Fuses Set but Hezbollah Not Lighting the Match: The Dominant Political Actor in Lebanon Limiting the Risk of Large-Scale Political War

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Hezbollah: The Dominant Political Actor in Lebanon Limiting the Risk of Large-Scale Conflict

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A Thesis in the Field of International Relations
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

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Abstract

Amidst the Syrian civil war and Arab Spring wave in the Middle East, Lebanon somehow avoided large-scale political conflict. Lebanon’s violent past would have pointed otherwise, considering political conflict is a somewhat of a customary procedure for domestic and regional political actors. However, post-2011, why has Lebanon not erupted in violence and conflict, despite regional instability and enormous socioeconomic and political tensions? Lebanon was a fragile state unable to monopolize the legitimate use of force within their territory. This left a gap for other non-state political actors to step forward as the dominant actor. This theory is particularly prominent with Hezbollah in Lebanon after 2011. I reviewed the hypothesized causal change that Hezbollah, the dominant political actor in Lebanon, played a major role in the distribution of political violence between 2011 to 2017 to support their political ideals. The dominant actor in a fragile state refers to a group that exerts the most political power and influence in the country by engaging in, or responding to, activities that influence the direction, decisions, policies and conflicts a fragile nation goes through. In the Lebanese case, the government is the figure head of the state, but Hezbollah often operates unchecked as a state within a state with their own strategic goals. A chronological review of fifteen important cases of political violence that took place between 2011 and 2017 were used to analyze the roles of the dominant political actor and other key interest actors involved in the country. The cases were key events that shifted the geopolitical landscape of Lebanon during the time frame.
Dedication

I dedicate this to my mother, Nicole El-Haddad Aoun. Throughout her life, she pushed through relentless adversities that she accepted as challenges with a smile on her face and love in her heart. She was a phenomenal mother and the memories of her encouragement, hard work, and love motivate me every day to be a better person.
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My mother – Nicole: Your strong-willed motivation and love taught me to be persistent during difficult moments and to follow my heart.

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My sister – Elissa-Maria: Your resilience and hard work motivate me to be better.

My family – Thérèse, Josephine, Marie, Nivo, Niso, and Samir: A family is not only through blood, it is through love and experience, Hezb el 1.

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Tash – Thanks for coming in hard with the clutch last minute saves.
Table of Contents

Dedication .......................................................................................................................... iv
Acknowledgments ................................................................................................................ v
List of Tables ....................................................................................................................... x
List of Figures .................................................................................................................... xi
Chapter I. Introduction ......................................................................................................... 1
Chapter II. Review of Literature .......................................................................................... 5
  Power-Sharing System Keeps the Peace Through Communication .............................. 5
  Sectarian Elite Use of Transnational Ties to External Actors for Domestic Power .................. 7
  Non-State Actors are the Key to State Governance .................................................... 9
Chapter III. Further Evaluation of Core Hypothesis .......................................................... 12
  Dominant Actors Control Political Violence ............................................................... 12
  Domestic Political Actors, Hezbollah, and Lebanon .................................................. 13
    March 14 Alliance ........................................................................................................ 15
    Future Movement ....................................................................................................... 16
    Lebanese Forces .......................................................................................................... 17
    March 8 Alliance ......................................................................................................... 18
    Free Patriotic Movement ........................................................................................... 19
    Hezbollah .................................................................................................................... 21
Chapter IV. Overall Case Selection ................................................................................... 24
Chapter V. Research Methods ........................................................................................... 28
Elaboration of Specific Crisis Cases .......................................................... 31
Chapter VI. Empirical Analysis ................................................................. 39

2011 ........................................................................................................... 40
Case 1: Power-sharing System Cannot Adapt to Political Crisis .......... 40

2012 ........................................................................................................... 43
Case 2: Hezbollah and Syrian Tactics against Domestic Actors .......... 43

2013 ........................................................................................................... 48
Government failure, Syrian Spillover, and a Peak in Domestic Political
Violence against the Dominant Political Actor ................................. 48
Case 3: Tripoli Sectarian Clashes coming from Qusair, a Hezbollah
Strategic Location ............................................................................... 49
Case 4: Syrian Concerns Push Parliament to Extend Until November 2014
............................................................................................................. 51
Case 5: Series of attacks 2013, Hezbollah to Show Restraint .......... 53
Case 6: Hassan Lakkis (Hezbollah) & Mohamed Chatah (Future)
Assassinated ....................................................................................... 55

2014 ........................................................................................................... 57
A Fragile Government and the Growth of the Syrian Spillover .......... 57
Case 7: Lebanon Without a President .................................................... 58
Case 8: The First Battle of Arsal Promoting the LAF and Hezbollah ..... 60
Case 9: Parliament Extends Own Term Until 2017 ............................ 61

2015 ........................................................................................................... 63
Case 10: Israel Growing Bold and Hezbollah Strong Militant Capacity ... 63
Case 11: Garbage Protests Triggered by Stalemate in Government........65
Case 12: Suicide Bombings in Shi’ā Suburb of Beirut..........................65
2016..................................................................................................................67
Case 13: Al-Qaa Suicide Bombings and Improvements to Lebanese
Security Forces............................................................................................67
2017..................................................................................................................69
Case 14: Qalamoun Offensive Joining Many Key Interest Actors in one
Offensive.........................................................................................................69
Case 15: Resignation of Prime Minister Hariri.........................................71

Chapter VII. Research Findings.................................................................73
Finding 1: Hezbollah had either a positive or negative nexus in almost every
aspect military or diplomatic political conflict in the time frame studied..........73
Finding 2: By virtue of their ability to cause and deter violence, Hezbollah is the
dominant political actor not aiming for large-scale political violence. ..........74
Finding 3: Dominant political actor is almost always involved in cases of
political, but they do not always control it since they are sometimes attacked
themselves. They can hold roles of instigator, defender, victim or attacker. ....75
Finding 4: Violence cannot be monopolized by the main political actor in
Lebanon since there are many other armed political actors, both regional and
domestic, with interests that could potentially solved with political violence. .....76

Chapter VIII. Conclusion...........................................................................79
Appendix 1. Summary of Cases.................................................................82
Appendix 2. Table of Cases and Hypotheses.............................................84
List of Tables

Table 1. Summary of Cases ........................................................................................................82
Table 2. Cases in relation to Hypotheses .................................................................................84
List of Figures

Figure 1. Breakdown of March 8 and March 14 Alliances................................................14
Figure 2. Overview of Lebanon.........................................................................................25
In 2011, the Syrian civil war was in full swing and the Arab Spring had swept through the Middle East bringing with it an influence of civil unrest and political conflict. Somehow amidst these tensions and considering its history, Lebanon did not fall into violent political conflict after 2011. Since Lebanon’s civil war that took place between 1975-1990 and many smaller conflicts including the 2005 Cedar Revolution and the 2006 Hezbollah – Israeli war, political conflict is somewhat of a customary procedure for domestic and regional political actors. However, post-2011, why hasn’t Lebanon erupted in violence and conflict, despite regional instability and enormous socioeconomic and political tensions?

In every country, there are important figures and groups, both domestically and regionally, that play a role in influencing the direction of the nation in regard to politics, economics, trade, security, immigration, and regional influence. Typically, most countries are characterized by a state that has the monopoly on the use of force.1 However, a fragile state cannot always monopolize the legitimate use of force within their territory. This opens the door to other political actors to step forward as the dominant actor that has the control relating to the escalation and/or de-escalation of violence for the country. This theory is particularly prominent with the Hezbollah case in Lebanon after 2011. The absence of large-scale political violence in Lebanon during a

1 *Politics as a Vocation*, 1918 Max Weber
period when many other countries in the region – most notably Lebanon’s neighbor Syria – erupted in large-scale violence or civil war can be related to the intentions of the dominant political actor in the country. I will review the hypothesized causal change that Hezbollah, the dominant political actor in Lebanon, played a major role in the distribution of political violence between 2011 to 2017 to support their political ideals.

The dominant actor in a fragile state such, and in this case Lebanon, refers to a group that exerts the most political power and influence in the country. This is done by engaging in, or responding to, activities that can have significant influence on the direction, decisions, policies and conflicts a fragile nation goes through while attempting to meet the actor’s strategic goals. Even though Lebanon identifies as a democracy, the fragility of its government exposes the vulnerable nation to have a dominant political actor that may not be the serving government or a group serving in a formal capacity. In the Lebanese case, the government is the figure head of the state, but Hezbollah often operates unchecked to achieve their own strategic goals without regard to the government or other key domestic actors.

The range of other possible theories relating to why Lebanon has not fallen into political violence after the Arab Spring are culminated into three larger arguments, with two smaller supporting arguments, all related to governing bodies either domestic or external. The chief rival hypothesis depicts a power-sharing democratic model that allows for representation and open discourse amongst sectarian elites particularly relating to security. The second rival hypothesis claims that domestic sectarian actors use transnational contacts with their regional sponsors, whom are in actual control the

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political violence, to solidify their influence at home\textsuperscript{3}. And, third, it is hypothesized that dominant non-state actors support the government in governing and securing the nation\textsuperscript{4}.

Lebanon is a fragile nation with deep factional divides that are fueled political sectarianism built-in institutionally. Mixed with external influence, this creates a ripe and vulnerable territory that has a prime vantage point into key western interests and allies in the region. The Lebanese President is openly aligned with Hezbollah and Iran, while the Prime Minister is aligned with Saudi Arabia. The IRI-KSA proxy, Hezbollah playing a key role in the support of the Al-Assad regime during the civil war in Syria, and the domestic divisions between the main political actors lay clear foundation for conflict. 2011 to 2017 are the span of the Syrian civil war, in which Lebanon played a key role. Lebanon took in over 1.5 million Syrian refugees saturating their social infrastructure, and Hezbollah was actively combatting ISIS alongside Al-Assad, gaining valuable combat experience. This tested the Lebanese power-sharing system, the relationships with regional sponsors, and interactions of the government, Hezbollah, Future Movement and other key interest groups.

A chronological review of fifteen important cases of political violence that took place between 2011 and 2017 were used to analyze the roles of the dominant political actor and other key interest actors involved in the country. The cases were key events that shifted the geopolitical landscape of Lebanon during the time frame. Such a chronological review allows for identification of tendencies and narratives of the key


interest groups, domestic and foreign, involved in the violence. This methodological approach allows to track, measure, and review each of the cases and their evolutions through time.
Chapter II.
Review of Literature

The chief rival hypothesis and two rival hypotheses are the leading ideas behind why Lebanon has not fallen into large-scale political conflict. Nonetheless, they all explore this question with the same premise that the Lebanese government is the dominant political actor domestically. Whether looking at the power-sharing model, the influence of regional sponsors, or sharing governance between state and non-state actors, the fragile Lebanese government is a key factor in these three theories.

Power-Sharing System Keeps the Peace Through Communication

The power-sharing system in Lebanon has been shown to facilitate direct lines of communication amidst sectarian divide, limiting security issues within the country. The Lebanese state has been in a constant state of fragility and has done a poor job of managing public goods and providing services for their citizens. This happens all while being in constant disarray within parliament when there is a significant disagreement between key interest actors during a crisis. In such circumstances, citizens to reach out to domestic non-state actors for support, shifting the democratic power-sharing system to a power-sharing system favoring groups with larger political alliances. An example of

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this can be seen at the core of the weak Lebanese state, which is Hezbollah’s claim of defending Lebanon’s national security while participating in Syrian war.7

Further, the active role of external actors in Lebanon can largely be associated to the success of the power-sharing system. It is argued that without the support of the regional sponsors, the Lebanese governing system cannot sustain long term peace.8 This shows that the consociational system in Lebanon is not just a blend of factional domestic actors, but also foreign actors as well. During a crisis, the militias-turned-political parties in Lebanon, like Hezbollah, Future Movement, Amal, Free Patriotic Movement, and the Lebanese Forces, are in positions to access to external and domestic state resources for potentially using violence to advance their own agendas.9 The effective use of the power-sharing system through coalition building avoids this, but the risk is present nonetheless.

Lebanon’s power-sharing culture had political and religious leaders stressing the need for coalition building, dialogue, and avoiding conflict since the Syrian civil war crossed borders into Lebanon in “an intersection of local interests and trans border loyalties.”10 This has provided flexible political solutions and sought to bridge sectarian divide and limit organizational paralysis. These political solutions come through, sometimes very slowly, a process of social pressure by the Lebanese citizens, institutional

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10 Ibid
consensus within parliament, and the ability for the government to evolve.\textsuperscript{11} The main success has been achieved through informal channels of dialogue, accessible through Lebanon’s unique power-sharing system, that have given competing groups an arena to address issues and connect on larger security threats.

