The Survival of minorities in a Turbulent Environment: The Case of the Druze in the Arab Spring

By

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A thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in International Affairs

School of Arts and Sciences
May 2013
Thesis Proposal Form

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On (dd/mm/yy): July 23, 2012

has presented a Thesis proposal entitled:

Drug Politics in Contemporary Middle East

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Comments / Remarks / Conditions to Proposal Approval:

Define secular sectarian minority majority alliance
Integrate more literature relevant to thesis
Expanding research approach and focus on secondary sources in Syria and Iraq
Israel limit historic examination and close from giving subject conclusion

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The Survival of minorities in a Turbulent Environment: The Case of the Druze in the Arab Spring

Result of Thesis defense:

☐ Thesis was successfully defended. Passing grade is granted

X Thesis is approved pending corrections. Passing grade to be granted upon review and approval by thesis Advisor

☐ Thesis is not approved. Grade NP is recorded

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Limit citations to academic sources. Editorial changes to strengthen writing style. Change reference of informants interviewed from Druze ‘experts’ to ‘professionals’. Changes Approved by Thesis Advisor: Dr. Imad Salamey  
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Acknowledgments

This Master thesis is the fruit of many years in academic studies that helped in structuring my personality, empowering my capabilities, and widening my knowledge about life. These years taught me that no matter how much I learn, and how much I earn, I will always remain a humble student in the school of life learning new things during every new day. These years also taught me that no matter how much I know, it will always be a miniscule fraction, compared to the knowledge the rest of the world has to offer. Moreover, I learnt that improving myself starts with being a good listener, a rational thinker, and a true believer in what I stand for. These long years left many unforgettable memories that were painted in my mind and heart, and that remind me every day that I should value my life, and learn from the mistakes I made in the past, in order to avoid them in the future.

I would have never been the person I am today without the sacrifice of my family, who were beside me emotionally, morally, and financially, every step of these academic years, in order to provide me with the proper atmosphere that helped me be. I thank my father Refaat, my mother Sawsan, and my sister Hanadi, for being next to me in times of need, for motivating me, and for believing in me. I also thank my friends who were always there to lend a helping hand.

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to Dr. Imad Salamey who advised me during the writing of this thesis, helped me in sticking to the correct track whilst researching, gave me significant remarks about my writing, and above all, encouraged me all the way through. Special thanks to Lara Batato, who was patient enough to help me strengthen my language and writing, and who made my life easier during the writing of this thesis.
I will also take the opportunity to thank all those who gave me the privilege to interview them for this thesis, you have provided me with valuable information. I thank everyone who helped me, trusted me, pushed me further, and believed in me: I hope to have met, and to continue to meet their expectations.
The Survival of minorities in a Turbulent Environment: The Case of the Druze in the Arab Spring

Assem Refaat Abi Ali

Abstract

This thesis examines Druze politics in relation to other sectarian groups, particularly Sunni and Shia in Lebanon and Syria. Politics of Druze in the occupied Golan Heights and within the Israeli political system is also assessed. The central question that this thesis aims to answer is how Druze politics has been implicated by contemporary sectarian awakenings and how it is being articulated in relation to the different power sharing reconfigurations. The rational choice theory is used in order to entertain different responses. Three power sharing coalition-based arrangement scenarios are evaluated: minorities’ alliance, majority-minority alliance, and secular alliance. The rational choice of a minority to join one alliance rather than another is assessed according to both the durability and benefits attained. This thesis implements an opinion study approach of key Druze intellectual and political leaders in order to compare and assess rational choice perspectives in coalition strategies. The findings highlight serious uncertainty and division confronting the Druze in alliance choices amid regional turbulences and political upheavals. At the same time, the thesis reveals the fact that such differences and divisions within the Druze community may better serve its political interest by widening its margin of maneuverability during epoch of uncertain transitions. Thus, under political duress, the thesis rejects both ‘determinism’ and ‘unitarianism’ in minority’s coalition rational choice modality in favor of a situational thesis.

Keywords: Arab Spring, Minorities in MENA region, Minority-minority alliance, Minority-majority alliance, Secular alliance, Druze.
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Chapter One

Introduction

The Druze, a Minority in the Middle East

The Middle East, strategically positioned between three continents and is known for being the place of origin of numerous flourishing ancient civilizations as well as of the three monotheistic religions. At the beginning of the second decade of the twenty first century, the Middle East witnessed rapid and acute changes, such as major political revolutions under the pretext of achieving democracy and freedom of expression; these were called the 'Arab spring’ revolutions.

In the twentieth century, this region was dominated by dictatorships, totalitarian regimes and/or monarchies, which all tightly controlled the people, seized their freedom of expression and coercively ruled them with fear and tyranny. Surprisingly, it has witnessed for the first time in its history, mass demonstrations and wide political mobility in order to eradicate these regimes and achieve fair democracy. Countries like Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen experienced such elevated levels of mobility and mass demonstrations that political regimes were affected and eventually altered, while on the other hand, chaos is still dominating the political scene in Bahrain and Syria, even in the time of writing this paper, because of the particularity of each country, and its geopolitical position in the region. The challenge for these countries was to find a substitute for the collapsing regimes, an ideological paradigm that would achieve the goals of these revolutions. However, the religious identity of the people of the Middle East is said to be the most powerful identity, and thus the most powerful substitutes for the collapsing regimes were religious groups, specifically Islamic groups who emerged as the most organized and
popular political groups capable of inheriting and ameliorating the damaged regimes. This political Islam was perceived as a rising threat by the religious minorities in the Middle East, who started to worry about their future in the region at a time where Islamic fundamentalism was becoming more popular than moderate Islam. These religious minorities began to conceive of ways to preserve their continuity and guarantee their existence in this contemporary changing Middle East.

**Minorities in the Middle East**

The Middle East is not a homogenous region, but a heterogeneous one, where many minorities have lived aside the Muslim Sunni majority for one and a half millennium and have succeeded to survive and preserve their own cultural and religious values and customs, as well as achieving significant social, economic, and political posts that enabled them to play a major and essential role in shaping the history of the region. In addition to the numerous ethnic minorities in the Middle East, there is also a remarkable number of religious minorities who have been settled in this region for thousands of years. According to Columbia Encyclopedia, these are the Bahá’í, Yazidi, Mandean, Gnostics, Yarisans, Shabakits, Zoroastrians, Copts, Maronites, Assyrians, Shi’a, Armenians, Isma’ili, Jews, Alawites, Druze, and others.

A publication by the Thomas Reuters Foundation (2012) suggests that the open political space in the Middle East enables ethnic and sectarian grievances to increase, and minorities to be scapegoats. The considerable changes occurring in the Middle East represent hopes for democratization, but at the same time could reveal to be the most dangerous episode for religious minorities in the region.
This thesis focuses on a specific religious minority in the Middle East, i.e. the Druze. It takes on a case study in order to show how a small religious minority can survive turbulent transitions such as that storming Middle East and North African region. The centralization of sectarianism and religious fundamentalism in this transition is particularly challenging in relation to minorities. Thus, it becomes critically crucial for sectarian and ethnic groups, such as the Druze to forecast survival strategies that would maintain their political and demographic relevance.

**Origins of the Druze**

The Druze originated from Isma’ili Shi’I Islam in 1017 during the time of the sixth Fatimid caliph al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, and the movement spread from Egypt towards Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine (Makarem 2005:1). The Druze like to be called Mowahhidun because of their central belief in a mystical oneness with the One, and because they acquired their name ‘Druze’ from Muhammad ibn Isma’il al-Darazi, whom they consider an infidel.

According to Makarem (2005:5), “the Druze should follow seven commandments or virtues:

1- Veracity in the broadest sense of the word, that is, to profess the truth, to act according to the truth and to live for the truth.

2- Safeguarding, helping and guiding his fellow men or seeking their guidance along the path of truth and real knowledge.

3- Renouncing all beliefs leading to repudiation of the oneness of God and, consequently, to falsehood.

4- Dissociation from those who transgress against righteousness and justice, that is, those who hinder man from knowing the truth and treading upon the path of real knowledge.
5- Striving endlessly to achieve the real purpose of man, namely, to be in union with the One as much as in humanly possible.

6- Contentment with the divine law.

7- Submission to God’s Will and deeds.”

The second commandment explains the solidarity among the Druze community over the years of turmoil, in which the unity of the group was always the priority of the Druze’s spiritual and political leaders throughout the years, allowing for their survival. The other commandments reflect the real essence of this sect; it has also been subject to secrecy, but the latter could be another reason why this community has preserved its particularity and continuity in this region over the years.

Many tribes in Lebanon and southern Syria converted to the Druze sect between 1017 AD and 1043 AD, despite these tribes being present in the region before the Druze themselves. The Arslan and the Al-Monzir tribes were sent to the seashore of Lebanon by the Abbasi caliph Abou Jaafar al-Mansour in order to protect the western seashore of the Abbasi lands from the invasions of the crusades in 758 AD, and then the Abbasi caliph Haroun al-Rashid gave them more land and ordered more Tanoukh tribes to settle in Lebanon under the command of the Arslan and Monzir (umara) in the year 803 AD (Basha 1990).

One of the most prominent groups who responded for the Druze faith between 1017-1043 AD was the Tanoukh tribe that originated from Iraq and was found in Lebanon and Syria; it was famous for resisting the Crusades and assisting Salah al-Din al-Ayoubi in the Hittin battle in 1187, states Dana (2003:4). According to Chakra (2005:172), the houses of Buhtur and Arslan were descendants of the Tanoukhs, and they were the notables and commanders (umara) who
controlled the Druze community in the early history of the sect. Druze communities lived at the foot of Mountain Hermon, and in the southern part of Western Lebanon. They depended mainly on agriculture, and had no interest in commerce and industry (Hitti 2007:31). Despite this, the Druze had a martial nature; they were warriors more than they were farmers or shepherds. Even if they were a small minority in the region, they played a key role in protecting their territory and securing its boundaries from foreign forces that were trying to invade and control it.

With time, the Druze spread in Belad al-Sham, settling not just in Lebanon, but also in southern Syria, Jabal al-Simmak in northern Syria, northern Palestine, and Western Jordan, and after the Saiks Biko agreement, they found themselves living in four different countries. Regardless of their spread to these varied areas, their social relations, culture, and traditions remained almost the same.

**Druze of Lebanon**

There is a popular proverb in Lebanon that says: ‘The Druze found Lebanon, the Christians and Sunni built the Lebanese Republic, and the Shi’a protected it’. Although a simple proverb, the latter shows how the religious diversity in Lebanon benefited the building of the Lebanese entity, and emphasizes the role of the Druze as a small but essential community in the history of the country.

In the early years, the Druze made Lebanon into a shelter for religious minorities, where they accepted every religious minority looking for protection in the elevated mountains of Lebanon, and welcomed those who were expelled from the Ottoman Empire. This could explain why Lebanon nowadays contains more than eighteen different sects living in a small geographical area, making it the only country in the Middle East with such an extensive religious diversity.
The Druze were ruled by feudal lords and Umara since their existence in Lebanon from the Tanoukhs, Ma’ni, Shihabi dynasties, till the Arslan and the Jumblat families reached a peak of control of the sect, and who are still controlling the political arena of the Druze to this day. The Druze seem not to complain about these two families, since they are still the most popular among the Druze communities not just in Lebanon, but also in Syria and Israel.

The Jumblat family is one of the most influential Druze families nowadays, originating from North Syria. They came to Lebanon in the 15th century fleeing persecution from the Ottoman Empire (Basha 1990:318). Kamal Jumblat was the most famous descendent of this family, mainly for his leftist and socialist political views, although he was born and raised in one of the wealthiest and most influential feudal Druze families. He constituted the Progressive Socialist Party in 1949, and was assassinated in March 17, 1977. His son Walid Jumblat inherited his political leadership, and led the Druze during the Lebanese Civil War that ended in 1990; thus he succeeded in becoming the most prominent and popular Druze leader with more than 65% of the Druze population following him.

The second political pole of the Lebanese Druze is the Arslan family. This family is known for Majid Arslan, one of the Lebanese National heroes who achieved independence from the French mandate in 1943. His son Talal Arslan has followed in his father’s footsteps, and he founded the Lebanese Democratic Party in 2001. Arslan has approximately 25% of the Druze population look up to him as a model for their community.

This paper will also enlighten the reader on the Druze leaders’ alliance strategies and tactics, as the two leaders mentioned above are ideal examples of these notions, since they are popular not only inside Lebanese Druze communities but also among the Israeli and the Syrian Druze.
Druze of Syria

In the eighteenth century, the Druze migrated from Lebanon to Hawran in Syria because of the internal wars between them, especially the war between the northern (Qaysi) tribes and southern (Yamani) tribes of Arabia, where the Tanoukhhs and the Shihabs were considered Qaysi, and the Ma’ns were Yamani (Dana 2003). The Druze migration from Lebanon towards Syria continued during the World War I, as a direct result of the starvation that struck Mountain Lebanon in the year 1914; the fertile land of Hawran provided the inhabitants of southern Syria with abundant food resources.

According to Dehghanpisheh (2013), the total Druze population today in Syria is approximately 700,000, including the 20,000 Druze living under the Israeli occupation in the Golan Heights. Landis (1998:370) states that despite the small amount of Druze in Syria, they still played an important influential political role especially in causes related to Arabism and resisting the French mandate (specifically in the year 1925 when Sultan Basha al-Atrash declared the Syrian Revolution against the French, which resulted in the Druze giving up the mandate over Jabal al-Arab).

In the late 1940s, the Syrian president Adib al-Shishakli created the Arab Liberation Movement and carried a military campaign against Jabal al-Druze in order to control the Druze and force them to be part of the Syrian government. He furthermore bombed the Druze areas of Damascus, killing hundreds of villagers brutally because he considered the Druze to be a ‘dangerous minority’ (Landis 1998:392).
Three decades later, during the rule of Hafez al-Assad over Syria in 1971, minorities in Syria earned more respect and a better status, since Hafez al-Assad himself belonged to the Alawite sect, which is also considered to be a minority in Syria. Moreover, the Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party that was led by al-Assad was a secular party that refused to include religion in the Syrian political life (thus, the Druze were perceived as ‘normal’ habitants of the country, rather than a minority religious group). Previous events help illustrate why the Druze nowadays in Syria are afraid of standing up to Hafez’s son, Bashar al-Assad, as there is no guarantee that the successor of Bashar will respect the minorities and protect them from discrimination.

A BBC news article of August 2011 stated that the Golan Heights have been occupied by Israel since the Six Day war in June 1967: despite this, the inhabitants of that area are about 20 000 Druze, as mentioned earlier, in addition to the few thousand Jews living in newly established settlements. The Druze living in the Golan Heights were always attached to their mother Syria, where the Israeli occupation didn’t affect their national identity, and didn’t make them forget their origins as part of the Jabal al-Arab. The Druze of the Golan Heights punished anyone of their community who accepted the Israeli citizenship; they also objected to receiving Israeli residence certificates (Dana, 2003:13). This helps to highlight the attachment that the Druze of this area have with their Syrian and Arabic identity, and that they refute the Israeli occupation even after four decades.

**Druze living under Israeli occupation**

The small geographical space between Wadi al-Taim in South Lebanon, where a substantial Druze community resides in both the Rashaya and Hasbaya areas, and North Israel clarifies the reason why the Druze spread to Northern Palestine and especially to the mountains of al-Jalil.
According to Stern (2009), it is estimated that about 120,000 Druze live in the al-Jalil area, and are spreading towards the district of Haifa. Unlike the Druze of Golan Heights, the ‘Druze of Israel’, as often referred to, are involved in the political activities of the country: they participate in the Knesset, and serve in the Israel Defense Forces in the same manner as the Jews. In the Israeli legislative elections of 2009, five Druze lawmakers were elected into the Knesset. This stands for about 4% of the Knesset’s 120 members, which is 2.5 times more than the proportion of the Druze within the Israeli population (Stern, 2009).

The Druze have been subject to compulsory military service in Israel since 1958, where one of every three Druze soldiers inducted carries on in the army, making a career out of it (Dana 2003:111). During the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 though, many Druze soldiers found themselves confused between their loyalty to the state of Israel on one hand, and their loyalty to the Druze of Lebanon on the other. Moreover, during the Israeli occupation of Lebanon in 1982, the Druze of Lebanon were involved in a civil war against the Maronites. Many Druze soldiers serving in the Israeli army deserted their units to join their co-religionists in their struggle against the Maronites (Dana 2003:14).

