



Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of International Relations

**THE ROLE OF IRAN IN CONSTRUCTION OF HEZBOLLAH'S  
IDENTITY AS A NON-STATE ACTOR IN THE MIDDLE EAST  
AFTER THE 1979 ISLAMIC REVOLUTION**

Mehdi ANSARI JOVINI

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2019



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## KABUL VE ONAY

Mehdi ANSARI JOVINI tarafından hazırlanan "1979 İslam Devrimi Sonrasında Hizbullah'ın Ortadoğu'da Devlet Dışı Bir Aktör Kimliğiyle Yapılanmasında İran'ın Rolü " başlıklı bu çalışma, 27.06.2019 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

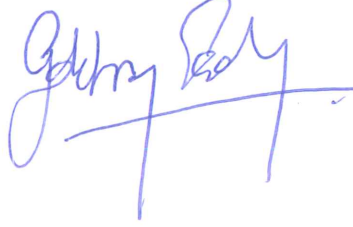


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## ABSTRACT

ANSARI JOVINI, Mehdi. *The Role of Iran in Construction of Hezbollah's Identity as a Non-state actor in the Middle East After the 1979 Islamic Revolution*, Master Thesis, Ankara, 2019.

Since its establishment throughout the critical period of Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) in the Middle East, Hezbollah has performed as both a powerful player within the Lebanese political system and a key regional non-state actor that received considerable international attention. Hezbollah as a Shi'a militia has a history of numerous struggles with Israel. It carries a strong and enduring alliance with the Iranian regime through its constructed Shi'a revolutionary identity. In fact, there is undeniable importance within the International Relations (IR) discipline in thinking about religious incentives and leadership in shaping the political identity of this non-state actor's in the Middle East. On the other hand, there are little works to suggest that religious incentives for creating political movements are acting as a systematized and documented instrument of the foreign policy of a state. This is the reason for the current study to scrutinize the complex mechanism that Shi'a Islamic tradition, led by Iranian religious leaders in influencing their sympathizers across the region. This study shows how Iran tries to gain stronger partnership with political movements - in the form of a non-state actor especially Hezbollah - to support its revolutionary agenda against the hegemony of the United States in the Middle East. Despite the fact that religious identity construction through Islamic traditions and teachings are neglected in theorizing in the IR discipline, social constructivism as the theoretical approach is progressively being employed in this study by focusing on formation and exchanges of collective borderless identity phenomena such that could be observed in the construction and expansion of Shi'a revolutionary identity in the Middle East by Iran after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

### Keywords

Iran, Hezbollah, Non-state Actor, Identity, Lebanon, Constructivism, Shi'ism.



## ÖZET

ANSARI JOVINI, Mehdi. 1979 İslam Devrimi Sonrasında Hizbullah'ın Ortadoğu'da Devlet Dışı Bir Aktör Kimliğiyle Yapılanmasında İran'ın Rolü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2019.

Hizbullah, Lübnan İç Savaşı'nın (1975–1990) en kritik dönemine tekabül eden kuruluşunu takiben, bir yandan Lübnan iç siyasetinde kudretli bir aktör olarak ön plana çıkarken, diğer yandan da uluslararası toplumun dikkate değer ölçüde gündemini işgal eden bölgesel bir devlet dışı aktör haline gelmiştir. Şii kökenli paramiliter bir yapı olarak, Hizbullah'ın tarihi, İsrail'le çok sayıda çatışmaya sahne olmuştur. Örgütün devrimci ve Şii karakteri, İran İslam Cumhuriyeti rejimiyle güçlü ve dayanıklı bir ittifakı beraberinde getirmiştir. Esasen Uluslararası İlişkiler disiplininin de ortaya koyduğu üzere, Ortadoğu'daki devlet dışı aktörlerin siyasi kimliğinin şekillenmesinde, din kökenli unsurların ve dini liderlik kurumlarının yadsınamaz bir ehemmiyeti bulunmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, devletlerin dış politikasında siyasi oluşumların kurulması ve bu yolda dini dinamiklerin araçsallaştırılmasına ilişkin, sistemli ve kaynaklara dayalı olarak hazırlanmış az sayıda çalışma bulunmaktadır. İran dini liderliği tarafından yürütülen ve Şii İslam yorumu üzerinden bölgedeki Şii kökenli grup ve topluluklar üzerinde nüfuz oluşturan kompleks mekanizmaların mütalaa edilmesini hedefleyen bu çalışmanın hazırlanmasının arkasındaki asıl saiklerden biri de bu eksikliklerdir. Bu çalışma, ABD'nin Ortadoğu'daki hegemonyasıyla mücadelesinde, İran'ın dayandığı devrimci dış politikaya destek tabanının oluşturulması çerçevesinde, bölgedeki siyasi oluşumlarla kurduğu ortaklık ilişkisini güçlendirme yönündeki gayretlerine odaklanmakta ve Hizbullah örneği temelinde bu ilişkinin boyutlarını incelemektedir. Uluslararası İlişkiler disiplinindeki teorik yaklaşımlarda İslami kökenli dini kimlik inşası ihmal edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, bu çalışmada teorik çerçeve olarak Sosyal İnşacılık (social constructivism) teorisinden faydalanılacaktır. Bu kapsamda, 1979 İslam Devrimi'ni takiben İran tarafından Ortadoğu ölçeğinde devrimci Şii kimliğinin kurgulanması ve yaygınlaştırılması çabaları bağlamında, sınırlar üstü kimlik oluşumu ve etkileşimi olgusuna odaklanılacaktır.

### Anahtar Sözcükler

İran, Hizbullah, Devlet Dışı Aktör, Kimlik, Lübnan, İnşacılık, Şiizm.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>CIA</b>	Central Intelligence Agency (of the United States)
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>IDF</b>	Israel Defence Force
<b>IR</b>	International Relations
<b>IRGC</b>	Islamic Revolution Gaurdian Corps (of Iran)
<b>ISIL</b>	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
<b>ISIS</b>	Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham
<b>LMI</b>	Liberation Movement of Iran
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>PLO</b>	Palestine Liberation Organization
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>US</b>	United States

## INTRODUCTION

Identity in the world politics is an incorporated part of any political movement that comprises organizational engagements as well as cultural and social aspects. The social science scholars see development of an identity as pushing for acknowledgment and being regarded as a social characteristic which has some roots in specific shared values. Identity is actually a fundamental concept of “linking social structure with individual action”.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the expectation of a social conduct entails an investigation of the connection between social structure and self.

It is assumed that activists who are organizing their movements around positioning identities comprehend noticeably that these type of identities are attached to certain cultural understandings which could be analyzed in socially constructed terms. Therefore, these thinkers have some critical views on social structures that are used by political players in forming and constructing identities for specific groups with common cultural orientations.

As it is going to be discussed comprehensively in this study the actual foundation of collective identity is normally shaped by resemblances that people observe between themselves and others who are representing this similarity, rather than the relationships or actual role that they have with another player in this ground. Therefore, collective identities could be examined through professed membership or association within a socially expressive classification or genuine membership in a controlled, interrelated social group under the shadow of a dominant culture that is strongly advocated by its original source.

Since the 1970s, Lebanon as the focused country of this study has been always in the midst of confrontation between Arabs and Israelis; its fragile state and restless religious sectarianism has become a platform of almost “free-fire zone

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Jeffrey Jacobsohn, "Constitutional Identity," *The Review of Politics* 68, no. 3 (2006).

for regional diplomacy”<sup>2</sup> predominantly by Iran and Syria, in their confrontation with United States, Israel and their regional Arab allies.

By tradition, Hezbollah as one of the most important non-state actors in the Middle East is trying to justify its guerrilla warfare and political moves on the fundamental basis of an interpretation and understanding of Islamic or in better words Shi’a ideologies such as “jihad, transnational Muslim cohesion and religious principles of social justice and political order”<sup>3</sup>. In fact, the Islamic tradition may not be essentially mismatched with or at the same time in disagreement with the standards and establishments of global community; but Hezbollah’s fundamental and Shi’a based political identity has always been a critical reason for resentment within global hegemonic doctrines and actors since its foundation. These core values have a deeper root in Shi’a charismatic leadership in Iran that encourages its sympathizers to act collectively against US hegemony in a different part of the world by label it as Great Satan. Therefore, understanding the role of Shi’a leadership in forming and conceptualizing its revolutionary identity is quite important in analyzing the role of Hezbollah as an influential non-state actor in the region.

In fact, during the late 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, a number of Shi’a thinkers and political analyzers in Iran and Iraq tried to develop a political agenda for the concept of “Marja’iyya” (leadership in Shi’a community by a qualified clergy). They defined a leadership role with clear identification features to connect their political identity to the gradual process of building an Islamic state. In practical terms, insufficiency of selecting a Marja (to act as a global leader of the Shi’a Community) was measured imperfect because of containing some capricious and subjective elements that put a number of difficulties in developing political identity of the Shi’a community. Grand Ayatullah Ruhollah Khomeini (the charismatic and at the same time the brutal leader of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran) and his particular fellow clergyman, Imam Musa al-

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<sup>2</sup> Judith Palmer Harik, "Between Islam and the System: Sources and Implications of Popular Support for Lebanon's Hizballah," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40, no. 1 (1996).

<sup>3</sup> Imad Salamey and Frederic Pearson, "Hezbollah: A Proletarian Party with an Islamic Manifesto – a Sociopolitical Analysis of Islamist Populism in Lebanon and the Middle East," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 18, no. 3 (2007).

Sadr - who later established a revolutionary movement in Lebanon- wished to connect the concept of Marja'iyya to the governing body of the transnational Shi'a community, as an instrument for identity formation, a juridical assembly or Islamist political roadmap.

This road map was perfectly used in the context of Lebanon as one of the target countries for exporting Islamic Revolution by Iranian Shi'a elites. In the last years of 1970s, the history of region witnessed three major circumstances which are considered very important in mobilizing and radicalizing the Shi'as in Lebanon through a revolutionary identity formation process: First, the vanishing of Al-Sadr in Libya (August 1978), which converted to a chief focus for mobilizing Shi'as and act as a reuniting standpoint for the mobilized Shi'a community; second, attack to Lebanon by Israeli forces (1978 and 1982) and third, the formation and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran through a mobilized revolutionary Shi'a ideology, preached by Khomeini and his supporters in achieving successful revolution and putting an end on the Pahlavi monarchy (February 1979). This specific experience in Iran was an important factor in enhancing the political awareness of the Shi'as in the region and especially in Lebanon, and provide them with revolutionary encouragement and a foundation of credibility in having a shared religious identity that exceeded national borders.

In fact, the political development within the Shi'a community throughout the Middle East has a deeper root in Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, adaptation and justification of Islam as the state ideology was practiced in the region as a role model for many revolutionary Islamic movements. This was witnessed more specifically with the Iranian financial and logistical paramilitary support to the Lebanese Shi'a community to defend themselves in facing with the devastations and destructions caused by Israeli military operations during years of civil war and unrest in the country.

Hezbollah, as the most well-known Shi'a militia in the world, was established as a separate group from the former unified organization that was merely based on Marja'iyya and its 'fundamentalist' and pro-Iranian platform, financed by Tehran,



and changed to become a much bigger social movement, a kind of Islamic version of social democracy in the areas it controlled through a transformational change in its identity.

According to the available resources in this study members of Hezbollah have a great propensity for self-discipline, having a decentralized authority and also encouraging active contribution from the mass of the population. It has also become a political party, no longer calling for a Lebanon under Shari'a (Islamic religious) law, but distinguishing that the country is unavoidably multi-confessional in which the rights of all must be protected.

On the other hand, there is a military institution, the Islamic Revolution Guardian Corps (IRGC) of Iran which fulfills a number of tasks related to intelligence, internal security, external defense, and regime survival, and it possesses an army, air force, and navy that had a significant role in formation of the first Hezbollah's political identity as a non-state actor in the region that forms resistance movement against US domination in the region and its supported ally, Israel.

It should be highlighted that religious identity and its affiliated identity formation processes through Islamic traditions and teachings are neglected in theorizing in the International Relations (IR) discipline but they are progressively being employed in this study which focuses on formation and exchanges of collective borderless identity phenomena such as construction of Hezbollah's identity that can be observed in dealing with the Shi'a influence of Iran in the Middle East.

There is certainly an undeniable importance in thinking about the religious incentives and leadership in shaping international politics in the Middle East, but there is little work to analyze the systematic incentives for creating political movements as a systematized and documented approach in Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA).

This is the reason for the current study to emphasize on the complex mechanism that Shi'a Islamic tradition, led by Iran, influences its sympathizers

across the region and gains stronger partnership with political movements voicing the same agenda.

This study tries to find answers to the following research questions such as: First, how Shi'ism and the concept of Marja'iyya have been used by the Iranian religious leaders to construct the revolutionary political identity of the Shi'a community in Lebanon and embed their role as upper-hand political leaders of Hezbollah and how it could be explained through social constructivism approach in IR discipline? Second, what are the key critical mechanisms that have been used by Iranian religious elites to maintain their network of influence in Lebanon based on the shared Shi'a revolutionary identity? And third, what would be the impact of political changes and fluctuations of power in internal politics of Iran (struggle between conservatives and reformists) on Hezbollah's revolutionary identity?

To find answers for these research questions as the main objectives of the thesis, a qualitative method has been employed to examine the Shi'a legitimacy discussions as a significant clue in understating the role of Iran in construction of Hezbollah's identity as a non-state actor in the Middle East after 1979 Islamic Revolution. To achieve this goal primary textual sources such as speeches of political leaders of Iran and Lebanon (Hezbollah) in addition to statements of political elites of both countries alongside with archived documents of the Islamic Republic of Iran specially form the rich archive of the parliament have been used. On the other had due to limitation of access to primary sources of the study which are mostly classified documents, secondary sources such as published articles by global, regional and local thinkers also being used through the study.

In the first chapter a short introduction on social constructivism theory, its evolution process and the concept of identity formation, especially in dealing with non-state actors in addition to basic concepts on structure of Islamic Shi'a social identity has been discussed and explained. Since social constructivism as a theoretical approach in IR discipline presents a multidimensional literature on identity formation process, it has been selected as a theoretical approach in

explanation of a wide collection of “socio-historical works on commemoration, narrative, and symbolization” in which active actors, particularly the political elite and leaders try to “create, manipulate, or dismantle the identities of nations, citizenships, allies, and enemies”<sup>4</sup>.

In the second chapter of the thesis it has been tried to examine the historical context of initiation and development of the Hezbollah’s revolutionary identity and role of Iran in this regard. The chapter specifically has a closer look to the contemporary history of Shi’a community and its identity in Lebanon and consequently understand how these developments took place within the country through impacts on the Iranian religious leaders in shaping Hezbollah’s political identity as a non-state actor in the region.

And finally in the third chapter impacts of Iranian political system especially in two important periods of the political history of Iran namely in President Khatami and President Ahmadinejad eras on transformation of Hezbollah’s revolutionary identity will be discussed and analyzed.

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<sup>4</sup> Teresa Nelson et al., "Emergent Identity Formation and the Co-Operative: Theory Building in Relation to Alternative Organizational Forms," *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 28, no. 3-4 (2016).

# CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the contemporary history of social science, different theoretical approaches have been employed by political analyzers to explain various phenomena within the International Relations (IR) discipline. Scholars who have studied non-state actors and especially sociopolitical movements tried to elaborate the complexities of these movements through different theoretical approaches including Social Constructivism.

Social Constructivism as a theoretical approach has been defined by social science scholars as a practice of epistemology which is known as the theory of knowledge with particular focus on scope validity and methods of knowledge that distinguishes between justified plausible belief and normal opinion. It is a sub-division of philosophy that tries to explain how we become aware of facts and surrounding issues including our own collective social identities. The main goal in this approach is to focus our attention on the way that perceive reality as intangible, specifically in political environments through analyzing non-state actors and politically active groups. In simple terms social constructivism argues that we live in a world where whatever we experience as tangible aspects of life, whether accepted as truth by all, or an idea, has deeper roots in our minds that are patterned by various social, cultural, and linguistic practices towards dominant understandings and beliefs.<sup>5</sup>

According to the social constructivists, in today's world the concept of "Identity" is one of the most powerful instruments for shaping our social life. Identity plays a critical role in reflecting our sociopolitical interests and could be considered as a sense of belonging to national, ethnic, racial and, more importantly, religious

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<sup>5</sup> John V. O'Leary and Fred Wright, "Social Constructivism and the Group-as-a-Whole," *Group* 29, no. 2 (2005).

(in the Middle Eastern context), or any form of socially recognizable sects or groups.<sup>6</sup>

A constructivist approach builds its arguments over how normal individuals in our societies - who are considered as active or inactive sociopolitical agents - engage in the processes that result in the development of their identities. According to this theoretical approach the concept of identity is iterative, dynamic, discursive, and relational, and is involved with processes encompassing psychological behaviors and reactions. M. Alvesson and H. Willmott in their work "Identify Regulation as Organizational Control" in 2002 discussed that "subjectively construed identities are available to the individuals in their societies as reflexively organized narratives derived from participation in competing discourses, and which afford a sense of existential continuity and security".<sup>7</sup> This type of narrative provides responses to questions like "Who am I?" and "Who do I want to be?" or "How should I define myself in society?" all for the notion of self-recognition and for substantial understanding of the others who are not in our circles, those we normally associate them with "identity narratives" are discussed and exchanged. They argue that identity as a social concept does not merely comprise verbal manners; it also involves the "ongoing cyclic interaction between narration and action". Identity in broad terms therefore could be summarized in subjective experiences and meanings pointing to the main questions, "Who am I?" and – consequently – "How should I act?"<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, analyzing the process of identity formation is critically important to understand how individuals, by forming a common identity through shared values, define themselves as political actors with a specific direction to move and behave.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Lauren Leve, "'Identity'," *Current Anthropology* 52, no. 4 (2011).

<sup>7</sup> Martin Löwstedt and Christine Räisänen, "Social Identity in Construction: Enactments and Outcomes," *Construction Management and Economics* 32, no. 11 (2014).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001).

Based on literature reviews that have been done during this study, most of the analytical discussion on identity formation process rest on the arguments around the sources of identity and its formation processes within the social constructivism approach. From this perspective the formation of identities that provoke social action could be summarized in areas such as roles and responsibilities, relationships with political actors, membership to social movements, identification within the social categories, or personal affiliations to groups.<sup>10</sup> In fact social constructivism as a theoretical approach offers a better understanding of human affiliations and sense of belonging to groups in the form of collective identities. It argues how and under what circumstances individuals create collective identities through building groups and promote collective action within social structures.<sup>11</sup>

In this chapter a short introduction on social constructivism theory, its evolution process and the concept of identity formation, especially in dealing with non-state actors in addition to basic concepts on structure of Islamic Shi'a social identity will be discussed and explained.

## 1.2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

Theory as a philosophical instrument is supposed to assist the human mind in understanding socio-political events, developments, processes and historical evolutions. In this regard, among different theoretical perspectives and schools of analysis, social constructivism within the IR discipline aims to demonstrate how world politics operates from a constructivist point of view.<sup>12</sup>

What is broadly labeled as the "social construction of meaning" is a well understood expression of increasing evolution within the sociology discipline. It is an area that refers to the core understanding of the sociological enterprise

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<sup>10</sup> Timothy J. Owens, Dawn T. Robinson, and Lynn Smith-Lovin, "Three Faces of Identity," *ibid.* 36 (2010).

<sup>11</sup> Anne L. Clunan, "Constructivism's Micro-Foundations: Aspirations, Social Identity Theory, and Russia's National Interests," *Conference Papers -- American Political Science Association* (2010).

<sup>12</sup> Ronen Palan, "Constructivism and Globalisation: From Units to Encounters in International Affairs," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17, no. 1 (2004).

that challenges rough essentialisms and different models of human's collective life which are based on reified concepts that inconsistently argue (if argue links with 'reified concepts') on issues such as what we know and understand about the human species.

### **1.1.1. Theoretical Arguments on "Identity"**

The first major wave of arguments on "identity" and its analytical challenges was mainly accomplished during the 1930s, when "instinct theory" as a component of biological essentialism was replaced with an entirely social ontology in which explanations of social phenomena had been understood in their own social terms. Therefore, it should be argued that the whole field of sociology was under huge change in a way that social theory of constructivism plays significant role during the twentieth century. In fact, during the first phase of analytical changes on the concept of identity sociologists paid attention directly to social processes that hinted at finding explanations for societal arrangements and configurations.<sup>13</sup>

A second wave of evolution of constructivist approach is dominantly known by the work of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's entitled "The Social Construction of Reality" in 1966.<sup>14</sup> They drew their attention from a Weberian perspective, which is a pragmatic scholarship with phenomenological understanding, and, which more obviously portrays an interpretive face, and has been used as an analytical instrument to encounter the old sociological essentialisms that are rooted in the influential misconceptions of Durkheim and obviously the subsequent dominance of the paradigm that is widely recognized as "social factist".<sup>15</sup> While this newer constructionist perspective arguably has developed as the best in the area of social problems, it has clearly grown

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<sup>13</sup> Runa Das, "Critical Social Constructivism: "Culturing" Identity, (in) Security, and the State in International Relations Theory," *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 70, no. 4 (2009).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

rapidly during the last 50 years and currently is being used in almost every area of sociology and its related disciplines.

### 1.1.2. Constructivism as an IR Theoretical Approach

The term "Constructivism," coined by Nicholas Onuf in 1989, emerged as "a constructive response to the challenge of the post-movement, in particular rejecting some [radical] post-modern thinkers," and at the same time uniting with the "post" movement "in calling into question the orthodoxy of the [traditional] post World War II International Relations scholarship".<sup>16</sup> As an alternative, sharing some mutual epistemological/ontological grounds, constructivism maintains that "the sociopolitical world is constructed by human practice, and seeks to explain how this construction takes place"<sup>17</sup>. Nevertheless, important, epistemological, and critical differences between these main streams remains between them in arguing "how" human practices constructed within this sociopolitical world that results in the constructivist alternative approach in explaining identifiable formation processes within societies. This scholar has tried to show some of these alternatives below, especially their epistemological, analytical and substantial framework in more detail to explain better the location or gaps of this constructivist analysis in arguing more "cultural" constructivist understanding within the IR discipline.<sup>18</sup>

The main argument of social constructivism (known as constructivism) in IR theory is primarily focused on "human awareness or consciousness" as the subject that is rooted in our theoretical analysis and its arguable position in international affairs.<sup>19</sup> Most of IR theoretical perspectives, particularly realism and liberalism, are focused on material issues. For instance, neorealism tries to shed light on the distribution of the materialistic aspect of power, such as economic and military capability or performance that would enable IR theorists

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Mary Bernstein, "Identity Politics," *Annual Review of Sociology* 31 (2005).