Sectarian Elite Use of Transnational Ties to External Actors for Domestic Power

Transnational sectarian identities have re-emerged in Lebanon with the importance of the elective affinity between co-sectarian state and non-state actors\textsuperscript{12} \textsuperscript{13}. With the Shi’a aligned with Iran and the Sunnis to Saudi Arabia, this ultimately renders the fragile Lebanese state susceptible to the authority of Iran and Saudi Arabia regarding domestic matters.\textsuperscript{14} While nations like Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United States push their strategic foreign policy agendas into Lebanon, the small nation utilizes the large regional sponsors as supporters and stabilizing influencers domestically.\textsuperscript{15} Lebanese institutions are accustomed to proxy regimes intricately involved in their domestic organizations with the dominant presence of Syria between 1990-2005.\textsuperscript{16} Once the Syrian

\textsuperscript{11} Castaignede, Monique. 2014. \textit{Power Sharing in Lebanon Political Sectarianism in the Ta'if Agreement}.

\textsuperscript{12} Salloukh, Bassel F. 2017. "Overlapping Contests and Middle Eastern International Relations: The Return of the Weak Arab State." \textit{PS: Political Science & Politics} 50 (3): 661-662. And


occupation was terminated, the susceptibility to foreign influence has not changed today with the presence of the aforementioned nations as within domestic Lebanese politics.

External sponsors like Iran and Saudi Arabia use Lebanese weak-state domestic struggles to build up their own regional influence, while domestic Lebanese actors use this transnational allegiance to gain credibility at home. The interplay takes place across three different levels in Middle Eastern International Relations. First, regimes push their geopolitical goals through the incapacity of rival states, like the IRI-KSA proxy. Second, transnational movements are crossing borders and functioning across different countries, in this case the “Shi’a Crescent”\(^\text{17}\) and Sunni movements. Third, domestic actors align with regional powers to outweigh their domestic opponents, as mentioned above. It can be stated that the relationships between domestic actors and their regional sponsors determine the potential for resolution of a crisis within Lebanon and the Lebanese government.\(^\text{18}\)

While this hypothesis explores the intricacy of the IRI-KSA proxy conflict across the Middle East, the influence of non-state domestic actors play in Lebanon is underplayed. For example, Hezbollah went to war against Israel in 2006 without the direct support of Lebanon or Iran, and stood their ground. Further, they have gained rigorous military experience in Syria between 2011 to 2017, have a large following within Lebanon, and more missiles than most NATO countries\(^\text{19}\). Bassel Salloukh

\(^\text{17}\) The Shi’a crescent is a notional crescent shape region in the Middle East in which the majority of Shi’a people reside; the countries include Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon.


expresses that when state authority breaks down, countries with weak governments go to Iran and Saudi Arabia for help through transnational sectarian identities but leaves little room for domestic autonomy in a weak-state, as what Hezbollah has achieved already.

Non-State Actors are the Key to State Governance

This hypothesis claims that Lebanon consists of a hybrid political order that utilizes the domestic state-led government supported by domestic non-state actor(s) to establish peace, security, and development with the nation. Non-state actors, like Hezbollah and Future Movement, supporting the domestic Lebanese government after the Arab Spring in Lebanon is an example that demonstrates the successful governance in comparison to a weak state government. Even though these groups have parties involved in Lebanese government, the groups are also taking part in prolonged political and military skirmishes alongside and/or without the government. As a recognizable force trusted by their followers, these non-state actors can work in an ideal context to support the government towards political change.

Within the context of state government, the revolutions are based on resilience and organization through the non-state governance. Outside of the domestic sphere, the Arab Spring was not only about nation-state identities, but also about transnational movements like Islamism and anti-oppression, making a case for the involvement of non-state actors. Hezbollah’s March 8 Alliance and Future’s March 14 Alliance as non-state


governance parties have supported their own respective identities with armed
organizations, administration, welfare, international contacts, and ideologies. With the
respective enjoyment or disagreement of rival non-state parties, Lebanon after 2005 grew
away from the Syrian occupation and moved towards their own blended form of
governance including domestic and foreign actors in the process. The dynamics of this
country transitioning away from political violence that lasted nearly forty years required a
grasp of a hybrid governance. Considering their informal governance roles amongst the
citizens of Lebanon, Hezbollah or Future would be best suited to complement the weak
government with non-state governance after 2011. This hybrid system forces the groups
involved to understand the different positions on various topics, and this in itself limits
insecurity between groups while forcing collaboration between state and non-state
actors.

It can be assumed that Lebanon went through the Arab Spring in the same way
that other nations did. The Arab Spring was a domestic revolution against authoritarian
regimes and Lebanon is the only power-sharing state in the Middle East with democratic
ideals. The country has major problems with the nature and functioning of a democracy,
but the power-sharing system is meant to allow for representation of minorities. Lebanon
went through peaceful protests in 2005 with the Cedar Revolution and again during the
Arab Spring both resulting in governmental change, not at all similar to the actual

Stel, Nora. 2014. "Governance and Government in the Arab Spring Hybridity: Reflections from


revolutions that took place in Egypt, Tunisia, and Syria. Opposing Nora Stel’s view, the evidence studied through various cases shows that Hezbollah is actually dominant in Lebanon and the Lebanese government is in support of them. The mitigation of the violence of the Arab Spring and the Syrian civil war in Lebanon was mainly supported by Hezbollah’s disinterest in pursuing violence within Lebanese borders between 2011 to 2017.
Chapter III.
Further Evaluation of Core Hypothesis

The fragile institutions of the Lebanese government are main tenets the three rival hypotheses to this paper. However, it is clear that the Lebanese government is polarized, porous, and sponsored by external actors. This then shows that the government is not the dominant political actor able to drive the strategic goals of the nation. Instead, this paper explores why Hezbollah is.

Dominant Actors Control Political Violence

As shown above, most of the literature on political violence in Lebanon before, during, or after 2011 focusses on the relevance of the decisions made by the domestic government or foreign influencing governments. Thus, there is a lack of research exploring the influence of dominant political actors that can influence political violence in Lebanon outside of the government. In particular, there is little research on the relationship of armed non-state groups as the dominant political actor and the control of political violence in a state.

Political violence as one of many tools used by political actors to achieve their strategic goals; it is seldom to be a random act or irrational logic.\(^2\) The categorizing political violence can be separated into three potential outcomes: resetting bargaining

rules in a democratic negotiation; undermining support of a dominant political body; or intimidating the opposition and rallying support. The monopoly of violence and weapons by the state is a key element in rendering them dominant politically, but when non-state actors are armed with weaponry and political aspirations, a state grows fragile. The use of violence by dominant political actors against those who contend them shapes the context and consequences of the political decisions at hand. Using such political violence, the dominant actor postures to sway the opposing parties to react in a manner supporting their objectives.

The nature of violence is brought forth with the level control and success of political objectives of the dominant actor in the state. Influence and control of the state can differ since there can be monopolized control and fragmented control. If the control is fragmented, there are two relatively equal armed powers in a contested region. Fragmented control can have violence initiated by either group, whereas full control has an armed actor establishing a dominant stance in the state. The dominant actor controls violence in relation to their political objectives and uses the initiative to upset decisions that are not aligned with their ideal outcome.

Domestic Political Actors, Hezbollah, and Lebanon

The domestic political actors in Lebanon have seen two essential developments in the past thirty years: the 1989 Taif Agreement that, amongst many other things, disarmed

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all political religious sects besides Hezbollah after the Lebanese civil war, and the creation of the March 8 and March 14 Alliances after the assassination of Rafik Hariri in 2005. This section demonstrates the political intricacies of the two alliances, the main political actors of the country, and how Hezbollah has utilized their armed authority to become the dominant political power in Lebanon.

Figure 1. Breakdown of March 8 and March 14 Alliances

*Parties with most seats in Parliament, Lebanon, Congressional Research Service, 2018*
March 14 Alliance

The March 14 Alliance is one of the two political alliances leading Lebanon since 2005. The group took its name after the date that the Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon, a major victory during the Cedar Revolution on March 14th, 2005. The parties in this coalition are connected by their anti-Syrian platform and opposition to the March 8th Alliance and Hezbollah. It is led by Prime Minister Saad Hariri, son of the late Rafik Hariri, who’s assassination sparked the Cedar Revolution in 2005. The group’s political parties consist of Maronite Christian and Sunni base. They include Hariri’s Future Movement (Sunni Muslim), the Lebanese Forces (Maronite Christian), the Kataeb Party (Maronite Christians), and the Independence Party (Maronite Christians). Originally, the Alliance was formed with the Future Patriotic Movement (Maronite Christian), but the party withdrew before the general elections in 2005 because of major disagreements in relation to the stance against Syria. The main tenets of the March 14 Alliance are the same as those formed during the Cedar revolution:

1. The unification of all Lebanese for freedom and independence;
2. Identifying and removing all pro-Syrian loyalists inside Lebanon;
3. Identifying and trying the killers of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri by supporting an international commission of inquiry;
4. Dismissal of the heads of the security services in the country; and

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29 Ibid
5. Denial of Syrian interference in Lebanon and Lebanese politics, beginning with the 2005 Parliamentary elections.

Further to these tenets, for the negotiations of the UN Security Council Resolution 1701 during the Hezbollah – Israel 2006 war, then-President Fouad Siniora and the March 14 Alliance took a stance against Hezbollah, vouching for state control of all non-state weapons, particularly the disarmament of Hezbollah. The March 14 Alliance initiated the Cedar Revolution after the death of Rafik Hariri and used the momentum to remove Syrian interference in Lebanon in 2005. Today, they are trying to unite all the Lebanese behind the cause of ousting the pro-Syria and pro-Iran March 8 Alliance.

Future Movement

The Future Movement is a Sunni Muslim political party led by Prime Minister Saad Hariri, son of assassinated former-Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. The party is relatively new, having been only formed in 2007, and it is mainly funded by Sunni Lebanese citizens, and indirectly to Saudi Arabia. The Hariri family is strongly associated to Saudi Arabia, allowing for a Saudi voice as the head of the Lebanese parliament. With the growing popularity of Shi’a loyalty to Hezbollah and its alliance to the Free Patriotic Movement, the Future Movement sought to its sectarian Sunni ties to raise money and popularity to rally against the pro-Iran Hezbollah. As the Cedar Revolution grew and the memory of Rafik Hariri stayed strong, the March 14 Alliance and the Future

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Movement kept their advance towards their vision of an independent Lebanon. However, factors like the shrinking Sunni population, growing Shi’a population, the limited involvement from Saudi Arabia, and the active and constant presence of Hezbollah in domestic politics and security while Future stood on the sidelines all played a role in the power swap between Hezbollah and Future. This is similar to the foreign policy habits of IRI-KSA. Iran is physically present sending reinforcements and support, while the Saudis provide a form monetary support without taking to the field.

Lebanese Forces

The Lebanese Forces is the second largest Maronite Christian political party, led by Samir Geagea, behind the Free Patriotic Movement. It was formerly a militia created in 1976 during the Lebanese civil war but has since relinquished arms, as did all religious militias except Hezbollah after the Taif Agreement. Geagea was imprisoned in 1994 for the length of the Syrian occupation of Lebanon and was subsequently released after the Syrian withdrawal in 2005. Considering its rich history, the Lebanese Forces party was a very vocal part of the March 14 Alliance during the Cedar Revolution. As mentioned in their charter, the party is strongly opposed to any external intervention in domestic Lebanese affairs, particularly those related to Syria.


leader, the party was able to grow and gain seats in the elections of 2005. Between 2005 and 2011, the group re-established itself within the divided nation and during the 2011 protests they supported the March 14 Alliance to reform a government. The Lebanese Forces saw difficulty after the 2011 protests because of the growth in strength of the FPM and Hezbollah. The goals of the party, according to their charter, are to have a democratic, free, and independent Lebanon representative of all Lebanese regardless of religious denomination, this puts them at an immediate opposition of the March 8 Alliance, and most notably Hezbollah.37

March 8 Alliance

The March 8 Alliance is the second main political group in Lebanon. This alliance was named after the date of a pro-Syrian rally during the Cedar Revolution.38 The parties in this group are strongly supportive of Iran and Syria, contrary to their opposition the March 14 Alliance. The Alliance’s political parties include: The Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) (Maronite Christian), Hezbollah (Shia Muslim), the Amal Movement (Shia Muslim), the Lebanese Democratic Party (Druze). During the 2005 Parliamentary elections, the Free Patriotic Movement, with their leader General Michel Aoun, split from the March 14 Alliance. Shortly thereafter, they signed a memorandum of understanding39 with Hezbollah and joined the March 8 Alliance, and this MoU became the platform of

37 Ibid


this political group. This large victory for the heavily Shia alliance gave them access to run for the presidency since the Lebanese consociational system requires a Maronite Christian president. The main tenets of this MoU are:

1. Condemnation of all political assassinations;
2. Placing the security agencies above all political considerations and having the political Alliance appoint the heads of these security agencies;
3. Working with the Syrian government to establish diplomatic relations;40
4. The inherent right for Palestinians to return to their Palestinian state; and
5. Keeping Hezbollah armed for two reasons:
   a. Justification through national consensus; and
   b. Finding conditions that Israeli occupation of the Shebaa Farms, liberating Lebanese prisoners from Israeli jails, and protecting Lebanon from Israeli dangers to protect Lebanese independence and sovereignty.

The interests of the March 8 Alliance are for a sovereign and independent Lebanon, but also a Lebanon that relies intrinsically on actors outside the Lebanese government, most notably the militant arm of Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran.