These privileges given to the Druze by Israel underline Israel’s intentions to gain the trust of the minorities, and to place them on its side in its struggle against the Palestinians. On the other hand, the Druze of Israel have managed to overcome their religion’s long history of resisting the Israeli occupation, and to mingle with the Israeli Jewish community in order to preserve their rights and security, as well as their properties.

The Druze of Israel and the Druze of Syria are tightly connected to the Druze of Lebanon, who form a minority in each of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. They share the same roots and families,
and since political affiliation is mainly based on the feudal families in the Druze community, then it makes sense to state that the majority of the Druze in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel are distributed among the two feudal families, the Jumblat and the Arslan families. This, again, may help to explain the paper’s focus on studying the political alliances and strategies of Walid Jumblat, the leader of the Progressive Socialist Party, and Talal Arslan, the leader of the Lebanese Democratic Party, both parties being aligned with the Druze population.

**Alliances and Tactics behind Druze Survival**

The Druze have managed to survive in the Middle East over the years despite their miniature population. They have succeeded in protecting their cultural and traditional values as well as their religious legacy due to many reasons but the most significant one to mention is their astute political tactics and strategies that enabled them to always remain on the safe side of the conflicts.

This small religious minority with a population of approximately 1.5 million only, has survived centuries of wars with much bigger religious groups in the region, as well as with combatants of the Ottoman Empire, and the French during the French Mandate. The military background of the Druze enabled them to overcome these wars. It also gave them the power to create alliances and to plan for political tactics that protected them in times of peace, and always backed them up in times of war. These alliances and tactics gave them a prominent role in every political or military event that happened in the region. According to Hitti (2007:13), the Druze have survived as a religious community depending on shifting alliances, making new friends as old friends turn to enemies, adopting a wide variety of tactics, sometimes cooperating or appeasing, other times competing or opposing, and even sometimes confronting or aggressively attacking a threat. The
Druze gave critical importance to creating alliances with other political or religious actors in the region or even outside of the region in order to always keep the balance of power with their foes.

**Alliances with Foreign States**

In the fifteenth century, the Druze inhabiting the land of Lebanon were thriving in order to create their own independent state where they would be able to govern themselves and achieve self-determination at a time where the Ottoman Empire was one of the most powerful entities in the world. The Druze were ready to cooperate with anyone who would help them achieve their goal, even if that alliance was with a foreign state.

Winslow (1996:17) states that at the early stages of the Ma’ni dynasty, which was the first independent Druze state from the Ottoman Empire, prince Fakhr el-Din II established an alliance with the Italian Grand Duchy of Tuscany. This alliance was a commercial one, but also a secret military one. This urged the Ottomans to create a military campaign in order to eliminate the growing power of Fakhr el-Din. Eventually, this said campaign led to the expulsion of the Ma’ni prince from Lebanon towards Tuscany in 1612.

Another famous alliance with a foreign state to make note of was the Druze-British alliance, during the Lebanese Civil War of 1840. The Druze were fighting the Maronites in Mountain Lebanon, and when the Maronites asked for assistance from the French, the Druze asked for the help of the British, establishing an alliance with Great Britain, and thus allowing the Protestant missionaries to enter Mount Lebanon (Hitti 2007:33).

Additionally, in the most recent Lebanese Civil War in 1975, and at the time of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, the Druze in Lebanon created an alliance with
the Soviet Union. The latter backed them up with weapons and military training, while the United States was aiding the Maronites. In 2005, the Druze leader Walid Jumblat shifted his alliance towards the United States, and became one of the most important American allies in Lebanon. This is an example of the Druze strategy of shifting alliances in what serves them best and guarantees their survival and continuity.

**Tactics of Survival**

For Hitti (2007:17), the Druze have never been united on one single side of any regional conflict; whoever was the victor would find a Druze faction siding with him to protect the whole community. This tactic enabled the Druze to protect their community from any regional danger. They can often be seen to split their alliances between different competing powers and not be entirely supporting of one side and abandoning the other. This political duality is also used by the Druze in the domestic politics of the countries they live in; they are always divided between the government and the opposition in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. This perceptive strategy of dividing the political alliances among the struggling political powers guaranteed that the Druze would find themselves in part of a winning side, and therefore whoever is named the victor will proceed to protect the whole community, in return for the Druze’s support. Moreover, inside the community itself, the members will stick cohesively together, as required in the commandments of their religious virtues, since protecting the community and preserving its solidarity is of utmost importance.

These are clear examples for the strategy of duality in politics, not only from the Druze’s past, but it can also be observed in the present. In the 18th century, Bashir Jumblat was resisting the Ottomans in the Shouf area in Mountain Lebanon. The Ottomans then proceeded to send a
colossal military campaign to restore peace to the area. Bashir al-Shihabi, another leader, claimed his allegiance for the Ottomans, who rewarded him by making him the guardian of Mountain Lebanon after killing Bashir Jumblat (who had at that time the majority of the Druze as loyal followers to him). Bashir al-Shihabi’s faithful stand on the side of the Ottomans enabled him to protect the Druze community from the Ottomans, despite having to go to undesired measures, such as killing Bashir Jumblat. In the end though, it was for the good of the Druze community.

In a more present context, the Middle East nowadays is facing two political agendas: one led by the United States and the Arab Gulf monarchies, and the other led by Russia, Iran, and Syria. An additional example of this duality in politics and dividing roles between Druze leaders is the example of Lebanon, where the Druze leader Walid Jumblat established an alliance with the United States and the Arab monarchies in 2005, joining forces with the Lebanese Sunnis, while the other prominent leader Talal Arslan founded an alliance with Syria and Iran, and consequently, aligning himself with the Lebanese Shi’a at a time where Sunnis and Shi’a in Lebanon are tensely opposed to each other. This strategy enabled the Druze to be distributed between both the Sunnis and the Shi’a in Lebanon, and therefore protecting themselves from the two bigger and more influential religious groups. Moreover, we can see this strategy put to work during the bloody incidents of May 7 2008 in Lebanon, when factions of Hezbollah, the Shi’a leading political party, invaded Beirut and parts of the Druze areas in Mountain Lebanon as a reaction to the two decisions made by the government of Fouad al-Sanyoura to dismantle the ground telecommunication lines of Hezbollah. These incidents put the Druze in direct confrontation with the greatly more numerous and armed Hezbollah forces, urging Jumblat to ask Hezbollah’s ally, Talal Arslan, for help. Thus, on May 11 2008, Arslan settled for peace in
the Druze areas, and initiated an agreement between Jumblat and Hezbollah ending the bloodshed and protecting the Druze community.

Concerning the present Syrian conflict, Jumblat announced his stand with the Syrian Revolution against the Syrian regime of al-Assad, while Arslan maintains his alliance with the regime, so that the Druze in Syria are protected no matter what the outcome of the crisis is. Even inside Syria, the Druze spiritual leaders Mashayekh al-Aql are pro al-Assad, while a considerable part of the al-Atrash Druze feudal family stands with the Syrian demonstrators, and is asking for the democratization of Syria and the elimination of the Ba’th regime.

Understanding the rationalism of Druze choice in political siding, may indeed serve in explaining alliance strategies that have served the historic survival of minorities during major civilizational clashes. Studying rational choices of religious minorities helps in finding the best survival strategy of such minorities during the current situation in the Middle East, where the mass social revolutions are creating threats for religious minorities in the region, especially concerning their role in the future of political Islam, that is gaining popularity in the Arab states. This thesis examines the political formulations of the Druze as a religious minority in the Middle East, after briefly introducing their origins, their presence in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. Druze alliance formations and strategic choices that helped them survive over the years in the region, which also provided them with influential political relevancy in tipping the balance of power despite their small population.

This thesis provides a new perspective in studying minority groups. It presents the minority-minority alliance and the minority-majority alliance based on sectarian characterizations as survival strategies for minorities at the time of political instability. This new theory in
international affairs states that minorities have three alliance choices in order to preserve their survival in a turmoil region. The minority-minority alliance, the minority-majority alliance, and the secular alliance are the three political models that guarantee minority survivalhood. This thesis concludes that minorities should divide their alliances among the conflicting groups in a way that guarantees their survival no matter which alliance won. This fractional politics enables the minorities to create minority-minority alliance and minority-majority alliance in order to keep the balance of power in the system especially when a secular alliance cannot be possible due to sectarian identifications.

An ethnographical approach is adopted in this examination of the Druze community and its politics. The thesis relies on existing literature, and on opinion interviews conducted with Druze informants to create a content analysis in order to answer the research question that is: Which political model preserves and promotes Druze interests and guarantees their survival in the region that is deeply unstable?

In order to answer this question, three political coalition models are entertained as strategic rational survival strategies: minorities alliance, majority-minority alliance, and secular alliance. In chapter two various rational choice views are examined. Primary attention are given to both coalition size and durability.

Chapter three entrenches further in the analysis of the contemporary Druze politics in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel, and analyze the Druze alliances. It also introduces the proposition of a conglomerate as a potential strategy to confront rising sectarianism in region, as to highlight its shortcomings.
Chapter four presents the different findings accumulated from a series of interviews conducted with ten prominent Druze intellectuals and political figures as to reveal collective choice. A content analysis of interviews is carried out for that purpose.

Chapter five concludes by gathering supporting analysis and evidence of Druze coalition choice in light of contemporary regional instability. It highlights the fact that minorities strategic calculation strategies, like that of the Druze, are often divided among different choices. That this division itself has been the rationalism of survivalhood, undermining its total political inhalation. On the contrary, this strategy has provided the community with strategic advantage in swaying the political balance between embattled groups.
Chapter Two

Rational Choice and Alliance Formation Theories

The anarchic state of the current Middle East is undergoing severe crumbling of regimes, demonstrations in order to increase freedom and personal rights (actions that have been unprecedented in the past), and engaging in violent struggles under this pretext. These public demonstrations effectively led to regime changes in countries like Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen, while in Syria it developed into a military struggle against the Al-Asad regime. This conflict debuted in March 2011, and is still ongoing, at the time of writing this thesis. It has left tens of thousands killed, as well as hundreds of thousands gravely affected (refugees in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan). This change in the Arab political scene introduced democracy to the region for the first time in history, and according to Barducci (2011), this democracy led to the rise of political Islam that succeeded in winning most the elections in Arab countries exposed to Revolutions. Barducci argued that the Islamists are the most organized and the most popular, and represented a political alternative for the fading dictatorships.

Years before the Arab Spring, and after the United States’ invasion of Iraq, the Shi’a experienced an increase in their power in the region. This obviously appeared as a threat to the Sunni Muslims, who felt that the Shi’a would religiously expand towards the Sunni Arab World and undermine their influence on Arab states. The Shi’a triumphed in creating a political and religious conglomerate that changed the distribution of power in the region and took the Arab World into a new phase of sectarian struggle.
Shi’a Crescent

According to Yamani (2006), since the beginning of the war in Iraq in 2003, the Shi’a crescent has become prominent in geographical and religious debates, while the Hezbollah-Israeli war consolidated its presence in the strategic sphere.

The Shi’a crescent was based mainly on the ideology of “Mahdi” the Messiah. For Ali Shari’ati (1953:15), messianism and futurism in Shi’ite Islam were the outcomes of a “synthesis between the ideals and the realities” of Islam, an ambition to restore the ideals of Ali’s just rule and to reconstruct such an idealized past. Shari’ati believed, the disinherited (mustad’afin) of the earth should strive for a “classless society” in which justice and equality will triumph over exploitation, imperialism and tyranny. This religious belief created a solidified Shi’a conglomerate across the Arab Region sponsored by Iran and led by the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (the religious leader of the twelver Shi’aa). The spearhead of this crescent during the past decade was the religious party of Hezbollah in Lebanon.

According to Palmer and Palmer (2004:55), Hezbollah (literally ‘The Party of God’), is best known for its activities in Lebanon and particularly its success in driving Israeli forces out of Southern Lebanon. The Lebanese branch of Hezbollah is only one component of much larger Hezbollah movement. Hezbollah parties also exist among Shi’a population in the Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain, and all are supported by Iran.

A fundamental body of this Shi’a crescent is said to be the Alawites, led by the Syrian regime that creates the link between Iran, the Iraqi Shi’a, and the Lebanese Hezbollah. These links help construct the geographical and demographical continuity of the Shi’a crescent across the Arab region.
Sunni Mobility

The Arab Spring has introduced the rise of political Islam, which embodied the Sunni desire to emerge as a united front in the face of the rising Shi’a in the region. The Sunnis’ mobility against the dictatorships and totalitarian regimes that were ruling the region for decades opened the door for the rise of religious parties and organizations that carried the banner of regime change and called for a democratic Arab World. In recent years, the Muslim Brotherhood appeared to be the most systemized and favored party in the region. This was rendered obvious during the parliamentary and presidential elections in Egypt and Tunisia. In the case of Syria, the popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood is increasing, due to the continuous military struggle between the opposition led by Islamists, and the Al-Asad regime.

Monte Palmer and Princess Palmer (2004) state that The Muslim Brotherhood spans across the globe with branches in many countries in the Arab World, where it operates under different names in countries such as Egypt, Syria, Libya, and Saudi Arabia. The Members of the Muslim Brotherhood are Sunnis; their number easily reaches to a few millions of members. This explicitly demonstrates their dominance in the domain of political organizations in the Arab World. Palmer and Palmer (2004:41-42) also mention that the Testament of the Brotherhood contains five main points represented by: “Allah is our objective, The Messenger Prophet Mohammad is our leader, Quran is our law, Jihad is our way, dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope.”

In Syria, the Muslim Brotherhood appears to be the leading party among the opposition against the Al-Asad regime, co-existing with other fundamentalist organizations such as “Al-Nusra” and “Al-Qaeda”. According to Wood (2013), Al-Qaeda is inspired by the Bin Laden world view of a
global jihad to enforce a fundamental Islamic society, where Al-Nusra is very much competing for influence in the Syria that will take shape if and when the embattled regime falls.

Wood interviewed Abu Lokman, an Emir and leader of the Al-Nusra front, who confirms Al-Nusra’s intention to implement an Islamic rule in Syria. He reveals that the Syrian people are fed up with socialist and secular regimes, and desire the establishment of an Islamic state in Syria. According to Borger (2013), Salman Shaikh, think tank at the Brookings Institution Doha Center, sees a dark future for Syria, similar to the breakdown of Iraq due to the increasing sectarianism on a scale that has not been seen before in the country.

Alliances for minority survival

The introduction of chapter two discussed the distribution of power in the region of the Fertile Crescent, where the Shi’a crescent itself is faced with the contemporary Sunni mobility, leaving the entire region in a state of disarray and instability. At the time of the current crisis in the region, the religious minorities are suffering from an existential obsession, especially after the religious minorities in Iraq were forced to leave their homeland because of continuous threat and annihilation, a few years ago. The minorities in the region appeared in need to form alliances in order to guarantee collective survival in these critical moments in the history of the region. Based on the current situation in the Middle East and especially in Syria and Lebanon, the minute religious minorities are faced with three choices of types of alliances or political models, in order to ensure their survival. They are the minority-minority alliance, the minority-majority alliance and the secular alliance. These political models are based on religious identification, as the region is currently experiencing an acute sectarian struggle and religious segregation that both threaten to eliminate the religious and therefore the cultural diversity of the region. In these
political models, the minorities are regarded to be all religious groups, except for the Sunnis who are considered the majority according to their vast population. In the case of the secular alliance, the groups represent ideological classifications away from sectarian or religious sorting.

**Minority-minority alliance**

The Shi’a in this region are viewed to be a minority in comparison to the immense Sunni population, thus they are threatened by the rise of the Sunnis as a religious block, not only larger in size but also backed up by the Western countries in addition to the Gulf monarchies. The Shi’a thus have tended to balance this rising Sunni power by creating alliances with other minorities in the region since they share with those minorities the same monumental fear of being swallowed by an Islamic state of Sunnis. These types of alliance can be characterized as the alliance of minorities in order to create power balance with that of existing majority. Minorities in this political model cooperate together in times of crisis against a common threat, although, on a wider scale, they might not agree religiously or ideologically. This political model is formed of minorities experiencing an existential challenge in order to thrive through the current circumstances and guarantee their survival, in the unpromising future of the region.