<sup>18</sup> Das.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



to argue better the concept of the “balance of power” between states and understand their actions and reactions toward each other in the world of political affairs. In contrast to this, social constructivists reject such statements as one-dimensional materialistic understanding. In a nutshell, they argue that the vital dimension of International Relations theoretical arguments should be focused on areas such as social affairs rather than materialistic issues.<sup>20</sup>

## 1.2. EVOLUTION OF THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

For a deeper understanding of the theoretical development of Social Constructivism, it is good to have a closer look at the background of its establishment within the IR discipline that goes back to the late 1980s and early 1990s through the works of thinkers such as Alexander Wendt, Nicholas Onuf, Friedrich Kratochwil, Emanuel Adler, Peter Katzenstein and John Gerard Ruggie.

In fact, constructivism could be defined as a “social theory of international politics”<sup>21</sup> that focuses on the world affairs as socially constructed phenomena. Nicholas Onuf considered constructivism as an IR theory that enables analyzers to have a multi-theoretical understanding of the relationship between states and non-state actors. Alexander Wendt also described it as a “Multi-theory” that covers many aspects of social behaviors of political actor in the international affairs.<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that constructivism does not reject the interpretation of behavior in international politics, posed by realists or neo-Marxists. It is critical to the assumption that claims “actors’ interest or behavior is constant”.<sup>23</sup> In contrast, constructivism puts more emphasis on sociological approaches in explaining how state or non-state identities, interests and even behaviors are

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<sup>20</sup> Jackson, Robert and Sorensen, Georg. Introduction to International Relations Theories and Approaches. 3rd edition. Oxford university press (2006).

<sup>21</sup> "Forum on "Social Theory of International Politics", " review of Social Theory of International Politics, Alexander Wendt, *Review of International Studies* 26, no. 1 (2000).

<sup>22</sup> Albert Domson-Lindsay, "South African–Swaziland Relations: A Constructivist Reading," *South African Journal of International Affairs* 21, no. 3 (2014).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

constituted through interactions between actors.<sup>24</sup> As social arrangements, norms, values, and different types of social interests change during various time courses, as a result of several reliant features or changeable principles many arguments have tried to bring justifications for their claims to explain changes in societies in interconnected methods. These type of changes found some opportunities to impose epistemic results to different filed of social science including IR. In this process, justificatory norms for theoretical arguments are constructed through social interactions between “epistemic agents”, and, in this process of exchanging, identity is constructed in social atmospheres.<sup>25</sup>

### 1.2.1. Explanation of the Identity Formation Process

In other words, as it has already been argued, the constructivist approach and its moves towards understanding political developments in the world turn in sociological studies that are responsible for an analytical explanation of questions regarding identity and its formation process. They have led the way for questions on how state and non-state actor identities are “socially constructed” throughout the history of humankind.<sup>26</sup>

This is why constructivism attempts to explain the “identity formation process” by exploring various elements that define social identity “as a part of actors”. In broader terms constructivism explains that identity formation is actively constructed by the processes that define social identity as an inseparable part of individuals and their membership to the groups that may form state or non-state actors.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Melinda Fagan, xa, and B, "Social Construction Revisited: Epistemology and Scientific Practice\*," *Philosophy of Science* 77, no. 1 (2010).

<sup>26</sup> Latha Varadarajan, "Constructivism, Identity and Neoliberal (in)Security," *Review of International Studies* 30, no. 3 (2004).

<sup>27</sup> Löwstedt and Räsänen.

### 1.3. IDENTITY AS A POLITICAL INSTRUMENT

In modern sociological theory the concept of Identity acts as the critical cornerstone of debates among thinkers. Identity studies was introduced to the sociological discourse through the works of Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead. They were focused on micro sociological issues including symbolic interactionism and social psychology in analyzing identify formation process. Their arguments mainly involved formation of “the ways in which interpersonal interactions mold an individual's sense of self”.<sup>28</sup>

In their analysis, social constructivist thinkers consider relations and collective interactions as critical elements of social life, which is environmentally and institutionally built and structured through perceptions at an individual level, interests, categorization, and “strategic calculations”.<sup>29</sup> Within this complex interconnection, “distinction in identity categories” plays a decisive role in understanding the conceptual link in the causal social network. On the other hand, at a broader level, changes in the “meaning of identity categories” may result in the alteration of fundamental variables in the justification of the transformation within social and political performances of actors. In indigenous or religious circumstances, for instance, delicate changes of meaning may create an alteration in “who is included or excluded, killed or let live, and whether peace or conflict prevails”. It is worthy of note that, if the change appears in diverse identity categories without paying attention to its nature it will cause serious changes in “institutional structure and social practice”.<sup>30</sup>

In fact, the notion of social identity and its formation processes has always been one of the most prominent and controversial theoretical debates among political thinkers. As it has been defined by Henri Tajfel,<sup>31</sup> social identity formation could

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<sup>28</sup> Karen A. Cerulo, "Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions," *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997).

<sup>29</sup> Jennifer Todd, "Social Transformation, Collective Categories, and Identity Change," *Theory and Society* 34, no. 4 (2005).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Henri Tajfel (1919-1982) was a Polish social psychologist, best known for his pioneering work on the cognitive aspects of prejudice and social identity theory, as well as being one of the founders of the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology.

be understood as “that part of individuals’ self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership”.<sup>32</sup> This type of connection could be considered as causing different reactions including “sociopolitical movements in the format of violent or revolutionary behaviors”.<sup>33</sup>

### 1.3.1. Construction of Collective Identity

In general, the concept of “collective identities” refers to a broad understanding of social movements and what social identities mean to individuals who are the basic elements in making collective moves. Therefore, the concept of collective identity should be analyzed in a way that handles identity creation and can sometimes be mirrored in the processes that are described by the theoretical approaches that see the conceptual links in the internal and situational identity dynamics.<sup>34</sup>

It is important to argue that the development of boundaries, often driven by challenges and competition between various actors are encouraging states and non-state actors to /move forward in interaction with social agents. This process could ultimately lead to identity formation and development, constructing it accessible for fellows of a social setting to see themselves in possessing a shared fate or set of political benefits.<sup>35</sup>

Under these circumstances, if the process of construction of collective identities is embedded in the formation of institutional arrangements, then obviously some institutional changes have the potential to amend social constructions of identity. Therefore, the rules and norms for governing social and political

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<sup>32</sup> Kitty Dumont and Johann Louw, "A Citation Analysis of Henri Tajfel's Work on Intergroup Relations," *International Journal of Psychology* 44, no. 1 (2009).

<sup>33</sup> Todd.

<sup>34</sup> Owens, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

interaction based on collective identity for different groups will face various incentives and opportunities for the members of political groups as well.<sup>36</sup>

### 1.3.2. Response of Constructivism to Social Identity Formation

In a constructivist approach that has been selected as the most relevant approach in arguing identity formation process within the IR discipline in the current study, the main focus of arguments is on sociocultural settlements of academic discourse such as “citing evidence, hedging and boosting claims, interpreting the literature to back one’s own claims, and addressing counter-claims”.<sup>37</sup> These arguments are considered as intrinsic elements for a social constructivist methodology as they relocate norms and values on the expansive, personal environment of different academic writing by various scholars who dedicated their efforts on finding suitable answer on how to receive and interpret political movements.<sup>38</sup>

Constructivism as a theoretical approach and in its narrower application on explaining formation of a social identity offers a unique and at the same time empirically validated conceptualization of developing social or political position that pinpoints it decisively in the human logic for legitimizing the sense of belongings to social or political groups and creating communal identities.<sup>39</sup> Constructivism emphasizes specifically on “how and why individuals form groups, and how those groups act to promote a collective sense of self-worth within existing social and material structures”.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, Constructivism, as an effective replacement to theoretical approaches by foundationalism argues that we simply recognize and understand whatever has been constructed as identity to distinguish ourselves from others, and that a variation of human

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<sup>36</sup> Robert C. Lieberman, "Social Construction (Continued)," *The American Political Science Review* 89, no. 2 (1995).

<sup>37</sup> Jim McKinley, "Critical Argument and Writer Identity: Social Constructivism as a Theoretical Framework for Efl Academic Writing," *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies* 12, no. 3 (2015).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Clunan.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

boundaries constrains our structures.<sup>41</sup> Rather than observing matters of understanding as exposed or discovered, the constructivist standpoint recommends that we originate or advance our understanding of ourselves and those who are considered as others, as clarifications of experience, and that kind of interpretation arises from historic frameworks and be subject to human actions. Thus, constructivists view identity as time-based, concrete, with a flexible nature rather than as long-lasting or immovable.<sup>42</sup>

#### **1.4. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITY FORMATION PROCESS**

While introducing their argument with an assertion on the accepted significance of identity formation in international politics, social constructivist theorists generally discuss the idea that identities are “constituted as they are focusing on the mutual referencing of the 'self/other' dichotomy”.<sup>43</sup> This statement could be investigated critically in -“two basic forms”-: the first one is “intrinsic” to a political actor and the second one could merely be “constructed” inter-subjectively through an explicit social structure that comprises a complex process.<sup>44</sup> As has been discussed in many valuable arguments over identity formation processes, present constructivist scholarship has underscored the significant role of personal inconsistency and new combinations of meanings in identity classification and focusing on the element of choice by individuals or the intentionality selection process in the identity formation circles as characterized in individuals within their collective lives.<sup>45</sup> This conceptual analysis firmly disrupts the concept of “identity categories” as permanent and well-defined. In wide-ranging terms any hegemonic cultural order could not enforce well-defined identity categories, whether domestic or international. It underscores the

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<sup>41</sup> Spencer A. McWilliams, "Cultivating Constructivism: Inspiring Intuition and Promoting Process and Pragmatism," *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* 29, no. 1 (2016).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Michael A. Hogg, "Subjective Uncertainty Reduction through Self-Categorization: A Motivational Theory of Social Identity Processes," *European Review of Social Psychology* 11, no. 1 (2000).

<sup>44</sup> Varadarajan.

<sup>45</sup> McWilliams.

inconsistent dimension, collaborative, and specific feature of self-definitions that are fabricated in social exercise and interface in complex psychological structure.<sup>46</sup> In this context it also should be debated that the experiment of theories within the framework of social constructivism could be seen in social construction terms as well.

Social constructivism has also confronted some criticisms such as considering it as a sole philosophical dispute, in this situation the concept of social construction has to have some social reality aspects as well. In fact, within this circumstance, the first responsibility of constructivists is not just to question how different type of peoples have involved in “social construction processes” but also elaborate how “social construction should be defined”. And the questioning indicates that their emphasis in practical terms should be dedicated on the customary responsibilities of an analytical philosophy.<sup>47</sup> Undeniably, through this perspective, constructivism is transmuted into a “run-of-the-mill theoretical methodology” – which is considered suitable, but at the same time not similar to another form of theoretical methodology in social sciences. In other words, when social constructivism creates extremely fundamental statements – about “all of reality being constructed or all of social reality being constructed” that it is uncommon and moving and, at the same time strange.<sup>48</sup>

In this context when we are faced with the collective identity claims at an organizational level, the structures listed with the groups encourage particular relations with potential supporters which could form or force their impacts on “organizational identity formation” as a result of the claims they are authorized by leaders to make regarding the important issues within the organization.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Todd.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Alexander J. Motyl, "The Social Construction of Social Construction: Implications for Theories of Nationalism and Identity Formation," *Nationalities Papers* 38, no. 1 (2010).

<sup>49</sup> Nelson et al.

## 1.5. COLLECTIVE IDENTITY FORMATION AND POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

Identity in the world of politics, which is an incorporated part of any political movement that comprises organizational engagements, is thought to have some cultural and social features. The social science scholars see this development as pushing for acknowledgment and being regarded for their social characteristics which has some roots in their specific shared identities.<sup>50</sup> Identity is actually a fundamental concept of “linking social structure with individual action”; in fact, the expectation of a social conduct entails an investigation of the connection between social structure and self.<sup>51</sup> Social science intellectuals assume that activists who are organizing their movements around position identities comprehend noticeably that these type of identities that are attached to certain cultural understanding are supplementary to the notions that discuss them only in socially constructed terms. Therefore, these thinkers have some critical views on observing sociopolitical activists who are key players in forming identity for groups with specific cultural orientations, and they critically argue the basis for developing the culture.<sup>52</sup>

A number of academic works try to find and examine different tools to understand the association between establishing specific type of identities and certain outcomes of political movements. As a tangible example, this "identity talk" in public debates is constructed in a cultural platform through interactional procedures and can impair or moderate pressures imposed by supporters of controversial identity statements. Van Dyke in 2003 recommends that external pressures offer the motivations for “cross-movement” groupings and the organizational ideology out of this process may have a bigger influence on movement identities and consequently form coalitions between agents.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Bernstein.

<sup>51</sup> Michael A. Hogg, Deborah J. Terry, and Katherine M. White, "A Tale of Two Theories: A Critical Comparison of Identity Theory with Social Identity Theory," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (1995).

<sup>52</sup> Bernstein.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.



Tstydzienski & Schacht's and Anner's works on political identities demonstrate that establishments with ranking structure of identities occasionally push "individuals into activism" and at the same time prepare them for mobilizing a number of political agendas that are not openly connected to "status identities, including class-based" or religious types. However, the papers also illustrate that "status identities" could even act as a serious barrier in construction and amplification of radical coalitions in some cases. One method of discovering the correlation between "movement identities" and establishment of alliances through shared identities and their related concerns is to scrutinize how political activists including militants use their collective identity to validate active contributions to a social movement in which they are not openly disclose their association with. For instance, families who are joined worker strikes, despite not being directly considered as workers can rationalize their involvement by justifying their family association to worker's community, like sons, daughters, mothers or wives. In fact, process of selecting an identity shapes the structure of activism.<sup>54</sup>

On the other hand, while most up-to-date theorists of nationalism that illustrate the practice of identity formation discuss their concerns on various types of social constructivism, only a limited number of theorists who are focused on identity formation question social constructivism as an establishment within the social science on how identity is "imposed on the non-self-consciously constructivist compartments of people", who are commonly avoid considering themselves as active agents and actually engaged in constructing and developing their own identities.<sup>55</sup> Since social constructivism as a theoretical approach is practically analysis the notion of social construction, the primary assignment of its thinkers is about inquiring how different people become involved in social construction of their own identity and at the same time how social construction in this process should be critically defined.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Motyl.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

Working together with the assumptions of Howard Becker, Peter Berger, Erving Goffman, WI Thomas, the social constructionist methodology involved with understanding the notion that identity rejects any arrangement that indicates any essential or core configurations as “the unique property of a collection's individuals”.<sup>57</sup> In this viewpoint, most of collective identities ultimately turn into a set of social actions and remains an element that is formed, re-fabricated, and mobilized in agreement with “reigning cultural scripts and focuses of power”.<sup>58</sup>

Besides this argument, there is a chance to contemplate on the connection between identities at the individual level, inside an activist group at the organization level.<sup>59</sup> According to this argument organizational identity is central, characteristic and continuing element within a sociopolitical organization, then it works as a rational framework for a better understanding of actual behaviors within an organizational structure, as a sensible discourse and also helps in shaping common traditions and communal assertions regarding its status.<sup>60</sup> Organizational identity thus is implanted in organizational philosophy and demonstrates common cultural understanding through collective images and symbols.<sup>61</sup> These elements could be seen in religious practices to a considerable degree.

These concepts, although offered under the theoretical umbrella of ‘constructivism’, do not necessarily explain a comprehensible number of applications or features, but also a chain of thoughts that could be understood through sharing some similar notions such as constructing knowledge to create a sense of the world.<sup>62</sup> In different disciplines, a variety of different constructivist theoretical approaches could be seen. Although these understandings differ from each other in their emphasis, there is a bold similarity between them. For instance, according to Adams, the nature of the learning environment in their

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<sup>57</sup> Cerulo.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Claire M. Leitch and Richard T. Harrison, "Identity, Identity Formation and Identity Work in Entrepreneurship: Conceptual Developments and Empirical Applications," *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 28, no. 3-4 (2016).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Paul Adams, "Exploring Social Constructivism: Theories and Practicalities," *Education 3-13* 34, no. 3 (2006).

International Relations Department is building research to reach a common dialogue, within their struggle to understand the context of complex political issues through our shared identity in the format of students and instructor's hierarchy.<sup>63</sup>

## **1.6. RELIGIOUS IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND SOCIOPOLITICAL ORIENTATIONS**

Based upon the studies that were reviewed during the establishment of this study, it could be argued that a few of them struggled to inspect the relationship between the progression of "religious identity construction" and sociopolitical orientation (as an engine of a political movement), nor did they try to clarify the origins and aspects which could be identified as responsible for the construction of these various types of religious identity - as the main argument of this study - and how they affect their social orientations.<sup>64</sup>

As discussed earlier the actual foundation of collective identity are normally shaped by resemblances that people observe between themselves and others who are representing this similarity, rather than the relationships or actual role that they have with another player in this ground. Therefore, collective identities could be examined through professed membership or association within a socially expressive classification or genuine membership in a controlled, interrelated social group under the shadow of a dominant culture that is strongly advocated by its dominant source.<sup>65</sup>

However, social or collective form of identities are constructed within a procedure of classification and differentiation which sets individual members of society into a range of identifying classifications. These individuals are overburdened by allegations, and some associations that mirror the particular views of the leaders or other players who tried to frame the individual identities

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Steven Childs, "From Identity to Militancy: The Shi'a of Hezbollah," *Comparative Strategy* 30, no. 4 (2011).

<sup>65</sup> Owens, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin.

in a very complicated process. The community leaders, for example, define a broad outline of actions that apparently seizes the performance of an individual, and at the same time project that “adopted pattern on to the individual” as a practical framework to shape a social identity. In other words, the collective identity of a society simply reflects as a widespread accepting of an individual’s social role, responsibility and cultural value structure. That comprehension could be easily containing the tangible performances and value oriented behaviors that shapes one’s self-identity. Consequently, “social identification is not an internal process of self-reflection endorsed by an individual, but an external process legislated by a group and imposed upon an individual”.<sup>66</sup>

### **1.6.1. Self-Identity Concept in Religion**

Self-identity as an individualist concept, in different circumstances, is based on an individual’s awareness on importance of his or her social responsibility in format of a social role. It is a mental picture which individual members of a society wish to carry and may contrast with their assigned social or collective identities. To pinpoint this development something has to present firm psychosomatic alignment concerning “an object, a person, or groups” with a subsequent feeling of close emotional association, especially within a religious framework.<sup>67</sup>

Self-identities are indicator marks that describe a person’s social responsibilities, roles, and also portrays the value structure that a member to society likes to demonstrate to others. For instance, when I state “who I am”, in fact, I wish to present a range of socially important indicator signs that could be representative picture of resentment, superiority, empathy, pride, or other stances that I try to emphasize specifically or in mixture with other groups, communities or individuals. These positions are organized around declarations

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<sup>66</sup> Mark K. Tomass, "Religious Identity, Informal Institutions, and the Nation-States of the near East," *Journal of Economic Issues* 46, no. 3 (2012).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

that categorize social responsibilities, including religious sects, affiliation, hierarchical rank, ethnic heritage, profession, or nationality.<sup>68</sup>

As a tangible sample, when the researcher of this study casually asked a Turkish or Arab citizen in the Middle East which religious orientation or sect he or she fit in during a casual friendly (as casually already used) interview, they usually answered “Sunni, and thanks God for that”.<sup>69</sup> In fact, we as individuals could understand the “importance of this person’s identity” for himself. To the researcher, these people from the region are intentional to express the belief that people with other religious backgrounds could not be as fortunate as they would ultimately be on “Judgment Day” because of their religious faith. In fact, they publicized the importance of religious self-identity to themselves and “conveyed a position of superiority vis-à-vis followers of rival Muslim sects as well as opposing religions”. As will be discussed later, this individual’s sense of pride that has deep roots in personal attachments to a specific religious orientation portrays greater merits in comparison with others could not be viewed as exclusion, but an ordinary method in which normal people in the grassroots level of a Middle Eastern society recognize themselves.<sup>70</sup>

This concept offers us a set of critical opportunities for better analysis within the context of the faith-based religious identity construction of Muslim communities. It permits us to examine how the groundwork that is shaped by Muslim communities in different parts of the region is used to justify an identified religious and social need for building an Islamic revolutionary movement as an example.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Yasmin Hassen, "Making Muslims: The Politics of Religious Identity Construction and Victoria's Islamic Schools," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 24, no. 4 (2013).

### 1.6.2. Radicalization and Self-Identity

The link between echoing religious identity and radical and sometimes brutal actions has conservatively been analyzed through the concept of “radicalization.” Radicalization as a social behavior does not essentially contain dramatic actions; it could basically translate into support for widespread and massive alterations to an arrangement or political order of a society, “without using necessarily violent means to achieve this aim”.<sup>72</sup>

The important point that arises from the previous discussion is that religion and politics in the Middle East are extremely interrelated. In other words, religion is the focus at the heart of political argument throughout the history of the modern Arab-Muslim countries and even Israel with its Jewish identity.<sup>73</sup> Sami Zubaida<sup>74</sup>, as one of the influential Arab thinkers, in an insightful essay clarified how different faces of economic and political activism are formed in a religious appearance.<sup>75</sup> These developments are more obvious in contemporary world than in the previous chapter of human history. This concept is widely discussed in John Gray’s latest book “Black Mass: Modern politics is a chapter in the history of religion.”<sup>76</sup> The evolution of radical practice of political Islam in the Middle East during the last decades has demonstrated widely through revolutionary ideologies, which has some deep roots in traditional understating of the Islamic principles and their combination with political behaviors as the

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<sup>72</sup> Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, Daphna Canetti, and Ehud Eiran, "Radicalizing Religion? Religious Identity and Settlers' Behavior," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 39, no. 6 (2016).

<sup>73</sup> Khaldoun Hasan Al-Naqeeb, "Movements of Political Islam: A Study in Socio-Cultural Dynamics," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 3, no. 2 (2010).

<sup>74</sup> Pro. Sami Zubaida is Emeritus Professor of Politics and Sociology at Birkbeck, University of London and has held visiting positions in Cairo, Istanbul, Beirut, Aix-en-Provence, Berkeley CA, Paris and New York. His research interests include Middle East Politics, Religion and Law, Nationalism, Food and Culture. Professor Zubaida is a regular contributor to the LMEI's *The Middle East* in London magazine and has published extensively on the Middle East, most recently an article in *OpenDemocracy* on Islam and Reform.

<sup>75</sup> David Styan, "Introduction: Sami Zubaida, Modernity, Politics and a Social Middle East," *Economy and Society* 41, no. 4 (2012).