Free Patriotic Movement

The Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) is the largest Maronite Christian political party led by President Michel Aoun. Aoun was forced into exile in Paris in 199041, he led

40 This tenet caused the split between The Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) and the March 14 Alliance. The FPM believe that the removal of the Syrian military from Lebanon ended the resistance to work with Syria and that diplomatic ties should now be pursued.

the FPM while exiled, and only returned after the withdrawal of the Syrian military in May 2005. From 2005 onward, the FPM focused their efforts on Lebanese Christians while it was aligned with the March 14 Alliance. In 2006, the FPM and Hezbollah signed a Memorandum of Understanding,\(^{42}\) with a focus on keeping Hezbollah armed, defense against Israel, and building a working relationship with Syria. The latter topic drew severe backlash for the March 14 Alliance since their core mandate is centered around a free and independent Lebanon, particularly regarding relations with Syria.\(^{43}\) This then drew them into the March 8 Alliance and the MoU became the main tenets of the political coalition. During each parliamentary election or government formation, the Movement grew in strength. Key political dates include\(^{44}\) \(^{45}\):

- 2005 parliamentary elections: 20 seats
- 2008-9 government formation and elections: 27 seats and 2 ministers
- 2011 government formation: 11 ministers
- 2016 elections: Michel Aoun elected president.

Besides being supportive of Syria, the FPM has a marriage of convenience to Hezbollah and the latter is strongly associated to Iran. During the Arab Spring, the FPM focussed on gaining political influence to push their mandate further ahead.


Hezbollah

Hezbollah is a Shi’a Islamist political group with a militant wing strong enough to rival most NATO countries. The group was created in 1984 and has been led by Hassan Nasrallah since 1992. The group and its military wing are considered terrorist organizations by many countries, most notably the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and the Gulf Cooperation Council. This label came to fruition after the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, killing 241 service personnel. This event remains to this day the largest single loss of life of American servicemen and women ever. Since then, the group has further deepened its sectarian roots as the only group permitted to be armed for the defense of South Lebanon against the Israelis. In May 2000, Hezbollah’s militant wing repelled Israel and caused the Israeli military to withdraw from the south of Lebanon. This was a victory for Hezbollah not only on the battlefield, but in the political spectrum as well. They gained popularity and legitimacy as a main line of Lebanese defense of its sovereign land to the south.


Comparing their 1985\textsuperscript{48} and 2009\textsuperscript{49} Manifestos, it is evident that Hezbollah has marginalized their views, going from Islamic extremism to Islamist group\textsuperscript{50}. An example of this moderate change is their clear intent to turn Lebanon into a caliphate in their 1985 manifesto changed to only having Lebanon become a caliphate if the Lebanese people prefer it\textsuperscript{51}. They have taken part in many conflicts, directly, indirectly, and unadmittedly: the 2000 Israel cross-border raid\textsuperscript{52}, the 2005 assassination of Rafik Hariri\textsuperscript{53}, the 2006 Hezbollah-Israel war\textsuperscript{54}, and the 2010-17 Syrian civil war\textsuperscript{55} are all events in which Hezbollah has admitted to or been investigated about their participation.


\textsuperscript{50} Islamic extremism is defined as a form of the Islamic belief that opposes the rule of law through violence, similar to Jihadism. Islamist ideology is a marginalized view that is more politically-centric aimed at reorder of governmental and societal views in accordance to Islamic rules.


The political side of Hezbollah was aligned with the FPM since 2006 and slowly grew to be of considerable influence in the nation since then. With Shi’a Muslims being between 27% to 40% of the country’s population\(^{56}\), Hezbollah’s military success and political protection for the disenfranchised Shi’a people, the group garnered momentum with this large Shi’a base. Further, aligned with the FPM, Hezbollah opened the doors to the Maronite Christian demographic in support of the March 8 Alliance. Their militant wing is more diverse and experienced than the Lebanese Armed Forces and their political wing has the support of the Lebanese government while Hezbollah politicians and Alliance members held key positions in government between 2011 to 2017, including the President of the country. The Lebanese people with the Shi’a majority and Christian minority populations support Hezbollah, especially after their strong actions repelling ISIS. They are in control of the government with the March 8 Alliance, including the office of the President. Finally, their militant wing has a dominant stance with in-depth combat experience against Israel and ISIS in the past decade with Iranian financing. These reasons, amongst others, render Hezbollah the dominant political actor in Lebanon.

Chapter IV.

Overall Case Selection

In 2005, after Rafiq Hariri’s death, the foreign influence in Lebanon became clear and two main political factions formed with the pro-Iran and Al-Assad March 8 Alliance and the pro-Gulf and Saudi Arabia March 14 Alliance. In line with dominant constructivist views about politicized ethnicity regarding the Consociational power sharing political system, since its National Pact written after their independence in 1943, Lebanon created a sectarian rift between the eighteen ethnic and religious sects of the country. Hezbollah, in particular, grew to be the strongest single political and armed force in Lebanon, now, aligned with the current Lebanese president and the majority party in government, and they are the dominant political actor in the country.

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59 1943. "The Lebanese National Pact."

Population: 6,229,794 (2017 est., includes Syrian refugees)

Religion: Muslim 54% (27% Sunni, 27% Shia), Christian 40.5% (includes 21% Maronite Catholic, 8% Greek Orthodox, 5% Greek Catholic, 6.5% other Christian), Druze 5.6%, very small numbers of Jews, Baha’is, Buddhists, Hindus, and Mormons. Note: 18 religious sects recognized

Land: (Area) 10,400 km²; (Borders) Israel, 81 km; Syria, 403 km

At a larger scale, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) are two key actors in the Middle East and Northern Africa, but the balance of power and geopolitical influence between the two have caused issues for decades. 2011 and onward, the IRI-KSA proxy war expanded into the Syrian civil war, and

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subsequently further into Lebanon, with Iran and Saudi Arabia both sponsoring various groups in the conflicts. The Syrian civil war and the on-going proxy war between a growing Iran and cornered Saudi Arabia point to one key territory that has key geopolitical goals for both sides: Lebanon. A weak Lebanese state placed in a key geographic location has acted as fertile ground for domestic Lebanese political actors to be heavily sponsored and influenced by international sponsors, mainly Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Violent conflicts and/or political wars arose in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and across MENA completely due to the Arab Spring in 2010. However, Lebanon avoided political war and conflict after 2011 even though the unique geopolitical climate and history of this sectarian-torn nation had resulted in regularly occurring domestic and transnational conflicts. Analyzing and categorizing the similarities of some of these conflicts will allow to identify key factors in why the Lebanese have avoided political war since 2011. I argue that the dominant actor has the control relating to the escalation and/or de-escalation of violence for the country. In the case for Lebanon, Hezbollah has grown to be the dominant actor within the nation. After reviewing the cases involving political violence after 2011, it is clear that Hezbollah is the dominant political actor within the country because of their armed capability and diplomatic influence in government. However, there are many other actors involved within Lebanon that have also armed and challenging Hezbollah during this time frame.

The Iranian sponsorship of Hezbollah has seen a noticeable increase in armed capabilities since the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel. Hezbollah is now more powerful militarily than most North Atlantic Treaty Organization members. It has
150,000 missiles and could launch 1,500 of them a day. From the ground, air or sea, it can strike anywhere in Israel.\textsuperscript{62} The U.S. Department of Defense mentions in their 2010 report that Iran supported Hezbollah with USD $100-200 million.\textsuperscript{63} If we could understand how/why Hezbollah, the dominant domestic political actor, controls the use of violence as a political tactic in Lebanon, we could better understand why Lebanon has avoided large-scale political violence between 2011 – 2017. There are many domestic Lebanese political actors, but the only one that still has a militant arm and has caused violence both in and out of Lebanon is Hezbollah. And there are many international sponsors, both state and non-state, but the two main sources of support in Lebanon are Iran and Saudi Arabia. Observing how these three actors, along with the others, have interacted throughout 2011 to 2017 with specific political cases in Lebanon, then comparing the similarities, and measuring the results will shed light on this complex topic.


Chapter V.
Research Methods

I will review the hypothesized causal change that Hezbollah, the dominant political actor in Lebanon, played a major role in the distribution of violence between 2011 to 2017 to support their political ideals. This will be done by tracing out the empirical story that took place chronologically during that time frame and focusing on key moments that generated an escalation of violence or potential violence, and what Hezbollah did in those situations. With each given flare up of tensions or violence analyzed, the accuracy of the hypothesis and rival hypotheses will be compared.

It is important to review the research chronologically in a case-by-case manner to see the evolution of the events within the time line starting in 2011. This allows for the identification of tendencies and narratives of the key interest groups involved in the violence during that time. Once the research is laid out, the findings, research limitations, interests of key actors, and limits of the rival hypotheses will each be measured and discussed thereafter.

I will use two main sources to identify key cases to be analyzed:

The Security Council Report⁶⁴: This independent resource tracks and analyzes the activities of the UN Security Council. Specifically, for Lebanon, they provide a month-by-month summary of occurrences and actions that the UN made, either by conducting briefings, writing resolutions, drafting press releases, actioning special

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tribunals, or others. I will use this source as a guideline to identify larger issues between 2011-17 that the UN, the over-arching international institution supporting Lebanon, deemed important to action in the aforementioned ways.

BBC Lebanon Timeline65: The BBC provided a chronology of key events in Lebanon’s history starting from 1516 to November 2017. They added key events that took place in that timeline relating to all factors that affected Lebanon. I will utilize this resource to identify key events of political conflict that were relevant to report to a large broadcasting corporation like the BBC between 2011 to 2017.

I will use these two timelines to review the period between 2011 to 2017 in detail through the lenses of the international institution and the international media. Then, once key cases of political conflict/war are identified, I will analyze different sources of news, publications, and articles for in-depth accounts of each individual case. The sources I will use are:

Geopolitical analysis: The International Crisis Group, the Atlantic Council, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Foreign Policy Journal, the Washington Institute, and Stratfor Worldview.


Middle-Eastern News: In English Al-Jazeera English and Naharnet English; and, in Arabic An-Nahar Arabic News and Al-Akhbar Arabic News.

I chose to only use these geopolitical analyses because they provided impartial, first-hand analysis. The international news agencies provided unbiased first-hand accounts, often with journalists on the ground and Middle-Eastern news organizations provided similar primary source information, but with a Middle-Eastern perspective in an unbiased manner also. I limited the news sources only to those mentioned because other Middle-Eastern and Lebanese news sources are supported by Lebanese political parties, Iran or Saudi-Arabia, with little quality control. Other international/American are often strongly pro-Israel, while the narrative has Hezbollah flagged as terrorist organization, so the information provided is skewed.

There were many cases that resulted in political and civil unrest, with some turning towards political war and violence, involving similar political actors, both domestically and internationally and I aim to review them all and compare my hypothesis and the rival hypotheses for accuracy.

The review and analysis of each case will be done chronologically and included into an overall chronological review of the 2011 to 2017 timeframe while paying particular attention to:

a. The domestic political groups and their positions before, during, and after the events;

b. Issues dividing the opinions of Iran and Saudi Arabia;

c. Local and international support and opinions on the topic; and

d. The significance of the actual case and impact it had within Lebanon.

Along with observing these key aspects throughout the timeframe, I will elaborate on the interests, actions, and behaviors for each internal and external actor relevant to the
maintenance of stability and prevention of violence in Lebanon. By identifying the key aspects, actors and narratives of each case chronologically, I will be able to measure how it was affected and review ex-post and ex-ante to understand how the case evolved into or away from political war. Specific attention will be paid to the four variables mentioned above, for they will be compared across the main events while considering the hypothesis and rival hypotheses.

**Elaboration of Specific Crisis Cases**

The fifteen cases chosen for analysis are all moments when large-scale violence could have erupted in Lebanon. Considering the fragile status Lebanon was in during the timeframe, particularly between 2013 and 2014, any of these cases could have been the precursors setting off another Lebanese civil war or bringing the Syrian civil war fully into Lebanon. The actions of key actors like Hezbollah, the Lebanese government, and the Lebanese Armed Forces, avoided this. Many of the civil wars that have taken place around the world between 1945 and 2003 have been fought by smaller militia-style groups with strong grievances as motivation. This, mixed with social support for the cause, is necessary for any militia group to advance their goals, especially in a fragile state.

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66 A short summary of each of the crisis cases is available in Table 1 of Appendix 1.


Between 2011 and 2017, Lebanon was in a time of crisis overall. The March 8 and March 14 Alliances polarized the country, political institutions were frozen from the fear of the Syrian civil war, politicians relied heavily on their regional sponsors for support, and there was the worst violence the nation had seen since their civil war. The results of the fifteen specific moments analyzed ended in either conflict or stability, but each of them could have expanded into large-scale political war if mishandled since the overall case in Lebanon was ripe with tension. The criteria for classifying these fifteen events as crisis moments relate to their timing that the event took place, actors involved, where it was located, reverberations throughout the nation and internationally, and the way it was interpreted by the opposition. The weak political institution, existential ongoing wars between other groups, the large losses of life, and the power-seeking factions with their regional sponsors also played key roles.