This political model is practically applied in the alliance of the Druze and the Christians with Hezbollah in Lebanon, and within the Syrian regime. Said alliances are sponsored by Iran, who is providing the regional and strategic depth for the minority-minority alliance.
Minority-majority alliance

The Sunni recent mobility in the region characterized by the desire for regime change and the implementation of democracy led to the rise of religious organizations and parties that are gaining more power and popularity within time. According to an article submitted by Fox News (October 31 2012), the project of these religious organizations, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, is to implement the Islamic Shariah in the place of the existing laws.

The minority-majority alliance consists of minorities, out of fear of losing their identity and melting into the overwhelming majority, form an alliance with this majority in order to preserve their existence and guarantee their survival. By doing so, they additionally avoid confrontation with the overwhelming majority.

In this political model, the minorities in Lebanon and Syria protect themselves by forming an alliance with the leading Sunni parties in Lebanon, and with the Syrian opposition in Syria. This alliance gives the minority involved a regional support provided by the Gulf monarchies in addition to the Arab League and Egypt.

Secular alliance

This political model is a result of the balance of power between the religious blocks of the Shi’a and the Sunni in the region in which it creates an equilibrium that does not allow any side to triumph at the expense of the other. Moreover, both of the conflicting sides will look for an alternative political model, which would result in a secular alliance, independent of religious belonging. This political model is based on political and ideological characterization rather than religious, where the religious minorities and majority alike unite as one strong civil society,
participants of a secular democratic system, that guarantees the majority rule and at the same time preserves the minority rights.

According to Alexis de Tocqueville (1862), the tyranny of the majority negatively affects the rights of the minority. Thus, while it is clear that democracy must guarantee the expression of the popular will through majority rule, it is equally explicit that it must also guarantee that the majority will not abuse of its power to violate the basic and inalienable rights of the minority. Secularism has meant to undermine sectarian and religious orientation of politics as to remove this challenge in the liberal paradigm in favor of individual rights and citizenship. Yet, liberal pluralism has increasingly attempted to find ways to preserve aspects of ethnic and sectarian based rights in its political discourse.

According to a publication of the U.S. Department of State entitled ‘Principles of Democracy’ (2008), minorities, whether of ethnic background, religious belief, geographic location, income level, or simply as the ‘losers’ in elections or a political debate, are entitled to basic human rights that no government, and no majority, elected or not, should remove. Minorities also need to trust that the government will protect their rights and self-identity. Once this is accomplished, such groups can participate in, and contribute to their country's democratic institutions regardless of their original affiliations.

The Israeli political system, for example, is of a secular nature, but it is extensively far from guaranteeing the rights of the minority. According to Stern (2007), the Arabs constitute twenty percent of the Israeli population, and in 2007, Raleb Majadele was the first non-Druze Arab minister to be appointed in Israel’s history (Stern 2007). This displays the discrimination of the
minorities in Israel where a significant portion of the population was not represented from 1967 till 2007, by not a single minister in the Israeli government.

According to Dana (2003), the Israeli government imposed compulsory military service on the Druze community; the Druze youth had no other choice but to abide by government rules, and therefore had to participate in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) (Dana 2003). The Israeli state has not treated its citizens equally, especially in terms of religious affiliation. Thus, the Israeli political system is secular in structure, but can be said to be discriminating in political practice.

**Rational Choice Theory**

This thesis’ research question is: which political model (minority-minority alliance/ minority-majority alliance/ secular alliance) can preserve and promote Druze interests and guarantee their survival in a region under duress? In order to answer this question, a sturdy theoretical base, with insights from scholarly works, should be structured so as to provide an accurate conclusion. As this study deals mainly with the survival of various religious minority groups and their connections with fellow/rival groups, and focuses on finding the most effective and advantageous political model for the future of the Druze in the region, the ideal socio-political theory to apply to this study is the rational choice theory. The latter would measure the costs, the benefits, and the outcomes of each political model, and eventually conclude on which to select to guarantee the best option for the Druze.

Hechter (1986:265) mentions that rational choice theory derives from the writings of Thomas Hobbes in the seventeenth century and nowadays it is widely used in the study of ethnic and race relations where it tends to synthesize evidence about intergroup relations and interpret it in the light of a particular explanatory scheme.
On another note, Scott (2000:136) states that rational choice theory of international affairs rests on the proposition of seeking the most cost-effective means to achieve a specific goal without reflecting on the worthiness of that goal. The theory adopts a methodological individualist position and attempts to explain all social phenomena in terms of rational calculations made by self-interested individuals. Moreover, it decides what choices to make, and how rational and beneficial these choices are (Scott 2000). The explanations that rational choice theory provides are predicated on only two types of mental states: beliefs and desires, where a decision should be made accepting the various consequences (Peternotte 2011:307). This theory’s rationality is based on choices that maximize the profit and minimize the cost in achieving a certain goal. The goal here is to explore the best rational alliance formation that can benefit a minority and preserve its survival during a state of extreme polarization. By simulating different possible alliance choices for a minority with respect to two dominant competing groups, the costs and benefits might be revealed.

Rational choice theory is usually used to measure the costs, effects, prospects, and profits of a certain single decision maker, as mentioned earlier, and therefore, usually applied to the individual level of analysis and not to that of communities and groups. However, this study will implement this theory in order to analyze the choices of the Druze community, and to study the choices of the Druze leaders who craft the politics of the sect since the Druze community is still under the control of a form of feudalism and popular leaders, especially in Lebanon and Syria.

In order to beneficially use this theory, an explanation for coalition strategies and theories that would help in clarifying the stated political models should be provided, to eventually have a comprehensible analysis about their costs and benefits.
Coalition Formation

Any political coalition should be based on cooperation between different parties or sides in order to achieve certain gains for the sake of all the sides concerned; these gains guarantee and preserve the mutual interests of the parties that constitute the coalition. Coalitions usually include agendas formed under a specific strategic plan that gains the contentment of the parties in the alliance.

According to Gamson (1964:83), a coalition is a joint use of resources to determine the outcome of a decision in certain specified situations, where the requirements for a coalition situation are divided into three games: pure coordination games, pure conflict or zero-sum games, and mixed motives games. These resources are weights controlled by participants where some of these weights are critical and sufficient enough to determine decisions. A coalition is a temporary arrangement that allows different parties to pool resources and combine efforts in order to effect change. The most prominent reason for forming a coalition is to combat threat or to take advantage of a certain opportunity.

Tarrow (2001:76) determines four elements that are necessary to maintain a coalition:

1. “Members must frame the issue that brings them together with a common interest.
2. Members’ trust in each other and belief that their peers have a credible commitment to the common issues or goals.
3. The coalition must have mechanisms to manage differences in language, orientation, tactics, culture, ideology, etc. between and among the collective members (especially in transnational coalitions).
4. The shared incentive to participate and, consequently, benefit from the coalition.”
According to Sened (1996:350-372), coalition formation is modeled as a cooperative game where each party enters the game endowed with a proportion (weight) of votes that it obtained in the election, and a preferred policy position. The payoffs to any party that joins a coalition are a function of the distance between the party's and the government's respective policy positions, and the office related payoff that the party receives as a member of the coalition.

This theory of coalition formation shows the motives, goals, and reasons behind conducting a political alliance. This therefore creates the needed base for this study about the political model that best suits the Druze minority in the near future.

The Druze should value their resources, capabilities, and abilities in order to choose a political alliance that is capable of guaranteeing their security, preserve their existence in the region, and protect their political and social interests. This implies that the nature of the alliance is affected by the weight of the Druze’s power, and by the circumstances that accompany the process of alliance formation giving a priority to the existential reasons rather than social and political privileges and gains especially due to the existence of the Druze in a Middle East occupied by instability and insecurity.

Many internal and external factors influence the process of alliance or coalition formation since coalition formation is subject to the mutual interest of all the participants and the parties involved in the alliance. This implies that the Druze are not the only actors who define the strategic plan or the agenda of any conducted alliance. On the contrary, the Druze are a minority that cannot be the core or the driving force in an alliance, but can only remain an influential element needed by more powerful actors in order to achieve gains and interests.
For Konishi and Ray (2003:39), in any formed coalition is it important to measure the possible gains of a certain actor, but it is also important to measure the consistency and continuity of this coalition for the maximum possible time interval in order to preserve long term achievements for this actor. This means that the Druze should search for the alliance offering the most possible gains for the longest period of time, as any future loss might be more costly than any current gain.

*Example 1.1:* If $A =$ Actor, $G =$ Gains, $I =$ time interval $C =$ Coalition, $(>) =$ more profitable $(<) =$ less profitable

Actor $A$ has the choice among two possible coalitions $C_1$ and $C_2$, taking into consideration:

$GC_1 > GC_2$ and $IC_1 < IC_2$, while $IC_2 + GC_2 > IC_1 + GC_1$ this implies that $C_2$ is the best coalition to choose.

**Minimum Winning Coalition**

Brams and Fishburn (1995:303), suggest that a coalition is a subset of players, where its incentive to form is to be winning. This enables it to enforce its selection of an outcome on other players. Each player then faces the problem of which other players to join in a coalition that can win, which will depend on what payoffs it might receive in that prospective winning coalition.

According to Wenger (2007), minimum winning coalitions occur when political groupings tend to win and hold power by thin margins, in order to not have to share the perks of power and office more widely than they have to.

In relation to minimum winning coalitions, Brams and Fishburn (1995:307-308) argue that a minimum winning coalition might be more beneficial for a player than another winning...
coalition, since in the former, a narrow majority is enough to make a coalition win, making the shares of the winning players much bigger than the shares they would have had if the coalition was larger. They continue to describe the size principle by showing that there are two types of minimum winning coalitions, a member minimum winning coalition, and a weight minimum winning coalition. A member minimum winning coalition is so if the defection of anyone of its members causes it to be losing, making its entire members critical. On the other hand, a winning coalition is a weight minimum winning coalition if it is a member minimum winning coalition and there is no other member minimum winning coalition whose weight is never greater than the weight of the first and sometimes is less than the first’s weight thus it can be said weight minimum winning coalitions are subsets of member minimum winning coalitions.

The Druze are a small minority in the Middle East, thus they cannot have the same size as other players in the region. Furthermore, since very often, the size of the party or player defines the amount of outcomes it gains from a coalition, this obliges the Druze to enter in the coalition that makes of them an important and necessary faction for the winning of this coalition, especially in minimum winning coalitions or alliances where the margin of winning is considered very narrow.

**Grand Winning Coalition**

According to Strohmeir (2007:1), grand coalitions can be built because of a major political crisis, a strong political fragmentation in a country, or a parliamentary crisis (missing majority for a stable minimum winning coalition). He adds that in some democracies, grand coalitions or even all-party coalitions were formed during a war or in a post-war period. Strohmeir (2007:2-5) further argues that grand winning coalitions might be created for parliamentary reasons due to the missing majorities for the creation of a stable governing
majority in parliament since there would be no majority for a single party government. He additionally mentions advantages and disadvantages of grand winning coalitions. He points out that the most important advantage of such a coalition is that it represents all the main and major parties in the government, while the most important disadvantage is that it creates a political cartel which prevents change due to the blocking of the voice of any opposition in such a wide grand coalition.

According to Farley (2005:2), there are certain variables that shows if the coalition is minimum or grand winning, those variables are: coalition volatility, level of system competition, size of the coalition, ideological polarization, and party cohesion.

**Coalition duration**

For Bennett (1997:844-850), four models of coalition duration exist, namely the capability aggregation, security-autonomy, domestic politics, and institutionalization models of alliances. The capability aggregation refers to the security seeking states in an anarchic world that tend to form alliances in order to improve their military situation against hostile states in case of conflict. In this model, states form alliances to improve their security positions, but this alliance ends when this external security threat declines or disappears. Security-autonomy tradeoffs refers to the states joining an alliance to improve their security, but the price they pay from gaining security is losing their autonomy, therefore states might break the alliance and lose security but gain autonomy. The domestic politics also affects the duration of an alliance because any leader tending to form an alliance on the international level as well as the domestic level is influenced by the opinion of elites and masses inside his country in which it might encourage him to move on in an alliance, or call him to break it down. Institutionalization refers to the establishment of
institutions in order to resolve differences and encourage cooperation between the members of the alliance, and these institutions become perpetual even if the threat declines or disappears.

**Hypothetical propositions**

Chapter two introduced the three political models: minority-minority alliance, minority-majority alliance, and secular alliance. It also discussed the Rational Choice Theory in addition to coalition formation and coalition duration theories that would help in choosing the best political model for the Druze minority. This section of the chapter creates hypothetical propositions in order to analyze the three political models in terms of coalition type and coalition duration. This section measures the three political models in terms of the coalition variables presented by Farley (2005) and coalition duration models presented by Bennett (1997).

**Coalition type**

In a minority-minority alliance, the coalition volatility is low due to the existence of many actors with different ideological and religious backgrounds. The size of coalition in minority-minority alliance is small because this alliance is formed of minorities who have limited weights and powers. The level of system competition is high since the minority-minority alliance is unable to form a vast winning majority due to its size. The coalition polarization is high in this alliance because minorities bind together in the aim of protecting themselves from the more powerful majority, regardless of the low outcome or profit from such a small coalition. The coalition cohesion is also high because of the common threat uniting the minorities and forcing them to ignore their differences and cooperate against the danger of majority domination. These elements classify the minority-minority alliance as a minimum winning alliance.
In a minority-majority alliance, the coalition volatility is high because of a gap between the small power of the minority and the high power of the majority, which makes the majority able to abandon the minority at any time. The level of system competition in this alliance is low since the outcomes that the minority gain by joining an alliance with the majority is high therefore making it difficult for the minority to leave the alliance to form another. The size of this coalition is large due to the vast majority that it constitutes as a result to the cooperation between minority and majority. The coalition polarization in this alliance is high because of the power of the majority and its ability to polarize the minority ideologically, plus the gains from such an alliance encourage such polarization. The party cohesion in this alliance is low because of the gap of power between the minority and majority and even ideological differences and also because they both have different goals behind forming such an alliance.

In the secular alliance, the coalition volatility is low once more, because of the presence of ideological harmony between the actors in the alliance. The level of system competition in this alliance is high since the system is based on ideological classifications rather than religious ones. This means that alliances are formed according to agendas that portray political and ideological visions in a democratic system where the level of competition is always high. The size of coalitions in this alliance is dependent on the weight of the actors sharing the same political views. The coalition polarization is low due to the ideological classification of alliances as well as the entire system. The party cohesion is high since the actors have many things in common including political vision, agenda, as well as the goal behind forming the alliance.
**Figure 2.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of coalition</th>
<th>Coalition volatility</th>
<th>Level of system competition</th>
<th>Size of the coalition</th>
<th>Coalition polarization</th>
<th>Coalition cohesion</th>
<th>Outcome: minimum winning or grand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minority-minority alliance</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Minimum winning alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority-majority alliance</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Grand winning coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secular alliance</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Grand winning coalition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Coalition duration**

The minority-minority alliance is formed in order to counter a common threat for all the minorities involved in the alliance, therefore this alliance ends with the end of this threat that makes the actors join together. A minority loses its autonomy in exchange of security in this alliance because every minority is dependent on each other, thus all minorities lose autonomy in exchange of security. The elites and masses of the minority pressure the decision makers involved in the alliance since there is an absence of strong ideological bond between the masses of each minority. The institutions established to solve differences between the actors of this alliance are not perpetual and they feature as long as the threat exists.
The minority-majority alliance is formed because of the minority’s fear of the majority, and this alliance is not stable because the majority is capable of abandoning the minority and throwing it away from the alliance. In this alliance, the minority loses its entire autonomy because the majority has significantly more power than the minority and therefore the minority loses autonomy in such an alliance at the expense of gaining security from the majority. There is low pressure from the masses in this type of alliance as the minority feels secured due to the majority’s protection. The institutions established to resolve problems between the actors of this alliance are not perpetual and they are unable to survive or feature in an effective way because of the huge differences between the majority and minority, and because the alliance is not based on ideology.