<sup>76</sup> Al-Naqeeb.

source for “the emergence of extremist and terrorist groups influenced by these ideologies”.<sup>77</sup>

### 1.6.3. Identity Struggle in the Islamic World

The expansion of political Islam could be analyzed through a wide range of socio-political factors within the Muslim world. The factors that were mainly observed as “the effects of the worldwide Islamic revival of the last several decades, the influence of international Islamist organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the export of Saudi funds and ideology, the impact of the Islamic revolution in Iran, and the spread of international radical Islamist network”.<sup>78</sup>

As a tangible example in the Middle Eastern region, despite all fundamental doctrinal dissimilarities, the most significant effects of the correlation between Shiism and Sunniism are political in nature. Politically, the essential doctrinal alterations described above offer a motivation for Sunni powerbrokers to disgrace Shiism as unconventional, in effect marking its followers as second-rate Muslims.<sup>79</sup> This would historically demonstrate a dominant mobilizing force in analyzing the arguing relation between minority Shi'as and majority Sunnis based on the aspiration to maintain the historical existing state of affairs of Sunniism as the political leader of the Arab world, in effect connecting Sunniism and political power in a traditional marriage throughout the history of the region.<sup>80</sup> In conclusion, civil religion in the Middle East plays a complex representative role in many conflicts and also constructs a collective identity in several religious communities in a continual process and leads the citizens toward mostly image-based values of political considerations.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> "The Growth of Radical Islam," in *Radical Islam in East Africa*, ed. Angel Rabasa (RAND Corporation, 2009).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Childs.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> "The Rhetorical Construction of Religious Constituencies," in *Religious Rhetoric and American Politics*, ed. Christopher B. Chapp, *The Endurance of Civil Religion in Electoral Campaigns* (Cornell University Press, 2012).

## 1.7. CONSTRUCTION OF SHI'A POLITICAL IDENTITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In the Middle East, the charismatic and popular political leaders who have succeed to gain attention of cross roots through charismatic speeches and practices usually attach themselves to a set of ideological objectives (including religious ones) that highlight fundamental values and changes in a society through portraying an aggressive declaration of their intentions regarding their agenda. They are very well skilled at motivating their supporters to believe in and act in a new revolutionary identity with a vision of having a bright future for all.<sup>82</sup> This fact indicates how identity formation could be instrumentalized by politicians in various political atmospheres. In this context social constructivism as a theoretical approach can assist us to understand how charismatic leaders play a decisive role in constructing a political identity and transform it when they realize it is time for a change.<sup>83</sup>

### 1.7.1. Hezbollah's Identity as a Non-State Actor

Since the 1970s, during modern history of the Middle East, Lebanon has always been in the midst of confrontation between Arabs and Israelis; its brittle state and restless religious sectarianism that has become a platform of almost "free-fire zone for regional diplomacy" predominantly by Iran, Syria, and Russia in their confrontation with United States, Israel and their regional allies.<sup>84</sup>

By tradition, Hezbollah as a non-state actor in the region is trying to justify its guerrilla warfare and political moves on the fundamental basis of an

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<sup>82</sup> Shaul Kimhi and Yohanan Eshel, "War, Ethnic Group, and the Public Image of Rival Political Leaders: Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and Lebanon Hezbollah Leader Nasrallah," *Democracy and Security* 5, no. 3 (2009).

<sup>83</sup> Catherine Lutz, "Unfenced Constructivisms," *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* 10, no. 1 (1997).

<sup>84</sup> Simon Murden, "Understanding Israel's Long Conflict in Lebanon: The Search for an Alternative Approach to Security During the Peace Process," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 27, no. 1 (2000).



interpretation and understanding of Islamic or in better words Shia ideologies such as “jihad, transnational Muslim cohesion and religious principles of social justice and political order”.<sup>85</sup> In fact, the Islamic tradition may not be essentially mismatched with or at the same time in disagreement with the standards and establishments of global community; but Hezbollah’s fundamental and Shia based political identity has always been a critical reason for resentment within global hegemonic doctrines and actors since its foundation.<sup>86</sup> These core values have a deeper root in Shi’ite charismatic leadership in Iran that encourages its sympathizers to act collectively against US hegemony in a different part of the world to the “Great Satan”. Therefore, understanding the role of Shi’ite leadership in forming and conceptualizing its revolutionary identity is quite important in analyzing the role of Hezbollah as an influential non-state actor in the region.

### **1.7.2. “Islamic Shari’a” and Collective Shi’a Identity**

For Muslims their religion is an inclusive and public faith, which advocates specific values and social orders through societal fabrics as “collective rather than individual” efforts.<sup>87</sup> Undeniably, Islam as a religion with billions of followers is established around the concept of the “Ummah”, or (Transnational) Community of Muslims, where social distance between believers and non-believers is considered as a common practice.<sup>88</sup> This type of public demonstrations of faithfulness are particularly significant in analyzing religious identity formation process and creating complex radicalized networks through collecting social investment.<sup>89</sup> It is argued that conventionally, Muslims have dedicated themselves to God's revelations to the Prophet Muhammad and the

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<sup>85</sup> Childs.

<sup>86</sup> Filippo Dionigi, "Un Security Council Resolutions as Factors of International Socialization: The Case of Hezbollah," *International Peacekeeping* 21, no. 3 (2014).

<sup>87</sup> Tristan Dunning, "Islam and Resistance: Hamas, Ideology and Islamic Values in Palestine," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 8, no. 2 (2015).

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

knowledge resulting therefrom, which includes the normative guidelines and ethical commands of the “Shari'a”: the widespread framework of Islamic law which allocates a moral value to nearly every human action, identifying each one as permitted, required, forbidden, reprehensible, or indifferent. It includes the rules and norms through which God expects each Muslim individual, including the Shi’as, to abide.<sup>90</sup> This is the central element in advancement of Resistant Identity by Hezbollah in Lebanon, which has been inspired strongly by Islamic teaching by Shi’a leadership.

### 1.8. CONSTRUCTION OF HEZBOLLAH’S IDENTITY

It has been said that Shi’a Muslims have a well-defined establishment, common religious guidelines, common ritualized exercise and ethical-political concepts but the undeniable fact of identifying and recognizing oneself within the Shi’a Islam tradition is determined by many other internal and external factors including the interest of other countries including Iran as a center of Shi’ism in the world.<sup>91</sup>

However, in this picture of defining borderless Shi’a identity, Hezbollah’s method in developing its political identity could not be easily explained. The previous historical chapter of life of the “Party of God” portrays its almost unique political identity as a “non-state actor which relies on state-like capabilities from State sponsors, namely Iran and Syria”.<sup>92</sup> Islamic teachings from Iranian clergies has a critical role in formation of Hezbollah’s identity.

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<sup>90</sup> Jonathan P. Berkey, "Tradition, Innovation and the Social Construction of Knowledge in the Medieval Islamic near East," *Past & Present*, no. 146 (1995).

<sup>91</sup> Safet Bectovic, "Studying Muslims and Constructing Islamic Identity," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 7 (2011).

<sup>92</sup> Jean-Loup Samaan, "Missile Warfare and Violent Non-State Actors: The Case of Hezbollah," *Defence Studies* 17, no. 2 (2017).

### 1.8.1. Role of Iran in Construction of Hezbollah's Revolutionary Identity

In fact, during the late 1970s and beginning of 1980s, a number of Shi'a thinkers and political analyzers in Iran and Iraq tried to develop the concept of "Marja'iyya" (leadership of a qualified clergy) into an established leadership role with clear identification features, or practically to connect their political identity to the gradual process of building an Islamic state. The practical manner or insufficiency of selecting a Marja (to act as a leader in Shia Community) was measured imperfect because of containing some capricious and subjective elements that put a number of difficulties in developing political identity of the Shi'a community. Ruhollah Khomeini (the charismatic and at the same time brutal leader of Islamic Revolution in Iran) and his particular fellow clergyman, Imam Musa al-Sadr, - who later established a revolutionary movement in Lebanon- wished to connect the concept of Marja'iyya to the governing body of the transnational Shi'a community, as an instrument for identity formation, a juridical assembly or Islamist political roadmap.<sup>93</sup>

Hezbollah, as the most well-known Shi'a militia in the world, started as a separate group from the former unified organization that was merely based on Marja'iyya and its 'fundamentalist' and pro-Iranian platform, financed by Tehran, and changed to become a much bigger social movement, a kind of Islamic version of social democracy in the areas it controlled through a transformational change in its identity.<sup>94</sup> According to the available resources members of Hezbollah have a great propensity for self-discipline, having a decentralized authority and also encouraging active contribution from the mass of the population. It has also become a political party, no longer calling for a Lebanon under Shari'a law, but distinguishing that the country is unavoidably multi-confessional in which the rights of all must be protected.<sup>95</sup> On the other hand, there is a military institution, the Islamic Revolution Guardian Corps

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<sup>93</sup> Rula Jurdi Abisaab, "Lebanese Shi'ites and the Marja'iyya : Polemic in the Late Twentieth Century," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 2 (2009).

<sup>94</sup> Nigel Harris, "There Is Life after Death," *Economic and Political Weekly* 32, no. 39 (1997).

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

(IRGC) of Iran which fulfills a number of tasks related to intelligence, internal security, external defense, and regime survival, and it possesses an army, air force, and navy that had a significant role in formation of the first Hezbollah's political identity as a non-state actor in the region that forms resistance movement against US domination in the region and its support to Israel.<sup>96</sup>

### 1.8.2. Construction of Transnational Shi'a Identity

Transnational Shi'a networks and their identity construction processes offer an interesting topic of study for the IR discipline such as the identity production process that was created through interactions between IRGC and Hezbollah that lasted for decades and could be analyzed in multiple ways. At the same time, members of Shi'a networks are engaged in arrangements of identity production that combine religious and national dimensions of collective identities in a very complex way.<sup>97</sup>

It has become obvious now that religious identity and its affiliated identity formation processes through Islamic traditions and teachings are neglected in theorizing in the IR discipline but they are progressively being employed in the study of formation and exchanges of collective borderless identity phenomena such as can be observed in dealing with the Shi'a influence of Iran in the Middle East.<sup>98</sup> There is certainly an undeniable importance in thinking about the religious incentives and leadership in shaping international politics, but there is little to suggest that incentives for creating political movements are in practical terms act as an epistemological or methodological portion of a systematized and documented approach to Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) and International Relations in broader definitions to become acknowledged as a part of

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<sup>96</sup> "The Irgc in Context: Iran's Security and Political Landscape," in *The Rise of the Pasdaran*, ed. Frederic Wehrey, et al., Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (RAND Corporation, 2009).

<sup>97</sup> Roschack Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Postrevolutionary Iran and Shi'i Lebanon: Contested Histories of Shi'i Transnationalism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>98</sup> Brent E. Sasley, "Theorizing States' Emotions," *International Studies Review* 13, no. 3 (2011).

"mainstream" IR studies.<sup>99</sup> This is the reason for the current study to emphasize the complex mechanism that Shi'a Islamic tradition, led by Iran, influences its sympathizers across the region and gains stronger partnership with political movements voicing the same agenda.

Throughout this study Shi'a legitimacy discussion are significant not only within the Shi'ite community but they should also be positioned in arguments about both the Lebanese national context and also Arab-Israeli encounter.<sup>100</sup> Lebanon, as the selected country in the Middle East for this study, has a multi-sectarian political structure that embraces six million people in its borders with almost 40 percent of Shi'ite citizens. Christian Maronites as the political majority in power held the highest political status while Shi'a communities, in particular, in the contemporary history of the country were hardly recognized as distinct cultural citizens with normal rights. This marginalized cultural characteristic became a source of a broad political identity formation in the country through alliance with the Iranian clergies. In fact, the first steps of gaining independence it was broadly accepted that Lebanon was an exceptional place for coexistence of Muslim and Christian but at the same time a source of disagreement between hegemonic powers in the region.<sup>101</sup>

The conservative view of the Lebanese political system defines the Shi'as as relatively impoverished and also marginalized in comparison with the other communities in the country. Initially, only an insignificant portion of the political system was given to Shi'a in the leadership structure – which is, only the "Speaker of the Parliament". This community have always articulated their dissatisfaction with the current economic and sociopolitical situational format within the power structure of their own country.<sup>102</sup>

As a Shi'a political organization and a nationalist armed movement supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hezbollah has a political agenda based on a

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Territorializing Piety: Genealogy, Transnationalism, and Shi'ite Politics in Modern Lebanon," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 3 (2009).

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Simon Haddad, "A Survey of Lebanese Shi'i Attitudes Towards Hezbollah," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 16, no. 3 (2005).

diversified socio-religious foundation of Lebanon which tries to establish a political coalition composed of Christian Maronites as well as Muslim Sunnis and Druse in the format of a democratic political party that entails change in its identity structure.<sup>103</sup>

It should be noted that from an analytical perspective the actual function of Hezbollah's identity in Lebanese political system has been shifted dramatically from "treating it as an instrumental proxy client for promoting the interests of the Iranian and Syrian regimes" in Lebanon to a non-state actor that embraces a political stand for gaining a structural, cumulative and local expression for the prolonged Shi'ite marginalization in the country.<sup>104</sup> According to this interpretation, several attempts by Hezbollah have been made to move beyond the dualisms of structure and agency prevalent in these approaches by focusing on the holistic and dualistic nature of its institutions and the structures of meaning they produce and reproduce.<sup>105</sup> This issue will be discussed intensively in the next chapter and include various reactions to the historical structure of the Shi'a community and Hezbollah.

## 1.9. CONCLUSION

In the context of the political system of Lebanon, the concept of "discourse of national identity" has a deep root in sectarian religious conjecture that highlights nation as an "imagined political community". In fact, one of the critical issues in forming the collective political ideology of the country - that acts as established values which indicates how society should be perceived or must have certain functions by individuals or groups has shape the "sociopolitical discourse" of Lebanon.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, the "discourse of national identity" in forming political ideology in the country is an instrument for constructing political behaviors

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<sup>103</sup> Hussein Kalout, "The Struggle for the Islamic Supremacy," *Global Discourse* 7, no. 2-3 (2017).

<sup>104</sup> Karim Knio, "Structure, Agency and Hezbollah: A Morphogenetic View," *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 5 (2013).

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Shabnam Holliday, "Khatami's Islamist-Iranian Discourse of National Identity: A Discourse of Resistance," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no. 1 (2010).

based on a religious sectarian structure to define national identity and build transnational relationship.<sup>107</sup>

Selection of social constructivism theory as the most suitable theoretical approach in analyzing identity formation process of a non-state actor such as Hezbollah in Lebanon highlights that, existence of objects happens only after they enter into a communication process. At the basic level of analysis this phenomena, the existence of an object is depending on an “individual’s sense of perceptions; through communicative acts”, both outside and inside of personal relationships. These developments at individual level are shaped and eventually construct social meanings. At collective level, the social practice of defining and labeling objects including religious identities enables the society to impose its cultural values in social context and gave them certain meanings<sup>108</sup>

A constructivist theoretical approach within IR discipline considers individuals as active elements or agent in social contexts who are dynamically engaged in developing and processing their collective identities. According to social constructivism “identity work is a discursive, dynamic, iterative and relational process imbued with emotional tension and contestation”, this process includes the religious beliefs and attachments by various political groups.<sup>109</sup>

Therefore, the topic of this study is focused on understanding the causal links between the identity construction of a political group and the impacts of its changes on interactional and institutional change that eventually take place in the political world. <sup>110</sup> In fact, there is a possibility of continual disorders within the intellectual classifications over time on identity related issues. Fundamental perceptions may come under questions, and new actions may be taken by actors that pushes old concepts into weaken areas of arguments and “new self-

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Shaughan A. Keaton and Graham D. Bodie, "Explaining Social Constructivism," *Communication Teacher* 25, no. 4 (2011).

<sup>109</sup> Löwstedt and Räisänen.

<sup>110</sup> Todd.

definitions are crystallized and major institutional change occurs” in societies through revolutions or political struggles. <sup>111</sup>

Another component of the constructivist argument examines the correlation between “the rational and the social” behaviors of actors that defines methodological assumptions in social sciences. <sup>112</sup> These debates among the political analyzers represents different methodological arguments in accepting or rejecting constructivist statements. <sup>113</sup>

Stated its most general arguments, social constructivism is trying to demonstrate that no matter how enduring social conditions might be, those settings, nevertheless, are “formed, retained, and changed through interpretive processes”. <sup>114</sup>

Social constructivism as a theoretical approach presents a multidimensional literature on identity formation process. <sup>115</sup> A wide collection of “socio-historical works on commemoration, narrative, and symbolization” in which active actors, particularly the political elite and leaders try to “create, manipulate, or dismantle the identities of nations, citizenships, allies, and enemies”.

One of the obvious analytical feature of the important role of the social awareness that plays in practical behaviors in international affairs is focused on identities and the relationship between “agency and structure, or the balance between possibilities”.<sup>116</sup> If we work on actors' perception as a shaped product in specific contexts, we would understand better in detailed applied terms how and when our understanding of the political world that is imposing certain actions to us as individuals. <sup>117</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Fagan, xa, and B.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> David R. Maines, "The Social Construction of Meaning," *Contemporary Sociology* 29, no. 4 (2000).

<sup>115</sup> Cerulo.

<sup>116</sup> Javier Lezaun, "Limiting the Social: Constructivism and Social Knowledge in International Relations," *International Studies Review* 4, no. 3 (2002).

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.



Social constructivism, in explaining the formation of religious identity, argues that “the process of religious identification entails the formation of religious identity-sharing groups, and that members of such groups are impelled to heed informal rules”.<sup>118</sup> Such regulations force members of sociopolitical groups to oblige the saying of their leaders and enable them to have certain type of behavior that is not necessarily compatible with formal structure of a nation-state unit. In this picture, international policies are established based on immaterial formal instructions that are influenced by hidden informal structures that are instantaneously in effect.<sup>119</sup>

In the International Relations discipline identity formation and its construction process includes the locating of self and other actors into political situations which can make their identity available within different discourses.<sup>120</sup> These discourses relate to various social classifications and categorized drawings that shape the foundation of “uniformity and variety and make possible the distinction between self/other, insider/outsider, included/excluded”.<sup>121</sup> Identities in this IR definition are thus comprehended as the special effects or consequences of specific positioning acts, implemented within dialogues and cultural conversations.<sup>122</sup> Social Constructivism as an IR theoretical approach, suggested as a legitimate replacement to a number of the miscarried theoretical frameworks in elaborating “identity formation process” and at the same time proposes that we just recognize what we already construct about ourselves, and that has a diversity of human limits to force our constructions of identity.<sup>123</sup> In fact, social constructivists instead of seeing elements of understanding as revealed or discovered by certain analysis, suggests that we conceive or create knowledge as “interpretations of experience”, and that kind of analytical understanding arises from historical circumstances and has some sort of dependence on human activity. Accordingly, constructivists see knowledge as

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<sup>118</sup> Tomass.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Frances Tomlinson, "Positioning Acts and Identity Effects: Constructing Identities for Organizations in Partnership," *International Journal of Public Administration* 31, no. 9 (2008).

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> McWilliams.

progressive, revisable and practical rather than as fixed or permanent social phenomena.<sup>124</sup> From its foundation political sociology has focused on the association of political phenomenon with a social structure.<sup>125</sup> Political sociologists in their analytical reviews of social movements, were concentrated on clarifying their directions on how social movements mobilize populations to become an active member of political groups.

In case of the Middle East, Islamism, in short, is not irrational – it is no humorous or divine caprice; it is accessible to reasoned explanation. And it seeks to evolve an alternative to the ways of the West.<sup>126</sup> In this situation the Islamic Identity that has been socially constructed throughout the history of the region plays a decisive role in the formation and transformation of non-state actors such as Hezbollah's political identity and its survival against the hegemonic West.

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Andrew G. Walder, "Political Sociology and Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 35 (2009).

<sup>126</sup> Alastair Crooke, "The Essence of Islamist Resistance: A Different View of Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (2009).

## CHAPTER 2:

### A COMPREHENSIVE HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF FORMATION OF HEZBOLLAH'S IDENTITY AS A SHIA MILITIA IN LEBANON

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

Since its formation throughout the critical period of Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) in the Middle East, Hezbollah has performed as both a powerful player within the Lebanese political system and a key “regional non-state actor” that received a considerable international attention. Hezbollah carries a strong and enduring alliance with Syria and Iran, in addition to have a history of numerous struggles with Israel. The militia is currently playing a significant role in safeguarding Assad regime in fight against “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant” that is known as ISIL or ISIS during the Syrian civil war.<sup>127</sup> Therefore, concentrating on Hezbollah as a regional non-state actor, additional to understanding its origins, history and ideology are the critical aspects of its identity formation process are the objectives of this chapter.

By underscoring its move on leaving behind the Shi'a radical origins and trying to integrate itself into the Lebanese sectarian-based political games currently Hezbollah tries to portrait a different picture from itself in its political program. The organization pays its attention to create a balance between its declared social justice agendums with continues support for semi-neoliberal goals in its manifest such as privatization, liberalization and commitment to the progress of the private sector as the main identity transformation process within itself.<sup>128</sup> The main objective of this study is to examine the mentioned change in Hezbollah's identity and specifically have a closer look to the contemporary history of Shi'a community and its identity in Lebanon and consequently understand how these developments took place within the country through

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<sup>127</sup> Ellis Stephen, "Book Review: Asia and the Pacific: Hezbollah: A History of the Party of God," *Political Studies Review* 12, no. 2 (2014).

<sup>128</sup> Galdini Franco, "Book Review: Joseph Daher, Hezbollah: The Political Economy of Lebanon's Party of God," *ibid.* (2017).

impacts on the Iranian religious leader in shaping Hezbollah's political identity in the region.

In 1943 when Lebanon gained its independence as an artificial state the Shi'a population who were residing in the country was mainly considered as a community that should be considered as taken for granted by the Lebanese political elites. Although the Shi'as on the basis of 1932 census were officially recognized as the third biggest population within the newly formed republic, standing after the Maronite Christians and the Sunni Muslims as the main majorities, they were still remained reasonably powerless during the late 1950s and 1960s. The political upraise of the Lebanese Shi'a population in the last fifty years from a point of denial and neglect within the political elites to a position of political recognition and undeniable influence is considerably important to understand and academically review the story of Hezbollah as a prominent non-state actor in the region. In fact, the widespread influence of Hezbollah in global politics has a deep root in the successful establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran under leadership of Ruhollah Khomeini after overthrowing of Shah of Iran in 1979 revolution and invasion of Lebanon by Israeli forces in 1982 as the second factor.