2011 brought on the UN Special Tribunal for Lebanon trying four Hezbollah members for the assassination of ex-Prime Minister Rafik Hariri Arab Spring. In protest to this, Hezbollah had eleven of its associated Ministers withdraw from cabinet, shutting down the government completely (Case 1). Given the time and events related to the Arab Spring protests across the Middle East, the shutdown caused mass protests against the power-sharing system as a whole with hundreds of thousands of Lebanese people taking to the streets. These protests lasted nearly one year and took place while the Syrian civil war was slowing beginning to move into Lebanon. A mix of factional conflicts related to the Syrian war, timing related to the Arab Spring wave, and Lebanon’s fragile state being taken advantage of by power-seeking factions were the main criteria for crisis.
A targeted car bomb of a high-value target exposed the fragility of the Lebanese state in 2012 once again. For the first time in four years, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device assassinated a key Lebanese official (Case 2). During the Lebanese civil war and until 2005, this method of assassination became a calling-card to Syrian Intelligence and Hezbollah’s tactical involvement with an incident. In this case, these two groups targeted Wissam al-Hassan, director of the Lebanese Internal Security Forces. This crisis revealed Syria’s and Hezbollah’s continual prominence in Lebanon, particularly in targeting high-level well-protected individuals. At the instance of political fragility and State instability in Lebanon, this assassination confirmed that the Syrian/Hezbollah relationship is still strong. Shocked by this key political crisis and still affected by the Arab Spring wave, the Lebanese population was fearful of the escalation and retaliation relating to Hezbollah and Syrian involvement in Lebanon, but Hezbollah managed that no further violence ensued.

Hezbollah’s political and influential prominence within Lebanon and activities undertaken outside Lebanon in supporting the al-Assad government in 2013 and 2014 brought on the bloodiest years in Lebanon’s recent history. Strategic battles for geopolitical territories and influence through Beirut, the East and the North of Lebanon. Early 2013 saw faceoffs between Pro and Anti-Syrian groups in Tripoli and Qusair relating to Hezbollah’s support in Syria (Case 3). These were the first geopolitical battles directly associating Lebanon’s, and mainly Hezbollah’s, involvement with the Syrian war. The inability for the Lebanese Armed Forces and other security forces to deter or control such assaults meant that the assailants dictated their own agendas, leaving the Lebanese State and people unknowing of any potential war in their country.
In the same year, three bombings throughout Beirut and Tripoli targeting a Hezbollah neighborhood, anti-Syrian Sunnis, and the Iranian Embassy reverberated throughout the country (Case 5). Further to this, the targeted assassinations of Hassan Lakkis, a Hezbollah bombmaker, and Mohamed Chattah, a trusted Hariri advisor, were executed by power-seeking factions and groups without fear of apprehension (Case 6). This further exhibited the vulnerability of the Lebanese security agencies in preventing such attacks and the variety of opposing groups operating within Lebanon through an existential war outside of government control. This large loss of life was a consistent strategic retaliatory exchange that simply used Lebanon as its area of operations, without consideration for its people or frail government, leaving them vulnerable for large-scale violence without any notice or influence.

Lebanon’s weak political institutions were at a stalemate for much of 2013 and 2014. The Syrian civil war and perpetual fear of another Lebanese civil war were the communicated reasons for the freeze (Cases 4 and 9). However, the March 8 and March 14 Alliances were also wrapped in their own political battles, as the two main factions seeking power domestically represented by Iran or Saudi Arabia, respectively. This became evident when Parliament was unable to elect a President, leaving the seat vacant for two years (Case 7). The Lebanese parliament is setup in a way that it is shut down or a decision is thrown out if one-third of the ministers resign or refuse the vote. In 2013-2014, both Alliances had one-third of the Parliamentary seats individually, hence causing the political impasse. The deadlock reverberated across all levels of governance and State institutions, affecting the Defense and Security organizations as well as the Public Health sector.
The summer of 2015 saw violent protests relating to the buildup of leftover garbage in Beirut (Case 11) is directly correlated to the government’s inability effectively solve state issues due to this deadlock without Iranian and Saudi external support even if it is a domestic issue unrelated to geopolitical or security problems. Lebanon’s fragile government exposed the nation to the feeling of being unprotected or unimportant. During this time, the citizens were seeking safety in protesting, supporting a non-state actor like Hezbollah, or taking up arms, leaving room for a potential civil war or large-scale political conflict.

The town of Arsal on the Eastern border between Lebanon and Syria and this could have very well been the center of where a large-scale conflict could have begun outside Beirut. This Lebanese border town harbored fighters from the al-Nusra front preparing to work themselves into Lebanon in 2014. The polarized Lebanese government agreed to use the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to take back this village (Case 8). The undermanned and logistically-ridden LAF had Hezbollah stationed as their support, but Hezbollah was not employed in the actual battle. This first battle of Arsal saw the LAF struggle but finally beat the Syrian rebels all while suffering casualties and having thirty soldiers taken hostage. Even through the victory, this battle showed the weakness of the Lebanese government and security organizations. It also empowered Hezbollah’s militant side as an organization parallel to the LAF. All while the Arsal conflict was stabilized for the time being, this region was ripe with potential for large-scale violence, especially after witnessing the ineffectiveness of the Lebanese Armed Forces.

2015 was the fourth year that Hezbollah was consistently providing aid to the Syrian government. The group gained battlefield experience at the cost of heavy losses in
personnel and organizational fatigue of constantly fighting for all that time. This exhaustion did not go unnoticed by Hezbollah’s regional opposition. 2015 and 2016 had two key situations in which Hezbollah was specifically targeted. Sensing this weakness, an Israeli airstrike was launched killing an Iranian general and six Hezbollah special operations militants (Case 10). Hezbollah responded with force sending two assaults to the Israeli border as a show of force, demonstrating how their capacities have improved since the 2006 Hezbollah-Israel war. Again in 2015, ISIS claimed simultaneous attacks killing 100 and injuring over 200 people in a Hezbollah Shi’a suburb of Beirut (Case 12). With ISIS growing frustrated of Hezbollah’s success, they attacked them at home, trying to ignite a response within Lebanon. However, Hezbollah has consistently refused entering conflict inside Lebanese borders to avoid the risk of larger-scale violence, and hence did not respond or retaliate. Both of these cases could have had Hezbollah escalate with further conflict against either group, as has been observed in the past, nevertheless they did not.

With the Syrian rebels growing more and more desperate in 2016-2017, Lebanon became a key territory to attempt to expand into. Losing ground in Syria and vulnerable Hezbollah targets are key reasons why the rebels would move into Lebanon, however they were stopped repeatedly by a stronger and more capable Lebanese security force. Eight suicide bombers killed five and injured twenty-five people in the border village of al-Qaa in 2016 (Case 13). The suicide bombers were initially deterred by the increased presence of Lebanese security forces near the border, they were later intercepted by locals and forced to prematurely detonate their bombs. These bombers would have caused mass
murder if they would have achieved their objective. Intelligence officials believed that the number of bombers, their skill level, and motivation all pointed to another target.

With the momentum of defeating the Syrian rebels at hand, the Lebanese Armed Forces conducted a joint-operation with Hezbollah, the Syrian military and supported by the British and American forces to assault the rebel-stronghold of Arsal once again to finally rid it of Syrian rebels permanently (Case 14). This last battle freed Arsal and the surrounding area and showed the increased effectiveness of the LAF compared to their last effort in 2014. The multi-national force involved in liberating Arsal showed the depth of organization required to defeat the rebels. At any point, the situation could have escalated into a large-scale crisis and seen Lebanon become the next avenue of approach for ISIS and al-Nusra.

Near the end of 2017, the Lebanese government was trying to re-establish itself after a difficult and bloody series of years. During this time, Lebanese officials were meeting with their strategic partners for updates and guidance. In particular, Pro-Saudi Arabia benefactor Prime Minister Saad Hariri met with Iranian officials in Lebanon. Suddenly, shortly thereafter he fled to Saudi Arabia only to appear on live television to resign from his role as Prime Minister (Case 15). He looked tired and distressed and spoke out against Hezbollah and Iran during his speech. A few weeks later, he returned to Lebanon and regained his seat as PM. Saudi Arabia recognized the depth of the relationship between Lebanon and Iran and they intended to re-align their main Lebanese backer. This exposed publicly the Saudi-Iranian proxy conflict ever-present in internal Lebanese politics. The weak Lebanese political institutions and factional divides aligning
parties with Iran or Saudi Arabia and their respective agendas are directing Lebanon political leadership, leaving Lebanon again as a strategic geopolitical battleground.
Chapter VI.

Empirical Analysis

In this section I review political developments in Lebanon between 2011 to 2017 in chronological order with particular focus on events of political disruption and violence – or where violence nearly erupted but ultimately did not materialize. I will highlight key elements and compare my hypothesis of Hezbollah, the dominant political actor in Lebanon, controlling the likeliness of political war; to the rival hypotheses of the Consociational system, Hezbollah’s allegiance to regional sponsors, and Hezbollah being a supporting actor to the Lebanese government, each respectively resulting in avoiding political war, and thus see which best fits for the case in Lebanon during this timeframe.

There are three levels to the political violence that struck Lebanon between 2011 and 2017, the domestic political issues between March 14 and March 8 groups, the civil war taking place in Syria concurrently, and the regional proxy-war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Most of the political war in Lebanon from 2011 to 2017 was interrelated and could be brought back to one of those three levels of regional developments.

The key elements to consider throughout this timeframe are: the spillover from the Syrian Civil War, Hezbollah’s activity in Syria and in Lebanon, and actions and decisions made by the Lebanese government regarding situations involving political violence. From 17 June 2011 to 28 August 2017 there was considerable violence in Lebanon from issues relating to the Syrian civil war. The population of Lebanon grew by one-third due to the influx of Syrian refugees with minimal security screening. This, mixed with porous borders between the two countries, caused an increase in violence
within Lebanon. During this time, Hezbollah was heavily committed in support of the Syrian government and protecting the Eastern Lebanese borders in a form of so-called Lebanese foreign policy. The clashes within Lebanon varied from pro/anti Al-Assad sectarianism to full military operations against ISIS strongholds in eastern Lebanon. In the interim, the collapsing Lebanese government was trying to keep control of an overpopulated, frustrated, and uncertain Lebanese population while the power-sharing government itself could not come to agreeance.

Throughout this chronological narrative, it is imperative to note how the key political actors navigated the geopolitical developments and interacted with one another without ever tipping too far into retaliatory large-scale political violence.

2011
Case 1: Power-sharing System Cannot Adapt to Political Crisis

On January 12, 2011, the Lebanese government fell after Hezbollah and their associates had eleven members withdraw from their positions in cabinet. This was in retaliation to the UN Special Tribunal for Lebanon trying four Hezbollah members for the assassination of ex-Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.⁶⁹ This came after months of paralyzing debate between the Future Movement and Hezbollah regarding the UN investigation and shortly after the announcement of the four Hezbollah members as the accused.

Since the rest of the Arab world was amidst the Arab Spring, the Lebanese took this chance after the government collapse to call on political reform against Confessionalism in Lebanon. The Confessionalist system has the highest levels of government proportionally reserved for equal representation of religious groups, with the Lebanese system calling for Parliamentary re-election every four years and Presidential appointment every six years. Lebanon saw two general elections free of Syrian influence, the first in 2005 with general elections after the Cedar Revolution and the second general elections in 2009 followed suit.

The government collapse in 2011 and subsequent protests were seen as Lebanon’s contribution to the Arab Spring revolutions, however a deeper look proves otherwise. Many nations in the Arab Spring saw violent political revolution that overthrew oppressive tyrannical political systems. Lebanon on the other hand, has been a democracy for decades with a political system designed for representation of all minority groups. This consociational system is what identified Lebanon so distinctly from its neighbors for decades, this is also what lead to the Lebanese protests in 2011. This political system has seen failure repetitively throughout the years, many times ending in political violence like the Lebanese civil war in 1972 that lasted until 1990 and the violent 2008 conflict.

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involving Hezbollah and Future. The key issue with the Consociational system in Lebanon is the power-seeking nature of the strict factional divide, with each group looking to overtake the other for domestic power in a constant domestic-style prisoner’s dilemma. All things considered, the government collapse by Hezbollah and subsequent lengthy protests against Consociationalism can be used to disprove the hypothesis that Consociationalism is why Lebanon did not fall into political violence.