The secular alliance is based on ideology more than it is based on security, so the absence of security threat might not affect the continuity of the alliance. The participants in this alliance have much more autonomy than the participants in a minority-minority alliance or a minority-majority alliance and the relation between autonomy and security does not apply in this alliance. The masses and elites in this alliance do not pressure the leaders as they do in the other forms of alliances since the masses of the actors involved in this secular alliance share the same political vision and agenda. The institutions formed to manage the differences between the actors involved in this alliance can be perpetual regardless of the decline of threat due to the ideological links between the actors and the durability of the cooperation between them.
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Chapter Three

Sectarian coalitions: The case of the Druze

The introduction of this study presented the Druze as a minority in the Middle East who has been always thriving to survive in a sectarian dominated region. Chapter Two presented the current situation in the Middle East, and suggesting three political models: minority-minority alliance, minority-majority alliance, and secular alliance. Chapter two presented the rational choice theory that will be used in this study to find which political model best suits the Druze in the near future. It also presented coalition formation and coalition duration theories that help in analyzing each political model in terms of outcomes and time span.

Chapter three applies these political models on the current Druze politics and coalition formation strategies giving examples for these political models in the Druze alliance formation in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. Chapter Three will also examine the possibility of a Druze regional conglomerate similar to the Shi’a and Sunni block in the region in which it would enable them to be a regional sectarian power rather than being a minority in every country they exist in.

Political Models: The Case of Lebanon

According to Yusri Hazran (2009), the Druze were widely known as the founders of the idea of Lebanon, and the first who made Lebanon an independent entity from the Arab world and therefore created a nation. The Druze had significant importance in the history of Lebanon by playing a major role in every single political incident, a role that exceeded the expectations of the
capabilities of a small-sized sect. Lebanon has always been a country of sectarian pluralism; a place where more than eighteen different sects live side by side and interact with each other. These interactions have alternated between cooperation and tensions, which have resulted in the use of coercion, leading to conflicts such as the Civil War. These clashes have left the country with a very fragile sectarian political system built on the bases of a consociational democracy that divided the power among the different sects.

As mentioned earlier, the Druze of Lebanon have been historically divided among feudal lords, as well as commonly divided into two portions, such as, most recently, between Jumblat and Arslan. Each one of these leaders originated from a widely known, politically respected, and wealthy Druze family.

This section of the study focuses on the coalition formation strategies of the two Druze leaders in Lebanon, and it classifies those strategies among the political models addressed in this study. It firstly argues that Walid Jumblat formed his political alliances on the basis of a minority-majority alliance strategy, while Talal Arslan established his political alliances on the basis of a minority-minority alliance strategy.

The dynamic politics of Jumblat

Walid Jumblat is the son of the famous Arab-Nationalist Kamal Jumblat and the leader of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) in Lebanon. He is widely known as one of the cleverest politicians in the Middle East. He gained his reputation throughout the three decades of his political practice in Lebanon, and as the most prominent and influential Druze leader in the region. Jumblat led the Druze of Lebanon during times of war as well as in the times of peace, and made this minority gain a significant political impact, disproportionate to the small
population of the Druze community. He was the cornerstone of any winning coalition in Lebanon; some say that he possesses ‘political radars’ that enable him to predict the best political outcomes, and therefore choose the winning side and stand by it.

According to Rowayheb (2011:47), Jumblat faced the threats and obstacles that might have ended, or at least severely damaged his political career by continuously changing his alliances on the local and international levels and by continuously adjusting his political discourse. Jumblat has previously allied himself with Lebanese Sunni, Shi’a, and Christians as well as with different foreign actors respectively. His selection of allies most often depended on Syria’s position in Lebanon as determined by the international balance of power.

Rowayheb argues that Jumblat gained his political achievements by adapting to the continuously changing circumstances, and by shifting alliances towards the winning side and according to the domestic and international variables.

In an interview conducted by David Kenner with Jumblat for the Foreign Policy Magazine, Jumblat stated that “politics is made out of change; there is no fixed status or rigid status. Sometimes you have to change through the environment.”

Regarding the changeful nature of politics, he sought to switch his alliances and his political position according to his benefits and gains, to an extent that made domestic politicians as well as international ones accuse him of being moody, inconsistent and not trustworthy. This created a ‘stain’ in his reputation, as his credibility was perceived as lost by many members of the political life of the region.

Jumblat entered the political life of Lebanon in 1977 after the assassination of his father. He soon became more popular than his father among the Druze due to his leadership of the sect
during the Lebanese Civil War: he appeared as the true leader and savior of this minority. Being knowledgeable about the history of the Druze, and being faced with the dilemma of civil war as the leader of the Lebanese National Movement during said war, Jumblat was always convinced that the Druze cannot stand alone in the face of political challenges, and that they need to set up solid alliances with other parties in order to guarantee their security and preserve their interests.

Jumblat’s knowledge that the Druze are a minority who cannot survive on their own, and that they live in a Sunni dominated region aided him in creating alliances with a powerful Sunni partner. During the Syrian mandate in Lebanon, Jumblat then sided with Syria since the Syrian regime was the practical ruler of Lebanon from the 90s till 2005. After the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and the project of George W. Bush to create a ‘New World Order’, Jumblat sensed a change in the international political scene, and he made a dramatic political shift towards allying with the United States and the Gulf monarchies.

On 14th February 2005, Lebanese leader and former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was brutally assassinated in Beirut; Jumblat led the Lebanese opposition, which gave birth to the 14th March movement that forced the Syrians to withdraw from Lebanon. This movement is still active and divides the Lebanese public nowadays. This decision made by Jumblat to face the Syrians and stand with the Hariri family made him at the time the leader of the Sunnis and the 14th March coalition although he represented the Druze, who were the smallest portion in this wide coalition that included the majority of the Sunnis and Christians. Lee Smith (2005) described Jumblat as the international symbol for the Cedar Revolution that led to the formation of 14th March.

In the elections of 2005, Jumblat was the godfather of what was called then the “Quartet alliance”. The latter included, in addition to Jumblat, the Sunni leader of the Future Movement and successor of Rafik Hariri, Saad Rafik Hariri, and the Shi’a dominating parties Hezbollah and
Amal Movement. This coalition was a grand winning coalition that Jumblat succeeded in establishing and therefore he became the backbone of this coalition that, unfortunately, did not last for long.

Jumblat was welcomed in the Gulf monarchies and especially in Saudi Arabia as he was one of their loyal allies, giving him unlimited support and unconditional privileges. This earned him the respect and acceptance of the Sunnis in the entire Arab region.

Jumblat believed that his alliance with Saudi Arabia would preserve the Druze and guarantee his personal and the Druze community’s interests, as he was convinced that the sectarian characterization in the Middle East could not be overcome. Thus by allying himself with the religious majority in the region, and by gaining the friendship of the strongest Sunni power in the MENA region (especially Saudi Arabia), Jumblat protected his position and the survival of the Druze in the times of acute religious segregation.

Jumblat was forced to switch his political alliance after the armed conflict with Hezbollah in 2008, due to his fear of the emergence of another civil war between the Druze and the Shi’a, which would have led to a bloody massacre. This made him leave his alliance with the 14th March movement and position himself as a median between the Sunni and the Shi’a. In this position, he played a major role in getting the 8th March movement to power by electing Najib Miqati as Prime Minister in 2011.

Jumblat took a moderate position in between the two opposing political movements in Lebanon (14th and 8th of March Movements), which enabled him to be the balancing power that every side needed in order to create a winning coalition, and therefore he had stronger power to bargain for more gains and outcomes.
This political dynamic of Jumblat, nevertheless did not make him entirely abandon his alliance with the Sunnis, so he declared his support for the Syrian Revolution led by Syrian Muslim Sunnis and was backed up by the Arab monarchies and rising Islamic parties in the Arab World against Al-Asad in an attempt to gain the Sunni acceptance.

According to an article on Naharnet on Monday 28 January 2013, Jumblat renewed his call on the Druze living in Syria to join the revolt against the regime of President Al-Asad, warning them against taking any reckless steps, such as joining the popular army.

Jumblat’s alliance with the Sunni majority enabled him to be an essential part of a grand winning coalition, but was unstable and always limited by short amounts of time. This explains Jumblat’s continuous shifts in his alliances and political positioning due to changing circumstances. If he were sure that a certain coalition would be durable and protective of his and his community’s interests, then he would not make the choice to move towards another alliance.

The alliance between Jumblat and the Sunnis in Lebanon, Syria, and the Gulf is considered a minority-majority alliance, which allowed Jumblat to achieve significant gains throughout the years, but these gains were always limited to an unstable time frame. This represented Jumblat’s desire to protect the Druze minority by forming alliances with the more powerful religious majority in the region in order to avoid confrontation with the Sunnis who lately had witnessed a sectarian mobility similar to the Shi’a. Jumblat’s minority-majority alliance with the Sunnis enabled him to gain significant political weight beyond the limitation of the size of the Druze community. This political weight was never sustained for a long period of time, and Jumblat tended to shift alliances in order to preserve his autonomy.

According to figure 2.1 in chapter two that is based on the variables of Farley (2005), Jumblat’s alliance with the Sunnis is a minority-majority alliance since the coalition volatility is high
because of the gap in power between Jumblat and the Sunnis in Lebanon and the region, the level of system competition is low since the Sunnis are the regional majority, while the population size of the Sunnis leads to the the size of the coalition being high. The coalition polarization in Jumblat’s minority-majority alliance is high because of the high power of the majority and its ability to affect the minority led by Jumblat ideologically, and the example for such ideological polarization is Jumblat’s call for the Druze of Syria to join the opposition in their struggle against the Al-Asad regime in Syria. The party cohesion of Jumblat’s minority-majority alliance is low due to the differences in culture, traditions, political agendas, and purposes between the Druze and the Sunnis. The following variables show that Jumblat’s minority-majority alliance is a grand winning alliance.

According to figure 2.2 that is based on the duration standards of Bennett (1997:844-850), Jumblat’s minority-majority alliance is not durable, due to his continuous fear of losing autonomy, since there exists a substantial difference in power between him and the Sunnis, making this alliance unsustainable for the future.

**The political principles of Arslan**

Talal Arslan is the son of the famous Lebanese independence hero, Prince Majid Arslan and the leader of the Lebanese Democratic Party (LDP). He is widely renowned for having noble virtues and for having solid and non-volatile political principles related to Arabism and Lebanese sovereignty. He was also inspired by his extensive family history of resisting oppression and foreign interference.

Arslan’s alliance formation strategies are completely contradictory to those of Jumblat’s since Arslan has always believed in stable and long term coalitions regardless of the gains and
outcomes. In other words, Arslan maintains his desires to stay away from political bets and remain on the safe side without taking risks that might cause remarkable losses, while Jumblat is a risk taker who willingly switches positions according to expected gains.

Arslan has no more than 30% of the Druze population in Lebanon behind him. This proportionally small size of Arslan’s representation of the Druze did not permit him to have a dynamic approach to politics, and to be able to comfortably switch alliances. On the contrary, Arslan tended to establish a long-term alliance with Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran, an alliance not based on the amount of gains earned but on ideological coherence and existential concerns.

Arslan has always had a solid influence by his ancestors, who proudly fought for the freedom of the Druze and following that, for the freedom of Lebanon (Basha 1999:133). As a result of that, he believed that his mission was to stand on the resistance’s side, which was fighting against the Israeli occupation of Lebanon. He joined forces with the Shi’a leading party, Hezbollah, who was intent on resisting Israeli occupation since the Taif Accord in 1989. At the same time, he also collaborated with the Syrians who were controlling Lebanon at the time he entered the Lebanese political life in 1992: this alliance allowed him to commence his political career and maintain his position as a Druze leader in addition to Jumblat.

As Arslan believed that minorities should stand together in the face of the majority, or else this majority might threaten their existence., he was pushed to create a long-term relation and alliance with the Shi’a of Lebanon, as mentioned earlier, who are also considered as minorities in the Sunni dominated Middle East, and with the Syrian Alawite regime that represent another minority in the region.

The political gains of Arslan from this minority-minority alliance were made clear during the events of May 8, 2008 when he prevented a brutal massacre between the Shi’a and the Druze by
conducting an agreement between Hezbollah and the Progressive Socialist Party to ceasefire, and by hindering Hezbollah’s attempt to enter the Druze dominated mountain. In an interview with As-Safir newspaper (2008), Arslan pointed out that he played a security role, in order to protect the Druze and prevent a new civil war in Lebanon.

Arslan’s opinion regarding the Syrian crisis is a coherent example of his fear for the Druze minority, and reveals his vision for the future of Druze alliances in the region. According to the Daily Star newspaper, Arslan made a statement on July 24, 2012 calling the Druze of Syria to stand against the attempts to place Syria under new forms of colonization and to eradicate Syrian Nationalism calling them to stand on the side of president Al-Asad.

Arslan’s strategy in forming a minority-minority alliance made him part of several minimum winning alliances that provided stability with constant but limited gains due to numerous reasons. The gains of Arslan from such alliances were limited because of the restrained political weight of Arslan as a leader, and in addition because such alliances include many other players willing to have a share of the outcomes. This distribution of payoffs among a large number of players left Arslan with little gains, especially as he was not a critical member of the minimum winning coalitions, as the latter were weight minimum coalitions (as defined previously in chapter Two by Brams and Fishburn (1995)).

According to figure 2.1 in chapter two that is based on the variables of Farley (2005), Arslan’s minority-minority alliance with the Shi’a in Lebanon, Syria, and Iran is a minimum winning coalition. The coalition volatility in this alliance is low due to the presence if many actors in this alliance having different religious and ideological backgrounds. The size of this alliance is small because it is formed of minorities with limited political weight. The level of system competition in this alliance is high because such an alliance is unable to form a vast winning majority, and
this was shown when Hezbollah abandoned Arslan in the Lebanese parliamentary elections in 2000 and 2005 to form alliances with more powerful actors. The coalition polarization in Arslan’s minority-minority alliance is high because of the political size and weight of Arslan is very small compared with the leading group in this coalition which is Hezbollah. This makes Arslan bind with Hezbollah ideologically and politically in order to guarantee survival. The ideological binding between Arslan and other minorities in this coalition sharing the same purpose make the party cohesion high in such an alliance.

According to figure 2.2 that is based on the duration standards of Bennett (1997:844-850), Arslan’s minority-minority alliance has a limited time interval related to the existence of the threat that is characterized by the Sunni mobility in Lebanon and the region. This alliance continues as long as the threat exists, but in such an alliance Arslan loses autonomy in exchange of security.

**The case of Syria**

The Baath party took power in Syria in 1970 when Hafiz Al-Asad became the president to what was labeled to be a secular regime in the Syrian Arab Republic (BBC 2008). Al-Asad belonged to the Alawites religious minority in Syria, so he tended to create a religious minority alliance in order to secure his power, and eliminate minority fear of repression (thus increasing popularity among his own ‘group’), in addition to the secular shield provided by the Baath party.

According to Philip Smyth (2012), Druze support for the regime of Hafiz Al-Asad, and after Hafiz’s death in the year 2000, of his son Bashar, was based on the fact that the Druze represent such a minute part of the Syrian population, and they feared to be easily squashed by any new Sunni-dominated government, although the regime did not work in the favor of the Druze since they did not gain any exclusive rights or privileged positions (Smyth 2012).
According to Martin (2011), The Assads, hailing from the minority Alawite sect, offered protection to fellow minorities such as Christians and the Druze as an exchange for their support, where they offered them the freedom to practice their religious beliefs without threat. Such loyalty is based largely on the fear of what Islamic extremists might do to Christian and Druze minorities.

The Druze fear of the Sunni majority, especially due to their tumultuous past relations, made them embrace Al-Asad and form an apparent alliance with the regime in order to guarantee their security although such a minority-minority alliance did not provide them with high government posts, except recently during the rule of Bashar. The Syrian regime intended to make this minority-minority alliance as it served as a religious shield that protected it during times of sectarian conflicts. This was rendered obvious when the regime was ‘attacked’ by the Syrian Revolution in March 2011, when the Sunni-led Free National Army began a military struggle to crack down the Asad regime and achieve democracy.

According to Karon (2013), large numbers of Christians and Druze who detest Asad and his regime remain unwilling to embrace what appears to many of them as a sectarian, Sunni Islamist rebellion. As Slobodan Milosevic had done in Yugoslavia, Assad has created a kill-or-be-killed mind-set among his core constituencies.