Within this context it is very important to deeply review the contemporary history of Lebanon, where the Shi'a community that due to having a high birth-rate in comparison with other religious sects in the country is considered as the growing and the largest community in Lebanon. This astonishing placement of the population has some roots in teachings and the religious incidents led by Shi'a clergies who have a deep influence in persuasion of community to grow in number.<sup>129</sup>

The Shi'as in Lebanon do not want to accept the fact that although Muslim sects including Sunnis despite having a population supremacy over Christians still unable to receive a fair share of influence in political structure of the country due

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<sup>129</sup> Lina Khatib, "Gender, Citizenship and Political Agency in Lebanon," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no. 3 (2008).

to their numerical size of population.<sup>130</sup> Although religion plays a predominant role for motivation of Hezbollah's leadership in positioning their ideology in the region the main struggle within "a quest for power" framework is to defend their faith, to defeat their "enemies" who are mostly considered Israel and the United States as its main global supporter, and to establish a regional hegemony for Shi'a as one of the main objectives of Khomeini's exporting revolution ideal. Therefore as the quest for power is one of the important concepts in studying international politics this study is focusing on Shi'a militant groups specifically Hezbollah, "not just as a religious movement but also as a regional non-state actor that triggers lots of instabilities in the region."<sup>131</sup>

The political development within the Shia community throughout the Middle East has a deeper root in Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, adaptation and justification of Islam as the state ideology was practiced in the region as a role model for many revolutionary Islamic movements. This was witnessed more specifically with the Iranian paramilitary support to the Lebanese Shi'a community to defend themselves in facing with the devastations and destructions caused by Israeli military operations during years of civil war and unrest in the country.<sup>132</sup> In this chapter it has been tried to start with "Harakat al-Mahroumin" (the political oriented movement to support people in deprived areas of the country) in the 1970s as the cornerstone of building revolutionary Shi'a identity that was originated by thoughts and actions of Imam-Musa Al-Sadr as the most important development which later became the inspiration for establishment of Hezbollah and its guerrilla warfare<sup>133</sup> and also have a closer look to the Hezbollah's historical identity in Lebanon, as one of seemingly fruitful "manifestation of Islamist Shi'a" non-state actor in the region that is considered as political player in Lebanon and the cross-border politics in the region.

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<sup>130</sup> Haddad.

<sup>131</sup> Bruce Hoffman, "The Contrasting Ethical Foundations of Terrorism in the 1980s," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 1, no. 3 (1989).

<sup>132</sup> Kamran Taremi, "At the Service of Hizbollah: The Iranian Ministry of Construction Jihad in Lebanon, 1988–2003," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 16, no. 2-3 (2015).

<sup>133</sup> Haddad.

## 2.2. LEBANON AND ITS HISTORICAL POLITICAL STRUCTURE

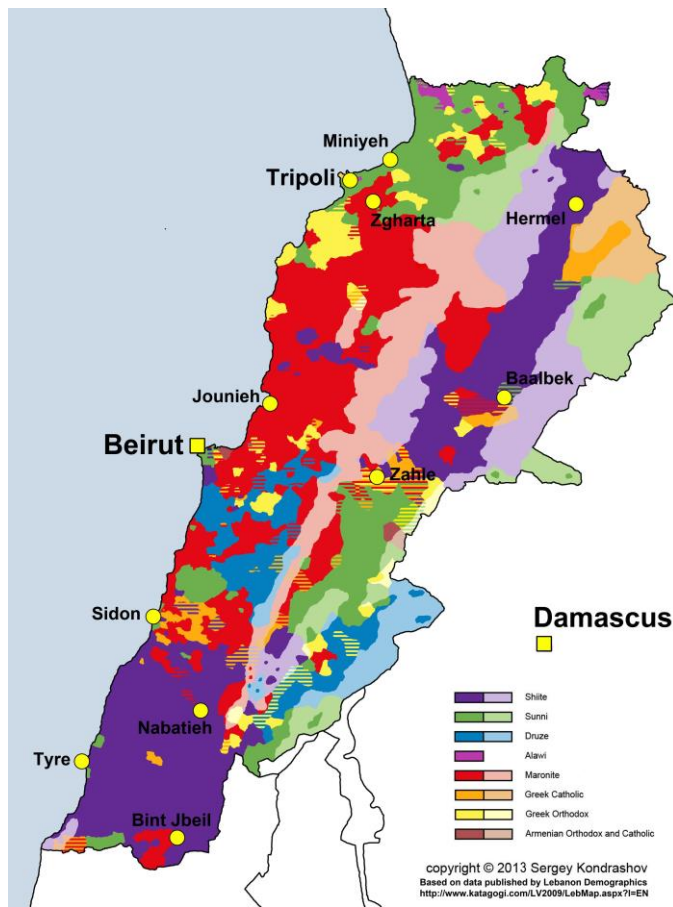


Figure 1 - Distribution of Main Religious Sects in Lebanon

Lebanon, in the geopolitical framework of analysis for the region is considered as an Arab country but not exist in the Persian Gulf power structure. The country is geographically located in the neighborhood to disputed lands and is located at the center of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict for decades. Despite being somehow geographically a tiny country, Lebanon has a diverse culture and heterogeneous residing population of 6 million<sup>134</sup> that embodies various religious

groups and diverse ethnic communities. It is at the same time considered as vulnerable to the region's life-long extended political turmoil and conflict. Based on the information that could be found in the CIA World Factbook, in 2017 the demographic share of the Shia Muslims in Lebanon had an estimated 28.4% of the county's population.<sup>135</sup> The demographic distribution of the followers of the main religious sects in Lebanon could be seen in the Figure 1.<sup>136</sup>

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the League of Nations after occurrence of the World War I gave France an instruction to unify the five provinces that make up today's Lebanon. The constitution of Modern Lebanon

<sup>134</sup> <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/lebanon-population/>

<sup>135</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html>

<sup>136</sup> Map of Lebanon, by religious sect: the state of the evidence - Scientific Figure on ResearchGate. Available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Lebanon-by-religious-sect\\_fig1\\_333246746](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Lebanon-by-religious-sect_fig1_333246746).

was written in 1926, as an instrument to specify and build stability of political balance between different religious sects within the newly born country.<sup>137</sup> The unwritten “National Pact” in 1943 highlights the representation and role of different religious sects and their communities in the government by instructing to nominate a president from the Maronite Christians, a prime minister from the Sunni Muslim, and ultimately put the responsibility of being the Speaker of the Parliament on the shoulder of a Shi’a Muslim. In fact, the independence of Lebanon from France in 1943 was practically followed by the withdrawal of French troops in 1946. Since its independence, this country has experienced golden periods of enjoying growth resulting from its favorable position within Arab nations as a regional center for education, art, culture, finance, and tourism, as well as being engaged with political turmoil and civil conflicts and unrests.<sup>138</sup> By studying the history of Lebanon’s independence a lot of interesting facts about this complicated nation reveals a picture of the unrestrained and “multi-confessional society”, that embraced 18 dissimilar religious sects, while demanding to reconcile them by crafting a fresh state as a result of a “continually changing terrain of hostilities to alliances, both local and regional”.<sup>139</sup>

By having a deeper look at the contemporary history of the Middle East, it could be understood that the modern political framework of a nation-state structure in many of the present countries is a colonial heritage of political orders throughout the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Therefore, these nations for a better adoption to the new model of governing themselves required some movements to construct new shared values or myths of origin to build their historical memories and create a cornerstone for all of their population to establish the required bases for justifying a collectively accepted national identity.<sup>140</sup> In this situation it was very important for them to distinguish

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<sup>137</sup> "Lebanon," in *Facing Human Capital Challenges of the 21st Century*, ed. Gabriella Gonzalez, et al., Education and Labor Market Initiatives in Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (RAND Corporation, 2008).

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Yasmeen Arif, "Religion and Rehabilitation: Humanitarian Biopolitics, City Spaces and Acts of Religion," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32, no. 3 (2008).

<sup>140</sup> Kaufman Asher, "Phoenicianism: The Formation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920," *Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no. 1 (2001).

and label themselves different from their neighbors, to underscore their own cultural and religious distinctiveness, and emphasize on the historical aspect of their identity and prove kinship within their community whether through religious sects of tribal origins.<sup>141</sup>

Broadly speaking, the concept of “discourse of national identity” in the Middle East is based on the idea that considers nation as an “imagined political community”<sup>142</sup> and has its own identity, which acts as a set of shared values concerning the process that indicates how a society is ought or perceived by having functional elements such as individuals or groups.<sup>143</sup> In other words, a “discourse of national identity” is considered as an instrument for constructing the ideology or ideologies that should be implanted in the gradual development or construction of a political identity of individuals as active agents in the nation.<sup>144</sup>

In the case of Lebanon, since its emergence as a national political setting, the country has resisted against a number of complexities and challenges within that was imposed to its inhabitants during different historical periods, there has been always an argument on the historical root of a national and cultural content of Lebanese nationalism.<sup>145</sup>

Despite all these complexities Lebanon was once acknowledged as a practical example of Muslim-Christian coexistence in the region. The political institutions which can be seen in the country awarded itself by permitting Lebanon to treat its religious diversity somehow successfully. Additional to these complexities, in 1948 when Israel was internationally recognized as an independent state, the country witnessed fleeing of thousands of Palestinians to its cities. This huge immigration was intensified especially when the authoritarianism of Jordanian

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Tim Phillips, "Imagined Communities and Self-Identity: An Exploratory Quantitative Analysis," *Sociology* 36, no. 3 (2002).

<sup>143</sup> Holliday.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Yusri Hazran, "Between Authenticity and Alienation: The Druzes and Lebanon's History," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 72, no. 3 (2009).



government in 1971 against previously accepted Palestinian refugees, triggered another pouring of a massive number of Arab refugees into Lebanon.<sup>146</sup>

This situation led to the social struggles that were seen in the political history of Lebanon and also marked as a stage of expansion and fluctuation of different means of political actions as a consequence of this newly joined massive population and their interaction with the existing political and social environment of Lebanon at that time. Since representing a noticeable political identity within their social organizations, interest group and resistance movements were principally political among these uninvited guests, they focused mainly on struggling for survival with the host community. These Palestinians keep growing through conquering legitimacy as their ultimate strategic goals, and also “ensuring their status as leaders of the struggle” is granted.<sup>147</sup> Therefore, it is very important to understand the attaining intra-societal support of religious groups and receiving their legitimacy for building an organization or a social movement that wishes to establish its constituency by claiming itself to represent a crucial identity element for gaining an “external political legitimacy” from the other players. These political actors, beyond their operational and structural dissimilarities, movements and organizations of widespread struggle with similar agenda desire for as wide and effective institutionalization process as possible, that is, to be accepted and consequently recognized.<sup>148</sup> During implementation of this phase of receiving recognition the major barrier in front of the creation of a sociopolitical identity in Lebanon was and still is the determination of different culture-bearing units in the form of ethnic groups. In broad definition ethnic groups usually hold a shape of socially formed organization which differentiates them from other groups or sects and, in extreme circumstances, leads to serious “ethnic segregation, to national self-determination or separatism”.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Melani Cammett and Etienne Mullet, "Muslims and Christians in Lebanon: Common Views on Political Issues," *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 6 (2002).

<sup>147</sup> Sela Avraham, "From Revolution to Political Participation: Institutionalization of Militant Islamic Movements," *Contemporary Review of the Middle East* 2, no. 1-2 (2015).

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> N. Kliot, "The Collapse of the Lebanese State," *Middle Eastern Studies* 23, no. 1 (1987).

### 2.3. SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE SHI'A MOVEMENTS IN LEBANON

Post-independence era of Lebanon passed through three landmark periods, which mainly were accomplished by top religious' leaders within the politico-religious structure and ethnic populations of the country who were trying to "share power in a dynamic process".<sup>150</sup> Each one of these historical period was mainly directed by one of the three key religious communities in the country.<sup>151</sup> In a nutshell the common political objectives between Maronite Christians, Sunni and Shi'a Muslims had two noticeable and demonstrated features: "communal dominance and external patronage" to build up their internal power and create broader external influence.<sup>152</sup>

As it has been indicated above, after independence of Lebanon in 1943 the Shi'a community that had a long history in Lebanon<sup>153</sup> was not considered as an important political player by Lebanese political leaders. Despite the fact that they were legitimately accepted as the third major political fraction within the new born republic, standing after Sunni Muslims and Maronite Christians, the Shi'as remained comparatively poor and defenseless especially during late 1950s and 1960s.<sup>154</sup> Indeed, since the early steps of their settlement in Lebanon, the Shi'a community normally has been observed with great

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<sup>150</sup> David D. Grafton, "Lebanon: The Politics of a Penetrated Society," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 24, no. 1 (2013).

<sup>151</sup> Imad Mansour, "Washington and Hezbollah: A Rare Convergence of Interests," *Middle East Policy* 17, no. 2 (2010).

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> According to Dr. Haytham Mouzahem, the executive director of Beirut Center for Middle East Studies, "Historians and researchers do not agree over the exact period of Shiism's inoculation into Lebanon; however, it prevails that Shiism entered this land that was part of the Islamic caliphate since the first century of hijra (7th century AD). That was concurrent with the early spread of Islam in the Levant, especially after Prophet Muhammad's death. Some historians say that Shias in Lebanon are indigenous to the land, and who embraced the Prophet House's branch of Islam. Moreover; Shiism's inoculation into Lebanon is linked to the revered companion of the Prophet, Abu Dharr Al- Ghafari, who was the fourth or fifth person converting to Islam. He was a staunch opponent of the rein of the third caliph, Uthman Bin Affan, who pandered to his tribe, The Umayyads, and thus banished Abu Dharr from Madina to Damascus. Abu Dhar is remembered for his opposition to Muawiyah I during the caliph Uthman ibn Affan era. Thus, Abu Dharr moved to the region known as "Jabal Amel" that enclosed southern Lebanon and some areas of the western Bekaa (as they are dubbed according to present administrative divisions). Abu Dharr died in that region in 652 AD, and two memorials were built commemorating him in southern Lebanon".

<sup>154</sup> Norton Augustus Richard, "Changing Actors and Leadership among the Shiites of Lebanon," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 482, no. 1 (1985).

suspicion, discrimination and unjust behaviors by Sunni rulers, specifically the Ottomans and Mamluks, who branded them as a marginal community within the heretical structure that they introduced in Islam.<sup>155</sup>

Therefore, the Shi'a religious leaders built up a social mobilization of their community that was complemented by a major demographic transformation through booming birth rates and causing a population move in the country that troubled power base on the dissemination of religious sects. As a result, Shi'as were slowly growing and became the largest population that ultimately pushed Christians and Sunnis back. They eventually protested against their social and political status which was not proportionate with the Christian and Sunni communities with their considerable size of population.<sup>156</sup>

The first to declare the importance of the population was the uprising flag of "Harakat al-Mahroumin" (The political movement of the deprived people.) originated and managed in the 1970s by Imam-Musa Al-Sadr as the first practical step towards building revolutionary and political identity for Shi'as in Lebanon.<sup>157</sup> He was born in Qom (a religious city in central part of Iran that is considered as Vatican of Shiism) in a family, which had a reputable tradition of religious trainings and education and possessing family links across in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon.<sup>158</sup> In 1959, he relocated to Tyre, in the Southern part of Lebanon, by the invitation of Ayatollah Abu al-Qasim Khu'i, who nominated Ayatollah 'Ali Sistani as principal of the theological schools (known as Hawza among Shi'as) in Najaf. He planned and formulated the structure of the first Shi'a militia, Amal, with its unique revolutionary identity in 1974, just a few years before his "disappearance" under shadowy surroundings in Libya which is unsolved until now.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Yusri Hazran, "Re-Confessionalising the Shi'ites and the Druzes: The Failure of Secularism in Lebanon," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 2 (2013).

<sup>156</sup> Haddad.

<sup>157</sup> Augustus Richard.

<sup>158</sup> Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Postrevolutionary Iran and Shi'i Lebanon: Contested Histories of Shi'i Transnationalism."

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

Al-Sadr's strategic move was centered, firstly on revolutionizing and mobilizing Shi'a political consciousness through forming into a revolutionary identity as a communal cluster in Lebanon and, secondly, on attempting to integrate the Shi'as into the Lebanese political structure. In fact, Al-Sadr established Amal to secure the Shi'a community from both government's negligence and wide deprivation and also to protect the Shi'as from Israel's antagonism.<sup>160</sup> Amal as the movement's military wing, incorporated the newly generated middle-class within the sociality of Shi'a professionals and businessmen as fighters. It helped as a cultural instrument, ideological framework, political instrument for Shi'a activism and power interest. It supplied a domestic sociopolitical ideology in the form of a revolutionary movement for the Shi'a community. In 1970s, the Shi'as joined the Palestinian's battle against discrimination and for withdrawal from the ruling elite.

Etymologically, Amal as an Arabic word – literally means, "Hope", it stands for abbreviation for the "Lebanese Resistance Detachments", who strongly challenged the power of local Shi'a political figures who were traditionally ruled the community for decades. The younger generation as fresh blood in this old structure then became gradually concerned about a sense of religious revolutionary identity that was constantly promoted by Shi'ite clergies who generated the movement by an activist understanding of Shi'a ideals "under the fundamentalist leadership of Sayyed Faddlallah".<sup>161</sup> The vanishing of Sadr in 1978 created a power vacuum that could not have filled easily by his descendant, Nabih Berri, but was only re-established after the victory of the Iranian Revolution, which later turned to become the key regional supporter and motivator of the Shi'as in Lebanon and the region as well.<sup>162</sup>

In the late 1960s Al-Sadr built up and chaired the foundation of the nation's Higher Shi'a Islamic Council, that was manifested a pioneer and also the most

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<sup>160</sup> Simon Haddad, "Explaining Lebanese Shii Adherence to Hezbollah: Alienation, Religiosity and Welfare Provision," *Defense & Security Analysis* 29, no. 1 (2013).

<sup>161</sup> Rosita Di Peri, "Islamist Actors from an Anti-System Perspective: The Case of Hizbullah," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 15, no. 4 (2014).

<sup>162</sup> Haddad, "Explaining Lebanese Shii Adherence to Hezbollah: Alienation, Religiosity and Welfare Provision."

critical step in the Shia's emancipation from the well-established supremacy of the influential Sunnis in the political system of the country. Nearly a decade after his achievement in building the resistance identity of Shi'a community in the country, in 1978, he was reported missing throughout a visit to Libya. This incident was convincing a number of Shi'as "symbolism of the Twelver Shiite community to which he was originally from, 'vanished', like the last of the Twelver's' historical imams".<sup>163</sup>

In fact, the original incentives for the formation of organizations such as Amal were very diverse and wide that included psychological, social, cultural, religious and political elements.<sup>164</sup> The fact that a considerable number of Muslims especially Shi'as emphasized on the important role of "normative Islam and collectivity" in their movements to focus on their identity which could be a reason for reaching to the point that "Muslims (at least those Muslims who initiated the formation of organizations), more than others, are defined by religious norms and texts, and they primarily need organizations as a way or form to protect their religious identity".<sup>165</sup>

In the last years of 1970s, the history of region witnessed three major circumstances which are considered very important in mobilizing and radicalizing the Shi'as in Lebanon through a revolutionary identity formation process: First, the vanishing of Al-Sadr in Libya (August 1978), which converted to a chief focus for mobilizing Shi'as and act as a reuniting standpoint for the mobilized Shi'a community<sup>166</sup>; second, attack to Lebanon by Israeli forces (1978 and 1982) and third, the formation and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran through a mobilized revolutionary Shi'a ideology, preached by Khomeini and his supporters in successful revolution and putting an end on the

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<sup>163</sup> Helena Cobban, "The Discovery of the Lebanese Shia," review of *Militant Islamic Movements in Lebanon: Origins, Social Basis, and Ideology*, Marius Deeb; *The Vanished Imam: Musa al-Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, Fouad Ajami; *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, Augustus Richard Norton, *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1988).

<sup>164</sup> Bectovic.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Marius Deeb, "Shia Movements in Lebanon: Their Formation, Ideology, Social Basis, and Links with Iran and Syria," *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1988).

Pahlavi monarchy (February 1979).<sup>167</sup> This specific experience in Iran was an important factor in enhancing the political awareness of the Shi'as in the region and especially in Lebanon, and provide them with revolutionary encouragement and a foundation of credibility in having a shared religious identity that exceeded national borders.

As it has been argued by some scholars, it is paradoxical nature disappearance of al-Sadr, encouraged Amal to begin its advances as a key political and guerilla force within the context of Lebanon.<sup>168</sup> While mystery had become the dominant aspect of the disappearance of al-Sadr in Libya (and even with the elimination of the Qaddafi administration during Arab Spring in 2010 this luckless incident still remained unsolved), it has been argued that the loss of Imam was somehow impotent in consolidating Amal's religious identity.<sup>169</sup> Despite all these facts it should be noted that Al-Sadr's charismatic picture and personal magnetism and was somehow presented a unique strength within the Amal leadership after his loss. From ideological perspective "It was not difficult to draw the links between Amal, Al-Sadr and the absent Imam in Shia (Mahdi) popular consciousness".<sup>170</sup>

It could be argued that in the late 1970s up to the early 1980s - despite possessing a great political potential- the Amal movement could not establish itself as a distinguishable military force or political player within the power structure of Lebanon.<sup>171</sup> However it is worthy to say that additional to economic shockwaves, political unrests and wars, even today it seems that Lebanon has a distinctive potential to be trapped in chaos through political catastrophes that might affect the security of the region and put its neighbors in critical risks.<sup>172</sup>

## 2.4. POLITICAL IDENTITY OF THE SHI'A COMMUNITY IN LEBANON

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Antony T. Sullivan, "Wars and Rumors of War: The Levantine Tinderbox," *Middle East Policy* 15, no. 1 (2008).

As it has been highlighted above at the onset of the twenty-first century the integrated community of Shi'a in Lebanon has turned to become an important element in the sociopolitical structure of the country. Since its occurrence and improvement this Shia population during the mid-1980s had been repeatedly linked to “fundamentalist understanding of Shi’a Islam”.<sup>173</sup> In fact, the reputation of the Hezbollah’s revolutionary movement throughout the Shi'a community of Lebanon in the 1990s revealed, an inclination to adapt a collective Islamic and revolutionary identity.<sup>174</sup> The reason could be found in the contemporary history of the community when the Shi’a have been suffered enormously from intensified poverty struggles and dislocation as a direct consequence of Israeli occupation supported by the United States between 1978 and 2000 within the southern part of Lebanon and also the Israeli assault of Shi’a inhabited parts of the country in the beginning of 1970s. They have also suffered from the neoliberal economic strategies dictated by the United States to the Lebanese government and encouraging them to demolish the traditional economic system.<sup>175</sup> As a consequence of intensifying the violent behaviors and inappropriate economic policies and approaches, a considerable portion of the Shi’a population have ultimately been obliged to evacuate from their villages and move to the southern region and settle in shanty towns located on the outskirts of the Capital, Beirut, where most of them received support through a wide-ranging complex of Hezbollah’s civil services. Many turned to became supporters of “Hezbollah’s populist, and at the same time extremist identity that encourages hatred and violence against the United States and Israel.”<sup>176</sup>

If we look deeply on the different chapters of civil violence in Lebanon, we will realize that “religious sectarianism” has a critical role in shaping “particular dynamic” within the civic spaces that promotes specific public identity.<sup>177</sup> The extent and influence of this kind of urban riots and devastations caused by them

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<sup>173</sup> Reza Simbar and Mehdi Zibaei, "Political Islam: Moderation or Radicalism? Case Study of Political Islam with Respect to Lebanon Hezbollah," *Journal of International and Area Studies* 18, no. 1 (2011).