Rather, the successful government shutdown by Hezbollah in protest to the UN Special Tribunal shows that they are the dominant political actor in the country. Their actions in shutting down the government shocked the international community (including the UN), broke down Syria and Saudi mediated talks with Future that were on-going for months, and initiated anti-government non-violent protests that lasted until 15 December 2011. Hezbollah’s intent was to show their displeasure with the UN decision and to show that they will not be contained and left inactive, but not to cause violence and revolution. This situation disproves that Hezbollah is directed by total allegiance to

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74 John Herz (1950) refers to the Prisoner’s Dilemma as opposing parties acting in their own assured self-preservation, regardless of their professed ideology. This is seen when the domestic political actors in Lebanon like Hezbollah and Future Movement stall the parliamentary system on decisions that they, or their regional sponsors, would concede their rational self-interest to the benefit opposing group. If the domestic actors concede while the opposing group gains an advantage it is seen as inferior or a loss while the opposite gives them the strategic advantage. Examples of this stalemate are analyzed in cases 1, 4, and 9.


external actors like Iran and Syria because they did not accommodate the negotiations with Future. It also disproves that Hezbollah works in constant support of the Lebanese government, since they decided to completely shut down the government to prove their point and causing anti-government protests afterwards. In regard to Future Movement, Hezbollah’s rival political actor in Lebanon, they were unable to handle the overwhelming imposition placed by Hezbollah on the Lebanese government. While Future and Hezbollah each have allegiances to one-third of parliamentary ministers respectively, the Lebanese parliament can be shut down if one-third of the ministers decide to resign. This left Future and all other key actors part of the March 14 group helpless. In the end of this key event that took up most of 2011, Hezbollah relayed messages of domestic political dominance and strength without resorting to any violence. They showed their dissatisfaction with the UN decision, their influence over the Lebanese government, and their ability to not use violence but still achieve their political goals.

2012

Case 2: Hezbollah and Syrian Tactics against Domestic Actors

After Spring 2012 and fifteen months into the Syrian civil war, Lebanon saw the emergence of acts of targeted political violence involving groups identifying with the Syrian civil war, but within its own borders. The northern city of Tripoli became a key location of the spillover conflict for pro and anti-Assad factions within Lebanon to face off. 77 These increased tensions spread across Lebanon for the rest of the year,

culminating in a natural progression of the spillover from Syria with the assassination of Wissam al-Hassan, Brigadier General of the Lebanese Internal Security Forces (ISF) by one tonne of explosives in a parked vehicle near his convoy.\textsuperscript{78} Lebanon is all too familiar with this type of assassination attempt. This same tactic has been used dozens of times on political and popular figures in Lebanon that stood against Syria, Hezbollah, or Iran. The most notable of these assassinations was in 2005 killing Rafik Hariri. The assassination of Wissam al-Hassan was particular because this was the first car bomb assassination attempt in four years in Lebanon.\textsuperscript{79} It came after a relatively calm year in domestic politics and was the precursor to heavy violence in the coming years, as Rami Khouri mentioned, “There has been a steady increase in violence and now we are going to the next step of assassinations, bombings and maybe clashes. It is terrible but it is not unexpected.”\textsuperscript{80}

This event showed that the Syrian regime was still prominent in Lebanon and Hezbollah field tactics were still able to target high-level well-protected individuals. Regularly occurring targeted car bombs of high-profile VIPs that spoke against Hezbollah or Syria ceased after the Cedar revolution. This was the first case of its kind in

\textsuperscript{78} Hassan Alliq. “Wissam al-Hassan: They want my head,” al-Akhbar, October 30, 2012. \texttt{<https://www.al-akhbar.com/Politics/78020.%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%86-%D9%87%D8%A4%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%B1%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%8A>}. Accessed December 12, 2018.


over four years and it confirmed that the Syrian/Hezbollah relationship is still strong. Al-
Hassan was a target of many groups since the ISF arrested former information minister,
and strong Al-Assad ally, Michel Samaha while smuggling explosives from Syria to
Lebanon; also, the unit is key in the Hariri assassination investigation targeting
Hezbollah; and the ISF unraveled an Israeli network of spies and informants in Lebanon
in 2008.81 82 However, al-Hassan’s main concern was over the Syrian Intelligence and
Hezbollah relationship, particularly relating to the arrest of Samaha. His relationship with
Riyadh, targeting of Israeli spies, arrest of a strong al-Assad ally in Samaha, and his
conviction that Hezbollah was behind the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik
Hariri puts many targets on al-Hassan’s back but the only way someone got to him was
through a car bomb.

Al-Hassan’s assassination took place just under 36-hours after his arrival at Rafik
Hariri International Airport early on 18 October 2012 from a business trip to France. It is
commonly known that Hezbollah control the Rafik Hariri airport.83 84 This was
discovered in 2008 after authorities found a hidden Hezbollah camera surveying the VIP

81 Ibid

82 Hassan Alliq. “Wissam al-Hassan: A Case Review,” al-Akhbar, November 7, 2012.<https://www.al-akhbar.com/Politics/78020/%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%86-%D9%87%D8%A4%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%B1%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%8A>. Accessed December 12, 2018.


landing strip and discovering the head of airport security to be a Hezbollah facilitator. To avoid such targeting and surveillance, al-Hassan regularly utilized low-profile rental vehicles, and in this case, he rented an armored limousine from the airport for travel. However, after review of over 100 cameras in the vicinity of the crime scene, two vehicles were observed swapping in and out of a reserved parking spot near the scene up to 48-hours before the explosion, waiting for al-Hassan. He was later assassinated in that same limousine across from that reserved parking spot. Even though al-Hassan had many groups interested in his death, this information, the tracking and intelligence capacity, along with the similarities to the Hariri and other Marth 14 Alliance members, this lead many to believe that Hezbollah was behind the assassination and supported by Syrian intelligence.

In terms of the control of political violence within Lebanon, this situation is in support of the dominant political actor in Lebanon, Hezbollah and my primary hypothesis. While al-Hassan was not a politician, he did facilitate and advise Rafik Hariri and his son, Prime Minister Saad Hariri. He even mediated negotiations between Saad Hariri and Hezbollah for maintenance of their secret fiber-optics network in exchange for political concessions. The case, these examples, and this assassination show how

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87 Ibid
Hezbollah still has a lopsided military advantage within Lebanon. The rival hypotheses arguing for the consociational system controlling political violence and Hezbollah being a supporting actor of the Lebanese government are both proved false with this situation. The rival hypothesis of external actors controlling domestic political actors for their gain can be supported with this scenario since Syria and Iran both had much to gain with the assassination of the leader of ISF. This is however a straw-in-the-wind test providing circumstantial evidence that is not unique. A more affirming explanation could be made with a smoking-gun test that has the use of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices to assassinate figures supporting the March 14 Alliance. There have been over sixty-five violent attacks in Lebanon since 2004, mainly mass bombings or assassinations. Aside from suicide bombings targeting military personnel, there have been less than five car bombs that have targeted pro-Hezbollah or pro-Syrian individuals or groups in that time. Whereas, there have been over fifty car bombs since 2004 that have targeted pro-March 14 Alliance areas or individuals. This modus operandi that Hezbollah uses domestically to deliver their political message or support their Syrian regional partner goes along with the proof of how they did it and how they control political violence with such actions.


90 Ibid

91 I have accumulated a comprehensive list of the attacks that took place in Lebanon from 2004 to 2018, it is available upon request for further information regarding this claim.
Such actions show the control that Hezbollah has on the domestic political spectrum with their applications of targeted bombings for their strategic needs.

2013

Government failure, Syrian Spillover, and a Peak in Domestic Political Violence against the Dominant Political Actor

Lebanon in 2013 saw sectarian clashes in relation to the spillover from the Syrian civil war. Hezbollah and Syrian loyalists constantly faced Salafists and Syrian rebels throughout 2012 and 2013 in an attempt to solidify supply routes, sectarian influence, and regional dominance throughout Beirut and the North of Lebanon. Further, 2013 had a war in the shadows through different forms of assassinations executed without apprehension. We saw this unfold in tit-for-tat bombings at the Hezbollah stronghold in Beirut and Tripoli mosque bombings, generating relative calm for three months. Then the Iranian embassy bombing brought remanence of the Lebanese civil war and showed the struggles at the regional level, not just domestically within Lebanon. Meanwhile, the assassination of Hezbollah’s Hassan Lakkis revealed that Israel is likely to blame and is still actively pursuing their own agenda within Lebanon; and, the targeted car bomb killing Future’s Mohamed Chatah had Hezbollah as the likely perpetrators. 2013 showed the inability of Lebanon’s consociational system to come together and provide governance and direction to the country and shield the military and security forces from responsibility.

political and sectarian strife. Targeted killings in Lebanon are often done for a larger purpose, relaying a political message, often associated to Syria or Israel in the past, but recently Hezbollah has begun taking on their own agenda. 2013 was a good example of how Hezbollah was able to suffer a higher than normal number of casualties and still mitigate their reactions in order to mitigate the escalation of violence beyond reasonable control. This year uniquely shows how restraint to not respond with violence can still achieve the overall strategic goals against an active opposition.

Case 3: Tripoli Sectarian Clashes coming from Qusair, a Hezbollah Strategic Location

Throughout 2012 and 2013, the North and East of Lebanon near the towns of Tripoli and Baalbek respectively saw the blunt of the Syrian spillover conflict in Lebanon. Tripoli has seen a rise in violence involving Alawites and Sunnis since the city has become the home to tens of thousands of Syrians fleeing the civil war. Tripoli is mainly Sunni, but there are particular areas of Alawite communities, a sect of Shi’a Islam that Bashar al-Assad belongs to as well. The main of the fighting in this case was in the Sunni Bab al-Tabbana area and Alawite Jabal Mushin area. The violence between the Sunnis and Alawites in Tripoli has existed since the Lebanese civil war. Violence in this area is not uncommon, but these past few months have been fueled with particular motivation on behalf of the Sunnis. The reason for this is the Sunni village of Qusair

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being surrounded and attacked by Hezbollah and Syrian loyalists. Qusair sits in a river valley and on a key crossroad into the Syrian city of Homs that the Syrian rebels and nationals are both actively fighting for.\(^96\) Essentially, the fighting taking place in Tripoli is in response to Qusair and an attempt by the Salafists and Syrian rebels to distract Hezbollah from the Qusair battle. Further violence stemming the Qusair battle took place near the village of Baalbek in June of the same year. The main point regarding the battle near Baalbek was that this was the first time that Syrian rebels and Hezbollah battled face-to-face in Lebanon.\(^97\) The spillover of the Syrian civil war throughout Lebanon took a new turn in Baalbek showing the status of the porous Lebanese/Syrian border with the ability of Syrian rebels to come across with heavy weapons without opposition from the fragile Lebanese government and divided military.

The Lebanese Armed Forces are tasked with the responsibility to patrol this area and enforce government legislation, but the military itself is riddled with sectarian conflict internally. Since its soldiers come from different sectarian backgrounds, taking action against what could be their own groups renders the military ineffective to apply the law. Lebanese authorities have had limited responses, if any at all, even as amounts of conflicts have risen since 2012.\(^98\) Human Rights Watch reported that of the eleven

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reported cases of violence against Alawite people or businesses, only two attempts to find the culprits were made.\textsuperscript{99} Innocent Alawites are being attacked in the streets, but no response is being generated. Lebanese soldiers patrol the streets in an attempt to maintain stability in the Tripoli area, but would not get involved in the skirmishes since their own soldiers stand divided on the issue.\textsuperscript{100} This clearly displays that the Lebanese government does not have control on political violence and that Hezbollah is not simply a supporter of the government, but rather a dominant political actor.

Case 4: Syrian Concerns Push Parliament to Extend Until November 2014

Lebanese law makers extended their term by sixteen months amidst a year filled with spillover sectarian violence from the Syrian civil war and a political deadlock between the nation’s two lead political alliances: The March 8 alliance and March 14 alliance. The United States and United Nations have both disproved the decision, claiming that giving Lebanese citizens their democratic right to scheduled free elections was necessary.\textsuperscript{101} However, after two months of failed talks in forming a government, the Lebanese parliament stood by their decision under the premise that an election would send the fragile nation into civil war considering the on-going sectarian conflict taking place across the country.\textsuperscript{102} This significant event is the first time that parliament decided

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid


\textsuperscript{102} Pekka Hakala. “Regional Tensions Lead to a Power Vacuum in Lebanon,” European Parliament Think Tank, April 17, 2013.
to lengthen its tenure since the Lebanese civil war.\textsuperscript{103} With the resignation of Prime Minister Najib Mikati having taken place in March 2013 due to "intensifying pressure between the pro-Assad and anti-Assad camps"\textsuperscript{104}, and now the first parliamentary election extension in nearly thirty years, the Lebanese government is clearly in a fragile position holding on to whatever it can.

The Lebanese consociational system was meant to have equal representation of minorities and the culturally diverse people of Lebanon. With parliamentary elections every four years and presidential elections every six years, it is meant to have a fair, democratic, and balanced process that limits sectarian conflict and allows for open lines of communication between the sects. However, this case shows the discrepancies involved in such a government. The consociational system was not able to go through elections during a time ripe with sectarian tension and spillover violence because of fear that the very sects that this government represents would defect into a civil war. With fears of civil war, a government should be able to fall on its military to protect the integrity of the state and electoral process, but the Lebanese military is torn with sectarianism in itself and unable to do so. Future Movement and Hezbollah, both with their respective support networks, held a stalemate in government because they each were not happy with the opposing party’s counter-offers. In this case, both groups are


benefitting by remaining in parliament without elections while the consociational system fails at effectively solving diplomatic issues. This shows that the lines of communication and representative government conceded political influence and stability through fear of sectarian violence, removing themselves as the dominant political actor controlling the violence.

