards the leadership of Hariri regarding the growing power of Hezbollah in Lebanon. The outcome reflected a deep fragmentation within the Sunni

417 Ibid.
community. Consequently, the communal vulnerability and lack of political unity within the Sunni community allowed Hezbollah to impose its political hegemony on the domestic sphere.

4.3.3 Provoking Grassroots Tension

The participation in Syria of Hezbollah provoked grassroots and increased sectarian tension. Hezbollah’ military engagement in the Syrian war unraveled into tit–for–tat violence between the Sunni and Shiite regions. The transborder loyalties displayed into Lebanese society prompted violent episodes to unfold. Alongside the Syrian-Lebanese border, fighting erupted between two Lebanese neighborhoods in Tripoli. The Jabal Mohsen area, resided by the Alawites, endorse the Assad regime and the Bab al-Tabbaneh area resided by the Sunnis oppose it. Moderate and extremist Sunni groups demanded an end to the Assad regime and the participation of Hezbollah in Syria. The Sunnis held Hezbollah accountable for the implications of the Syrian conflict on Lebanese borders. The Sunni pressure increased to the extent that the moderate diplomacy of Hariri no longer satisfied members of the Sunni community. The Sunnis viewed Hariri’s inability to

422 Ibid.
423 Khatib, “Hezbollah’s Ascent and.”
influence the actions of Hezbollah as a weakness. Sunni extremists sought to compensate for the lack of leadership of Hariri through violent measures. Salafi preachers such as Egyptian cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi, encouraged the Lebanese Sunnis to fight against Hezbollah and the Syrian government. As a result, the Sunnis in Lebanon slipped across the border to support the rebels in Syria. Firas Ballout, Sunni Sheikh from Tripoli, affirmed, “as per the Sunni in Lebanon and in Syria, this intervention [Hezbollah in Syria] was part of the extermination process that some countries are following in this region.” Hezbollah’s military participation in Syria contributed to the radicalization of the Sunni Lebanese population. The rise of sectarianism provided the opportunity for Salafists to organize and take action against Hezbollah. Lebanon witnessed the rise of Salafist cleric Ahmad al-Assir. The former condemned the hegemony of Hezbollah in the southern region of Lebanon and its participation in the Syrian war. In the southern city of Sidon, clashes erupted between supporters of the Salafist cleric al-Assir and Hezbollah resulting in the death of two individuals. Sunni extremism and

424 Harb, “A feeling of defeat,”
426 Filkins, “Hezbollah Widens.”
support for Al-Qaeda have risen in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon such as Ein El-Hilweh.432

4.4 Conflict?

Sectarian dynamics previously led Lebanon to conflict as illustrated in the 1975 civil war in Lebanon. Hezbollah’s participation in Syria destabilized the Lebanese balance of power yet has not resulted into an open conflict.

Lebanon’s confessional system was built with a purpose to promote peaceful co-existence among various sectarian communities. Fakhoury describes sectarianism in Lebanese politics as the “glue holding all interest and identity groups together.”433 The top-down approach of the Lebanese political infrastructure provides the Lebanese elite to govern over their communities while strengthening their power.434 The Lebanese elite willingly interacts together by reason of corporate consociation rests on a win-win or lose-lose situation. Under these circumstances, the benefits are greater when all relevant groups

cooperate. According to Salloukh, the Lebanese power-sharing system is simultaneously “a problem and a protection from lapsing into civil war, as long as this corporate consociation formula serves the economic and political interests of the elite, they will maintain it and it will serve as a protection.” 435 Cooperation among the Lebanese elite of various factions is based on the common denominator of safeguarding the current system. 436 The Lebanese elite made a pragmatic decision to favor the preservation of the power-sharing system and avoid the breakout of a civil war 437 over contesting Hezbollah’s actions in Syria. Salamey confirms, “the threat of open conflict and civil war has provided a strong incentive for sectarian elites to negotiate political reform and settlement and to reach agreement.” 438 The takfiri threat forced the Lebanese elite to come to terms with Hezbollah’s decision and its use of arms to preserve their interests and protect national security. Nicholas Sehnaoui, Vice-President of FMP, reaffirms “Hezbollah fought in Syria alongside the Syrian regime, the Syrian government forces, against the terrorists and opposition fighters.” 439 The Lebanese politicians prevented the collapse of the political system at the expense of Hezbollah exploiting the corporate model for its personal gains. This includes exempting Hezbollah from violating official

436 Byman, “Keeping the Peace,” 141.  
agreements including the National Dialogue, the UN resolutions and the Baabda Declaration. Cooperation became a necessity at all costs even if Hezbollah’s military participation in the Syrian war infringed fundamental principles of power-sharing while negatively impacting the social cohesion and political balance of power in Lebanon.