<sup>174</sup> Nir Omri, "The Shi'ites During the 1958 Lebanese Crisis," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 6 (2004).

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Sofia Maria Tagliabue, "Inside Hezbollah: The Al-Mahdi Scouts, Education, and Resistance," *Digest of Middle East Studies* 24, no. 1 (2015).

<sup>177</sup> Arif.

attempts to highlight territorial, religious or neighborhood identities as instruments for organized armed movements and “symbolically charged spaces such as borders and frontiers between sensitive urban ‘territories’”.<sup>178</sup>

Within this context, the formation process of political identity within the Lebanese Shi'as for having a better picture of their violent activities has not been methodologically studied, despite the fact that its importance to understand the revolutionary essence of Shi'as in Lebanon. For studying this issue comprehensively, it is important to scrutinize different periods in the modern history of the country. That might be useful in providing us with a better picture for evaluating the today's political identity struggle of the Shi'a community in Lebanon.

Traditionally speaking Hezbollah has always justified its guerrilla style of fighting and an extensive range of political activism on the basis of an “interpretation of Islamic religious principles” and teachings that include: “jihad, transnational Muslim solidarity and religious ideals of social justice and political order”.<sup>179</sup> The Islamic widespread conventions are not fundamentally incompatible with or in disagreement with the standards and establishments of international community; but in case Hezbollah's revolutionary identity there has been a strong reason for resistance against international hegemonic doctrines and its key global actors since its formation.<sup>180</sup> Therefore, if we comprehend “international society with reference to the concept of hegemony”, whereby leading players enforce and dictate their norms and values to subordinated groups in different parts of the world including the Middle East, we can find out the thoughtful boundary between international society led by the Western countries and Hezbollah with its revolutionary identity, which has continually being voiced by Iranian conservatives as well in their resistance manifesto “Western imperialist project” in the region.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Ophir Falk and Hadas Kroitoru, "The Internationalization of Suicide Terrorism," in *Suicide Terror* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008).

<sup>179</sup> Dionigi.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.



Throughout this study it has been tried to understand such an investigation by scrutinizing the behavior of the Shi'as and their revolutionary movements as one of the thundery periods in modern history of Lebanon, and more importantly focus on the civil war of the country in 1958.

Since the early stages of the uprising revolutionary behaviors of the Shi'a community in the region, a considerable number of studies have been published on formation of the Shi'a political identity and its mobilized forces in the region. Some of these studies tried to portray the social or political changes within the Shi'a community suffered since the early steps in 1970s, others try to show the activities of their late well-known religious and political leader Imam Musa al-Sadr in Lebanon, and some other focused on Shi'as and their somehow violent movements in the form of organizations Amal and Hezbollah, that are still struggling with each other over taking the leadership of the Shi'a population. Only a limited number of studies analyzed previous stages in the Lebanese contemporary history and try to view Shi'a participation in formation of their political identity as an important incentive in creating major events.<sup>182</sup> Therefore, looking more deeply in the historical backgrounds of evolution of Shi'a political identity in Lebanon could explain many questions within the framework of formation and transformation of Hezbollah's political identity.

## **2.5. SHI'A MOVEMENTS IN LEBANON**

Throughout the history, for any political movement that wishes to have a degree of success, it has been always very important to organize itself around a basis of unity and the most vital element here which is broadly discussed in this study is "formation of an identity". Social collectiveness can generate identities, but operative actors in the political world may try to exploit a standing identity to strengthen their desired policy during struggles with competitors.<sup>183</sup> In analyzing Lebanese Shi'a movements and its identity, one must first dig deeper to

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<sup>182</sup> Omri.

<sup>183</sup> Childs.

understand the broader sectarian dichotomy within Islamic traditions which mainly could be seen between the dominant Sunnis in the region and the minority Shi'as in the other side of struggle.<sup>184</sup> In more deliberate focus it could be said that the Twelver Shiism is as one of the branches of a specific Islamic tradition that highlights the faith that the Muslims is expecting the reappearance of "the Hidden Imam Mahdi". Based on this religious narration till return of the Hidden Imam and taking the responsibly of leadership of Muslim community across the world the Shi'a Ulama, (the religious scholarly community known as Imams) are in charge of revelations of Allah and leading the Islamic political system.<sup>185</sup>

Therefore, in analyzing the most important factor in shaping political and revolutionary Shi'a identity the role of Imams in resist against the US and Israel as infidels seems very important. One can discuss that the establishment of Amal through constant efforts of Imam Musa al-Sadr as one of reputable and key Ulama in 1974 that manifested the early stages of the revolutionary rise of Shi'a Muslims in Lebanon could be a tangible example of this understating of Shi'a Islam. It should be noted that he was not considered as a rebellious leader, nor was it his agenda to build up a militant group to take arms as such.<sup>186</sup> His key objective was to deteriorate powerful and influential local leadership who run a "feudal-style" property-ownership system such as well-known Kamil al-Asad as a local patron was in position of ruling the Shi'a population residing in the Jabal Amil region in the southern part of Lebanon. Amal as a paramilitary group was considered as Al-Sadr's mechanism for covering and combining the stance of the clerical pyramid in Jabal Amil area through imposing new power settings to the ruling families who were traditionally controlled the area for decades.<sup>187</sup>

Since in Lebanon the social institution of ruling families as important political determiners in power sharing mechanisms play an important function within the

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Deeb.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

political management of the community, leaders of ideologies, their relationships and practices within the community are the results of multidimensional processes of religious identity that were and still are active in political structure of Lebanon. While family and state are equally “constitutive in the country”, family and especially influential once are critical to in understanding the role of state’s social and political organizations and arrangements.<sup>188</sup>

Taking this structure into account, the literature on revolutionary movements against domination of influential families as rulers suggests that the natural format of “the relationship between religion and militancy depends on which aspect is considered and which operationalization is used”.<sup>189</sup> Additional to this reviews, the analysis of political scholars proposes an argument on a meaningful relationship at the group-level (here deprived Shi’a people in case of Lebanon), as critical aspects of understating the relationship between constructing a religious identity and violence. In this regard, a close analyze of existing theories within IR discipline especially social constructivism and its affiliated literature suggests that “while the group-level institutional and communal aspects of religion may be the most important in thinking about its relationship with behaviors such as violence, there is evidence and theoretical reason to question whether this effect always increases support for violence and militancy”.<sup>190</sup>

As a tangible example for this argument, in the last year of 1970s, some Shi’a intellectuals and political analyzers sought to focus on Marja’iyya<sup>191</sup> as the most important religious instrument for defining leadership in Shi’a political literature into an influential position that contains clear bureaucratic structures, or link it to the practice of building a state. The mechanism or lack of selecting an

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<sup>188</sup> Suad Joseph, "Political Familism in Lebanon," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 636 (2011).

<sup>189</sup>T. Hoffman Michael and R. Nugent Elizabeth, "Communal Religious Practice and Support for Armed Parties: Evidence from Lebanon," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61, no. 4 (2015).

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> The marjaiyya (rank of legal exemplar among Twelver Shiite) is part of a complex system of legal guidance, socio-religious management, economic administration and political negotiation at the seminaries, at local, regional, and international settings.

appropriate Marja<sup>192</sup> was measured defective and subjected to arbitrary selections of potential individuals. It should be noted that a significant number of politicians and their advisers in Lebanon are torn between the desire to “continue to lean on the Christian minority in the country and the absolute understating of the notion that without collaboration with Shi’s in South, peace cannot be realized in southern Lebanon.”<sup>193</sup> On the other hand, event within the Shi’a community during the last phases of ending civil war in the country supported “Hezbollah to establish itself as a force to be reckoned with”.<sup>194</sup>

Amal and Hezbollah in their previous phases of their history as the most important forces in the region fought with each other, in 1988–89, to challenge the Shi’a hub in the southern part of the country and the crawling suburbs of Beirut, a region that completely populated by Shi’as.<sup>195</sup> By creating a social face that portrays a division between religious identity and practice, Hezbollah has been trying hard to create well-organized establishments, such as a range of services for public, including construction enterprises and clinics, while Amal was mostly focused in offering a political system that was resemble to the familiar patronage structure which was basically the source of its rebellion actions in the past.<sup>196</sup> This behavior costed Amal to lose its control in southern suburbs of Beirut.<sup>197</sup>

## 2.6. BIRTH OF HEZBOLLAH

As it has been discussed earlier, the social environments, poverty, and depression affecting the Shi’a community encouraged many member of the community to join Palestinian and leftist movements that were formed as arm

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<sup>192</sup> In its classical form, Shiite theory considers political authority void and illegitimate in the absence of the infallible guide, the awaited Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi (12th Imam) who derives his leadership from Prophet Muhammad himself. In time, this theory led to a transfer of power and social leadership to the Shiite jurists (marja), who interpreted the Imams' statements and transmitted their rulings to believers.

<sup>193</sup> "Coexistence with the Sh'ites," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 15, no. 1 (1985).

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Augustus Richard Norton, "The Role of Hezbollah in Lebanese Domestic Politics," *The International Spectator* 42, no. 4 (2007).

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

groups. The appearance of Imam Musa Al-Sadr as a significant religious leader in Lebanon during 1959 marked the Shi'a restoration and prompted the change that led to the emergence of the Shi'a political identity.<sup>198</sup>

In fact, the involvement of Iran's back religious leaders in Lebanon had some roots in the most important transnational network existing among Iranian Shi'a created mostly in the 1970s which had a close ties with the members of the *Nehzat-e Azadi-e Iran* (Religious Nationalist Political Party), or the Liberation Movement of Iran (LMI), as one of the revolutionary an anti-king (Shah) opposition movement, and specially Imam Musa Al-Sadr within the Amal framework.<sup>199</sup>

Hezbollah emerged from a "marriage between Shi'a militants and Islamic regime in Iran" and it was not only focused on confronting the Israeli occupation of Lebanon but also for the determination of giving a loud voice to the marginalized Shi'as in the southern part of Lebanon.<sup>200</sup>

The Shi'a resistance movement to gain political influence labeled its identity as "Lebanese Resistance" which was created during occupation of Beirut in September 1982 by Israeli forces. It institutionalized rapidly in the southern part of the country as of the end of the year. Resistance in the border district was limited for the same purpose, it had been limited in 1978-the absence of young men to fight in compare with an abnormally high proportion of women and old men in the populated areas.<sup>201</sup> In some analysis, this situation was viewed as the consequence of four years of occupation in the south. However, the residents of the zone, like everyone, were proud of their resistance identity that was constructed by Shia imams and what they witnessed in their resistance against Israel.<sup>202</sup> It should be highlighted here that during the civil war the

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<sup>198</sup> Haddad, "Explaining Lebanese Shii Adherence to Hezbollah: Alienation, Religiosity and Welfare Provision."

<sup>199</sup> Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Postrevolutionary Iran and Shi'i Lebanon: Contested Histories of Shi'i Transnationalism."

<sup>200</sup> Haddad, "Explaining Lebanese Shii Adherence to Hezbollah: Alienation, Religiosity and Welfare Provision."

<sup>201</sup> Ahmad Beydoun, "The South Lebanon Border Zone: A Local Perspective," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, no. 3 (1992).

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

principle objective of Hezbollah in generating an Islamic republic in Lebanon was slowly moved to sidelines by a committed effort to fight against Israel and saving the south from her forces.<sup>203</sup> Hence, this position especially in the practical fight against Israel and rhetoric of resistance identity favorably distanced the party from the poisonous partisanship effects of the civil war.<sup>204</sup>

### 2.6.1. Constructing Leadership within Hezbollah's Structure

In Arabic literature the concept and terminology of Hezbollah has some roots in Quran versus that refers to the community of Muslim believers. In "Surat al-Mujadilah" (the face of fight) the term "Hizb-u-Shaytan" (the Party of Satan) was pointed simply at the supporters of Satan.<sup>205</sup> Concisely, Islamic Jihad is mainly focused on a fight between Hezbollah (the Party of God) and Hizb-ush-Shaytan (Party of Satan). Apparently, this analogy does not mirror the exact struggle and specific outline of Hezbollah's mandate. It does not portray the characteristic of its violent behaviors as well.<sup>206</sup>

The base of ideological orientation of Hezbollah has deep roots in the key role of its leadership in the form of *Ulama (religious scholars)* in the Shi'a community.<sup>207</sup> The main responsibility of mentioned ideology is to demonstrate that Shi'as must accept instructions by those who are ruling them politically as religious leaders. According to these clergies, there is a well-known "hadith" as a referable saying by Prophet Muhammad that highlights the role of Ulamas who are the heirs of the prophets. The interpretation is widely used by the ideologists and supporters of Hezbollah to manipulate public in justifying the leadership of Ulama and plays a significant role in indoctrination of masses for scarifying their lives in fight against infidels.<sup>208</sup> As a tangible example on the

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<sup>203</sup> Knio.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> AbuKhalil As'ad, "Ideology and Practice of Hizballah in Lebanon: Islamization of Leninist Organizational Principles," *Middle Eastern Studies* 27, no. 3 (1991).

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

critical role of clergies in leading Hezbollah, in the uppermost ruling body of the party that is called Majlis ash-Shura (Board of Councils). In this leadership structure there is only one non-clerical individual member. Therefore, it is important to note that “the emphasis on the roles of the Ulama in society is a fundamental feature of the ideology of the “Party of God””.<sup>209</sup>

### **2.6.2. Role of external players in Hezbollah’s Revolutionary Identity**

On analytical point of view, popular revolutionary analyzers including Ted R. Gurr, who have studied the most vital motivations for joining insurgencies by different peoples and groups argues that within the communities in transitional phase, those who have somehow managed to rise above devastating poverty but have not still touched the advantage of reaching to the desirable level of welfare, there are some incentives that make them to take arms and join violent revolutions to resolve their reasonable frustrations and disadvantages, specifically if they face with severe ethnic or religious discriminations.<sup>210</sup>

In Lebanese political context, Joseph Daher analyzed its economic and political structure “through a materialist and historical approach of Political Islam”. In his work, he indicates that the Shi’a community’s development “within the changing class and state formation in Lebanon” had brought them to the head of global political debates through symbolic and practical confrontation with the US and its important and key ally in the Middle East, Israel.<sup>211</sup>

Tom Najem discussed the origins of the 1975–1990 civil war and concentrated on external features in the country’s political system.<sup>212</sup> Najem explores that, while the motives for the occurrence of the war were multifarious, the principal cause was the ‘vital “role of external actors in the Lebanese system”’.<sup>213</sup> He argues by referring on “the influence of the Palestine Liberation Organization’s

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Salamey and Pearson.

<sup>211</sup> Franco.

<sup>212</sup> Grafton.

<sup>213</sup> Simbar and Zibaei.

(PLO), Iran, the United States and the European Union (EU), but his critical eye is aimed at Syrian hegemony and interests in Lebanon".<sup>214</sup> It should be also noted that Lebanon has long engaged a predominantly important location in the Palestinian fight with Israel. Almost half a million Palestinians settled there, it neighborhood with Israel/Palestine border, and for almost twelve years starting from 1970 till the invasion of Lebanon by Israel during June 1982, this country served as the military and political host for attracting Palestinian movement. It did also, in one sense, the country in the classical means acted as a sanctuary for all external guerrillas: it created a ground for logistical support, shelter, and a "departure point for military activities" against Israel.<sup>215</sup>

## 2.7. HEZBOLLAH'S IDENTITY

Throughout the intensive period of the Lebanese civil war, one of the most critical objectives of Hezbollah as Shi'a militia was focused on preserving paramilitary existence in the south of the country in order to use the area as a battle ground for combating Israeli forces.<sup>216</sup> At the end of the confrontations with Israel in 1989, Hezbollah was politically isolated and because of some domestic political competition in that part of the country it was pushed out of the south, where it was directly engaged with as conflict with the United States Army and more specifically Israel Defense Forces (IDF).<sup>217</sup> In fact, in order to attain its political agenda that envisaged withdrawal of Israel from Southern part of Lebanon, Hezbollah implemented a complex strategy to utilize guerrilla warfare.<sup>218</sup> The Hezbollah's leadership frequently invoked by the American experience in Vietnam by projecting that the psychological impacts of sending "body bags home" to US and Israel would have serious impacts on decision

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<sup>214</sup> Grafton.

<sup>215</sup> Rex Brynen, "Plo Policy in Lebanon: Legacies and Lessons," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, no. 2 (1989).

<sup>216</sup> Ora Szekely, "Hezbollah's Survival: Resources and Relationships," *Middle East Policy* 19, no. 4 (2012).

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Iver Gabrielsen, "The Evolution of Hezbollah's Strategy and Military Performance, 1982–2006," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 2 (2014).



making processes in these countries and ultimately generate a flaming arguments in the both societies on their involvement in war with Hezbollah.<sup>219</sup>

The birth and grow of the Hezbollah as a Shi'a movement that involves violent aspects was not a silent affair. In fact, it exploded onto the Lebanese political game in a devastating violence that trapped Western leaders and Lebanese elite alike off guard. That Lebanon, once known as the "Switzerland" or "the Bride of the Middle East" and long seen as a Western-oriented society, could so significantly change into a hotbed of "Shi'a radicals".<sup>220</sup> From its beginning, Hezbollah would engage itself as the US firmest opponent. In Lebanon, it would become Americas and Israel's lethal hostile.<sup>221</sup>

On external point of view, the blaming finger was directly touched the shoulder of Iranian and Syrian conservative leaders and their allies in Lebanon, Hezbollah as the most important one among them.<sup>222</sup>

As the first major encounter between the US and Hezbollah occurred on 23 October 1983, we can refer to the incident that "a truck loaded with TNT exploded under the headquarters of the US marines near the Beirut airport, killing 241 soldiers".<sup>223</sup> Although, according to Robert Baer, Iran, and not Hezbollah, was behind this operation, it is widely recognized that was the main responsible of the attack, which was planned to push the American troops to leave Lebanon. The mastermind of this attack was the key for Hezbollah military commander, Imad Mughniyeh who was killed in February 2008 at a car explosion in Damascus.<sup>224</sup> The impact of this attack was enormous. The US did indeed withdraw its troops from Lebanon in March 1984 and Hezbollah and Iran considered this as a major victory at that time.<sup>225</sup> Starting in 1989 and exactly aftermath of the war, Hezbollah's leadership made a mindful decision to

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Hala Jaber, "Consequences of Imperialism: Hezbollah and the West," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 6, no. 1 (1999).

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Childs.

<sup>223</sup> Hussain Sirriyeh, "The Us, Hezbollah and the Idea of Sub-State Terrorism," *Israel Affairs* 18, no. 4 (2012).

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

transform the political identity of the militia with a deadly record into a legitimate political party.<sup>226</sup> The symbolic aspect of this shift was somehow the “organization’s participation in the first post-war legislative elections in 1992”.<sup>227</sup> Based on the remarks made by the Deputy Secretary General of Hezbollah, Naim Qassem “the period leading up to the elections was one of significant disagreement and realignment within the organization: parliamentary representation of Hezbollah was not a clear choice . . . at the time, [it was] a decision that called for deep internal debate”.<sup>228</sup> Today Hezbollah at the same time dresses in military uniforms and political suits: Under one, it sponsors an uninterrupted, regional struggle against Israel, funded, exhilarated and supported by Syria and the Iranian Islamic Regime. On the other hand, it tries to be an active political figure with legitimate face in Lebanese politics political system, which carries the banner of the Shi’a community in leadership system of the country.<sup>229</sup>

At domestic level, Hezbollah has taken some roles and responsibilities that are normally delivered by state administrations.<sup>230</sup> In fact the party, through its affiliated institutions within a complex network consists of entrepreneurs and charities, has taken some tasks that successfully play a significant role in responsibilities that traditionally must be implemented by a state.<sup>231</sup> In addition to its domestic power, Hezbollah enlarged its influence inconsiderable number of municipalities and other managing councils in southern area of Lebanon which is obviously visible after 2004 municipal elections.<sup>232</sup> Hezbollah directly and indirectly has a critical role in managing almost controls “60 percent of municipalities in southern Lebanon” and they have successfully established their influence in occupying managerial positions in the south through their

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<sup>226</sup> Rola El Hussein, "Hezbollah and the Axis of Refusal: Hamas, Iran and Syria," *Third World Quarterly* 31, no. 5 (2010).

<sup>227</sup> Krista E. Wiegand, "Reformation of a Terrorist Group: Hezbollah as a Lebanese Political Party," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 8 (2009).

<sup>228</sup> El Hussein.

<sup>229</sup> Sukumar Muralidharan, "Israel in Lebanon: Wreaking Havoc and Violence," *Economic and Political Weekly* 41, no. 30 (2006).

<sup>230</sup> Najib B. Hourani, "Lebanon: Hybrid Sovereignties and U.S. Foreign Policy," *Middle East Policy* 20, no. 1 (2013).