Case 5: Series of attacks 2013, Hezbollah to Show Restraint

Among the many spillover attacks that took place in Lebanon in 2013, three events stood out particularly compared to the others. One targeted Hezbollah, the other targeted anti-Syrian Salafist Sunnis, and the last targeted the Iranian embassy. Even though the targets were on opposite sides of the political spectrum, the uniqueness of the attacks connects them and shows the various foreign actors involved in armed conflict in Lebanon in 2013. Hezbollah did not retaliate on Lebanese soil, each of the unique bombings was not followed up with further battles or attempts at life, and the groups behind the respective attacks were not heard from again within Lebanon. This restraint and vulnerability from Hezbollah showed that the dominant political actor does not only manage the violence, but also their reaction to violence perpetrated against them.

The first was a car explosion that detonated near a Hezbollah stronghold in a Shi’a neighborhood in Beirut, killing twenty-seven people and injuring two-hundred in August 2013. A Sunni group named the “Brigades of Aisha” claimed the attack in a video surfacing shortly after the attack, but many Lebanese politicians claimed the


The second was a set of twin mosque bombings against two Salafist Sunni mosques in Tripoli in the end of August and the tail end of a bloody summer in Lebanon. Different from the other attacks that took place with the Syrian spillover, this was a mass terrorist act on religious sites that left over one hundred dead and several hundred injured.\footnote{Oliver Holmes and Nadih Siddiq. “Bomb Kills 42 outside Mosque in Lebanon’s Tripoli,” Reuters, August 23, 2013. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-explosion-deaths-idUSBRE97M0FL20130823>. Accessed January 15, 2019.} In 2016, two Syrian Intelligence officers were indicted in connection to the bombings, with the Lebanese military court stating that the order came from a high-level official within the Syrian Intelligence service.\footnote{Lisa Barrington and Laila Bassam. “Lebanon Indicts Syrian Officers for Twin 2013 Mosques Bombings: State Media,” Reuters, September 2, 2016. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-lebanon-court/lebanon-indicts-syrian-officers-for-twin-2013-mosque-bombings-state-media-idUSKCN11826V>. Accessed January 15, 2019.}


Three vastly different groups, with different views of Lebanon and the Syrian civil war. However, the main tenet is that the Lebanese government and security forces had little to no control over these situations, or any like them in Lebanon, disproving the rival hypothesis that the consociational system maintains peace in Lebanon. The
perpetrators are external forces operating in Lebanon as an extension to Syria and the targets are domestic Lebanese objectives on both sides of the Syrian conflict. This showed a case in support of another rival hypothesis that external actors using domestic political actors to do their bidding control through the influx of political violence. This is more a *straw-in-the-wind test* that is unique to the peak of the Syrian spillover into Lebanon, while the hypothesis mentions domestic political actors being used as an extension of the external actor’s foreign policy objectives. Hezbollah in 2013 played a constructive role in the Lebanese domestic arena while showing restraint from retaliating and raising tensions potentially beyond their control.

Case 6: Hassan Lakkis (Hezbollah) & Mohamed Chatah (Future) Assassinated

Hassan Lakkis was a Hezbollah weapons manufacturer and he was assassinated by two individuals at close range with a silenced firearm.\(^ {110} \) Shortly after his death was announced, an unknown Sunni jihadist group claimed responsibility, but all the details of this killing have pointed fingers towards Israel.\(^ {111} \) The assassination that took place late that night near Lakkis’ parked vehicle had the undertone of a professional organization with no collateral damage or witnesses; this is similar to methods that Israel had used previously. Sunni extremists, on the other hand, often resort to explosions with considerable collateral damage, as seen with the Iranian mosque and Hezbollah stronghold attacks.


Mohamed Chatah was a former finance minister and former Lebanese ambassador to the United States. He was a trusted advisor to ex-Prime Minister Rafik Hariri before his assassination and to his son Prime Minister Saad Hariri. Chatah was killed with a car bomb along with three others and fifty injured in downtown Beirut. Even though Chatah constantly varied his routes, his attackers were able to track his movements and place the explosive device quickly enough to target him between two spontaneous appointments.112 This type of filed craft and technological sophistication has been seen many times before, most notably with the assassination of Rafik Hariri in 2005 and Wissam al-Hassan in 2012. It is commonly known that Hezbollah can execute such a sophisticated vehicle-borne explosion assassinating a high-value target within Lebanon.113

While these two attacks targeted victims on the opposite side of Lebanon’s political spectrum, Lakkis with March 8 and Chatah with March 14, and utilized totally different methods of execution, the high level of sophistication and the Hezbollah involvement in these two assassinations are what connect them. These attacks show the presence of highly skilled forces operating within Lebanon with their own agendas and without the fear of being apprehended. While both these individuals were not directly involved in the fighting, they were trusted advisors to the leaders of their respective organizations and their assassinations were meant to send a message to each side.

This kind of targeted killing shows support for the rival hypothesis of regional sponsors operating with domestic political actors within Lebanon for their own foreign


policy objectives. Particularly, a *smoking-gun test* shows presence of the standard operating procedure of Israel in precise assassinations with little collateral damage and that of Hezbollah with vehicle-borne explosive devices targeting high-value targets, as both these organizations have been associated to such assassinations in the past. However, my primary hypothesis is also strongly relevant in these cases. Hezbollah is intimately involved in both of these assassinations, with Hassan Lakkis being a prime weapons manufacturer and trusted advisor to Nasrallah, and by Hezbollah being the prime suspect in the targeted killing of Mohamed Chatah. Hezbollah being the dominant political actor in the country allows them to control the violence, but also puts them as a prime target for foreign and domestic actors and their regional goals, especially with Hezbollah’s active support of Al-Assad.

2014

A Fragile Government and the Growth of the Syrian Spillover

2014 saw similarities to 2013 with the majority of events being related to the Syrian civil war spilling over into Lebanon. The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Hezbollah are defending Lebanese borders in the North, South, and East of country, while Hezbollah also acted as a strong battle ally to the Syrian government. The battle for Arsal saw the LAF successfully take on Syrian Sunni Islamists al-Nusra in a key battle pushing back the rebels from Lebanon and gaining credibility for the LAF. However, Arsal displayed weaknesses with the Lebanese military taking on many casualties and kidnapped soldiers. This proved very beneficial to Hezbollah who maintained constant
logistical and armed support for the LAF, but without getting directly involved in the fight against the same rebels whom they are in combat with Syria.

Meanwhile, the Lebanese consociational system struggled to keep up the open lines of dialogue between the parties. President Michel Suleiman’s term came to an end and the Lebanese parliament was not able to elect a successor. They attempted a total of fifteen presidential elections in 2014, all failing in a stalemate between March 8 and March 14. These failures in dialogue are exactly what the consociational system was established to limit, but the regional tensions with the Syrian civil war have caused the government to freeze and veto any attempts being made on key issues.

Overall, 2014 supported my primary hypothesis of Hezbollah being the dominant political actor and managing the amount of political violence in the country. Also, the rival hypothesis of regional sponsors using domestic political actors to push their foreign policy aspirations was also supported. These two points are not necessarily mutually exclusive. This, in fact, shows that Hezbollah is not merely an Iranian proxy, but its own exclusive organization using Iranian support to advance their agenda. This is also evident within the Lebanese political system not advancing without the external support of Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Case 7: Lebanon Without a President

President Michel Suleiman’s term came to an end in May and the newly formed Lebanese parliament was unable to find a successor, entering into a presidential vacuum. The issues were based on a domestic political power struggle between Hezbollah’s March 8 Alliance and the Future lead March 14 Alliance and their disagreements on Hezbollah’s
activity in Syria. The president is the head of the state, commander in chief of the armed
forces, and the highest elected representative of the Christian-Maronite community.  
Without a president, the Prime Minister is the head decision maker, but in such a case no
decision can be made without approval of the cabinet. Further to this, the Lebanese
parliament headed into election later in 2014 as well.

Hezbollah and the Future movement each hold one-third of the cabinet seats
respectively and can hence freeze the cabinet completely or overthrow the government as
Hezbollah did in 2011. Since the president is elected through a parliamentary vote,
Hezbollah and Future both hold considerable control over the political status of the
country. This means that there will not a be a president elected that is against the parties’
interests. With their rivalry on-going, finding this balanced state is extremely difficult.

The failure for the Lebanese parliament to reach a consensus on the Syria issue
through increasing spillover uncontrolled violence as well as the failure to elect a
president both fit into a doubly-decisive test  
that is necessary and sufficient to disprove
the rival hypothesis that the consociational system in Lebanon is able to limit the violence
in the country.

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114 Lebanese Civil War. “Government and Society,” Encyclopedia Britannica,


Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Case 8: The First Battle of Arsal Promoting the LAF and Hezbollah

The battle of Arsal was the largest battle of the Syrian spillover. The Lebanese military was not going to accept anything besides the withdrawal of the al-Nusra militants inside Arsal. This battle was one topic that the split and fragile Lebanese parliament agreed on in majority. Lebanese Prime Minister Tammam Salam said the occupation of Arsal by the al-Nusra fighters was “a flagrant attack on the Lebanese state.”117 Even in their disagreements, the parliament disregarded their sectarian differences and worked together in the cabinet and on the battlefield with the Lebanese military being supported by Hezbollah and Syrian activists during the battle.118 By the end of the seven-day battle, eighteen Lebanese soldiers, sixty militants, and forty-two civilians were accounted as dead as well as thirty soldiers missing but presumed kidnapped.119 120

The main leader of the Sunnis and the March 14 Alliance, Saad Hariri, returned to Lebanon after three years in the wake of this battle. His aim was to motivate the Lebanese Sunnis to rally behind Lebanese institutions and away from Sunni extremist groups like al-Nusra/ISIS. Hariri also aimed to revitalize the relationship with Saudi


Arabia and Lebanon around the recent change to Saudi foreign policy now aiming to
counter the growth of ISIS in the Middle East.121

The victory of the Lebanese Armed Forces in Arsal was favorable for the
Lebanese government and cementing the credibility of the LAF as a legitimate
organization. However, the Sunni Islamist groups that the LAF were combatting were
present in Arsal to fight against Hezbollah for their support of the Al-Assad regime. In
combatting these Sunni extremist groups, the LAF have legitimized Hezbollah’s position
to be on the correct side of the conflict, even though Hezbollah has explicitly gone
against the Lebanese government repetitively in support of the Syrians.

Case 9: Parliament Extends Own Term Until 2017

In November 2014, all but two of the ninety-seven parliamentarians in Lebanon
voted to extend their own mandate until 2017. Similar to the extension that took place
sixteen months prior, parliament officials cited security concerns over the growing civil
war in Syria and spillover taking place in Lebanon.122 The EU, US, UN and many non-
government organizations in Lebanon all disagree with the decision, claiming that it is
unconstitutional, illegitimate, and the beginning of an authoritarian regime.123

The consociational Lebanese parliament is struggling to come to terms through
their growing sectarian divide. It only takes a one-third minority of the parliament to veto

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122 Oliver Holmes. “Lebanese Parliament Extends Own Term Till 2017 Amid Protests,” Reuters,

any cabinet decision. If any decision would be made, both the March 8 and March 14 groups have the minimal number of ministers respectively to veto any decision on their own. The Syrian war has frozen the March 8 and March 14 groups, rendering them unable to elect a president since May 2014 and are now deadlocked in Parliament as well. As mentioned, many groups have opposed this act. They claim that the political elite in Lebanon do not want to risk losing their positions within the government during an unpredictable event like the Syrian civil war. It is of common agreeance that the ultimate goal of the politicians is to protect themselves first.

The effectiveness of the consociational system in Lebanon is at its prime when there are no overarching issues of disagreement flaring up the sectarian divide. 2013 and 2014 period have seen two parliamentary extensions and a presidential vacuum that has gone through over fifteen re-election attempts. Since the first general parliamentary election without direct Syrian influence in 2005, it has become common for the Lebanese government to go into a stalemate near an election. Often the situation only gets resolved

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once the March 8 and March 14 groups receive support from their regional sponsors, Iran and Saudi Arabia respectively. As seen in the forming of a new government in February 2014, ten months of no governance was only solved with a Saudi-Iranian blessing.\(^{129}\)

This translated directly into a Future-Hezbollah coordination with each other and their respective regional sponsors. The power-sharing system cannot function properly when there are key interest actors that have such overwhelming influence with little consequence like Hezbollah and Future. Mixed with constant disagreements and a fragile country in crisis, this exposes severe flaws in governance.

2015

Case 10: Israel Growing Bold and Hezbollah Strong Militant Capacity

Hezbollah has been stretched thin and tired after several years of fighting in Syria. Israel has taken this opportunity to slowly begin taking out targets involving Hezbollah in Syria that they deem threats to Israeli sovereignty. In January 2015 an Israeli airstrike killed six Hezbollah fighters and an Iranian Revolutionary Guard General\(^{130}\) to which Hezbollah retaliated with a rocket attack targeting a convoy causing fifteen Israeli casualties near the in northern Golan.\(^ {131}\) Another Israeli airstrike in December 2015

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targeted a Hezbollah militant leader operating in Damascus.\textsuperscript{132} Hezbollah responded with a rocket attack into Israeli fields causing no causalities in this case. The Lebanese Shi’a militant group has shown time and time again that they can stand their ground with their regional enemies and be assets to their regional partners, including the Lebanese government.