As time passes and the military struggle against Al-Asad continues, and the support of the Arabs and most of the international community directed at the opposition, the Druze started to trust the latter and significant amounts of them have joined/ are joining the Free National Army. Sands (2012) states that although the Asad regime is still popular in the Druze areas that have a
tacit support to the regime, many Druze activists and political figures are playing a prominent role in the uprising as members of the opposition.

According to a study done by IRIN, the humanitarian news and analysis service of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (IRIN 2013), in Golan, the local Druze leadership is firmly pro-Asad and has taken heavy measures against anyone supporting the Syrian Revolution, threatening social and religious exclusion, but there are still people refusing to follow those leaders and declaring their support to the Syrian Revolution.

According to a BBC study concerning Syria (2012), the Druze constitute 3 percent of the Syrian population, while Muslim Sunnis constitute more than 70 percent of the population. Being such a miniscule portion of the population, co-existing with an overwhelming majority, the Druze tended to be part of a minority-minority alliance with the Alawites and the Christians because of the fear that this supreme majority might threaten their existence. This minority-minority alliance is based on the factor of fear and not on favorable outcomes and privileges. This existential obsession became clearer and stronger nowadays because of the civil war currently occurring in Syria and the Druze being stricken with fear questioning their survival in the country if the Al-Asad regime were to fall into pieces and the Muslim Brotherhood were to come to power. As long as the Syrian crisis continues and evolves day by day, this minority-minority alliance leading to a minimum winning alliance or even a losing one, is transforming into a very fragile one. This is due to the Druze playing the role of the observer who are waiting for ‘the wind to blow’, i.e. for the crisis to reach an end.

According to figure 2.1 in chapter two that is based on the variables of Farley (2005), the tacit minority-minority alliance between the Druze and the Al-Asad regime in Syria is a minimum
winning coalition. The coalition volatility in this alliance is low due to the presence if many actors in this alliance having different religious and ideological backgrounds. The size of this alliance is small because it is formed of minorities with limited political weight. The level of system competition is high due to the civil struggle occurring in Syria at the time of writing this study, where many actors are thriving to increase their political weight making the political system unstable and fragile. The coalition polarization in this minority-minority alliance is high because of the presence of a common threat that unites the different actors together in order to balance with the rising religious majority. This cooperation between minorities make the party cohesion in this alliance high since the groups in this alliance are in upmost need to each other.

According to figure 2.2 that is based on the duration standards of Bennett (1997:844-850), the minority-minority alliance between the Druze and the Al-Asad regime has a limited period of time related to the existence of the threat from an Islamic Syria caused by the Sunni mobility and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism.

**The Case of Israel**

According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, the number of Druze in Israel were 125,300 in 2010, while the total number of Israelis being 7,552,000 people (CBS 2010). This compact religious minority, living in a Jewish dominated state, has had a noteworthy impact on the politics of Israel.

The political system in Israel is secular, where theoretically, people of all religions join different political parties across the country. However, this claim is heavily associated with immense discrimination for minorities especially the Arabs and especially Muslims. Qasem
(2013) mentions that in the 18th Knesset there were 17 Arabs in Israel’s 120-seat parliament, six of them Druze belonging to the Likud, the Balad, Yisrael Beitenu and Independence parties.

In proportion to their population, the Druze of Israel have had a much larger share of power in the 18th Knesset than all the other Druze living in Lebanon and Syria, as well as the other minorities living in Israel. Qasem (2013) also argues that at every Israeli general election, hundreds of thousands of Arabs cast votes for parties that do little to improve their lot, at a time where the socio-economic gap between Jews and Arabs (Arabs make up one in five Israelis), is widening, and Arab political parties have signally failed to defeat a draft of laws detrimental to them that Binyamin Netanyahu’s government has passed in the outgoing parliament. This shows the gap between the majority rule and the minority rights in the Israeli secular political system therefore making this political remarkably far from being a typical, beneficial system for minorities.

On the other hand, according to Dana (2003:20), the Druze enjoy more privileges than any other minority in Israel, where they serve in the Israeli army along the Jews, and they reach high posts in Israel Defense Forces and the government. They also enjoy their own religious courts and the freedom to practice their religious beliefs.

Because the Israeli political system is secular, the Druze did not participate in parties according to their religious beliefs, but joined parties according to their ideological and political views, and this explains their distribution among the different Israeli political parties.

Despite this, in the 19th Knesset, the Arab population is underrepresented, with 11 Arab and one Druze MKs. The only Druze representative in the Knesset is the Likud Beytenu’s Hamed Amer, (Keinon 2013).
This contradiction in the representation of Druze between the 18\textsuperscript{th} and the 19\textsuperscript{th} Knesset shows that despite the Israeli elections are said to be secular, they do indeed have a sectarian implication. The lack of fixed guarantees in such a secular system where there is no religious quota of representation for the Druze (as there is in Lebanon) is clear here, which might affect adequate representation. Then again, a secular democracy depends on non-sectarian quotas, and thus will have wins and losses: due to this, the Druze were represented more than their proportional size in 2009, and in 2013, they were represented less.

The Druze were part of many coalitions in the Israeli government, which granted them consequential gains and interests over the years. These coalitions were secular in nature and grand winning, therefore giving this minority outcomes and payoffs that they would never have earned if the distribution of these outcomes were based on sectarian weights.

On the other hand, Ruth K. Westheimer and Gill Sedan (2007:33) believe that the Druze were partners with the Jews only on paper: the Druze community still suffers from discrimination by the Jews as every other minority in Israel.

According to figure 2.1 in chapter two that is based on the variables of Farley (2005), the participation of the Druze in a secular alliance in Israel is a grand winning alliance. The coalition volatility in this alliance is low because such coalitions are built on ideology rather than threat and religious divisions. The level of system competition in this alliance is high since the system is based on ideological classifications rather than religious ones. The size of coalitions in this alliance is dependent on the weight of the actors sharing the same political views. The coalition polarization is low due to the ideological classification of alliances as well as the entire system. The party cohesion is also high, since the actors have many things in common including
political vision, agenda, as well as the goal behind forming the alliance. This alliance is not based on religious identification, but the discrimination in the Israeli political system weakens the value of minorities as equals to the majority in the state, but this does not eliminate the fact that such alliance is a grand winning alliance.

According to figure 2.2 that is based on the duration standards of Bennett (1997:844-850), the secular alliance has a durable time interval since it is not subject to threat, and since the actors participating in this alliance sustain their autonomy and security. On the contrary, the secular alliance that occurs in Israel does not have a durable time interval due to the existence of discrimination in the Israeli political system, where the Druze as other minorities does not share the same equal rights as the Jewish majority.

The Druze as a regional power

The Shi’a and the Sunni succeeded in forming religious blocks or poles in the Middle East, which enabled them to have powerful political weight in a region doomed with sectarianism. This political power came from the ability of these sects to join and connect together regardless of the boundaries of states, therefore creating a regional geopolitical depth for their presence in each and every country in the region.

This study intends to use the rational choice theory in order to find the best political model that guarantees the survival of the Druze in the Middle East. These political models are influenced by the political weight and the geopolitical position of the Druze in the region. In order to analyze these political models and apply them either on a regional level of analysis or on a domestic level of analysis, it is important to measure the ability of the Druze to form a regional religious conglomerate similar to that of the Shi’a and Sunnis.
The possibility for a regional Druze mobility to form a united political block can be determined by comparing the case of the Druze to that of the Sunnis and Shi’a in terms of several standards such as: population, culture, geography, foreign sponsorship, and ideology.

**Population**

According to Dana (2003:98), the population of the Druze in Lebanon is 350 thousand constituting 7 percent of Lebanon’s population, while their population in Syria reaches 500 thousand people, about 3 percent of the total population. As mentioned before in this chapter, and according to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (2010), the number of Druze in Israel is 125,300, about 1.6 percent of the Israeli population.

This very small population of the Druze in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel does not allow them to create a religious block similar to the Shi’a and the Sunni because a religious conglomerate needs an extensive number of members.

**Culture**

The Druze of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel share the same cultural and religious heritage since they have the same customs and traditions that identify them from other religious groups. The culture of the Druze is not an obstacle that forbids them from creating regional mobility. On the contrary, the culture of the Druze is a unifying factor that connects the people of this sect together, no matter which country they inhabit.

**Geography**

Creating a regional religious block or conglomerate depends essentially on the geopolitics of the religious group. Evans and Newnham (1998) say that the geographic location, size, demography,
natural resources, and the political power over a defined territory are the variables that constitute the geopolitics of a country or group.

The geopolitics of the Druze can thus be determined by applying those variables to the Druze in the region. The Druze are located in Mountain Lebanon, in the foot of Mount Harmon, in Hasbayya in South Lebanon, in Jabal Al-Druze to the South of Syria, in the Golan Heights that are occupied by Israel, in Al-Jaleel Mountains in North Israel, and in Al-Azrak Mountain in the east of Jordan (Basha 1990: 10). This means that the small population of the Druze is distributed among a wide geographic area, mainly in mountains where resources are limited, and where other religious communities share this geographic space with them, therefore not allowing the Druze to enjoy independent political authority over these areas.

Another reason that forbids the Druze from creating a religious block is geographical continuity. The Druze are separated from each other by geography: Mountain Lebanon is separated from Mountain Harmon in the South of Lebanon by the Beqaa province, while the Druze of Jabal Al-Druze are separated from the Druze of the Golan Heights by the disputed borders among Syria and Israel. The Druze of Lebanon and Syria are separated from the Druze of Israel because Lebanon and Syria are at a state of war with Israel, where the borders are closed between them, and Israel therefore forbidding Druze mobility within these conflicting countries.

The geopolitics of the Druze in the region shows that they are unable to form a religious conglomerate similar to that of the Shi’a and the Sunni, since they have small population, geographical discontinuity, lack of resources, and weak political authority and autonomy over their land.
Foreign sponsorship

Building a religious conglomerate requires the presence of an international religious reference that protects, sponsors and embraces this religious group. This religious reference plays as a religious, political, and financial supporter for the religious conglomerate. The Sunnis are sponsored by Saudi Arabia that symbolizes the Sunni regional power, while the Shi’a are sponsored by Iran, who represents the Shi’a regional power. However, the Druze do not have this religious reference in the world, and there is no Druze regional power that might adopt Druze mobility in the aim of forming a regional block. Any regional or international power supports such a conglomerate if this conglomerate is beneficial for its interests, but the small Druze population, its limited geographic area, and its lack of resources make the Druze not an attractive nor a beneficial investment for any international or regional power, and this explains the absence of a foreign sponsor for the Druze.

Ideology

One of the most important elements of a religious conglomerate is having a common ideology that unites the sect under a certain objective. This ideology must have a religious purpose that conveys the interests of the religious group since the objective is building a religious conglomerate.

Throughout history, the Druze never encouraged the establishment of religious parties or religious state for their own. According to Landis (1998:375), the Druze of Syria were always nationalists who resisted foreign occupation and played a significant political role much larger in proportion to their small population: this was observed in the Great Arab Revolution of Sultan Basha Al-Atrash against the French Mandate in 1925.
The Druze of Lebanon followed either Arab Nationalist parties such as the Progressive Socialist Party led by Jumblat, or Lebanese National parties such as the Lebanese Democratic Party led by Arslan. There are no religious parties for the Druze in Lebanon, and this explains the Druze’s desire to be nationalists rather than being religious, out of habit. As mentioned before in this chapter, the Druze of Israel are also active in the Israeli political system where they participate in different Arabic and Nationalist parties in the country.

These elements show that the Druze are unable to create a religious conglomerate in the region due to the lack of population, resources, geographic continuity, foreign sponsorship, and a religious ideology which are fundamental for any religious conglomerate. The religious classification in the region does not serve the interests of the Druze, and the best political model that preserves the interests of the Druze should lie beyond sectarian and religious identifications.

Chapter three presented examples for the three political models: minority-minority alliance, minority-majority alliance, and secular alliance in each of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. Then the chapter followed on to examine the possibility for a Druze regional mobility to form a religious conglomerate in the region, and proved that this conglomerate cannot be applicable.

The Druze have succeeded in surviving strenuous historical incidents due to their political tactics and strategies that allowed them to exist for more than a thousand years in this continuously troubled region. The Druze preserved their particularity and protected their identity throughout history, and they encountered all kinds of their own. This study tends to find the rational choice of the Druze community regarding the three political models minority-minority alliance, minority-majority alliance, and secular alliance. In order to do so, it is significant to view the current struggle in the region, and to analyze these political models from the
perspectives of the Druze themselves taking into consideration their worries, obsessions, and their views concerning the survival of their own community. Analyzing the rational choice of Druze informants helps in finding out the rational choice of the whole community regarding the best political model that guarantees the future survival of the Druze in the region.

Chapter four presents an ethnographical research methodology in order to closely examine the perspective views of the Druze community and its various political contexts and outlooks. Chapter four also conveys the points of view of ten Druze informants concerning the three political models, and their perspectives about the best political model that preserves the survival of the Druze community in the region at such a critical time. The ten informants specifically answer the question concerning the choice of which political coalition model that would best serve the rights and guarantee the survival of the Druze in the region, the reasons for that choice, and how the choice can be implemented.

The ten interviewees are: Prince Talal Arslan, the leader of the Lebanese Democratic Party, Marwan Kheir Al-Deen, a Druze minister of government in the current Lebanese government elected in 2011, Sharif Fayyad, former secretary general of the Progressive Socialist Party, Walid Safi PhD, Government Commissioner with the Council for Development and Reconstruction and senior lecturer at the Lebanese University, Slaiman Taqi Al-Deen, a famous Druze journalist and political analyst, Assem Jaber, former Lebanese ambassador in Ghana, Canada, and Russia. Latif Abou Al-Hosn, former Lebanese ambassador in Australia and senior lecturer at the Lebanese American University and the American University of Beirut, Rami Al-Rayyes, director of media and “Montada Al-Fikr Al-Taqadomi” in the Progressive Socialist Party, Hasan Hamede, member
of the National Media Council and a political analyst, and Sami Abi Al-Mona, a member of the Druze clergy and secretary general of the Irfan Druze religious institution.

Chapter four additionally provides content analysis based on the results of the interviews and the information provided in chapter two and chapter three that would forecast the rationalism and the political positioning of the community with respect to regional sectarian turbulence.
Chapter Four

Analyzing Druze Perspectives on Coalition Models

This study suggested three political models that feature as a survival strategy for the Druze, and then presented the rational choice theory that helps in choosing the most beneficial model of the three. It introduced the coalition formation and coalition duration theories that would set the criteria to measure the benefits and outcomes of each political model. The study applied the three political models mentioned above on the politics of the Druze in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel, identifying the minority-minority alliance, the minority-majority alliance, and the secular alliance in the practical political life of each country. The study then discussed the ability to form a regional Druze conglomerate similar to the Shi’a and Sunni conglomerates, and proved that such a Druze conglomerate cannot be established and therefore the Druze should participate in the national politics of the countries they belong to rather than having a multinational ambition.

Chapter four analyzes the perspectives of Druze informants concerning the three political models and their educated opinions about the most ideal political model that would preserve the Druze interests and guarantee their survival in the region for the future.

Taking into consideration the Druze’s inability to create a regional power of their own, the interview question that was asked to the informants did not address the Druze from a regional point of view, but instead targeted them in each concerned country (Lebanon, Syria and Israel). The ten informants answered the following question: ‘what is your opinion about the minority-
minority alliance, the minority-majority alliance, and the secular alliance in terms of benefits and duration? Which one of these political models best serves the interests of the Druze and guarantees their future survival in each of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel?’

The ten Druze informants were selected according to their political affiliation and their influential and significant position in the Druze society. Three informants are currently part of a minority-minority alliance: Talal Arslan, the leader of the Lebanese Democratic Party, Marwan Kheir Al-Deen, a Druze minister of government in the current Lebanese government elected in 2011, and Hasan Hamede, member of the National Media Council and a political analyst. Three other informants are currently part of a minority-majority alliance: Sharif Fayyad, former Secretary General of the Progressive Socialist Party, Walid Safi (PhD), Government Commissioner with the Council for Development and Reconstruction and senior lecturer at the Lebanese University, and Rami Al-Rayyes, director of media and “Montada Al-Fikr Al-Taqadomi” in the Progressve Socialist Party. Additionally, the selection of interviewees includes two diplomats: Assem Jaber PhD, former Lebanese ambassador in Ghana, Canada, and Russia, and Latif Abou Al-Hosn PhD, former Lebanese ambassador in Australia. Finally, the array comprises of Slaiman Taqi Al-Deen, a famous Druze journalist and political analyst, and Sami Abi Al-Mona, an influential and respected member of the Druze clergy and vice-president of the Irfan Druze religious institution.