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Shawn Teresa Flanigan and Mounah Abdel-Samad, "Hezbollah's Social Jihad: Nonprofits as Resistance Organizations," *ibid.* 16, no. 2 (2009).

supporters, beside that the party is “controlling 27 out of 30 contested municipalities in the Bekaa Valley”.<sup>233</sup>

Therefore, possessing such a strong local network has made the work difficult for international organization, humanitarian donors, and even governmental entities to dismiss negotiations and interaction with Hezbollah. As a tangible example, along with its political and paramilitary capabilities, Hezbollah by receiving logistic and technical supports from Iran has successfully managed to build extremely sophisticated health care and social-service workers that exceed the normal capacity of the current Lebanese state.<sup>234</sup> If we look closer to this transformation process in its manifesto issued in November 2009, Hezbollah deleted some of the controversial radical Islamist rhetoric, removing any indicator that highlights their intention for establishing an Islamic republic in Lebanon, which refers to the group’s inclination on ‘Lebanonization’.<sup>235</sup> However, the organization has not changed its political orientation in its taste against the US or Israel. As a result, in a section that labeled “Domination and Hegemony” the manifesto declares that “US hegemony is hazardous because Americans ‘consider that they own the world and therefore, the Western expanding strategy turned to be an international one without limits’”.<sup>236</sup>

Domestically, the interaction between Hezbollah’s political identity and sovereignty of the state has become visible enough; for instance, in the post-2005 era, a security statement was issued by the Lebanese government, which emphasizes on sustaining a dynamic balance between “Hezbollah’s resistance identity and the Lebanese state’s sovereignty”.<sup>237</sup> As a tangible indicator, Article 6 of the policy statement ratified by the Lebanese government in 2009 reads as follows:

“From the stance of the duty to uphold Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity, the cabinet affirms the right of Lebanon, its government, its people, its

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> El Hussein.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Alagha Joseph, "Hezbollah and the Arab Spring," *Contemporary Review of the Middle East* 1, no. 2 (2014).

army, and its Resistance [Hezbollah] to employ all legitimate means in order to liberate all Lebanese territory."<sup>238</sup>

As it has been discussed earlier, Hezbollah has successfully transformed itself to an important non-state political player that holds its distinct identity to perform in the Lebanese domestic political games.<sup>239</sup> Some analyzers believe that as soon as this consensus discontinues, the system despite all the costs that posed to its founders stops working and may cause a catastrophic governmental results in managing the country, which could be resolved only through a national dialogue or even an international mediation by the global community. Therefore, it should be noted that despite enjoying a position of strength, Hezbollah has the potential to act in different manner and would not hesitate to create a breakdown in the system as it has been practiced earlier in 2006, 2007 and 2008 cases.<sup>240</sup> When the party started increasingly losing its political position of strength and credibility from 2011 onwards - because Syria became involved in a civil war, Hezbollah was siding with Assad Regime and losing reliability among the Lebanese for doing so, and accusations of Hezbollah members by the players of Lebanon's political game who intensified the role of Party of God in causing a breakdown.<sup>241</sup>

### **2.7.1. Hezbollah as A Terrorist Organization for The West**

In contrast with the American and Israeli assertions and their views on terrorism, for a social movement with violent agenda that intends to bring some sort of changes in societies it is important to work on forces that are critical in developing an identity for their organization that in practical terms carries lethal outcomes.<sup>242</sup> In other words, a social movement at a first stage could be seen

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Eva Dingel, "Hezbollah's Rise and Decline? How the Political Structure Seems to Harness the Power of Lebanon's Non-State Armed Group," *Sicherheit und Frieden (S+F) / Security and Peace* 31, no. 2 (2013).

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Comas Jordi, Shrivastava Paul, and C. Martin Eric, "Terrorism as Formal Organization, Network, and Social Movement," *Journal of Management Inquiry* 24, no. 1 (2014).

as a comprehensive collection of interested individual who are acting as organizational elements through incorporating their identity with a historical stance and bitter cultural experiences. In this type of social movements, a common sense of unity between the members empower them in attaching themselves to the radicalization process and even articulating a reflective (even revolutionary) alterations in societies.<sup>243</sup> In other words, social movements in some cases demonstrate procedural and even mechanical reformations across different periods.

The most significant and obvious cases are happening a revolutionary organization by adapting a rational model that accelerate transforming itself to an institutional and legitimate organization, in quest of gaining international and national acknowledgement and recognition.<sup>244</sup> Based on the studies and reviews that have been done for this work, until recently, a limited number of studies within the social science literature established interest in critical review of the Islamic movements. Most of these arguments were discussing the issues while firmly dedicated themselves inspirational dogmas, religious, and even politically rigid stances. Similarly to this approach, the Islamic movements that are employing violence have been largely recognized as terrorist groups.<sup>245</sup>

In analyzing Hezbollah as one of these religious-based organizations with a resistance manifesto, it could be found that the organization has developed strong ties not only in the Middle East but also through Lebanese Shi'a immigrant across the world, which acts as international operative groundwork. According to the American analyzers these international cells of Hezbollah are linked to local and international criminal networks.<sup>246</sup> As an example in the South America the organization has one of the most sophisticated strongholds. For many years Hezbollah through pursuing its anti-imperialist agenda against the US and its active forces on the ground has registered activists in Latin America, firstly by establishing its triple frontier in countries such as Paraguay,

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Avraham.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Boaz Ganor and Miri Halperin Wernli, "The Infiltration of Terrorist Organizations into the Pharmaceutical Industry: Hezbollah as a Case Study," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36, no. 9 (2013).

Brazil, and Argentina and consequently this network has expanded to Venezuela and elsewhere in the region, especially in countries where state has little control on their activities and there is a good soil for spreading hostility seeds against the United States such as Cuba.<sup>247</sup> In fact, Hezbollah is searching for a better platform to improve its leverage capacity to counter US interests in the Latin America.

In a broader look, through implementation of the post-9/11 global agenda that was initiated by the Bush Administration as “War on Terror” a favorable platform had been established as a suitable environment for ideological confrontations and sectarian polarizations that had a direct influence in complicating the process of rational nationalism within Lebanese borders.<sup>248</sup> Consequently, the polarization as a direct result of this agenda has been demonstrated by many Islamists opposition groups throughout developing process of ‘anti-terror’ policies within a nation-state structure that has some geopolitical and international obligations towards global community led by the United States. For instance, Hezbollah as militant Shi’a group had been reflected in “the 2004 US-sponsored UN Resolution 1559”, as non-nationalistic movement.<sup>249</sup> In geopolitical analyses, Hezbollah receives financial and military assistances from the Islamic Republic of Iran’s to intensify its anti-Israeli campaigns regardless of conventional rule and regulations that has been accepted as international law and its requirements by UN member states. This attitude has created a serious “block between the party and other supporters of state sovereignty and proponents of UN Resolution 1559”.<sup>250</sup>

### **2.7.2. Hezbollah’s as A Resistance Movement for Shi’as**

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Imad Salamey and Gary Copeland, "How Exceptional Are Islamists? Comparing Support for Hezbollah and the Lebanese Forces," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 13, no. 2 (2011).

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

As it has been discussed before, Hezbollah's transformation and its enlargement from a breakable alliance consisting of the Shi'a Islamic groups that had a marginal role within Lebanon into a sophisticated political party with strong arm forces has direct influence on the coalition governing body in the country which is the direct consequence of complex networks of political interrelationship and influences that have been imposed both from inside and outside the Lebanese borders, particularly started in the mid-1990s.<sup>251</sup> In fact, Hezbollah's group-based "cultivation of hatred" assists directly in creation of a socially constructed identity that is known as "reality lived" for its sympathizers, this aspect of their social identity acts as manipulating instrument for a universally motivated army of killers.<sup>252</sup> Thus, one of the key strategies of Hezbollah is building a military of resistance that is actively engaged in confronting Israel as one of the chief objectives of the movement.<sup>253</sup> Yet Hezbollah's struggle against Israel, at least in principle, exceeds the latter's occupation of Lebanon. The "Party of God" does not believe in the existence of Israel as a nation-state. In fact, the word "Israel" does not occur in their literature, which alternates the phrase "Zionist Regime" as it has been used by Islamic Iran during the past forty years.<sup>254</sup>

The incentive that pushes Hezbollah to demonstrate its support for 'Lebanonization' is the opportunity that creates a political platform for them to act as strong supporter of Lebanese nation and more importantly to draw a picture of victor in their fight against Israel.<sup>255</sup> Simultaneously, Hezbollah tries to be understood and portray itself as the defender of Lebanese in combating against "global imperialism", which is tuned through the capitalist system preached by the United States of America. In fact, Hezbollah wishes to present itself as the guardian of the Islamic Umma. This political stance has reappeared several times both in Sayyad Hassan Nasrallah's speeches on different

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<sup>251</sup> Eitan Azani, "The Hybrid Terrorist Organization: Hezbollah as a Case Study," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36, no. 11 (2013).

<sup>252</sup> Taylor Armstrong and Jonathan Matusitz, "Hezbollah as a Group Phenomenon: Differential Association Theory," *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 23, no. 4 (2013).

<sup>253</sup> Adham Saouli, "Lebanon's Hizbullah: The Quest for Survival," *World Affairs* 166, no. 2 (2003).

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Di Peri.

occasions and also his electoral programmes.<sup>256</sup> At the regional and international levels the revolutionary position of Hezbollah have demonstrated that the party did not hesitate to instrumentally employ violence in its struggle against the capitalist system of managing the world that has been identified Israel as the key non-Arab ally of the United States in the Middle East.<sup>257</sup>

To apprehend the roadmap Hezbollah in its relationship with the Lebanese state at the national level, one must first understand the structure and atmosphere of the state.<sup>258</sup> The Lebanese regime has been basically shaped by two defining characteristics: its division of power along confessional sectarian lines and its relationship with Syria after the Taif Accord.<sup>259</sup>

On the other hand, some of the Iranian political analyzer believed that Iran has implanted its sophisticated national-security agenda that contains the leverage position against Israel inside Lebanon by putting Syria in front as has been shown in the fight against ISIS. In fact, Hezbollah processes a strategic deterrent and retaliatory capacity to threat Isreal's national security by locating itself in important areas of the southern part Lebanon.<sup>260</sup> In more clear words, if Iran being threatened by possible heavy air attacks by Israeli air force on its controversial nuclear or ballistic missile facilities, Hezbollah can immediately act as its first hotline of protection. As it has been frequently used in rhetoric of the Iranian leaders against Israel any Israeli politician or military commander who is contemplating on such attacks must also consider a serious consequence of the possible retaliatory actions that may contain missile attach of Hezbollah on Israeli military, economic infrastructure, and more importantly defenseless civilians of the country.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Bryan R. Early, "'Larger Than a Party, yet Smaller Than a State': Locating Hezbollah's Place within Lebanon's State and Society," *World Affairs* 168, no. 3 (2006).

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> David Albright et al., "Symposium: The United States, Its Middle East Allies and Iran: What Is the Way Forward?," *Middle East Policy* 21, no. 1 (2014).

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.



## 2.8. CONCLUSION

In the literature, the term “non-state actor” has been analyzed mostly in economic or institutional terms. In IR discipline, the governing literature is concentrated principally on non-governmental organizations (NGOs), economic corporations and more importantly international organizations.<sup>262</sup> Since 1980s this literature has experienced a shift towards including different classifications of non-state actors by involving various organizations such as Islamist movements like Hezbollah as transnational non-state actors who has serious impact on calculations of the international politics, and to a lesser extent this new shift involved the role of transnational ethnic groups as well into the category of non-state actors.<sup>263</sup> The insufficiency in scholarly debate on the power that employed the concept of “non-state actors as agents of significant change” in academic discussions, has proven the necessity for defining a comprehensive framework that “brings together both state and non-state actors” to the debating table.<sup>264</sup> It should be noted that since the 1960s the socially constructed identity of non-state actors through nationalist and even religious political movements had emerged. In fact, in the 1970s the concept of non-state actors and its relations with established states, within the wave of the nationalist movements became a hot topic for academic arguments including IR discipline. Therefore, IR scholars by observing “historical identities claiming both rights and statehood”, revitalized the agenda of the discipline regarding the significance of non-state entities particularly those social movements with revolutionary manifestos including Islamic one. .<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Aarnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore, Md: the Johns hopkins Press, 1962).

<sup>263</sup> Katerina dalacoura, ‘Islamist Movements as non-state actors and their relevance to international relations’, in *Non-State Actors in World Politics*, ed. daphne Josselin and William Wallace (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p. 235.

<sup>264</sup> Fred Halliday, ‘the romance of non-state actors’, in *Non-State Actors in World Politics*, ed. daphne Josselin and William Wallace (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), pp. 28, 37.

<sup>10</sup> Robert I. Pfaltzgraff Jr., ‘international relations theory: retrospect and Prospect’, *International Affairs*, 50(1) (January 1974), p. 47.

<sup>265</sup> Marianna Charountaki, “State and Non-State Interactions in International Relations: An Alternative Theoretical Outlook,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2018).

Hezbollah as a recognized non-state actor with a revolutionary constructed political identity within the political structure of the Middle East has been analyzed by IR thinkers both in negative and positive ways. In fact in the early 1980s the party gained the attention of the international community, following a number of deadly attacks against American troops, and Israeli military targets in Lebanon in that period.<sup>266</sup> In addition to several disagreements among the IR scholars who are studying Islamic based terrorism, most of them believe that during the 1980s the number of death toll caused by terrorist activities has been an increase as a result of risen volume of terrorist incidents in the world. Indeed, between 1980 and 1986 the deadly operations that contained terrorist agendas claimed to take more than double number of lives in compare with other historical periods.<sup>267</sup> Throughout the contemporary history of developing revolutionary identity of Hezbollah a growing intention was created within the party to stand against the established social classes in Lebanon that marginalized Shi'as in many aspects within the political structure of Lebanon.<sup>268</sup>

In this picture, Iranian Islamic Regime by taking an active role from inception to construct the revolutionary identity of Hezbollah has trailed its multilayered relationship with the Party in search for achieving several strategic goals. First, Shi'a community of Lebanon could be seen as one of successfully targeted populations which Iranian religious leaders could claim the achievements in exporting their revolutionary agenda against the United States and Israel. Although it could be argued that the complicated geopolitical goals of Iranian regime had a superior significance in the 1980s in compare with their today's agenda. In fact, in reviewing the role of external powers in constructing revolutionary identity of Hezbollah we should not underestimate the critical role of Iranian hardliners, particularly the Islamic Revolutionary Guardian Corps (IRGC) as one the most important determining factors. Second, Iran's constant support for safeguarding Hezbollah forces on the ground provides an important opportunity for strengthening their political influence within the Lebanese and

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<sup>266</sup> Shapira Shimon, "Hizballah's Loyalty," review of Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God, Matthew Levitt; Hezbollah and Hamas: A Comparative Study, Benedetta Berti and Joshua. L. Gleis, *Bustan: The Middle East Book Review* 4, no. 2 (2013).

<sup>267</sup> Hoffman.

<sup>268</sup> Salamey and Pearson.

Syrian borders. Correspondingly, Iran has been trying to secure its position within the Arab's public opinion by carrying a critical role in supporting Hezbollah as seriously armed anti-Israeli force with missile launching capabilities. Third, Hezbollah has been considered as a security asset and deterrence factor for safeguarding Iran regime by mobilizing local forces in Syria and Iraq to pose a serious threat to American military bases in the region.<sup>269</sup>

Hezbollah, during 1990's and 2000s, tried to transform its constructed revolutionary identity from a deadly militia group into a "sophisticated hybrid political organization" which contains deepening and developing its obligation towards achieving three complementary and interrelated areas of sociopolitical actions including: military resistance (in the format of jihad against the Western ideology), political activity and finally social welfare for Lebanese. More precisely, Hezbollah has used social welfare and jihad as a foundation for establishing their actual political power. Towards achieving this goal the Hezbollah's leadership has professionally articulated its stance from leading force that carries the flag of "resistance" against Israeli influence in Lebanon to "heading Lebanon's governing coalition"—that tries to demonstrate its interest in avoiding political violence.<sup>270</sup>

In conclusion the Shi'a political identity that had been craftily constructed by Iranian religious leaders in exporting their revolutionary ideology against the West in Lebanon are manifested by initiation of Amal movement through Imam Musa Al-Sadr's involvements in 1960's and 1970's and ultimately birth of Hezbollah in the beginning of 1980's and its various intentions for its transformation towards establishing itself as a legitimate political party within the Lebanese political games. The Hezbollah's dominance as a non-state actor that affects the US calculations in the region is intended to continue as long as the Islamic regime of Ayatollah in Iran the Asad's dynasty in Syria as the most important external influencers in Lebanon exist. Presumably considerable portion of the Shi'a communities in Lebanon are not attracted by the political

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<sup>269</sup> "Iran and Its Non-State Partners

Assessing Linkages and Control," in *Dangerous but Not Omnipotent*, ed. Frederic Wehrey, et al., Exploring the Reach and Limitations of Iranian Power in the Middle East (RAND Corporation, 2009).

<sup>270</sup> Azani.

agenda of the leadership of Amal or Hezbollah, but they have no other choice to take a part in the struggle with Israel.<sup>271</sup>

Therefore, the revolutionary political identity that was constructed by Shia traditional leaders could not be easily disappeared, but it is highly unlikely that they would ever recapture their domination that has been practiced in 1980's after many transformation processes.

In today's Lebanon there is a strong possibility of become more politically active for the Shia community than ever before that may directly affect their resistance against subordination to the dictated political agenda by Iranian and Syrian regimes.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Deeb.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

# **IMPACTS OF IRANIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM ON HEZBOLLAH'S REVOLUTIONARY IDENTITY**

### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

Once social movements with political agendas in the world have emerged in a process that completes through defining organizations, role of organizers, and framework of recruitment campaigns, the strategic moves in crafting and mobilizing identities play a significant role in achieving the envisaged objectives of the movement. In this process, even identities that are enforced by law, longstanding customs, and familiar for masses regularly required intensively to be redesigned and re-imagined by activists and more importantly leader's movement. At the bottom line, "they must be integrated with a movement identity, i.e. a collective identity based on shared membership in a movement".<sup>273</sup>

Since "preexisting collective identities" does not always enforce required mobilization of forces to form a sociopolitical identity, the efforts and struggles of activists' in strategically construction of "frame" for movement identities are essential in recruiting participants for taking political actions. In fact, "frames" are the "interpretive packages" that political leaders are developing to mobilize potential supporters and voters.<sup>274</sup> In social constructivism theoretical approach, when a political force successfully frames a persuasive case within a society for fighting against "injustice" in actual terms it builds the required foundations in the mind of people within different circumstance as a need for an effective building of a collective "agency" that is mandated to change that condition and establish "justice" in the target society. In social constructivism there are some

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<sup>273</sup> Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001).

<sup>274</sup> Polletta and Jasper.

efforts to make clear the "identities" of the challengers within a political system that describes conceptual attempts to distinguish "us" from "them" and portraying enemies as human elements in decision making processes rather than impersonal factors similar to the notion of Western imperialism for Muslims around the world. Therefore, according to social constructivists "Organizers often try to build a movement identity on another, independent collective identity which may come from prior activism as well as from racial and other ascribed identities".<sup>275</sup>

### 3.1.1. Concept of Unity in Shi'ism

In practical terms, for any movement that has a political agenda together with some mechanisms to measure its success, it is important to consolidate itself around the notion of having a "basis of unity". In Islamic movements this concept of unity is more frequently used as a source for constructing a revolutionary identity. In general, collective of masses could generate identities, but operative and persuasive political players would like also to exploit an obtainable sociopolitical identity for strengthening their preferred level of influences in policies.<sup>276</sup> This involvement may brought engagement of external forces including other countries to cultivate their interest in another part of the world in format of proxy wars and conflicts. As the type of this study the Lebanese Shi'a could be accounted as a source of identity formation within the framework of unity of Shi'as and building their alliances regardless of political borders to address sectarian divide within Islamic traditions mainly "between the dominant Sunni variety and the minority Shi'a variety".<sup>277</sup>

Based on social constructivism analytical frameworks many studies have been concentrated on the role of collective identities within the armed struggles that are carrying popular organized structures and distinguish between what is

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Steven Childs, "From Identity to Militancy: The Shi'a of Hezbollah," *Comparative Strategy* 30, no. 4 (2011).

<sup>277</sup> Childs.

labeled as “terrorist” and what is known as “armed” organizations, on one side of analytical reviews and “social movements” on the other side. In fact, there are unclear borders between intentions and approaches of actions in differentiating social movements that are envisaging evolutionary objectives as instruments of success and use of intensive violence as a major tools to achieve them while having a broad and widespread societal concerning and infrastructures.<sup>278</sup>

The prevailing literature within sociological framework of analysis still superintends to find logical relationship between nonviolent and violent sociopolitical movements and their modes of action which could be found in the reviewing a considerable number of many popular arm struggles in many places of the world especially within the Middle East region. On the other hand there is little attention to analysis role of external factors such as role of foreign influencers in developing and transforming long- and short-term objectives of political movements that employ arm struggles within the given phases of changing structural alignments in different categories of organizations and movements.<sup>279</sup>

### **3.1.2. Revolutionary Political Identity as instrument for Influence**

In case of revolutionary political identity formation in the Middle East most of the literatures on analyzing relationship between militancy and religion (Islamic traditions in many cases) suggest that while proving this connection is difficult but in many cases in the region, religion often promotes communal conflict and violence that could be labeled as terrorist acts.<sup>280</sup> Although in theoretical terms every religious faith and tradition tries to promote the notion of peace and spiritual prosperity in its proclaimed instructions, “most have at least some history of violence” as it was indicated in the work of Kyoko Tokuno and James

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<sup>278</sup> Sela Avraham, "From Revolution to Political Participation: Institutionalization of Militant Islamic Movements," *Contemporary Review of the Middle East* 2, no. 1-2 (2015).

<sup>279</sup> Avraham.

<sup>280</sup> Michael T. Hoffman and Elizabeth R. Nugent, "Communal Religious Practice and Support for Armed Parties: Evidence from Lebanon," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61, no. 4 (2017).

K. Wellman in 2004. For them, “there are patterns within religion that tend toward conflict and even violence” and “religious violence ... may not be inevitable, but it should surprise no one.”<sup>281</sup> A range of considerable thinkers have paid their attention on questions about violent behaviors and killing others are justified within the theological foundations and spiritual teachings of religious the tradition, and specially work on understanding of how ritual practices, religious symbolisms and notions of justice is employed within the framework of religious traditions. Mark Juergensmeyer in his 2008 work entitled “Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State, from Christian Militias to al Qaeda” underscores that “religious symbols and historical narratives are steeped in blood”. He also argues that “any attempt to understand the violence of contemporary religious rebels must begin with an understanding of the violence inherent in religious symbolism and tradition”.<sup>282</sup>

Back to the concept of violent behaviors by Shi’a Muslims that is promoted by Twelver Imam Shiism, their identity is constructed and promoted by the Iranian theological schools and their Ulama (religious scholarly community) in Qom. According to them all Shi’a Muslims should submit themselves to the believes such as:

*“If there is supposed to be justice, truth, monotheism, purity and submission to God in the awaited era, then as the people who are waiting, we should get closer to these qualities. We should become familiar with justice. We should prepare ourselves for justice. We should prepare ourselves for accepting the truth. These are the consequences of awaiting”*<sup>283</sup>

Based on this belief the Shi’a Ulama are responsible for developing the guidelines for actions even with violent aspects to prepare the gourd by bloods for reappearance of the Hidden Imam as the ultimate savior and leader of millions of Shi’as or even billions of Muslims regardless of their current political borders and divisions. It should be note that in geopolitical terms, Shi’a communities are located mainly in the Middle East specially within the oil-rich

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<sup>281</sup> Jr. Wellman, James K. and Kyoko Tokuno, "Is Religious Violence Inevitable?," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43, no. 3 (2004).

<sup>282</sup> Jennifer Turpin, "Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence by Mark Juergensmeyer," *American Journal of Sociology* 107, no. 1 (2001).