Clearly, Hezbollah still has the ability to engage Israeli targets when taunted, but their active stance in Syrian conflict and constant struggles within Lebanese borders over the past five years have resulted in considerable losses and worn them down. However, Hezbollah has taken the Syrian civil war as an opportunity to grow. It is estimated by the Israeli military that Hezbollah had over 100,000 rockets and missiles with improved accuracy and range compared to those seen in 2006. They are also able to field up to 5,000 militants at a given time, most with recent and relevant combat experience.\textsuperscript{133} Their advancement from the 2006 war has brought their militant capacity and arsenal to rival that of many NATO countries. This armed capacity affirms my primary hypothesis; Hezbollah solidifies itself as a dominant political actor in Lebanon, able to defend, attack, retaliate and protect its’ assets throughout their area of operations, even as Israel did not target anything within Lebanese borders.


Case 11: Garbage Protests Triggered by Stalemate in Government

The garbage protests that took place in Lebanon in August 2015 were due to the buildup of garbage in the streets of Beirut after Sukleen, a private garbage collection company, ceased to move the trash to the overfilled landfill in the south of Lebanon. The landfill closure is several years overdue; yet, the government had no replacement plan in place. The environmental minister blamed the current political crisis and lack of cooperation within parliament for the issue. The citizens used this opportunity to voice their displeasure with what they called a corrupt Lebanese system, assembling over 20,000 people the first protest and over 100,000 people the second protest. The protests turned violent and several dozen protesters were injured in the process. This is another example of the limits of the consociational system during crisis. The lines of communication are available, but the sectarian disagreements act as barriers.

Case 12: Suicide Bombings in Shi’a Suburb of Beirut

Over one hundred people lost their lives and two hundred people were injured when two suicide bombers detonated their vests in a Hezbollah neighborhood of Beirut in November 2015. ISIS were the ones to claim the attack and two days later, the

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Lebanese Internal Security Force was able to arrest thirteen people related to the attack. ISIS directly targeted Hezbollah in retaliation of their actions supporting the Syrian regime.\textsuperscript{138}

This is another example of the bloody spillover from the Syrian civil war into Lebanon. There are two key elements here, the first is that ISIS decided to attack Hezbollah at home, and this was interpreted as the Sunni extremist group growing desperate.\textsuperscript{139} The on-going US and NATO bombing campaigns since 2014, the Syrian military, and a combat-hardened Hezbollah have all caused much difficulty on the battlefield for ISIS in the past two years. This act showed their desperation in attacking a target of opportunity and killing many non-combatants in the process. The second key element is that the detained individuals were mostly Syrian, which identifies the uniqueness of this attack. At the time, ISIS had hundreds of Lebanese supporters in Beirut and in Tripoli, but they elected to use Syrians in the execution of this attack for unknown reasons. Hezbollah has actively avoided attacking Lebanese targets to avoid the risk of a sectarian war in Lebanon, this was observed in the battle of Arsal with them only supporting the LAF.


Case 13: Al-Qaa Suicide Bombings and Improvements to Lebanese Security Forces

The theater of operations has changed in 2016 within Lebanon. The country has slowly recovered from heavy violence in the past few years involving Hezbollah, ISIS, Israel, and Syrian spillover but 2016 was relatively calm. The one occurrence was a three-part attack in the Christian village of al-Qaa, near the North-East Lebanese border. In the morning of June 26, 2016, four suicide bombers detonated their vests killing four people and injuring fifteen. That same evening, the families that mourned the victims were attacked, as well as other points within the village, when four more men detonated four more suicide vests, raising the victims to five dead and twenty-eight injured.\(^{140}\)

No one claimed the attack, but all signs point to ISIS. If this is the case, this would be the first time ISIS attacked a group besides Hezbollah in Lebanon. According to a Lebanese army intelligence officer, the suicide bombers had the intent to strike a larger target but were discovered that morning and were forced to detonate their vests. Then, that evening the four other bombers targeted points of interest in the town such as the town centre and the LAF outpost.\(^{141}\) The Lebanese intelligence officer went on to mention that the number of bombers, skill level involved, a low number of casualties compared to amount of detonations all point towards a larger intended target.


The increase in cooperation between the intelligence services, the military, and the border control services have generated ample results by foiling ISIS and al-Nusra planned attacks that targeted key Lebanese locations and by increasing border and military checkpoints near key hostile locations. This unfortunate case had unnecessary loss of life, but the drastic improvement and cooperation of the Lebanese security forces helped limit this from being something much worse.

During a time of relative stagnation and calm from the violence in the years prior, domestic Lebanese politics blamed Hezbollah for being the reference for this attack. Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah’s Secretary-General, affirmed that they are fighting in Syria for the betterment and protection of Lebanon. In other words, according to Nasrallah, Hezbollah had been applying Lebanese foreign policy tactics in Syria while combatting those who want to destroy Lebanese sovereignty. The Lebanese government continues to support the militant arm of Hezbollah and LAF conducted several missions alongside Hezbollah militants. These are in definite support of the primary hypothesis that Hezbollah is the dominant political actor in Lebanon and controls the state of violence in the nation, but they can be vulnerable to being targeted, as seen a few times before.

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Case 14: Qalamoun Offensive Joining Many Key Interest Actors in one Offensive

This was a multi-faceted operation along the Lebanese-Syrian border that involved Hezbollah, the Syrian military, and the LAF. Hezbollah and the Syrian military operated from the Syrian side of the border, and the LAF from the Lebanese side. This joint military operation targeted the Islamic state (ISIS) in a final drive to rid them from the border area. The LAF denied any coordination with the Syrians or Hezbollah at any point,\(^\text{146}\) even though the three groups began the first phase of the final attack all together on July 21, 2017.

There were assaults on pockets of Islamic state rebels, forcing the rebels into isolated areas in anticipation for the second phase.\(^\text{147}\) In the second phase starting on August 4\(^{th}\), the LAF operated from the Lebanese side, clearing the mountainous Qalamoun area around Arsal and the Baalbek region, while Hezbollah and the Syrian military cleared villages on the Syrian border.\(^\text{148}\) By the end of the offensive on August 27\(^{th}\), a ceasefire was agreed upon in order to negotiate for the kidnapped LAF soldiers from the 2014 Arsal battle.\(^\text{149}\) The coordination and resolve while operating alongside the

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Syrian and Lebanese armed forces showed how far Hezbollah has come from being a simple rebel force in 2006, as seen by the Israelis\textsuperscript{150}, to a valid opponent and dominant political actor in Lebanon.

Even though many news sources and the Syrian government claimed that the operation was coordinated on both sides of the border, Lebanon continuously denied it. If the Lebanese government would have admitted that they were operating alongside Hezbollah, an Iranian-back terrorist organization, U.S. military support and USAID funding could have been severely affected.\textsuperscript{151}

This shows the complexities involving the armed actors with Lebanon. In this operation alone, there were American and British assets supporting the LAF,\textsuperscript{152} Hezbollah, the Syrian government, all operating alongside one another to counter ISIS. To add to this, Israel, other Sunni extremist groups, and the constant threat of another Lebanese civil war have all been key elements that created a high risk of political violence within Lebanon since 2011.

Relevant to domestic Lebanese politics, this battle negatively affected the relationship that Saudi Arabia had with Lebanon. Prime Minister Saad Hariri, the lead Sunni politician with very strong connections to Saudi Arabia, admitted to Hezbollah’s


regional hegemony in Lebanon in 2016.\textsuperscript{153} Then, with this battle, the United States, a main Saudi ally, worked alongside Hezbollah, a main Saudi enemy, in a successful victory recapturing key terrain and countering ISIS in the Levant.\textsuperscript{154} The success of this battle showed a shift in the tide within domestic Lebanese politics, with Saudi Arabia and the Future Movement both losing.

Case 15: Resignation of Prime Minister Hariri

On November 4, 2017 Prime Minister Saad Hariri announced his resignation as Prime Minister of Lebanon and leader of the Future Movement from Saudi Arabia, surprising domestic, regional, and international actors. His televised speech spoke against Iran and Hezbollah with particular negativity, different from Hariri’s typical pragmatic tone and body language.\textsuperscript{155} Hariri also mentioned that there was a plan to kill him and he had to leave to Saudi Arabia quickly to escape the risk.\textsuperscript{156} Two weeks after his return to Lebanon, Hariri withdrew his resignation. With his return, each member of the government, including Hezbollah, completely agreed of staying out of conflicts in other


\textsuperscript{154} \textit{Ibid}


Arab States.\textsuperscript{157} This was the first time Saudi Arabia had taken such a direct stance in Lebanese politics.

While it is commonly known that Lebanese political parties are supported by their regional sponsors – Iran and Saudi Arabia, this was the first time there was direct and blatant involvement from Saudi Arabia in such a way, worrying the Lebanese government. The Saudi-Iranian regional power struggle is has existed since the last Iranian revolution in 1979.\textsuperscript{158} The two regional hegemons have been competing for power and influence since that time. Regularly, the two countries employ buffer states to do their bidding as proxies to gain further influence in the region. Syria, Iraq and Yemen are examples of the Saudi-Iranian proxy wars currently taking place within the region.\textsuperscript{159} The perpetual fear that Lebanon may fall into another civil war\textsuperscript{160} is constantly on the mind of all Lebanese citizens, so this show-of-force by Saudi Arabia could be seen as an attempt at realignment away from Hezbollah and Iran, leaving Lebanon in a vulnerable position between to regional powers.

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid


Chapter VII.

Research Findings

In short, these results mostly support the primary hypothesis about the dominant political actor controlling the violence and not supporting large-scale political violence. Theoretically, we should expect that dominant political actors use the distribution of political violence to advance their strategic goals. Evidence from the case studies mostly conforms to these expectations, with the exception that the dominant political actor can be the victim of political violence as well.

The five research findings are instructive and demonstrate the complexities involved in studying the sensitive topic of political war in a fragile state such as Lebanon with multiple domestic and regional actors involved.

Finding 1: Hezbollah had either a positive or negative nexus in almost every aspect military or diplomatic political conflict in the time frame studied.

The fifteen cases that have been reviewed are all examples of how large-scale violence was avoided even though critical political violence took place. Actors in these cases used political violence to achieve their strategic goals, but at no point was large-scale political violence one of these goals.

The research shows that Hezbollah was involved in all but one of the fifteen cases of political violence in the time frame reviewed, the only one being the garbage protests
in 2015 (Case 11). Whether militant or political, offensive or defensive, Hezbollah was either directly or indirectly involved in the majority of the cases observed.

The Lebanese government was involved in eight out of fifteen cases, but primarily in a negative aspect. The 2011 government collapse, 2013 and 2014 Parliamentary extensions, 2014 presidential vacuum, 2015 garbage protests, and 2017 resignation of the Prime Minister all negatively affected the Lebanese government. The two battles of Arsal (2014 and 2017) were positive for the government in the sense that they were able to foster a response to the Syrian rebels; but, the 2014 battle exposed significant logistical and tactical issues with the military and the 2017 battle was supported by Syria and Hezbollah.

Future Movement and the March 14 Alliance were involved in five key cases, most notably four relating to parliament (Cases 1, 4, 7 and 9) and the resignation of Hariri (Case 15), leader of the Future Movement.

Finding 2: By virtue of their ability to cause and deter violence, Hezbollah is the dominant political actor not aiming for large-scale political violence.

The strategic use of violence by dominant political actors against those who contend them shapes the context and consequences of the political decisions at hand. Whether in response to violence or using such political violence, the dominant actor postures to sway the opposing parties to react in a manner supporting the strategic objectives of the dominant actor.

This research has shown that Hezbollah uses political violence and political influence in government as tools to achieve their strategic goals. Even when they are the
target of the attacks, evidence has shown that their goals during this time frame were not for large-scale political violence or civil war in Lebanon. This can be observed in the instance Hezbollah actively did not actively engage any targets within Lebanese borders, even while in support of the LAF or after being attacked themselves. The two cases (Cases 2 and 6) that involved car bombs, the usual smoking-gun relating Hezbollah and Syrian intelligence to assassinations in Lebanon, were targeted killings that did not escalate further. Hezbollah took advantage of a fragile Lebanese state to fill the gap as the dominant political actor with their effective utilization and ability to abstain of violence to suit their strategic needs.

Finding 3: Dominant political actor is almost always involved in cases of political, but they do not always control it since they are sometimes attacked themselves. They can hold roles of instigator, defender, victim or attacker.

Throughout these case studies, it is apparent that the dominant political actor has the ability to cause and deter violence in ways that are consistent with their political ideals. However, this research has shown that in a fragile state there are many political actors that can resort to violence to advance their own ideals as well. The use of, or response to, political violence by a dominant actor to support their political ideals was observed in this research with Hezbollah.