Ironically, foreign actors have been frequently involved in the internal affairs of Lebanon. Lebanese elite have historically depended on external support to facilitate inter-communal cooperation. External actors have shaped and enforced power-sharing agreements in the Lebanese state over the years. Hariri’s unexpected resignation and refuge in Saudi Arabia demonstrated a recent case of the influence of regional powers in Lebanon and the dependency of Lebanese politicians to their foreign sponsors. According to Geukjian, power-sharing in Lebanon could not have been attainable without external intervention. For that reason, cooperation between elites cannot be applied to Lebanon. The Lebanese elite seeks refuge and external support to gain an advantage over their rivals. Furthermore, external interventions contradict the purpose of consociationalism. Lebanon’s volatile political situation increases insecurity among sectarian groups. This correlation fortifies the commitment of actors to the power-sharing arrangement as the only means of security in deeply divided societies. Collaboration among the Lebanese elite consistently takes place when attempting to maintain stability and preservation of the

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political system. The corporate model served a coping mechanism to overcome the effects of the Syrian war such as the influx of refugees and Hezbollah’s military engagement.\textsuperscript{441} The long-term sustainability of peace in corporate consociations is not guaranteed, nonetheless. Recurrent political deadlocks at the executive and legislative levels reaffirms the high suspicion and distrust that continues to reside within the Lebanese power-sharing system since 2011.

\textsuperscript{441} Fakhoury, “Lebanon's Perilous Balancing,” 354.
Chapter 5

Discussion of Findings

Corporate consociations’ predetermined positions aim to secure power sharing for all relevant participants. In theory, consociationalism brings great advantage to minorities. Minorities in a corporate consociation can compete at an equal platform with their political peers. In practice, fair representation is not always guaranteed. The nature of corporate arrangements allows groups to benefit from cooperation. At the same time, rigid quotas and structures prompt actors to exploit political opportunities to consolidate their predominance. On that account, corporate arrangements, where identity is key and the loudest voice wins, can have adverse effects in divided societies.

Hezbollah’s military engagement in Syria allowed Hezbollah to expand its power while testing the boundaries of the confessional system. Hezbollah, both discursively and actively, constructed its role as a strategic player in Lebanon’s power-sharing formula. The war in Syria enabled Hezbollah to play a dual role, both as a challenger and a balancer within the Lebanese political system.
At first, Hezbollah’s participation in Syria raised heated contention. The military engagement provoked political polarization and inter-communal tensions particularly Sunni-Shiite confrontations. The willingness of Hezbollah to engage militarily in Syria without the consent of its political peers triggered insecurity and intensified the security dilemma among politicians in Lebanon. Opposing parties feared that Hezbollah’s military operations would have tremendous effects on the Lebanese confessional system. On the one hand, some political factions flagged potential spillovers from the Syrian war and their implications for Lebanon. For instance, the Christian Free Patriotic Movement referred to the presence of a higher number of Sunni refugees who are “military-age men”\(^{442}\) as a threat of terrorism and radicalization. On the other, the Lebanese Sunnis viewed the involvement of Hezbollah as a direct threat to their livelihoods\(^{443}\) and an attempt to impose its hegemony in Lebanon. Under these circumstances, some radical Sunni factions resorted to alternative measures such as aiding contending factions in Syria to counterbalance the military support of Hezbollah to the Assad regime.

In a divided environment such as Lebanon, Hezbollah’s military involvement in the Syrian conflict heightened existing security dilemmas: Lebanese actors tied the outcome of the war in Syria to their survival.

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\(^{443}\) Khatib, “Hezbollah’s Ascent.”
Despite sectarian and political differences, Hezbollah’s military intervention did not result in an open conflict and has not led to the breakdown of the consociational system. Hezbollah drew on the takfiri threat in that regard as the rationale for its intervention, and managed to frame its military role as that of deterrence not only for its constituency, but also for the Lebanese population.\(^{444}\) It drew on various speech acts that legitimized the logic of its intervention, and in which Hezbollah portrayed itself as an entity capable of upholding national security, a duty the Lebanese government could not fulfill.\(^{445}\) This legitimizing discourse garnered support in the Lebanese context.

At the same time, even though Hezbollah’s participation in the neighboring conflict amplified security dilemmas among Lebanese groups, its military entanglement has not resulted into an open conflict. On the contrary, the security dilemma is the very reason that the Lebanese power-sharing arrangement remains intact and a priority for the Lebanese elite. The political elite in Lebanon recognized that cooperation is one of the fundamental elements of consociationalism, and thereby of their survival. Political parties such as the PSP, and AM, a Shiite political rival to Hezbollah, preferred being spectators while Hezbollah took charge in the Syrian conflict. As Walid Jumblatt, leader of the PSP, claims “I decided it was unnecessary to have a clash with Hezbollah because they represent a major community called the Shiites. Therefore, it was not in the interest of the

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\(^{444}\) Hazbun, “Assembling security in,” 1062.