<sup>283</sup> [http://english.khamenei.ir/Opinions/Imam\\_mahdi](http://english.khamenei.ir/Opinions/Imam_mahdi) (Speech of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Supreme leader of Iran on July 9<sup>th</sup> 2011).



nations at the heart of the Persian Gulf geopolitical structure where safeguarding their revolutionary prominences may directly or indirectly influence the diplomatic calculations of the region for the global powers including the United States. On sectarian issues such as the environment of the relations between Shi'a and Sunni populations in the region, despite the influence of Iran the "Arab doctrinal, political, and ideological factors has created an environment agreeable with the notion of an Arab-Shi'a identity"<sup>284</sup> which is absolutely portrays itself in contrary with Iranian based constructed Shi'a identity.

In this chapter impacts of Iranian political system specially in two important periods of the political history of Iran namely in President Khatami and President Ahmadinejad eras on transformation of Hezbollah's revolutionary identity will be discussed and analyzed. This effort tries to find an answer for the main question of the study that is focused on the role of diplomatic moves by Iranian politicians in ultra-reformative and ultra-conservative periods and their influence on Hezbollah's dual identity as civilized political actor and guerilla arm force in proxy wars between Iran and Israel.

### **3.2. RELIGION AS INSTRUMENT OF IRAN TO BUILD REGIONAL SYMPATHIZERS**

As it was argued by John R. Hall in his 2003 work "Religion and Violence: Social Processes in Comparative Perspective", "religious justifications have been provided for communal violence in the form of civil wars, defensive wars, and genocides".<sup>285</sup> Based on the findings and analysis of Monica Duffy Toft<sup>286</sup> in 2007 and Jonathan Fox<sup>287</sup> in 2002 it has been documented that approximately one-third of occurred civil wars with tragic results between 1940 and 2000 had been involved with some religious justifications for brutal actions and violence,

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<sup>284</sup> Childs.

<sup>285</sup> Philip S. Gorski et al., "Religion, Nationalism, and Violence: An Integrated Approach," *Annual Review of Sociology* 39 (2013).

<sup>286</sup> Monica Duffy Toft, "Getting Religion?: The Puzzling Case of Islam and Civil War," *International Security* 31, no. 4 (2007).

<sup>287</sup> Peter Mandaville, "Bringing Religion into International Relations," *Perspectives on Politics* 4, no. 1 (2006).

in addition to witnessing a sharp increase in the frequency of conflict incidents triggered by religious doctrines over the mentioned timeframe.<sup>288</sup>

Today, Hezbollah that carries borderless Shi'a revolutionary identity against Western imperialism led by the United States plays a significant role in the East Mediterranean part of the Middle East to act the most noticeable "proxy force" of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Lebanon. As it has been argued comprehensively in the second chapter, the birth of Hezbollah was resulted in marriage of Islamic Revolution Guardian Corps (IRGC) and Shi'a militias in southern part of Lebanon. Both strongly obey the Shi'a Islamist ideology advocated by the Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, the mastermind Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979.

In present-time Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic who is proclaimed by the Iranian Mullahs as the "Leader of Islamic (Shia) population in the world" and as the Marja (a title presented to the highest religious leadership position within Shia authority) is the Commander-in-chief of all the armed forces of Iran. In addition to this, Ayatollah Khamenei also is considered by Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the Secretary General of Hezbollah as the instructor and leader is Shia community in Lebanon as well.

Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah in one of his speeches in Beirut on June 6, 2011 regarding the leadership role of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Lebanon said:

*"When I was in the southern part of Beirut, I received a voice message from Imam Khamenei. This was while the buildings in southern Lebanon were being bombarded. The message would be several pages if it were written down, so I will only mention a few important points. In that message, Imam Khamenei told us, "My dear brothers, this war is like the Battle of the Trench in which Quraysh, Jews of Medina and all the tribes united to besiege the Messenger of God with all their power and decided to eradicate Islam and its faithful followers. This war is like the Battle of the Trench, and everybody will be frustrated. But rely on God, and I would like to tell you that you will definitely achieve a victory. I would even say that when the war ends with a victory for you, you will turn into a power and no other power will be able to stand up against you." <sup>289</sup>*

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<sup>288</sup> Michael T. Hoffman and Elizabeth R. Nugent, "Communal Religious Practice and Support for Armed Parties: Evidence from Lebanon," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61, no. 4 (2017).

<sup>289</sup> <http://english.khamenei.ir/news/1465/Nasrallah-s-Speech-Regarding-Ayatollah-Khamenei-Video>

In fact, those who are in charge of Hezbollah's leadership strongly support the idea that through establishment of political system resemble to what Khamenei controls in Iran they can manage the everyday life of Shi'a Lebanese population and ultimately enhance development of the collective borderless collective identity of Shi'a Muslims and eventually build a better world for deprived Muslim communities. This understating explains the existence of Shi'a Islam as a comprehensible system of governance that can accomplish the movements that its leadership preaches in many occasions.<sup>290</sup> In practical terms Hezbollah's leadership openly assert its allegiance to Ayatollah Khamenei and the Islamic Republic political system. Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah allegedly in many political moves mentions Khamenei as a referee in his decisions. Additional to this Tehran utilizes this strong inspiration of Hezbollah's as an instrument for overseas covered security operations as well.<sup>291</sup>

The mentioned Shi'a ideologies, Islamic authoritarianism and anti-imperialism, shapes the cornerstone of Iran's politics, economy and diplomatic moves in the world which to some extent tries to manipulate Muslim community on its resistance both at national, regional and international levels. Their efforts mainly concentrate on two institutions: the military led by IRGC and the transnational clergy system. The maintenance or breakdown of the existing political order fundamentally depends on the consistency, weaknesses and strengths of these two important institutions.<sup>292</sup>

Since the inception of Hezbollah, Iranian forces form the both institutions have been directly involved with Shi'a Lebanese on developing and forming the organization's strategic paramilitary moves and its common Shi'a principles.<sup>293</sup> Hezbollah's leadership was significantly motivated by the successful actions of their fellow Iranians in mobilization forces for constructing Islamic Revolution and were optimistic from "backing and reinforcement" of the newly built Islamic

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<sup>290</sup> Mona Harb and Reinoud Leenders, "Know Thy Enemy: Hizbullah, 'Terrorism' and the Politics of Perception," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2005).

<sup>291</sup> Daniel Byman, "Should Hezbollah Be Next?," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 6 (2003).

<sup>292</sup> Mahmood Monshipouri and Manochehr Dorraj, "Iran's Foreign Policy: A Shifting Strategic Landscape," *Middle East Policy* 20, no. 4 (2013).

<sup>293</sup> Krista E. Wiegand, "Reformation of a Terrorist Group: Hezbollah as a Lebanese Political Party," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 8 (2009).

Republic.<sup>294</sup> The association of Hezbollah with the Islamic Republic of Iran seemed like a regular fit because of their common belief in the “jurisdiction of the jurist-theologian”. The ideology that was Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of Iranian revolution in 1979 constructed on foundations of shared Islamic identities principles and their narrations towards liberation movements and denial of accepting American imperialism and Israeli occupation of some Lebanese and Palestinian areas. As a direct consequent of these common objectives, at the time of Hezbollah’s founding, the “Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran commanded the Iranian Revolutionary Guard to support Lebanon’s resistance against Israel both militarily and financially, establishing a relationship between Iran and Hezbollah” this approach is still continuing.<sup>295</sup>

### **3.3. IRAN AND CONSTRUCTION OF HEZBOLLAH’S SHI’A REVOLUTIONARY IDENTITY**

Following the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the relationship between Shi’a sociopolitical and religious leadership in Iran and Lebanon have enormously intensified on different levels of engagements. As a tangible instrument for constructing, the brotherhood Shi’a identity among Persian Iranians and Arab Lebanese one can refer to the mobilized forces by the post-revolutionary Iranian government -regardless of their political orientations- that was focused on the keen interest of Shi’a leadership in Iran for hosting Shi’a pilgrim of Lebanon from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. In fact, the Iranian clergies have also encouraged Lebanese women –by counting on their influence in shaping narratives about Shi’a identities- to take the pilgrimage to holy cities of the country namely Qom and Mashhad as a channel of communication for propagating Iran’s version of Shi’ism.<sup>296</sup>

Thus, in the 1980s just after the accomplishment of the Islamic Revolution, the quantity of Lebanese pilgrims who were willing to visit religious sites in Iran

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<sup>294</sup> N. Qāsim, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within* (Saqi, 2010).

<sup>295</sup> Wiegand.

<sup>296</sup> Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Imagining Shi’ite Iran: Transnationalism and Religious Authenticity in the Muslim World," *Iranian Studies* 40, no. 1 (2007).

multiplied and reached to a big number. On the other hand because of Saddam Hussein's growing anti-Shi'a political measures in Iraq and restrictions that he imposed on pilgrimage of Shi'as to the holy shrines of Imam Hussein and Imam Ali and in Karbala and Najaf, there was a big shift to the Iranian Shi'a cites in Qom and Mashhad.<sup>297</sup> Mobilizing resources for these activities as an instrument for encouraging Lebanese to visit Iran have been caused a creation of specific images of Iran's role in leadership of Shi'a community in the world which is not sometimes in line with the way that the Iranian government wishes to represent widely itself. In fact, the pilgrims from Lebanon, especially who are coming from the Lebanese Shi'a political parties and movements such as Amal and Hezbollah, or even followers of Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, the distinguished Shi'a religious leader, repeatedly compare Lebanon with Iran and, to some degrees, put the claim of the Iranian government as "the primary guardian of Shi'a Islam" under a big question mark.<sup>298</sup> This is a tangible example of miscalculations of the Iranian state for deepening its political influence over Arab Lebanese with their own narratives and images of Iran, which sometimes are evaluated negatively by Arabs in their religious affairs.

Another instrument in the hand of Iranian state for improving its overseas influence is the hundreds of Shi'a young clerics who are graduating every year from the various religious seminaries and Shi'a religious institutes (Hawzas). In this seminaries local students generally stay in their own original cities, and foreign students by having a mission to mobilize communities are returning to their original homelands with the financial aid of the Iranian state.<sup>299</sup> These young clerics are performing many tasks such as running religious schools, teaching Shi'a sociopolitical ideologies, doing missionary works and giving religious sermons at mosques or in other Shi'a religious centers across the world.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid

<sup>298</sup> Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Imagining Shi'ite Iran: Transnationalism and Religious Authenticity in the Muslim World," *Iranian Studies* 40, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>299</sup> Khalid Sindawi, "Hawza Instruction and Its Role in Shaping Modern Shi'ite Identity: The Hawzas of Al-Najaf and Qumm as a Case Study," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 6 (2007).

<sup>300</sup> <http://www.attajdid.ma/old/archives/2001/138/Hiwarat.html>.

Nevertheless in reality, according to some official narratives by the current religious ruling elite and the Iranian government, the post-revolutionary relationship between Iranian Shi'as and their Lebanese brothers and sisters are not just a simple continuation of what was exist in prerevolutionary eras of Iran.<sup>301</sup> Scholars including Houchang Chehabi reviews this narrative by the Iranian officials on Iranian-Lebanese Shi'a ties in their arguments and analysis of the post-revolutionary links of these two transnational Shi'a dialogues to frame the required base for constructing the Hezbollah's identity and mobilize its forces as frontiers in proxy war with the Israel as the most important ally of the United States in the Middle East.<sup>302</sup>

In a nutshell, those who are in charge of leading the Islamic Republic's government namely the Iranian religious elite involve in framing a discourse that promotes religious authenticity regularly are justifying their claim to be the key leader of the Shi'a communities in Lebanon. They constantly try to present Islamic Republic as the main Shi'a center of tradition and knowledge though huge investments in religious schools, seminaries and so called Shi'a shrines in Qom and Mashhad.<sup>303</sup> In an absolute nationalist and selective narration of the past, they try to underscore that "Iranian scholars have contributed immensely to Islamic civilization and that Persian is a language of Islam and the Shi'a Revolution of 1979".<sup>304</sup> They always try to underscore that "members of this Iranian religious elite present the Iranian Revolution as the successful Shi'a Revolution deserving respect and emulation, which has succeeded in producing the most pious Shi'a Muslims".<sup>305</sup> In conclusion, the Iranian religious elite both in theoretical and practical terms construct their image of "the most authentic and legitimate Shi'a deserving emulation" to advance their political agenda's specially in Lebanon to create a leverage point to safeguard their ruling in Iran

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<sup>301</sup> Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Postrevolutionary Iran and Shi'i Lebanon: Contested Histories of Shi'i Transnationalism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>302</sup> Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Postrevolutionary Iran and Shi'i Lebanon: Contested Histories of Shi'i Transnationalism."; Imad Mansour, "Iran and Instability in the Middle East: How Preferences Influence the Regional Order," *International Journal* 63, no. 4 (2008).

<sup>303</sup> Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Imagining Shi'ite Iran: Transnationalism and Religious Authenticity in the Muslim World."

<sup>304</sup> Eric Inafuku, "How Does the 1979 Iranian Revolution Affect Current Iranian Fundamentalism and International Politics?," *Journal of Applied Security Research* 5, no. 3 (2010).

<sup>305</sup> Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Imagining Shi'ite Iran: Transnationalism and Religious Authenticity in the Muslim World."

beside inspiring other Shi'a throughout the world. They usually employ instrumentalism by using their Marja'iyya networks additional to public events and publications in target societies through the cultural centers of the Islamic Republic, to propagate these leadership claims.<sup>306</sup>

### **3.4. CHANGES IN FOREIGN POLICY DIRECTION OF IRAN IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

Iranian foreign policy through the last four decades has always characterized with aggressiveness stands against the West. In recent years, Iran's behaviors in confronting US policies in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan have caused great concern for politicians in Washington and capitals of European nations as well as Iran's Arab neighbors in the Persian Gulf region. The greatest concern has been focused on Iran's nuclear program and its capabilities in missile industry, which is widely believed by Israel and Saudi Arabia as an instrument for destabilizing regional security.

In fact, deep penetration of Iranian IRGC in Iraq though mobilization of Shi'a forces also have produced growing anxiety, not merely for the United States of America and Britain, who constantly blame Iranian supported groups in attacks against their armed forces, but also for Saudi Arabia and other nearby Arab countries, who are threatened by Shi'a power and broader sectarian violence in the region specially within the borders of Syria, Iraq and Yemen.<sup>307</sup> All together with Iran's long-lasting backing for Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas and other radical Palestinian groups, these engagements have led many to consider that Iran is looking for "regional hegemony" in the Middle East.<sup>308</sup>

At the domestic level, the picture of Iranian political structure which had direct impact on foreign policy of the country is almost more complicated than the simple dichotomy between "reformists" and "conservatives" fraction. In reality,

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Mark Gasiorowski, "The New Aggressiveness in Iran's Foreign Policy," *Middle East Policy* 14, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

each one of these categories incorporates with a wide range of political groupings and orientations, each one has its own world-view and ideology on foreign policy.<sup>309</sup> In the beginning, the reformists who are known with the leadership of former president Mohammad Khatami embrace a wide spectrum of the religious reformists to “pragmatic technocrats” and politically active students. The conservatives on the other hand label themselves who are involve mostly in diverse factions such as hardliner and conservative clergies, moderate merchants (bazaaris), much of head of clerical establishments in Qom and Mashhad, and more extreme hard-liners such as former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who advocate brutal actions and violence to calm the political oppositions. In order to understand these difficulties even deeper, it should be noted that the two dimensions of the Iranian political system are not completely constant when we argue the Iranian foreign policy structure, especially on the challenge of the diplomatic relations with the United States or involvement of their country in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. In development of Foreign policies frameworks “elements in both camps take different positions on whether rapprochement is appropriate and on what conditions should be placed on a dialogue with the West ”.<sup>310</sup>

During the mid-1990s, the reformation political camp within the Islamic Republic received popular support by influential thinkers and elite who constantly try to sustain control over the elected bodies of government. This was marked by success of Mohammed Khatami in the presidency election of 1997, the dominance reformists at the of local city councils in 1999 and the Parliament (Majlis) election in 2000 and the most importantly the reelection president Khatami in 2001. However, the conservative camp maintained its wide control over the non-elected establishments such as “the Council of Guardians, Council of Experts, Expediency Council” and some additional governmental bodies including the Ministry of Intelligence, additional to having strong support of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who disputably succeeded Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the leader of 1979 revolution, at the end of 1980s.

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<sup>309</sup> Puneet Talwar, "Iran in the Balance," *Foreign Affairs* 80, no. 4 (2001).

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.



Following these developments, the conservatives mobilized all their resources through populist strategies succeeded to gain the control of the local city councils in 2003 and the Majlis in 2004, and most importantly concluding their efforts in 2005 presidency election with the dominance of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who verified devotion to the “original revolutionary dogma” more than any candidate with the competitions for presidency within the Islamic Republic. Consequently, “the policy of dialogue between civilizations, promoted by Khatami, was replaced by an eventual clash of civilizations”; the progression of reformism and building dialogue gave way to rise of conservatism, and the policy of aggression towards Western civilizations both at regional and international levels and paved the way for growing tension between Iran and the global community.<sup>311</sup> As a result of all these developments within the framework of Iran's envelopments in the civil wars and political tensions of Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and even within the Palestinian Authority, combined with a determination to follow its disputed nuclear program, and the President Ahmadinejad's incendiary statements on denying Holocaust have led Iran to a very complicated and durable conflict both its immediate Arab neighbors and countries such as the US and UK far from its home.<sup>312</sup>

### **3.4.1. Political Reformation in Iran and its Impacts on Hezbollah's Revolutionary Identity**

By the beginning of 1990s, some political thinkers were declaring that history of misunderstandings and continues conflicts to reach last peace in politics was essentially close to end. They argued that as result of this development in the mind of political leaders the fight for establishing democratic values even in most conservative societies had simply been won in many parts of the world including the Middle East and North Africa. Eventhose nations that had not

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<sup>311</sup> David Menashri, "Iran's Regional Policy: Between Radicalism and Pragmatism," *Journal of International Affairs* 60, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

touch this sooner or later would catch up the democratic changes in their countries.<sup>313</sup>

In the same period, in 1997 the reformation movement in Iran emerged from its intellectual growth through the popular election of one its devotees, Muhammad Khatami, took the role of presidency. The primary electoral accomplishment was also repeated, as the reformers took the majority in parliament and the municipal councils in 2000 through a landslide victory and regained the presidency a year later. Despite its diverse and wide nature of elements, the reform alliance stood behind Khatami's political strategy that was "proceeding cautiously and avoiding significant clashes with the conservatives".<sup>314</sup> The president and his supporters expected that through adhering to legislation, enlargement of critical media, and re-establishment of the rule of law, they could eventually reform the most important pillars of the Islamic Republic including negative attitudes towards the West. Iran portrayed a threshold of a changes and new direction, as the "theocracy's own institutions were to be used for its liberalization".<sup>315</sup> In fact, with successful election of President Khatami political analyzers who are focused on the Iranian political system both at internal and external argued that a balanced liberalization process of Iran's political structure was in his agenda. According to them the Iranian Islamic revolution, had finally got its significant phase, by taking a step towards the threshold of democratization.<sup>316</sup>

It is worthy to note that there were a number of supports within the reformation who had some backgrounds as "third-worldist leftist extremists". The political fraction that lost its pragmatism after the collapse of the Eastern Block in 1992 but actively joined political forces of President Khatami to materialize and label themselves as "reformers" in 1997.<sup>317</sup> In practice, Khatami was at greatest and at the same time an obscure cleric with different world-view. He was in charge

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<sup>313</sup> John Markoff, "Democracy's Past Transformations, Present Challenges, and Future Prospects," *International Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 2 (2013).

<sup>314</sup> Ray Takeyh, "Iran at a Crossroads," *Middle East Journal* 57, no. 1 (2003).

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Mehran Kamrava and Houchang Hassan-Yari, "Suspended Equilibrium in Iran's Political System," *The Muslim World* 94, no. 4 (2004).

<sup>317</sup> Manochehr Dorraj, review of *Eternal Iran: Continuity and Chaos*, Patrick Clawson, Michael Rubin, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38, no. 4 (2006).

of culture ministry, and the former director of the National Library of Iran. Khatami did not diligently connect himself to the ruling and powerful clerics who helped him to win the presidential campaigns. To enhance its popularity for the presidency, he traveled the entire country along with his election advisers by a bus. In fact, in 1997 election the ruling elite was completely surprised, more than 29 million people participated in the election (compared with 16 million voters in four years earlier), 20 million of the participants gave their vote favorably for Khatami.<sup>318</sup> There was a great hope for change in many parts of country especially among youth and women.

Broadly speaking, on the Iranian political case, the power structure of the Islamic Republic has actually “institutionalized a regular process of interaction with society”. This process is authentically followed by an inadequate arrangement of the electoral politics to demonstrate that it has a republican orientation in politics.<sup>319</sup> In fact, presidential and parliamentary elections are decorating essential elements of power in the hand of the Supreme Leader within the political landscape of the country. In this structure for being recognized as a qualified candidate for elections, there is need for official approval of the Guardian Council, which its members are nominated by the Supreme Leader of the country. This approval mechanism for candidates has been always in the hand of conservative players. Following the successful parliamentary elections in 2000 and re-election of the President Khatami in 2001 it was revealed that the conservatives practically became “either unable or unwilling to stop the electoral momentum of the reformists”.<sup>320</sup> Nevertheless, most critical controllers of power in Iran— including especially the judiciary the Leadership— remain exclusively in the hand of revolutionary forces. The result of this process was the balanced development of an “institutional suspended equilibrium and, more importantly, near-complete policy paralysis”.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Fariborz Mokhtari, "Mahmud Ahamadinejad's Presidency: What Does Iran Really Want?," *American Foreign Policy Interests* 28, no. 5 (2006).

<sup>319</sup> Mehran Kamrava and Houchang Hassan-Yari, "Suspended Equilibrium in Iran's Political System," *The Muslim World* 94, no. 4 (2004).

<sup>320</sup> Mehran Kamrava, "Iranian National-Security Debates: Factionalism and Lost Opportunities," *Middle East Policy* 14, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>321</sup> Kamrava and Hassan-Yari.

During most of the time in two terms in taking office by President Khatami, reformists through their openness for dialogue with civilizations and active foreign policy with Europeans gained stronger public recognition that followed with the eagerness of the urban middle classes in big cities of the country, particularly in Tehran. But in practical terms to get the desirable level of diplomatic engagements with the West “what they lacked, however, was meaningful political power and the institutional resources necessary to push their agendas through and to translate them into official state foreign policy”.<sup>322</sup> Despite all these developments and difficulties, the interest of the reformist political elite in Iran had some influence on political dialogues with transnational groups who were receiving direct financial and logistical support from the Islamic Republic including Hezbollah.