The responses of the ten Druze informants were obtained from personal interviews with each of the said informants. The interviews were recorded, and the informants agreed to publish their interviews in the content of this study.
Minority-minority alliance

The ten informants had obvious reservations concerning the minority-minority alliance; even the participants in such an alliance did not admit that their goal is to form an alliance against the majority (Sunnis). The fear of being perceived as an anti-Sunni sect explains such hesitation although those who belong to a minority-minority alliance admitted the right for minorities to cooperate in times of crisis in order to protect their existence from majority domination. The ten informants also agreed that the minority-minority alliance is not durable and beneficial in Lebanon and Syria for long time intervals, while some of them supported a minority-minority alliance for the Druze in Israel.

On one hand, two interviewees defended the notion of minority-minority alliance of the Druze:

- Talal Arslan (2013) argues that his alliance with Hezbollah in Lebanon with the Syrian regime and with Iran is largely beyond simply a minority alliance with another minority in order to survive. He assures that his stand with this axis of reluctance and resistance incarnated in Hezbollah, Syria and Iran is based on ideological reasons, not only on minority survival methodology. Arslan confesses that according to the acute changes happening in the region, and the rise of sectarianism, a minority-minority alliance can guarantee the survival of the Druze but for a very short period of time. This is due to the fact that the history of the Druze was never linked with sectarian characterization. He adds “the survival of the Druze is related to the survival of other minorities because they share the same existential destiny, but the survival policy of these minorities shouldn’t be intertwined with sectarianism.” Arslan also emphasizes the fact that “minority-minority alliance is not against the Sunnis in the region, but it is a coalition of sects sharing the
threat of losing their identity.” Furthermore, he assures that a minority-minority alliance can be possible in Lebanon since the country is constituted of minorities, while in Syria, this is not feasible as the country was always secular in every political system that ruled it throughout modern history. He believes that the minority-minority alliance best suits the Druze in Israel because by joining the other Arab and Muslim minorities against Zionism, the Druze empower their Arab identity and their belonging to the Palestinian cause.

- Marwan Kheir Al-Deen (2013). He considers that a minority-minority alliance in Lebanon and Syria can be beneficial for a short period of time but never for a long period, and such an alliance would be an alliance of circumstances, guaranteeing the survival of the Druze only during times of crisis. He adds that a minority-minority alliance is a must for the Druze in Israel because Israel is an occupying entity that will not survive in the future, so the survival of the Druze is related to cooperating with the Arabs no matter what religion they belong.

On the other hand, the rest of the interviewees viewed the minority-minority alliance in a negative light:

- Sharif Fayyad (2013) states that a minority-minority alliance is a trap leading to continuous wars in the future, and he assures that it is not a solution for the Druze in the current situation or in the future. Fayyad adds that even in Israel, a minority-minority alliance based on sectarian identification might lead to the annihilation of the Druze by the Israeli government.

- Sami Abi Al-Mona (2013) believes that the minority-minority alliance can never be sustainable. He adds that the slight chances of it occurring would be to solve a current problem but not on the long run, therefore it is not valid as a political model that
guarantees survival. Abi Al-Mona also assures that in Lebanon and Syria, the minority-minority alliance makes the Druze the spearhead in any sectarian confrontation, thus it does not serve the interests of the community.

- Slaiman Taqi Al-Deen (2013) suggests that a minority-minority alliance is another phase of majority rule, and it is the most dangerous political model that will inevitably lead to civil wars because such an alliance creates a front in the face of the majority opening the door for sectarian confrontation between sectarian minorities and the sectarian majority.

- Other informants such as Rami Al-Rayyes (2013), Walid Safi (2013), and Assem Jaber (2013) agree that the minority-minority alliance can never survive for a long period of time either in Lebanon, Syria, or Israel, and it will never benefit the Druze on the long run, thus it is not helpful in guaranteeing the survival of the Druze in the future.

**Minority-majority alliance**

The interviewees were much more comfortable speaking about the minority-majority alliance than speaking about the minority-minority alliance. The ten informants agreed on having good relations with the majority (Sunnis) regardless of forming an alliance with it or not. They also saw eye to eye concerning the issue in Lebanon where the Sunnis are not a clear majority, thus any minority-majority alliance between the Druze and the Sunni would lead to chaos and instability since this alliance will lead to the marginalization of other significant sects from power. Walid Safi, Rami Al-Rayyes, and Sharif Fayyad supported a minority-majority alliance for the Druze in Syria, while Talal Arslan, Sami Abi Al-Mona, Marwan Kheir Al-Deen, Slaiman Taqi Al-Deen, Hassan Hamede, Assem Jaber agreed that such an alliance can only guarantee the survival of the Druze for a very short time, raising the possibility of civil strife and chaos, and leading to the fading of the Druze identity.
On one hand, the informants (roughly, for some) agreeing on minority-majority alliance:

- Walid Safi (2013) believes that the Druze should be part of the Arab Spring movement in Syria because minorities cannot protect themselves by confronting the majority but with cooperating with it, thus a minority-majority alliance in Syria is essential for the survival of the Druze.

- Rami Al-Rayyes (2013) argues that the Druze should join the Syrian Revolution even if this revolution brings Islamists to power, suggesting that if democracy enables the Islamists to rule in Syria, then the minority-majority alliance would guarantee the survival of the Druze.

- Sharif Fayyad (2013) confirms that an alliance with the majority on the bases of subservience harms the identity of the Druze in the long run. He adds that any alliance with the majority should be based on the terms of equality and partnership in order for this alliance to guarantee the survival of the Druze but also not for a long period of time because the leaders of this majority change resulting in a change in majority’s behavior.

And the informants against a minority-majority alliance:

- Sami Abi Al-Mona (2013) mentions that the Druze were famous throughout history for practicing the *taqiya* which is not about lying to protect the community, but about being cautious, and about respecting the power of the majority and complying with it in order to avoid confrontation that might be costly. He adds that despite having the minority-majority alliance as a result of the *taqiya*, and being better than a minority-minority alliance especially in Syria, it can never be durable and it is doomed to failure because the majority will try to dominate and control the minority.
- Slaiman Taqi Al-Deen (2013) believes that minority-majority alliance based on sectarian identifications erases the identity of the minority and therefore leads to civil wars in Lebanon and Syria.

- Hassan Hamede (2010) has a very different point of view concerning minorities and majorities in the region. He believes that the sectarian characterization of the region is a western and a Zionist project that tends to divide the region and promote civil wars. He confesses that there is no religious minority or majority in the region, but one identity called Arabism, which is beyond sects, and beyond state boundaries that were implemented by Sykes-Picot conspiracy. However he admits that this project succeeded in planting the seeds of sectarianism and in changing the political identification from ideology to religion.

On a general note, all informants refused any minority-majority alliance in Israel between the Druze and the Jews, and they classified Israel as a Zionist entity that would collapse in the future. They described the minority-majority alliance in Israel as being against the history of the Druze, and does not portray their legacy, traditions, and Arab identity.

**Secular alliance**

There was a consensus among all the informants that the secular alliance is the best political model that serves the interests of the Druze and guarantees their future survival in the region. They also agreed that the Druze are not able to impose the political model that best suits them because of their limited powers, but they interact with the available options and search for the best available model. This means that the current alliances made by Druze leaders are not the best alliances for the interests of the Druze, but they are the best available options according to
their points of views. The ten informants encouraged the formation of a secular alliance beyond sectarian identifications because they agreed that throughout history, the Druze were never sectarian in nature and never had specific sectarian projects. On the contrary, they assured that the Druze were supportive of the nation they belonged to, and were fighting for nationalist causes. The informants differed their points of views regarding the process of implementing such a secular alliance in Lebanon and Syria, however they all agreed that the current Israeli political system is not secular due to the high discrimination against the minorities by the Israeli government.

Talal Arslan (2013) argues that the best political model that guarantees the survival of the Druze at this time and in any time is a secular alliance that is beyond sectarian identifications and that is the most durable and stable alliance. He adds that the Druze were always part of Arab Nationalism, and that he formed the Lebanese Democratic Party which is secular and against sectarianism, assuring that the future of the Druze in Lebanon and Syria cannot be guaranteed for the future except in a secular government promoting citizenship rather than sectarianism. Arslan believes that such a secular model can be applicable in Lebanon and Syria under the standards of Arabism, resisting Israel, and defending the Arab cause in which these principles can form a majority that would guarantee the participation and engagement of all minorities in the national fabric of Lebanon as well as Syria. He admits that dialogue between different groups can set up the infrastructure of this secular alliance by eliminating the sectarian minorities and majorities and transforming it into political and ideological identifications.

Slaiman Taqi Al-Deen (2013) agreed with Arslan that the secular alliance is the most durable and beneficial for the survival of the Druze, but he had a different point of view regarding the implementation of this secular model in the current situation in the region. He believes that the
solution for the current crisis in the long run can be in a secular state, adding that the process to achieve this secular state is by applying federalism as a solution for sectarian divisions in Lebanon and Syria taking the Iraqi case as an example.

Sharif Fayyad (2013) believes that the secular alliance cannot be applied in one package, but it should be the resolution of long stages of evolution. He assures that this alliance can be applied when the citizens of Lebanon and Syria reach total contentment that their future can be peaceful and guaranteed only in a government that provides their needs, preserves their dignity, and achieves their posterity.

Hasan Hamede (2013) sees the future of Lebanon and Syria only in a secular government that guarantees the rights of all individuals equally. He believes that the current sectarian political system proved and will continue to prove being a failure for the people of this region, where it spread poverty, civil wars, inequity, corruption…etc, and this failure will be a reason to search for an alternative political model that would be the secular alliance. Hamede also mentions that a secular alliance cannot be achieved except with a rational certainty among individuals in Lebanon and Syria that the only solution for the current crisis in the region is by adopting secularism under the umbrella of a secular government that guarantees the equal participation of all individuals in the political process.

Rami Al-Rayyes (2013) and Walid Safi (2013) agree that although the secular alliance is the best political model for the survival of the Druze, it is nearly impossible to adopt such a model in Lebanon because the current sectarian divisions impose the consociational system as the best system that achieves stability in Lebanon in the foreseen future. They also both state that the secular alliance can be possible and beneficial for the Druze in Syria depending on the outcome
of the Syrian Revolution. They believe that if the Syrian Revolution produces secular political powers, then a secular alliance would be applicable, while if it produces sectarian powers, then a minority-majority alliance would be the best model for the Druze in Syria. Rami Al-Rayyes admits that the secular alliance is the most durable and beneficial regardless of the possibility to implement it in Lebanon and Syria. He believes that such an alliance “is not feasible taking into consideration the sectarian deadlock in Lebanon, the sectarian strife in Syria, and the Israeli discrimination in occupied Palestine”.

Marwan Kheir Al-Deen (2013) believes that the secular alliance can be gradually applied in Lebanon starting from a proportional electoral system that takes the entire country as a single electoral district in which every Lebanese elects his representatives regardless of their sectarian backgrounds. He assures that such a process of creating secular government empowering citizenship rather than sectarianism takes time in order to be accomplished.

Sami Abi Al-Mona (2013) assures that the Druze clergy are not against a secular alliance as long as such a secular state is not an atheist state, but a state that respects religion and guarantees the right of expressing and exercising religious beliefs freely and without suppression. He adds that “the secular alliance best serves the Druze in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel because no interests for the Druze in any sectarian political system”.

Assem Jaber (2013) believes that the secular alliance is the best durable alliance that guarantees the survival of the Druze in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. He admits that the Druze in Israel should be integrated in the Israeli state since they cannot force any change in the system due to their small population. He adds that, in this integration, they promote their Arabic and Palestinian
identity and preserve this spiritual link with the Arab cause and the other Druze in Syria and Lebanon.

The informants concurred that the secular alliance is largely more durable than the minority-minority alliance or the minority-majority alliance because the secular alliance is based on ideological belonging, which acts as a common denominator that joins groups together under the national umbrella. They also agreed that any sectarian identification puts the Druze under the risk of being overthrown due to their small population and miniscule impact on the political distribution of power, and such sectarian alliances are never durable because they are subject to the narrow interests of the sects.

**Analysis of political models**

These interviews showed the perspectives of ten Druze informants and significant activists on the best political model that preserves the interests of the Druze, and guarantees their existence in a region dominated by chaos and instability. The standards used to define the term (best) political model were: the duration of the alliance, the role of the minority in the alliance, the benefits gained from it, and the ability to guarantee the survival of the Druze.

The informants answered the research question taking these standards into consideration to test the validity of each political model from their rational point of view. They differentiated between the best political model for the Druze, and the best rational choice to take according to the current circumstances. The informants had different perspectives taking into consideration their political affiliation, backgrounds, and their personal interest.

**Figure 4.1: Summary of informants’ perspectives on duration of political models in Lebanon**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Druze informants’ views of political models in term of duration:</th>
<th>Minority-minority alliance</th>
<th>Minority-majority alliance</th>
<th>Secular alliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talal Arslan</td>
<td>Duration related to the existence of threat</td>
<td>Very short period of time due to majority abundance of minority</td>
<td>Durable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marwan Kheir Al-Deen</td>
<td>Duration related to the existence of threat</td>
<td>Very short period of time due to majority control of minority autonomy</td>
<td>Durable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharif Fayyad</td>
<td>Very short period of time because it leads to civil wars</td>
<td>Limited period of time due to lack of equality between minority and majority</td>
<td>Durable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walid Safi</td>
<td>Very short period because it isolates majority</td>
<td>Durable as long as majority guarantees minority rights</td>
<td>Durable but not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rami Al-Rayyes</td>
<td>Very short period because it isolates majority</td>
<td>Limited period of time due to consociational democracy</td>
<td>Durable but hard to be applied in Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sami Abi Al-Mona</td>
<td>Very short period because minorities cannot live alone</td>
<td>Short period of time due to majority dominance</td>
<td>Durable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaiman Taqi Al-Deen</td>
<td>Duration related to threat in times of crisis but causes civil wars</td>
<td>Limited period of time due to civil wars and instability</td>
<td>Durable in case of federalizing Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasan Hamede</td>
<td>Very short time</td>
<td>Very short time</td>
<td>Durable and applicable due to sectarian corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assem Jaber</td>
<td>Limited period of time</td>
<td>Limited period of time</td>
<td>Durable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latif Abou Al-Husn</td>
<td>Duration dependant on political culture</td>
<td>Duration dependant on political culture</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2: Summary of informants’ perspectives on duration of political models in Syria
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Druze informants’ views of political models in term of duration:</th>
<th>Minority-minority alliance</th>
<th>Minority-majority alliance</th>
<th>Secular alliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talal Arslan</td>
<td>Duration related to the existence of threat</td>
<td>Very short period of time due to imbalance in the weight of majority and minority</td>
<td>Durable and applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marwan Kheir Al-Deen</td>
<td>Duration related to the existence of threat</td>
<td>Very short period of time due to majority dominance on minority autonomy</td>
<td>Durable and applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharif Fayyad</td>
<td>Very short period because it leads to civil war</td>
<td>Durable/ dependent on majority acceptance of minority</td>
<td>Durable and applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walid Safi</td>
<td>Very short period due to lack of balance between minorities and majority</td>
<td>Durable/ dependent on majority</td>
<td>Durable and applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rami Al-Rayyes</td>
<td>Very short period/it causes civil war</td>
<td>Durable/ dependent on future majority behavior</td>
<td>Durable and applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sami Abi Al-Mona</td>
<td>Very short period due to the inability to isolate majority</td>
<td>Limited period of time due to majority dominance</td>
<td>Durable and applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaiman Taqi Al-Deen</td>
<td>Very short period of time depending on existence of threat</td>
<td>Limited period of time because it causes civil war due to minority isolation</td>
<td>Durable and applicable by federalizing Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasan Hamede</td>
<td>Very short period of time</td>
<td>Very short period of time</td>
<td>Durable and applicable depending on the Syrian secular history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assem Jaber</td>
<td>Limited period of time</td>
<td>Limited period of time</td>
<td>Durable and applicable due to Syrian secular history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latif Abou Al-Husn</td>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>______________________</td>
<td>Durable due to Syria’s secular history</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.3: Summary of informants’ perspectives on duration of political models in Israel
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Druze informants’ views of political models in term of duration:</th>
<th>Minority-minority alliance</th>
<th>Minority-majority alliance</th>
<th>Secular alliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talal Arslan</strong></td>
<td>Durable due to historic coherence between minorities in Israel</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Limited period of time due to discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marwan Kheir Al-Deen</strong></td>
<td>Durable since those minorities are joined under the same cause</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Limited period of time due to discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sharif Fayyad</strong></td>
<td>Short period due to Israeli oppression to such alliance</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Long period/ the Druze should defend their Arab and Palestinian identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Walid Safi</strong></td>
<td>Durable/ dependent on Israeli suppression to Druze and Arab minorities</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Durable/ Two state solution where Druze join the Arab state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rami Al-Rayyes</strong></td>
<td>Limited period/ the Druze might face annihilation by Israel</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Durable/ Join secular powers supporting the Arab cause against Zionism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sami Abi Al-Mona</strong></td>
<td>Short period due to Israeli discrimination</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Durable/ Druze preserve their identity and defend Arab cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Slaiman Taqi Al-Deen</strong></td>
<td>Very short period of time depending on existence of threat</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Durable/Druze defend their identity, and defend the Palestinian and Arab cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hasan Hamede</strong></td>
<td>Very short period of time due to Israeli suppression</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Durable/ Druze join the system since no other choice, but resist Zionism and empower Arabism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assem Jaber</strong></td>
<td>Durable/depending on the behavior of the majority</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Durable/Druze defend their identity and preserve its Arab and Palestinian belonging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figures 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 show the perspectives of the interviewed informants regarding the duration of every political model in each of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. Since duration is related to survival, then the most important standard in analyzing each political model is the time interval that guarantees the continuity and survival of the alliance, and therefore of the Druze.