Of the fourteen cases that involved Hezbollah, nine of them directly involved a form of violence. Three cases were Hezbollah on the offensive (Cases 2, 8 and 14), three were a tit-for-tat exchange (Cases 5, 6 and 10), and three cases involved Hezbollah being attacked (Cases 12 and 13) or being the cause of the attack (Case 3).
Finding 4: Violence cannot be monopolized by the main political actor in Lebanon since there are many other armed political actors, both regional and domestic, with interests that could potentially solved with political violence.

Lebanon is a fragile state; within 2011 to 2017 the government failed to support the country, could not establish a consensus on five different occurrences (Cases 1, 4, 9, 11 and 14) and the Lebanese Armed Forces had difficulty securing key tactical locations without external support (Cases 8 and 14). The fragility of the state left Lebanon at risk for domestic and foreign actors to use it as an area of operations for their own interests. From 2011 to 2017, Hezbollah, Future Movement, Israel (Cases 6 and 10), ISIS (Case 5), Sunni extremists (Case 3), the LAF (Cases 8 and 14), Iran (Case 10), Saudi Arabia (Case 14) and Syria (Case 5) were all active in Lebanon and along its porous border.

This shows that in a fragile state, in which the dominant political actor is not the state itself, the presence of other armed political actors seeking to advance their own agendas limits the monopoly of violence from the dominant political actor.

The interests of the key actors that were active in Lebanon varied between actors and between particular cases, but at no point did anyone attempt to trigger continuous large-scale political violence or civil war during this time frame. The way this can be identified is through the goals and reasoning behind the actions of each actor during the attacks. Each of the cases had for goal either control of governance (Cases 1, 4, 7, 9, 11 and 15), targeted assassination of key individuals (Cases 2, 6 and 10), force-on-force territorial battles (Cases 3, 8 and 14), or acts of terrorism to deliver messages of fear or retaliation (Cases 5, 12 and 13). Further to this, at no instance, besides the on-going
Syrian civil war and spillover, was there an escalation in response to one of the cases observed.

The key actors that played a role in Lebanese domestic political violence during this time frame are Hezbollah (all cases except 11), Future Movement (Cases 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9 and 15), Israel (Cases 6 and 10), ISIS and various groups of Sunni extremists (Cases 3, 5, 12 and 13), the LAF (Cases 8, 13 and 14), Iran (Cases 3, 7 and 10), Saudi Arabia (Cases 3, 7 and 14) and Syria (Overarching issues relating to the civil war and cases 5 and 14). They each had their own particular interests, often unique to each case, but the commonality is at no point in time did any group show proof that they were leaning towards large-scale political violence or civil war.

In this qualitative study, it is clear that there is not strong direct evidence connecting the influence of dominant political actors to the limiting of large-scale political violence. This relationship is very difficult to prove considering all the factors that cannot be accounted for, particularly in a fragile state such as Lebanon. However, the facts are still more consistent with the primary hypothesis than the chief rival hypothesis or two supporting rival hypotheses. This qualitative analysis of case studies relating to political violence was a way to isolate significant events, review what took place, and compare them to one another with the interests domestic and regional actors involved. This allowed to build a timeline of significant events and a narrative of the political tensions taking place in Lebanon during this time. This brought a different scope on the domestic politics and violence within Lebanon and provided the facts to answer a key question, particularly relating to the chief rival hypothesis.
The institutional virtues of power-sharing for preserving the peace\textsuperscript{161} were unique elements that identified Lebanese politics. However, this study has shown repetitively that it is not the institutions, but rather the interests of key actors – mainly the dominant political actor – whether violence breaks out. The power-sharing system is effective to maintain peace when all parties are at peace; but, as observed in this analysis, as soon as there is a separation or conflict between the groups, the system fails to function, and peace is compromised. In the case of Lebanon, the dominant political actor – Hezbollah – positions and interests are necessary to understand why large-scale political violence does not break out. Through the research, it is apparent that Hezbollah actively took every precaution to not, under any circumstances, directly conduct operations on Lebanese soil that could be negatively associated to them. As observed, they were part of fourteen out of fifteen cases of political violence in Lebanon since 2011, but only two cases (Cases 2 and 6) could be connected to Hezbollah on Lebanese soil, even though they never claimed responsibility. It is apparent that the group is not in total control of the Lebanese climate since they or their interests were regularly targets themselves, but the other domestic political actors that were active at the time – the Future Movement, the Lebanese government/Army, and pro-ISIS Lebanese factions – did not have much capacity to dictate the course of events. Of all the instances observed, there were only three cases relating to the Lebanese Army (Cases 8, 13 and 14) that positively promoted the interests of any one of the domestic political actors besides Hezbollah. Nevertheless, cases 8 and 14 were also favorable to Hezbollah.

Chapter VIII.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis examined the effects of a dominant political actor on the severity of political war in a country. I argue that the dominant political actor can influence the severity of political violence by virtue of their ability to apply and respond to violence themselves. In fragile states, however, the dominant political actor is often contested by other actors, both diplomatically and with violence. Evidence from Lebanon between 2011 to 2017 supports these claims. In particular, a fragile state unable to sustain itself autonomously leaves room for regional sponsors, domestic actors and opposing forces to advance their strategic goals within the country. In the circumstance of Lebanon, this meant taking on the dominant political actor, Hezbollah. Throughout the time frame studied, Hezbollah operated alongside or against the Future Movement, ISIS, various groups of Sunni extremists, the Lebanese Armed Forces, Israel, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, all of whom were active in Lebanon and committed to their own goals and ideals relating to the Syrian civil war and spillover into Lebanon.

Based on case studies analyzing key events of political violence and/or conflict in Lebanon after 2011 in this thesis, these findings suggest that the dominant political actor in a country can sway political violence in a particular direction, depending on the goals of the dominant actor. Insights from the literatures on large-scale political violence as well as specific characteristics of the Lebanese domestic political climate stated that the outbreak of large-scale political violence is dependent mainly on the consociational form
of governance allowing for equal representation and open lines of communication between the competing political groups. This chief rival hypothesis was refuted by the research with all but two cases showing that the power-sharing system in Lebanon during a time of crisis is either irrelevant or ineffective. The literature also states two other key factors affecting political violence. The second rival hypothesis of a domestic state-led government supported by domestic non-state actor(s) is best suited to establish peace, security, and development with the nation was proven false as well since the Lebanese government was unable to maintain control of the state and their own governing body throughout most of the time frame observed. This study supports the third rival hypothesis of domestic actors using transnational ties to regional sponsors to gain power domestically. This is done in exchange for aligning their views with those of the respective sponsors goals, and in the case of Lebanon between 2011-2017, political war was not a said goal for any party. I find instead that the strategic goals of the dominant political actor can sway the level of violence, venturing to or away from large-scale political violence. To explain the relationship, I hypothesize that Hezbollah, being the dominant political actor, was able to control the distribution and growth of violence in Lebanon between 2011 and 2017, in which their strategic interests did not include the spread of large-scale political war.

These insights from Lebanon are most likely generalizable to similar polities with the dominant political actors being groups other than the residing government, most prominently in countries with identity-based separations. This is shown with Hezbollah being the dominant actor in Lebanon. Even though Hezbollah is part of the Lebanese government, their militant side operates with their own strategic interests in mind. In
other words, Hezbollah is a non-state actor with a militant wing that could compete with many NATO countries162. Further, the Lebanese case between 2011 to 2017 can offer relevant insight into how a power-sharing system like the Lebanese government is ineffective during a period of prolonged crisis involving groups that have their own interests and the power to pursue them without the support of the government. Repeatedly, we observed the power-sharing system fail during the studied time frame. Most notably, this was observed to be due to the disproportionate power allocation between the dominant political actor and the other domestic actors with different intended objectives. Moreover, the findings call for a broader investigation in future research for the interaction between a power-sharing system during crisis and domestic actors with disproportionate power and dissimilar goals. Lebanon was in a stalemate in Parliament without a president and unable to make a decision because rival parties were competing in two-level games that shut down the government. The stalemate discredited the government to the citizens of Lebanon and the international community. Such research could find ways to render the power-sharing system more effective during a time of high political violence or crisis in a nation, among other outcomes.

Appendix 1.

Summary of Cases

Table 1. Summary of Cases

*A short summary of each of the fifteen analyzed cases.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Power-sharing system cannot adapt to political crisis</td>
<td>Eleven ministers associated to Hezbollah stepped down from parliament, in result shutting down the government because of the UNSTL. This shutdown caused large protests calling for political reform in the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Hezbollah and Syrian tactics against domestic actors.</td>
<td>Al-Hassan was a key security figure in Lebanon and his assassination by targeted car-bomb showed the resurgence of a tactic not used in over four years and the presence of Syria and Hezbollah join-operations in Lebanon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Tripoli clashes from Qusair, strategic Hezbollah location</td>
<td>Pro and anti-Syrian groups faceoff in Tripoli and Qusair relating to the Hezbollah support in Syria. The Lebanese military and government have little influence in the East and North of Lebanon while Hezbollah presence is strong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Syrian concerns push Parliament to extend until November 2014</td>
<td>Spillover violence from Syria and a political stalemate between the March 8 and March 14 alliances cause Lebanese politicians to delay elections for the first time since the Lebanese civil war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Series of bombings in 2013, Hezbollah show restraint</td>
<td>Three major bombings took place in 2013, one targeting a Hezbollah stronghold, another anti-Syrian Salafists, and the third the Iranian embassy. Each target belonging to a different group, this shows the variety of violent political actors, foreign and domestic, operating in Lebanon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Hassan Lakkis (Hezbollah) &amp; Mohamed Chattah (Future) assassinated</td>
<td>Hassan Lakkis (Hezbollah) was assassinated at close range by who is believed to be the Israelis and Mohamed Chattah (Future) was assassinated by Syria/Hezbollah. These attacks show external forces operating against Lebanese citizens in Lebanon without fear of apprehension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: Lebanon without a President</td>
<td>A power struggle between the March 8 and March 14 alliances could not agree on a new presidential candidate leaving the seat vacant for two years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8: First battle of Arsal promoting the LAF and Hezbollah</td>
<td>The Lebanese Parliament unanimously agreed to take back the village of Arsal from al-Nusra fighters. The LAF were victorious but had several dead and 30 soldiers taken captive. They were also supported by Hezbollah and Syrian activists to deter Syrian rebels from the Lebanese town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9: Parliament extends own term again until 2017</td>
<td>Similar to what occurred sixteen months prior, officials cited security concerns and the fallout to another civil war to be the main tenets of the extension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10: Israel growing bold and Hezbollah strong militant capacity</td>
<td>After an Israeli airstrike killed an Iranian general and six Hezbollah fighters, Hezbollah retaliated with two significant attacks near the Israeli border. This</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
showed Israel that while Hezbollah have been stretched thin, they are stronger than they were in 2006.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11: Garbage protests triggered by government stalemate</td>
<td>A buildup of garbage in the streets of Beirut caused large protests demanding a change in government. Even the landfill was several years overdue, Parliament blamed the Syrian civil war as the reason it was not addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12: Suicide bombings in Shi’a suburb of Beirut</td>
<td>Two suicide bombers killed 100 and injured over 200 people in a Shi’a suburb in Beirut. Lebanese security forces arrested thirteen Syrians in Beirut affiliated to ISIS two days later.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13: Al-Qaa Suicide Bombings and Improvements to Lebanese Security Forces</td>
<td>Eight suicide bombers killed five and injured twenty-five in the Christian village. Considering the skill of the bombers, officials believe a larger target was intended but the increased presence of Lebanese security forces near the border foiled this plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14: Qalamoun Offensive Joining Many Key Interest Actors in one Offensive</td>
<td>The final assault to free the border village of Arsal of Syrian rebels had LAF supported by U.S. and British assets on the Lebanese border, and Hezbollah/Syrian military support on the Syrian border.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15: Resignation of Prime Minister Saad Hariri</td>
<td>After meeting with Iranian officials in Lebanon, PM Hariri suddenly left and then appeared on television from Saudi Arabia to announce his resignation with words echoing the Saudi anti-Iran narrative. This is an attempt by Saudi Arabia to realign Lebanon away from Hezbollah and Iran.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 2.

#### Table of Cases and Hypotheses

**Table 2. Cases in relation to Hypotheses**

*The fifteen analyzed cases and their relevance to the primary hypothesis and rival hypotheses.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Primary Hypothesis</th>
<th>Rival: Consociational</th>
<th>Rival: Regional sponsors</th>
<th>Rival: Support of Leb govt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Power-sharing system cannot adapt to political crisis</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Refute</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Refute</td>
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<td>2: Hezbollah and Syrian tactics against domestic actors.</td>
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<td>Refute</td>
<td>Support</td>
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<td>Support</td>
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<td>5: Series of bombings in 2013, Hezbollah show restraint</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Hassan Lakkis (Hezbollah) &amp; Mohamed Chattah (Future) assassinated</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
<td>Support</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Refute</td>
</tr>
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<td>Support</td>
<td>Refute</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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