Druze when Hezbollah started intervening in Syria.” The AM expressed similar viewpoint. Ayoub Hmayed, AM Member of Parliament states, “we [Amal Movement] approved the intervention of Hezbollah but we didn’t get involved.”

Lebanon’s corporate model rests on complex interdependent relationships of power and cooperation among the key political actors. When a group is more powerful and prosperous than any group including the national army, equal designation is automatically erased. Hezbollah’s political peers are aware of its military strength. Elie Baraghid, chief of staff of the LF, stated, “when we are around the table with Hezbollah ministers, in dialogue or negotiations and aware that we are speaking to someone stronger than us, psychologically that can influence anyone. We are cautious about what we are doing every time.” In this case, corporate consociationalism becomes both a setting for discord and cooperation. Though participating groups may fear each other’s agenda, they remain bound to each other through dense ties. In this context, they are hesitant to challenge the system in such a way that it breaks down.

Such dynamics are embedded in Lebanon’s political history. Power struggles have never ceased to exist in Lebanon’s political sphere. Still, Lebanon’s political actors have, in

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various instances, deliberately avoided the breakout of a civil war, and have sought through various devices to preserve the power-sharing system. 449 In this perspective, Lebanese actors including Hezbollah have realized it is far more beneficial to work with rather than against the power-sharing system.

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Chapter 6

Conclusion

Corporate consociationalism accommodates groups based on factors such as ethnicity or religion\textsuperscript{450} by which positions in power are predetermined based on this criterion.\textsuperscript{451} At the same time, such rigid structures provide an opportunity for domestic actors to challenge existing parameters. The participation of Hezbollah in the 2011 Syrian civil war is a case in point. Dynamics within Lebanon’s corporate consociation provided a fertile ground for Hezbollah to draw on the neighboring war in Syria as an opportunity to strengthen its power domestically and regionally. The involvement of Hezbollah in Syria consolidated its power and expanded its military and political capabilities beyond national borders at the risk of unsettling Lebanon's communal dynamics and provoking inter-elite and sectarian rifts. Hezbollah seized the Syrian crisis as an opportunity to safeguard its political interests and expand its influence. First, Hezbollah strengthened ties with the Axis of Resistance and its international allies like Russia and China to solidify its power on a regional level. Second, Hezbollah restored legitimacy and integrity within the Shiite community. Third, Hezbollah consolidated its cooperation with other Lebanese factions.

\textsuperscript{450} McGarry and O’Leary, “Iraq’s Constitution of,” 675.

\textsuperscript{451} Salamey, “Failing Consociationalism in,” 85.
and the LAF military against the Takfiri threat. Finally, Hezbollah increased its power in Lebanon and extended its role and influence in the Middle East.

At the same time, the role of Hezbollah as a challenger must be embedded in a more complex reading of Lebanon’s corporate consociationalism. As previously demonstrated, Lebanese factions including Hezbollah have sought to preserve the power-sharing agreement notwithstanding stark divisions.

Hezbollah’s case generates insights on actors’ behavior within corporate consociationalism, and more particularly, on how actors draw on power-sharing arrangements to expand their power. In broader perspective, it also shows how the strength of corporate consociation is, paradoxically, also its weakness. The Lebanese power sharing illustrates the interdependency of actors, yet this interdependence may serve as a commodity for a “stronger” group [Hezbollah] to challenge the corporate model for its interests [military intervention in Syria].

Hezbollah initially participated in Syria’s war without seeking the approval of its political peers. Given the insecure sociopolitical setting in Lebanon and the fragility of the power-sharing system, Hezbollah eventually sought to receive recognition from its political peers to avoid the collapse of the power-sharing system. In this context, the role of Hezbollah
cannot be confined to a black and white characterization as the group has played a dual role as a challenger and a balancer within the Lebanese political system. Its military intervention in Syria’s war reflects this duality. Hezbollah challenged power-sharing parameters on this occasion. Nonetheless, it has made sure through a politics of negotiation with domestic actors to show its commitment to the power-sharing system. This finding is to be contextualized in the broader dynamics and dilemmas of Lebanon’s consociationalism. Since the establishment of the Lebanese state, players have been caught in a dilemma: They have sought various ways to challenge the rigid power-sharing formula. At the same time, they have been keen on preserving it, for its breakdown has costly consequences.

This thesis opens new perspectives for further inquiry: To what extent does the case of Hezbollah’s intervention in Syria’s war alongside its implications for Lebanese politics inform us about the limitations of corporate consociations in highly unstable regional environments? At the same time, in what ways does the case shed light on the limitations of Lebanon’s sectarian power sharing? Are corporate consociations able to accommodate competing conceptions and forms of power? In addition, can Lebanon’s version of corporate consociationalism continue to accommodate contending factions without open conflict?
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