The three figures show that the supreme majority of informants believe that the secular alliance is the most durable political model. The fact that the secular alliance eliminates sectarian identifications and substitutes it with ideological identifications makes it durable according to the majority of informants.

The answers of the informants regarding the duration of each political model varied between Lebanon, Syria, and Israel, which shows their different political approaches in each country depending on the distribution of power and political weights. What was clear is that they had points of views about the duration of minority-minority alliance and minority-majority alliance in each country, and this explains the diversity in their political affiliations.

Figure 4.4: The political models chosen by Druze informants in Lebanon

![Political models chosen in Lebanon](image)
Figure 4.5: The political models chosen by Druze informants in Syria

Political models chosen in Syria

- minority-minority: 0%
- minority-majority: 20%
- secular: 80%

Figure 4.6: The political models chosen by Druze informants in Israel

Political models chosen in Israel

- minority-minority: 44%
- secular: 56%
Figure 4.7: Distribution of models on informants according to political affiliation in Lebanon

Informants' distribution along political affiliation in relation to Lebanon

Political affiliation

Number of informants

Minority-minority
Minority-majority
Secular
Figure 4.8: Distribution of models on informants according to political affiliation in relation to Syria
Figures 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 show that 60% of informants supported the secular alliance in Lebanon and 56% of them supported secular alliance in Israel, while 80% of them supported a secular alliance in Syria. They also demonstrate that 10% supported a minority-minority alliance in Lebanon, 0% supported a minority-minority alliance in Syria, and 44% supported a minority-minority alliance in Israel. 30% supported minority-majority alliance in Lebanon and 20% supported minority-majority alliance in Syria, while 0% supported a minority-majority alliance in Israel. None of them support an alliance between Druze and Jews in Israel as they believe that such alliance does not reflect the history or the belonging of the Druze to the Arab cause. 0% of
the informants supported a minority-minority alliance in Syria because they believed that religious minorities couldn’t sustain an alliance in the face of the religious majority in Syria.

Figures 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9 show the distribution of political models of informants according to political affiliation, where it classified the informants under three political affiliations: Pro-Jumblat, pro-Arslan, and the independents.

Three informants are considered pro-Arslan: firstly and intuitively, Talal Arslan followed by Marwan Kheir Al-Deen and Hasan Hamede. Kheir Al-Deen supports a minority-minority alliance in Lebanon, while Arslan and Hamede encourage a secular alliance. Concerning Syria, Arslan, Kheir Al-Deen, and Hamede endorse a secular alliance. Arslan and Kheir Al-Deen support minority-minority alliance in Israel, while Hamede backs up the secular alliance.

Three informants are Pro-Jumblat: Sharif Fayyad, Walid Safi and Rami Al-Rayyes. Fayyad supports a secular alliance in Lebanon and Syria, while Safi and Al-Rayyes endorses a minority-majority alliance in both countries. Fayyad and Al-Rayyes support a secular alliance in Israel while Safi, a minority-minority alliance.

Four informants are independent: Assem Jaber, Slaiman Taqi Al-Deen, Sami Abi Al-Mona and Latif Abou Al-Husn. Jaber, Taqi Al-Deen, and Abi Al-Mona support a secular alliance in Lebanon, while Abou Al-Husn support a minority-majority alliance. The four informants encourage a secular alliance in Syria, while Sami Abi Al-Mona and Slaiman Taqi Al-Deen support a secular alliance in Israel and Assem Jaber backs up a minority-minority alliance in Israel. Lateef Abou Al-Husn did not choose any of the three models in Israel due to his claim that there is a lack in information concerning the Druze of Israel.
Pro-Arslan

The outcomes of the graphs show that Arslan and Hamede who are currently in a minority-minority alliance with the Shi’a in Lebanon admitted that the secular alliance is the best political model for the Druze in Lebanon. Talal Arslan (2013) believes that the sectarian nature of the political system in Lebanon obliges the Druze leaders to participate according to their sectarian representation, but he emphasizes the fact that secularism frees the Druze from the limited sectarian identification, and therefore guarantees them a more prominent and essential role in the politics of Lebanon. He adds that the “Druze join sectarian alliances in order not to be excluded from the system, but if they have the ability to change this system, they will make it secular because by then, they will be able to protect their principles, defend their causes, and guarantee their survival.” Marwan Kheir Al-Deen (2013) believes that the minority-minority alliance is beneficial for the Druze only in times of crisis, however he highlights the necessity to create a secular alliance that would guarantee the survival of all minorities in the region for a much longer period of time. This shows that Arslan does not have any contentment in the efficiency of minority-minority alliance in Lebanon or in Syria for a long period of time, and that the nature of the political system and current chaos and instability in the region impose such alliances.

Pro-Jumblat

Figures 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9 show that the pro-Jumblat informants did not have similar perspectives concerning Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. Sharif Fayyad supported a secular alliance at a time when Rami Al-Rayyes and Walid Safi assured that the secular alliance is the best alliance for the Druze. However, they doubted the possibility to implement it taking into consideration the sectarian struggles in Lebanon and the entire region. Rami Al-Rayyes (2013) says that the Druze
are the first demanders of a secular alliance, and he mentions a study made regarding the civil marriage in Lebanon, where the Druze appeared to be the most encouraging sect for such a marriage. He adds: “this study shows that the Druze community wants a secular political system”.

Walid Safi (2013) mentions that the Druze were the first to demand a secular political system in Lebanon, where Kamal Jumblat was the godfather of this political project. Safi adds that “Kamal Jumblat was assassinated because the side that killed him did not have any interest in secularism, they wanted, by killing him, to kill his project and unfortunately they succeeded.”

**Independents**

Figures 4.7, 4.8, 4.9 make clear that the independent informants supported the secular alliance in Lebanon except Lateef Abou Al-Husn, who considered secularism unachievable and unreachable in Lebanon, emphasizing on the continuity of political sectarianism in the coming years. Lateef Abou Al-Husn was very cautious in the interview since he feared making a decision that associates him with any Druze political leader. He repeatedly mentioned the same sentence: “I trust the Druze leaders who are enlightened and knowledgeable in politics and I trust that they are working hard for the sake of the entire Druze community”. This fear in the tone of Abou Al-Husn reflects the opinion of many Druze people who prefer to be obedient to their leaders and avoid having their own opinion regarding important issues. Abou Al-Husn did not choose any political model for the Druze in Israel as shown in figure 4.3, potentially because of the sensitive issue for a Lebanese diplomat to discuss the politics of Israel.

On the other hand, Assem Jaber had the courage to express the difference between the welfare of the Druze community and the welfare of their leaders. Jaber (2013) stresses on the necessity
for the Druze to stay aside and be neutral towards the conflicting sects in Lebanon and Syria, adding that such an option guarantees the safety of the Druze but contradicts the interests of their leaders who search for their own personal interests. Jaber assures that the Druze should play the role of a moderator by constructing bridges between the sects rather than being part of sectarian alliances. He adds: “a secular alliance can be formed through these bridges that connect the sects together and search for the common ground that leads to eliminating differences.”

Sami Abi Al-Mona who is a member of the Druze clergy supported the secular alliance in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. Abi Al-Mona (2013) mentions that the Druze clergy constitutes 10% of the Druze population, and it agrees to adopt secularism as long as this secular alliance respects the religion and guarantees free exercise of religious beliefs.

**The rational choice of Druze informants**

Chapter four surveyed the perspectives of ten Druze informants concerning the best political model that preserves the interests of the Druze and guarantees their survival in each of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. The standards that were used to measure these political models were the duration of the each alliance, the role of the minority in the alliance, the benefits gained from it, and the ability to guarantee the survival of the Druze. The outcomes of the interviews showed that the ten Druze informants agreed that the secular alliance is the best political model for the Druze in Lebanon and Syria, but Walid Safi (2013), Lateef Abou Al-Husn (2013), and Marwan Kheir Al-Deen (2013) doubted the possibility to implement such an alliance in Lebanon. Concerning Syria, all informants supported the secular alliance except Rami Al-Rayyes (2013) and Walid Safi (2013) who supported the Syrian Revolution even if it resulted in a Sunni religious block and argued that the Druze should cooperate with this Revolution regardless of its
results. Talal Arslan (2013), Marwan Kheir Al-Deen (2013), Assem Jaber (2013), and Walid Safi (2013) supported a minority-minority alliance in Israel emphasizing on the Druze cooperation with other Arab and Muslim minorities in Israel in order to defend the Arab cause and resist Zionism. The rest of the informants supported secular alliance in Israel where they believed that the Druze can defend their identity and Arab cause by participating in the Israeli political system since they do not have any other choice.

The results of the interviews show that the majority of informants supported the secular alliance, where 60% of informants supported secular alliance in Lebanon, 80% supported secular alliance in Syria, and 56% supported secular alliance in Israel.

Concerning the duration of each alliance in Lebanon, 90% of informants classified secular alliance as durable, 10% classified the minority-majority alliance as durable, and 0% considered minority-minority alliance as durable. In Syria, 100% of informants classified secular alliance as durable, 30% classified minority-majority alliance as durable, and 0% classified minority-minority alliance as durable. In Israel, 67% of informants classified secular alliance as durable, 0% classified minority-majority alliance as durable, and 45% classified the minority-minority alliance as durable.

The outcomes of the interviews show that the supreme majority of informants believed that the best political model that guarantees the interests and survival of the Druze in each of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel is the secular alliance. This shows that the rational choice for the Druze informants is the secular alliance since they believed it has the longest period of survival in comparison with the minority-minority and minority-majority alliances, and since it avoids confrontation with other religious minorities, and with the much powerful religious majority.
Chapter four presented the perspectives of ten Druze informants regarding the three political models: minority-minority alliance, minority-majority alliance, and secular alliance. The ten informants answered the following question: What is your opinion about the minority-minority alliance, the minority-majority alliance, and the secular alliance in terms of benefits and duration? Which of these political models best serves the interests of the Druze and guarantees their future survival in each of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel? Their answers revealed that the rational choice for the majority of informants was the secular alliance in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. They believed that the secular alliance had the longest time duration and preserves the security of the minority by avoiding confrontation with other religious groups.

Chapter five is the conclusion of the study, where the literature presented in chapters two and three will be combined with the rational choices of Druze informants presented in chapter four in order to find the rational choice for the Druze community concerning the three political models.
Chapter Five

Conclusion

The Rational Choice for the Druze

Religious minorities have played an essential role in crafting the history of the MENA region, being prominent contributors in creating the greatness of this history. Religious minorities succeeded to sustain their religious, cultural, and traditional identities throughout centuries of foreign occupations, civil wars, and sectarian struggles. Nowadays, these minorities are experiencing an existential threat due to the violent scenarios of raging sectarianism in the region, which is urging them to take fateful decisions for the sake of preserving their historical position and guaranteeing their future survival in the anarchic MENA region.

The MENA region has recently been experiencing sectarian mobility characterized by the rise of political Islam as a result of the “Arab Spring” revolutions. Especially in the case of Syria, the country has been subject to such sectarian mobility since March 2012, where the acute civil strife is tearing the country apart, and threatening not just the security, but also the existence of religious minorities such as the Alawites, Christians, Shi’a, and Druze.

The Druze are one of these minorities who are thriving to sustain their essential prominent position in the region especially at a time where Syria is experiencing severe sectarian divisions leading to a civil war between various sects. The Syrian crisis, having acute implications on the politics of Lebanon, made the Druze in both Lebanon and Syria, worry about the future of their existence in this region. The Druze of Israel are suffering from the same existential threat as the
Druze in Lebanon and Syria but in a different phase, where the Druze in Israel are threatened to lose their identity due to the Israeli attempts to erase their Arab and Palestinian belonging, therefore imposing serious threat regarding their future in the state of Israel.

**Summarizing content**

This ethnographical study focused on the survival of the Druze religious minority in contemporary changing Middle East region. It proposed three political models based on the current politics of the region, in which the Druze should take a rational choice of embracing the best suitable model that guarantees their survival in such a critical time of their history. The three proposed models in this study are the minority-minority alliance, the minority-majority alliance, and the secular alliance. The minority-minority alliance is incarnated by the alliance of the Druze with the Shi’a in Lebanon, Alawites in Syria, and Arabs in Israel. The minority-majority alliance is incarnated by the alliance of the Druze with the Sunnis in Lebanon and Syria, and with the Jews in Israel. The secular alliance removes the sectarian identifications and substitutes it with ideological belongings under the umbrella of citizenship.

The research question proposed in this study was: Which political model best serves the interests of the Druze and guarantees their future survival in each of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel? Is it the minority-minority alliance, the minority-majority alliance, or the secular alliance?

The introduction of this study states the current situation in the Middle East, where political Islam is rising as a result of mass demonstrations to overthrow totalitarian regimes, therefore creating a fear among minorities who began to conceive of ways to preserve their continuity and guarantee their existence in this contemporary changing Middle East.
The introduction presents the Druze as a minority in the region, stating their origins, commandments, and demography in each of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. It states the Druze alliances throughout their history with local and foreign powers in order to protect their community. The introduction presents the Druze’s tactic of survival by depending on the strategy of dividing their political alliances among the struggling political powers in order to guarantee that any winning side will have a Druze partner, and therefore the winning Druze faction protects the whole Druze community. The introduction proposes the research question and maps the process of answering it throughout the chapters.

Chapter two provides the theoretical base of the study, and starts by providing the academic background of the three political models: minority-minority alliance, minority-majority alliance, and secular alliance. It argues that the Shi’a crescent joining the Shi’a of Lebanon, the Alawites of Syria, and the Shi’a of Iraq under the sponsorship of Iran tended to form alliances with other minorities in the region in order to create a balance of power against the rising Sunni mobilization, where this Shi’a alliance with minorities is classified as a minority-minority alliance. Chapter two also argues that the rising Sunni power in the region especially after the “Arab Spring” revolutions established a fear among minorities of being overthrown by this Sunni religious conglomerate. In order to counter this threat, minorities tended to form alliances with this Sunni power, which is classified in this chapter as being a minority-majority alliance. Chapter two defined the secular alliance presenting it as an alternative option resulting from the balance of power between the Shi’a crescent and the Sunni conglomerate. After defining the three political models, this chapter presents those models as different survival strategies for the Druze community.
Moreover, chapter two presents the rational choice theory as the methodology in order to answer the research question. It relies on the literature of Hechter (1986) and Scott (2000) to define the rational choice theory that is summarized by measuring the ways to reach the best possible outcome with the least possible cost.

Chapter two also explains the coalition formation theories relying on the writings of Gamson (1964), Tarrow (2001), and Sened (1996). This chapter furthermore creates hypothetical propositions for the three political models applying the variables of Farley (2005) and Bennett (1997) to measure the nature and duration of each model. It concludes that the minority-minority alliance is a minimum winning coalition with duration related to the existence of threat, the minority-majority alliance is a grand winning coalition with very short duration due to majority’s dominance over minority’s autonomy, and that the secular alliance is a grand winning coalition with long duration independent from threat and with sustained autonomy.

Chapter three applies the political models analyzed in chapter two on the Druze politics in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. This chapter presents Jumblat’s strategy in shifting alliances in order to preserve his prominent position in the Lebanese political system. It makes clear his stand with the leading Sunni powers after the assassination of the Lebanese former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, his strong ties with the Gulf monarchies, and his support for the Syrian Revolution against the Al-Asad regime as a minority-majority alliance.

Chapter three analyzes the politics of Arslan, classifying his alliance with Hezbollah in Lebanon as a minimum winning alliance that guaranteed him limited gains throughout the years. It explains that Arslan’s alliance with the most prominent Shi’a powers in Lebanon, with the Al-Asad regime in Syria, and with Iran as a minority-minority alliance.
It explains the case of the Druze in Syria in relation to the current crisis and its implications on the Druze community. This chapter suggested that the fear of the substitution of the Al-Asad regime with an Islamic state made the majority of the Druze in Syria stand on the side of the regime. It concludes that the current alliance of the Druze with the Syrian regime, and with the Christians in Syria is a minority-minority alliance leading to a minimum winning coalition in the time of crisis.

This chapter also presents the case of the Druze in Israel where the political system is secular stating that the Druze in Israel constitute 1.6% of Israeli population, and were represented in 6% of seats in the 18th Knesset, which is proportionally much more than the representation of the Druze in the Lebanese and Syrian political system. Chapter three further explains that the participation of the Druze in the Israeli political system guaranteed a grand winning coalition which was never durable because of the Israeli discrimination against the Druze as well as other minorities in Israel.

Chapter three suggests the probability to create a regional Druze conglomerate similar to the Shi’a and Sunni conglomerates. It argues that the Druze are unable to create a religious conglomerate in the region due to their lack of population, resources, geographic continuity, foreign sponsorship, and a religious ideology.

Chapter four surveys the perspectives of ten Druze informants in order to understand their rational choice regarding the research question. This chapter shows that the Druze tend to divide their affiliation among the current existing powers in order to preserve their community regardless of the outcomes of any regional conflict. It lists the outcomes of the interviews, which showed that the majority of informants favored the secular alliance over minority-minority and
minority-majority alliances in terms of preserving the survival of the Druze in each of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. Chapter four showed that 60% of informants believed the secular alliance is the best choice for the Druze in Lebanon, and 70% believed it is the best choice for the Druze in Syria, while 56% believed it is the best choice for the Druze in Israel.

The Rational Choice of the Druze

This final chapter should answer the research question: Which political model best serves the interests of the Druze and guarantees their future survival in each of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel? Is it the minority-minority alliance, the minority-majority alliance, or the secular alliance?

The answer for the research question can be determined by using the rational choice theory to compare the outcomes of chapters Two and Three with the perspectives of informants in chapter four in order to find the best rational choice that preserves the survival of the Druze in each of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel.

According to Scott (2000), rational choice theory of international affairs rests on the proposition of seeking the most cost-effective means to achieve a specific goal without reflecting on the worthiness of that goal.

This study will use the rational choice theory in order to measure each political model in terms of costs and benefits in order to find the political model that guarantees the survival of the Druze in each of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel with the least possible cost, and the longest possible
Minority-minority alliance

Costs:

- According to figure 2.2 in chapter two, a minority loses autonomy in exchange of security in a minority-minority alliance since it depends on other minorities in order to achieve security.
- Also according to figure 2.2 in chapter two, a minority experiences high public pressure on the alliance because the public of the minority fears the more powerful majority.
- Sharif Fayyad (2013) and Slaiman Taqi Al-Deen (2013) considered that a minority-minority alliance leads to civil war in both Lebanon and Syria, and to the annihilation of the Druze of Israel due to Israeli suppression.
- According to chapter four, the ten Druze informants had obvious reservations concerning the minority-minority alliance because they had a fear of being perceived as an anti-Sunni sect which will lead to negative implications on the national as well as the regional level.

Benefits:

- According to figure 2.1 in chapter two, the minority-minority alliance is a minimum winning alliance due to high coalition volatility, high level of competition, high coalition polarization, and high party cohesion.
- According to Figure 2.2 in chapter two, the minority-minority alliance is durable as long as the threat that led to its formation exists. This implies that the duration of this alliance is dependent on threat and security.
The interviews in chapter four showed that 70% of the Druze informants believed that the duration of a minority-minority alliance is short. Only Talal Arslan (2013), Marwan Kheir Al-Deen (2013), and Slaiman Taqi Al-Deen (2013) believed that the duration of this alliance is related to the existence of threat, while Lateef Abou Al-Husn (2013) believed the duration of this alliance is related to the acceptance of the political culture in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel.

Brams and Fishburn (1995) presented their size principle in chapter two: the political weight of a group, and the size of the coalition determine the size of the payoffs the group gets from a certain coalition. The minority-minority alliance includes many religious groups since it is an alliance of many sects joining together against a more powerful majority, and since the Druze have small political weight due to their small population, the payoffs of the Druze from such an alliance are very limited. This was interpreted by chapter three when it described the small political gains of Arslan from the minority-minority alliance in Lebanon.

**Minority-majority alliance**

*Costs:*

- According to figure 2.1 in chapter two, the minority experience very low autonomy in a minority-majority alliance due to the dominance of the majority.
- According to figure 2.2 in chapter two, a minority experiences low public pressure on the alliance because the public of the minority become secured due to their alliance with the stronger majority.
Sami Abi Al-Mona (2013) mentioned in chapter four that the Druze protect themselves from the majority by practicing the taqiya, which he believed “is not about lying to protect the community, but about being cautious, and about respecting the power of the majority and complying with it in order to avoid confrontation that might be costly.”

In chapter four, Slaiman Taqi Al-Deen (2013) mentioned that minority-majority alliance based on sectarian identifications erases the identity of the minority and therefore leads to civil wars in Lebanon and Syria.

**Benefits:**

- According to figure 2.1 in chapter two, the minority-majority alliance is classified as grand winning coalition due to high coalition volatility, low level of system competition, large size of the coalition, high ideological polarization, and low party cohesion.
- According to Figure 2.2 in chapter Two, the duration of the minority-majority alliance is very short since it is dependent on threat and security.
- The ten Druze informants agreed that the minority-majority alliance has a very short duration. Only Walid Safi (2013) and Lateef Abou Al-Husn (2013) had different perspectives, Walid Safi (2013) considered that the duration of this alliance is subject to the majority’s respect for the rights of the minority, while Lateef Abou Al-Husn (2013) believed that the duration of this alliance is related to the acceptance of the political culture in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel.
- Again, according to the size principle of Brams and Fishburn (1995) presented in chapter two, the political weight of a group, and the size of the coalition determine the size of the payoffs the group gets from a certain coalition. The political weight of the Druze is much smaller than the political weight of the majority due to huge difference in population, but
since this coalition does not involve many actors, the Druze still have a much bigger share of payoffs than the shares they might have in a minority-minority alliance.

**Secular alliance**

*Costs:*

- According to figure 2.2 in chapter two, the participants in a secular alliance experience high autonomy and security because the alliance is independent from threat and security.
- According to figure 2.2 in chapter two, the participants in a secular alliance experience very low public pressure because of the ideological coherence between the participants.
- In chapter four, Sami Abi Al-Mona (2013) expressed his fear that a secular alliance might lead to an atheist state, therefore affecting the religious identity of the Druze.

*Benefits:*

- According to figure 2.1 in chapter two, the secular alliance is classified as a grand winning alliance due to low coalition volatility, high level of system competition, low coalition polarization, and high party cohesion.
- According to figure 2.2 in chapter two, the secular alliance is durable because it is not related to security and threat, and since it includes institutions that narrow down the differences between the participants in the alliance.
- In chapter four, 90% of the Druze informants classified secular alliance as durable in Lebanon, and 67% classified it as durable in Israel, while they all considered that a secular alliance is durable in Syria.
Once more, the size principle of Brams and Fishburn (1995) presented in chapter Two is relevant in this case: the political weight of a group, and the size of the coalition determine the size of the payoffs the group gets from a certain coalition. The secular alliance eliminates sectarian identifications, therefore, the political weight of the participants is not defined and by sectarian limits, in which it gives the Druze a bigger margin of representation based on ideology rather than religion.

The case of Lebanon

Concerning religious minorities and majorities, Lebanon is a special case. According to Minority Rights Group International (June 2008), “Lebanon is a country of minorities with no single dominant group”, where the Druze form 6% of the population, the Sunnis form 28% sharing the same percentage as the Shi’a, and the Christians constitute 34%.

The particularity of religious composition in Lebanon does not affect the validity of the costs and benefits proposed in the previous section because, even if the Sunni compose just 28% of the Lebanese population, they still possess a regional strategic depth by being the majority in the entire region. This means that any confrontation between the Druze and Sunnis in Lebanon might lead to fatal consequences afflicted on the Druze in the entire region.

On the other hand, any minority-majority alliance between the Druze and the Sunnis in Lebanon might lead to civil strife because in Lebanon; minorities enjoy influential political weight in which they cannot be excluded from any winning alliance.
The case of Syria

Syria is suffering at the time of writing this study from brutal civil disputes caused by the military struggle between the Alawite regime of Al-Asad and the opposition, which has a Sunni majority.

A minority-minority alliance between the Druze, the Alawites, and the Christians will be doomed with failure after a short period of time since the Sunnis can never be excluded from a winning alliance in Syria due to their significant political weight. Additionally, any minority-majority alliance between the Druze and the Sunnis in Syria will have the same fate as the minority-minority alliance since there is a colossal difference between the political weight of the Druze and that of the Sunnis, and according to the duration variables of Bennett (1997), such alliances have a short duration due to the majority’s dominance over the minority’s autonomy.

The case of Israel

In Israel, the Druze take part in the Israeli secular political system, and they are active participants in the various Israeli political parties according to chapter Three of this study. The latter chapter also mentioned the discrimination in the Israeli political system, in which the Druze and other minorities are not treated along the same standards as the Jews, who enjoy greater privileges in the political system.

A minority-majority alliance between the Druze and the Jews in Israel will guarantee more benefits for the Druze, but at the same time they will be accused by all Arabs, Muslims, and even the Druze in Lebanon and Syria of being traitors.
A minority-minority alliance between the Druze and the Arabs in Israel will not be beneficial for the Druze since the entire Arab population in Israel constitute according to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (2010) about 20% of the Israeli total population. Such an alliance puts the Druze under the threat of being suppressed by the Israeli government.

The Druze in the region

Chapter three argued that the Druze are not able to create a religious conglomerate in the region due to their lack of population, resources, geographic continuity, foreign sponsorship, and a religious ideology. The outcomes of this chapter assured that the Druze would be a weak actor in any sectarian alliance due to their inability to create a religious conglomerate similar to the Shi’a and the Sunnis, which implies that they should seek an alliance beyond sectarian identifications. These outcomes showed that the Druze should focus on the politics of the nations they belong to rather than having a regional ambition since such an ambition is strained by obstacles and doomed with failure.

The Druze perspectives

The results of the interviews conducted in chapter four showed that the rational choice of the majority of Druze informants supported the secular alliance, where 60% of informants supported secular alliance in Lebanon, 80% supported secular alliance in Syria, and 56% supported secular alliance in Israel.

Resolution: The secular alliance

According to the history of the Druze as a minority in the Middle East, to the current state of Druze politics and to the outcomes of the interviews provided in chapter four of this study, the
The best survival choice for minorities in the Middle East during current upheavals is to divide their alliance in order to guarantee survival in a state of regional and domestic crisis. The historical Druze survival tactic of fractional politics still proves to be efficient at times of crisis; their reliance on dividing their alliance is especially relevant in the current situation in which the Middle East finds itself. Due to a multitude of factors mentioned earlier, the minorities in the Middle East are not able to create their own political model. This implies that they have no choice but to react to the existing political conditions in the region: they do so by dividing their alliances among the conflicting powers to preserve their existence regardless who the winning bloc is made up of. The minorities in the region tend to preserve their survival by taking part in the minority-minority alliance, and the minority-majority alliance, where any winning alliance guarantees the survival of the community since these minorities are unable to achieve survival without being dependent on other political powers or religious groups.

This study measures the rational choice for the Druze minority, which is similar to the rational choice of other minorities living in the region. This means that the future of all religious minorities in the Middle East is subject to the same destiny, where the rational choice that guarantees their future survival lies beyond this fractional politics of dividing affiliations.

Adopting the rational choice theory on the outcomes of this chapter provides an answer for the research question: Which political model best serves the interests of the Druze and guarantees their future survival in each of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel? Is it the minority-minority alliance, the minority-majority alliance, or the secular alliance?

Comparing the costs and benefits of each political model, taking into consideration the reality of each political model in each of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel, and the regional status of the Druze
minority in addition to the perspectives of the Druze community regarding the three political models enables this study to conclude an answer to the research question.

The comparative analysis relying on the provided literature and the perspectives of the Druze informants shows that the secular alliance in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel guarantees the Druze a grand winning alliance not subject to threat, security, and autonomy restraints like the other sectarian alliances. The secular alliance assures a durable time frame for the Druze in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel, at a time where the other two political models are limited by a much shorter duration. Moreover, the secular alliance provides the Druze in these three countries with significantly sturdier political weight than the minority-minority alliance and the minority-majority alliance, since the identification in the secular political system is based on ideological characterization rather than sectarian belonging, which is always limited by the population of the sect. The secular alliance sets the Druze free from being characterized as being with or against the struggling religious conglomerates. It liberates them from their existential fear of being overthrown by more powerful religious groups in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. Such an alliance provides security for all the factions of society who preserve their autonomy under the umbrella of citizenship.

These comparative analyses show that the rational choice for the Druze community is to embrace a secular alliance in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel in which it will be the best political model in preserving their interests and guaranteeing their survival in the contemporary changing Middle East.

According to the coalition equation provided in chapter two, this study deduces that:
Example 2.1 Let $S=$ secular alliance, $M1=$ minority-minority alliance, and $M2=$ minority-majority alliance. And let $G=$ gains, $I=$ time interval, $>=$ greater than.

Taking into consideration that: $GS > GM1$ and $GS > GM2$ while $IS > IM1$ and $IS > IM2$

Then: $GS + IS > GM1 + IM1$ and $GS + IS > GM2 + IM2$

Thus the rational choice for the Druze community is the secular alliance since its gains are more profitable than the gains of a minority-minority alliance and the gains of a minority-majority alliance. Its duration is also greater than the former and the latter.

This secular alliance that guarantees the survival of the Druze minority in the future of the anarchic Middle East should also preserve their religious identity, for which they struggled to protect from melting into the other religious identities in the region. The alliance should respect free practice of religion, embrace religious diversity, preserve the rights of minorities, and protect them from discrimination. The secular system that suits the Druze is the system proposed by Pope Benedict the XVIth according to Ivereigh (2010). This system consists of positive secularism that “leads to the separation of religion from the state, but at the same time allowing faith the freedom to run schools, offer services, and build the common good, according to the principles and values that nourish it” (Ivereigh 2010).

Not far from the positive secularism proposed by Pope Benedict the XVIth, the typical secular system for the Druze is what their prominent historical leader Kamal Jumblat (2012) described as the secular system that pursues humanitarian equality, legal equality, and equality among the individuals of the state, where this equality is beyond religions, sects, and political parties. A secular state in Jumblat’s view does not have any religion, but it is a state that respects every single religion and belief.
Personal Interviews

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