According to the Western thinkers, Iran is recognized as one of the most important supporters of aggressive non-state actors within the region. The Islamic Republic of Iran is constantly supporting violent and armed organizations to gain proxy power in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Yemen. Indeed, this picture of Iran as cultivator of “mini-Hezbollahs” underscores the alarmist role of Iran in escalation of proxy wars in the Middle East by acting as a catastrophic regional power.<sup>323</sup>

On analytical point of view, following this position of Iran there had been a suitability for arguing the effect of state- of non-state actors in a broad analytical terms. These analyses are shedding light on the Iranian constant support in different political seasons for Hezbollah in its post revolution history. The process had been practically valuable to policymakers and scholars.<sup>324</sup> Therefore, there is a possibility of relationship between changes in political orientations within the Iranian political games and their impacts on transnational proxy groups such as Hezbollah.

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<sup>322</sup> Mehran Kamrava, "Iranian National-Security Debates: Factionalism and Lost Opportunities," *Middle East Policy* 14, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>323</sup> Marc R. DeVore and Armin B. Stähli, "Explaining Hezbollah's Effectiveness: Internal and External Determinants of the Rise of Violent Non-State Actors," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27, no. 2 (2015).

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

In parallel with to the mentioned developments on advances of reformists in domestic political games of Iran, the political rhetoric of Hezbollah had also experienced major modifications from “militancy to dialogue and democracy” throughout the critical period of the 1990s.<sup>325</sup> During this important course the organization progressively outlined its armed resistance against Israeli forces and their occupations carrying the flag of the “Lebanese Resistance”. In fact, Hezbollah’s widespread popularity and electoral success in Lebanon stands as a substantial challenge to the impression on its support for Islamic fundamentalist doctrines which stems especially different forms of societal marginalization and hatred instead of dialogue and mutual understating between political factions. In the mentioned period Hezbollah leadership devoted itself to support of the desectarianization (advocating for putting an end on the confessional system) of Lebanese politics further exhibits its desire to shift its identity to a more like factional politics, although, the Shi’a population with minimum access to power and influence during their difficult history would significantly benefit from such an action and plan. By the end of the 1990s exactly with the President Khatami’s era in Iran, the organization’s struggles hand born democratic fruit within the Lebanese public opinion: Hezbollah’s resistance efforts gained nationwide appreciation, its political positions were respected and taken seriously, and it ended the general public’s misperception of it as fanatical. Harik contends that Hezbollah’s increasingly engagement within Lebanon’s civil war and social societies has been a deliberate attempt by the organization’s elite to inoculate it from American assertions of being a terrorist organization.<sup>326</sup>

Most of the notorious terrorist organizations in the world exhibit a clear political capacity within themselves. In another words while simultaneously they carry out terrorist attacks they try to portrait themselves as an extremely successful political party.<sup>327</sup> Despite the fact that relationship between groups with political agenda and acts of terrorism is blurred, armed groups such as Hezbollah and

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<sup>325</sup> Bryan R. Early, ““Larger Than a Party, yet Smaller Than a State”: Locating Hezbollah’s Place within Lebanon’s State and Society,” *World Affairs* 168, no. 3 (2006).

<sup>326</sup> Early.

<sup>327</sup> Lindsay L Heger, “Votes and Violence:Pursuing Terrorism While Navigating Politics,” *Journal of Peace Research* 52, no. 1 (2015).

Hamas are appear in public opinion of Arab nations through gaming significant support despite the condemnation of international community on their attacks against US and Israeli targets in the region.<sup>328</sup>

In an article entitled “Votes and violence: Pursuing terrorism while navigating politics”, Lindsay L Heger examine extensively the relationship between violence and political participation. She argues that “rebel groups are less likely to attack civilians when they simultaneously participate in democratic elections”.<sup>329</sup> She demonstrates that attack to civilian targets and increasing the number of casualties are not good elements for securing popularity for political gains. She underscores that “Not only can it distinguish the group as a terrorist organization and alienate supporters as a result, but attacking civilians also imposes high costs on the group’s own civilian support base. For these reasons, civilians frequently withdraw political support for rebel groups after they target civilians” she argues.<sup>330</sup>

In analyzing the democratization process of Hezbollah in parallel with reformation process of the Islamic Republic during President Khatami era, the organization tried to demonstrate a popular and effective picture of its resistance against the Israeli forces with the southern borders of Lebanon. The Hezbollah’s leadership to establish a neutral platform for a better engagement with the Lebanese parliament considerably avoided any kind of instructions to the military wing that may cause harm to civilians in order in order to strengthen its political legitimacy.<sup>331</sup> The transformation process of Hezbollah’s political identity allowed its leaders to play an important role in shaping arrangements within the Lebanese government’s structures and policies. Even as it competes with the state for power, Hezbollah has become a constituent of it with the hope of influencing its policies. Within the analytical work of Amal Saad-Ghorayeb entitled “Hizbu’llah: Politics and Religion”<sup>332</sup> she argues that Hezbollah’s

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<sup>328</sup> Lindsay L Heger, "Votes and Violence:Pursuing Terrorism While Navigating Politics," *Journal of Peace Research* 52, no. 1 (2015).

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> Early.

<sup>332</sup> Beverley Milton-Edwards, review of Hizbu’llah: Politics and Religion, Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, *Journal of Islamic Studies* 15, no. 1 (2004).

pragmatically identity shift within the country's political circle grew out of a strong desire to build dialogue between constituencies who had been influenced and even governed by Hezbollah's political leaders to possess a recognized political organization continuing to effectively represent them; this presented a conclusion that says "metamorphosis ..... form narrow resistance into broad social movement necessitated that it plays the role of "the party of general political and social resurrection as well as the party of resistance".<sup>333</sup>

### 3.4.2. Iranian Conservatives and Escalation of Tension with Israel

The surprising victory of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at the Iranian presidency election of June 2005 brought many radical changes within the political system of Iran, including its foreign policy. His striking success shocked the world in many aspects similar to the former president Mohammed Khatami's unforeseen accomplishment in 1997 election.<sup>334</sup> On the contrary, while President Khatami principally overwhelmed an disliked rival in the election who was presenting himself (Nategh Noori) as a political hardliner and religious fundamentalist carrying socially conservative identity, Ahmadinejad's accomplishment primarily involved defeating more experienced, more attractive and more qualified rivals from the reformist side. In 2005 election Ahmadinejad out of eight presidential candidates who received approval and clearance by the Council of Guardians, was the most unpopular in compare with the other candidates. Based on an opinion poll taken almost four weeks before the presidential elections, "less than 5 percent of likely voters favored him compared to 36 percent for ex-president Hashemi Rafsanjani—the defeated challenger in the run-off elections".<sup>335</sup> Despite all these facts against him, he received a strong support from the Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the Islamic Revolution Guardian Corps (IRGC) who are the main player in relation with Hezbollah as well.

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<sup>333</sup> Early.

<sup>334</sup> Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, "Manufacturing War: Iran in the Neo-Conservative Imagination," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (2007).

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

Ahmadinejad's primary objectives as the president were mainly focused on to promoting Shi'a Messianism (worshiping the reappearance of Imam Mahdi as 12th Shi'as Imam the savior of the world). His administration worked hard reintroducing a "competent Islamic government", through establishing Islamic rules and regulations as the only feasible instrument to address global concerns of Muslims and Non-Muslims, in addition to carrying populist rhetoric on economic equality for all and building social freedom.<sup>336</sup> When he took the office, Ahmadinejad launched a new approach to initiate dramatic international political changes. However, Ahmadinejad had to face many arguments both at national and global levels when he tried to brought many changes in foreign policy issues that was based on mutual understanding and dialogues during President Khatami era.

His theological understating of foreign policy was constructed on the notion of the arrival of the 12th Imam whose reappearance might be accelerated by generating turmoil. Therefore, they tried to convince the Imam for "intervention on behalf of the Shi'a faithful and against the infidels" by creating serious confrontations.<sup>337</sup> In fact, Ahmadinejad during his presidency intensively brought this marginal standpoint to an almost noticeable place in the Iranian political structure. After occupying the president chair, the political concern of Iran was mainly focused on imminent return of the 12th Imam which took the highest extraordinary attention in recent history.<sup>338</sup> Many of his close supporters and associates strongly believed that there was a heavenly decision to bring Ahmadinejad to power. He himself stated to believe that he has chosen to by God to conduct a divine mission. He in a meeting with one of the religious Ulama in Qom said that he felt a "halo surround his head"<sup>339</sup> when he was addressing head of states in a speech at the UN General Assembly in 2005.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Alireza N. Haghighi and Victoria Tahmasebi, "The "Velvet Revolution" of Iranian Puritan Hardliners: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Rise to Power," *International Journal* 61, no. 4 (2006).

<sup>337</sup> Masoud Kazemzadeh, "Ahmadinejad: The Secret History of Iran's Radical Leader," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 6 (2010).

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> <https://www.rferl.org/a/1063353.html>

<sup>340</sup> Kazemzadeh.



### 3.4.3. Ahmadinejad's Approach in Antisemitism

Iran during Ahmadinejad era was not a suitable platform for the manifestation a solid political agenda thus the international dimension of his rhetoric was mainly served the needs of the deepening domestic problems. Indeed, the continuity in creation of international crisis was central to his agenda.<sup>341</sup> This is particularly given to note the specific nature of the charismatic authority of the Shi'a Islam in constructing political identity of Hezbollah and its growing reliance on symbolism and national ideas for which the mainstream leadership of the Islamic Republic is willing to demonstrating in its foreign policy.<sup>342</sup> What predominantly confounds this analytical challenge to comprehend is that, for all their considerations against the possible appearance of a "rival charismatic source of authority", these leaders have nevertheless shaped the social anticipation that redemption of Shi'a ideology stands, and "that it will come from 'beyond' the system". In fact this is a paradox in which the orthodox clergy system of Iran is acutely aware, that is why the Shi'i Ulema have energetically participate at dissemination of end of the world ideas and beliefs.<sup>343</sup> As a tangible example of this process, one can refer to President Ahmadinejad's arguments on the Holocaust as one of the prominent topic in catching world's attention.

In December 2006, the historical issues of the Holocaust became the subject of a conference that was organized in Tehran by the support of Ahmadinejad's administration, in which 67 contributors participated from more than 30 countries. The conference that was officially organized by the foreign ministry of Iran carrying the title of "Review of the Holocaust: Global Vision"<sup>344</sup>. It brought many of the high-ranking officials of the government in Iran, including President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and his Foreign Minister Manuchehr Motaki to the

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<sup>341</sup> Ali Ansari, "Iran under Ahmadinejad: Populism and Its Malcontents," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 84, no. 4 (2008).

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/11/world/middleeast/11cnd-iran.html>

event.<sup>345</sup> According to the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the main objective of the conference was to generate an opportunity “for suitable scientific research so that the hidden and unhidden angles of this most important political issue of the 20th century becomes more transparent”. The conference totally was organized in seven different sessions which brought 67 papers to present. Almost half of the articles were from Iranian participants.<sup>346</sup> In continuation of his controversial argument, in his opening remarks Ahmadinejad anticipated that “the government in Israel would one day be ‘wiped out’, not unlike the regime of the erstwhile Soviet Union”.<sup>347</sup>

In fact, Ahmadinejad’s insist on wiping the Israel from the map was continuing in many occasions especially in June 2007. He said: “God willing, in the near future, we will witness the destruction of the corrupt occupier regime,” while admiring Hezbollah’s accomplishments in 2006 and its constant fight against Israeli forces in Lebanon.<sup>348</sup> His statement was later strongly destined by the U.N. Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon<sup>349</sup>. Such flaming rhetoric of Ahmadinejad, combined with the capricious quarrel between Iran and the international community over the disputed nuclear program of the county which brought many concerns throughout the world.<sup>350</sup>

It should be noted that in August 2006, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad attended a meeting at the Islamic Conference in Malaysia and once again he referred to the outbreak of 33-day war between Israel and Hezbollah in July of the same year. He restated his belief that “the Arab–Israeli conflict could only be solved by the complete “elimination of the Zionist regime”.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> George Michael, "Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Sponsorship of Holocaust Denial," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no. 3-4 (2007).

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

<sup>348</sup> John A. Tures, "Rattling the Hesam: International Distractions from Internal Problems in Iran," *Asian Politics & Policy* 1, no. 1 (2009).

<sup>349</sup>

[https://www.thestar.com/news/2007/06/07/un\\_chief\\_shocked\\_by\\_iran\\_leader39s\\_call\\_for\\_israel39s\\_destruction.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/2007/06/07/un_chief_shocked_by_iran_leader39s_call_for_israel39s_destruction.html)

<sup>350</sup> John A. Tures, "Rattling the Hesam: International Distractions from Internal Problems in Iran," *Asian Politics & Policy* 1, no. 1 (2009).

<sup>351</sup> Nevine Mossaad, "The Israeli War on Lebanon: The Iranian Connection," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 1, no. 2 (2008).

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's rhetoric against Israel unconsciously serves interests of the neoconservative across the world. In fact, he has portrayed Iran as an irrational or even fascist state which was somehow similar to the way that was represented by the United States before invasion of Iraq, labeling Iran as "axis of evil"<sup>352</sup> by President Gorge Bush in his 2002 State of the Union address, —in contemporary world politics which had become a critical instrument in the campaign of American neo-conservatives to discredit Iran's foreign policy.<sup>353</sup>

In sum, anti-Zionism within the framework of anti-Semitism constitute the significant ideological pillars of the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy within the Ahmadinejad's administration which had critical "real-world consequences for its citizens and the broader Middle East region" specially on aggressive dimension of Hezbollah's revolutionary identity.<sup>354</sup> Though conceptually arguing, there is an evidence to recommend that these conceptions are indistinguishably knotted in social representations exhilarated and distributed by the Islamist regime in Iran, indicating that "anti-Semitism is progressively demonstrated through the more 'socially acceptable' anti-Zionist route".<sup>355</sup>

In analyzing the impact of Ahmadinejad's foreign policy on Hezbollah's revolutionary identity it should be noted that his strategy on denying Holocaust was playing a critical role in understating of change in Iran's expectation of Hezbollah's identity. In contrary with President Khatami's period, Hezbollah had become more aggressive in Ahmadinejad era. In fact, Holocaust and its victimization process have been always an instrument in the hand of Israelis state. The method of selective assumption of using the Holocaust by supporters of the Zionist movement goes back to the early pre-state period.<sup>356</sup> Ahmadinejad by knowing the importance of the Holocaust for Jewish population as the victim of a hostile world, tried to undermine Jewish–Israeli ethos and identity to highlight Hezbollah's revolutionary identity.

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<sup>352</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/axis-of-evil>

<sup>353</sup> Adib-Moghaddam.

<sup>354</sup> Rusi Jaspal, "Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism in Iran," *Israel Affairs* 19, no. 2 (2013).

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>356</sup> Maya Hadar, "Renegotiating Israeli Identities, Collective Victimhood and Social Exclusion of Arab Israelis in a Changing Social Reality," *Psychology and Developing Societies* 31, no. 1 (2019).

### 3.4.4. A Proxy War in 2006 Between Tehran and Tel Aviv

In the early morning of 12<sup>th</sup> July 2006, entrance an Israeli border patrol into the Lebanese borders motivated Hezbollah to act in trapping and attacking, killing three soldiers of Israeli Defense Force (IDF) besides arresting two more. Soon after the report of the kidnapping to Tel Aviv, an Israeli tank deployed in search for the reported missing soldiers, unfortunately by a bad luck the tank hit a land mine and the incident caused immediate killing of crew of four.<sup>357</sup> Another soldier who desperately tried to bring the dead bodies from the tank also was killed in a direct shooting by an Hezbollah's sniper.<sup>358</sup> At that horrible night for Israel, after having a long meeting, the Israeli military commanders convinced the government to release the permission for an air strike as a massive retaliation against Hezbollah's forces and facilities on the ground.<sup>359</sup> According to some Israeli narratives even after 2006 war which was later labeled as 33-day war, Hezbollah forces continued attacking Israeli military targets and even sometimes within civilian areas. The Hezbollah leadership justified these actions as "detering mechanisms to confront Israeli attacks on Lebanon, by employing force on Israel to release Lebanese" or in another words, it was trying to gain the arrested guerilla forces back in addition to pushing an agenda towards "determination to 'liberate' the disputed lands specially Shebaa Farms which are located in Lebanese-Syrian border and also the Israeli-occupied Golan.<sup>360</sup> In general, Hezbollah's tactics mainly involved strong endeavors to "capture IDF soldiers, firing mortar shells and anti-tank missiles, and laying roadside bombs".<sup>361</sup>

Almost immediately after Hezbollah's attack, Ehud Olmert, the late Israeli prime minister admitted that the ambush was "the action of a sovereign state" and cautioned that "Lebanon is responsible and Lebanon will bear the

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<sup>357</sup> Asaf Siniver and Jeffrey Collins, "Airpower and Quagmire: Historical Analogies and the Second Lebanon War," *Foreign Policy Analysis* (2013).

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> Iver Gabrielsen, "The Evolution of Hezbollah's Strategy and Military Performance, 1982–2006," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 2 (2014).

<sup>361</sup> Siniver and Collins.

consequences of its actions.”<sup>362</sup> This response seemingly formed Israel’s military reaction; in addition to aiming Hezbollah’s armed forces, Israel similarly wanted to impose pervasive harm on civilian areas and their critical infrastructures in order to inspire the arrogances and actions against the Lebanese nation as a whole.<sup>363</sup> At the beginning of the conflict, the then IDF’s chief-of-staff, Lieutenant-General Dan Halutz, “threatened that Israel would “turn Lebanon’s clock back 20 years” if the kidnapped soldiers were not returned”.<sup>364</sup>

During the catastrophic July 2006 war in Lebanese land, many housing and building complexes in the southern part of Lebanon were fully or partially destroyed through various attack by the Israeli forces who constantly bombed these areas as part of attacks on Al-Dahiya lands as Hezbollah’s larger stronghold.<sup>365</sup> It should be noted that the side effect of the war was also continued until May 9th, 2008, when following the instruction of the Hezbollah’s Secretary General, Sayyad Hassan Nasrallah, Lebanese Shi’a armed men started a chain of brutal attacks in Beirut and consequently brought other lands of the country into a chain of serious conflicts which in some aspects was similar to the 1975-90 Lebanese civil war.<sup>366</sup>

The war between Israel and Hezbollah which almost took one month was shattering for the inhabitants of the south of Lebanon because Israel's "disproportionate use of force" demolished their municipal infrastructures specially hospitals, schools and homes.<sup>367</sup> The 2006 war was resulted in more than “1,000 casualties, around one million dislocations, and suffered economic losses estimated at \$1.5 billion”.<sup>368</sup> It should be note also the damage to Israeli facilities that was mainly occurred in the military sites had also some severe aspects, in political calculations it cost the Israeli government “loss of a deterrence strategy as well as political unity”. In fact, Israel experienced of

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<sup>362</sup> Evan Braden Montgomery and Stacie L. Pettyjohn, "Democratization, Instability, and War: Israel's 2006 Conflicts with Hamas and Hezbollah," *Security Studies* 19, no. 3 (2010).

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> Hiba Bou Akar, "Contesting Beirut's Frontiers," *City & Society* 24, no. 2 (2012).

<sup>366</sup> Bilal Y. Saab, "Rethinking Hezbollah's Disarmament," *Middle East Policy* 15, no. 3 (2008).

<sup>367</sup> Nazir Hussain, "The Israel-Lebanon War and Its Implications for Regional Security," *Policy Perspectives* 4, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

having almost more than 160 casualties which considered a huge number in Israeli military calculations, challenged its control and command, and it also triggered serious questions which were directly pointed a blaming finger to the political leadership of the country. .... "It was required to initiate an investigation into the war failures in Lebanon".<sup>369</sup> At international level Israel also faced strong criticism by the international community over "the use of inappropriate military tactics", particularly on the "use of cluster bombs against the civilian and infrastructure target"; some of them by even raised concern over Israeli massacres as "war crimes".<sup>370</sup> This short but devastating war demonstrated the fact that despite all military advances Israel cannot practically afford to fight guerilla forces on the ground and tolerate its political consequences in the future. It is not simply that the IDF, despite holding some of the best counter-insurgency strategic mechanisms and equipment in the world, is not necessarily designed to fight at an asymmetric war with guerilla forces.<sup>371</sup> The 2006 confrontation has also exhibited that the public opinion within Israel has zero tolerance for such military failures. In fact, when the funeral ceremonies as a sad show of politics brought the casualties of the war through broadcasting of it by the local television in Israel following the leakage of the doubts of the cabinet on their achievement in the national and international press, the public opinion of Israel strongly express its disappointment by the war and criticized it many directions.<sup>372</sup> In fact, the Israeli public expect the government to have only a rapid victory only with having a few body bags back home in addition to having a minimum security damages to the country.<sup>373</sup> For the Israel and US , Hezbollah is not more than a terrorist organization, despite its fire on military targets are far more efficiently in compare with Israel, "Hezbollah killed 43 civilians and 121 armed forces; Israel killed 1,190 civilians and 250 militias in the 2006 war".<sup>374</sup> The war that took place in Bint Jbeil,- near the Israeli borders

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Nahum Barnea, "Israel Vs. Hezbollah," *Foreign Policy*, no. 157 (2006).

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> Yassin-Kassab Robin, "Syria's Diversified Options," *Political Insight* 1, no. 2 (2010).

where was marked by Ahmadinejad in his delivered speech there in October 2010 as “the town symbolized Lebanon’s defense”.<sup>375</sup>

As It has been argued by many political thinkers that proxy wars in the Middle East are strengthening the role of non-state actors in the region. In this atmosphere the domestic, regional and global powers such United States and Russia the try to take advantages by creating new political identities in the region for these non-state actors and push them in struggles of major global powers, as well as regional powers such as Israel, Saudi Arabia and Iran, who are challenging each other with cost of other nationalities on battlegrounds beyond their own territories.<sup>376</sup> These non-state local forces gradually become means of confrontations and collaboration, therefore they are becoming progressively significant player in “shaping not only intra- but also inter-state power struggles”.<sup>377</sup>

Following this argument, the military conflict between Hezbollah and Israel in July-August 2006 could be analyzed as a proxy war between Tehran and Tel Aviv through involvement of Hezbollah as a non-state actor that is identity whether as militia group or democratic political party is constantly changing due to up and downs in Iran’s political fluctuations. This incident was the result of at least four interlink developments of Shi’a political identity: the mobilization of the political and socioeconomic resource of the Shi’a community by the Iranian clergies, which in actual terms occurred in the second part of the 20th century through efforts of Imam Musa Sadr; second the Israeli occupation and invasion beginning with the Litani Operation in 1978 which affected some parts of Lebanon and third and the “Operation Peace for Galilee” in 1982 and the forth was enlargement of traditional Iranian bonds with the Lebanese Shi’a community following the 1979 revolution through collaboration with IRGC. As a result of these important phases of the Lebanon’s history an uncertain self-decaled movement of resistance (Hezbollah) of the politically marginalized and

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<sup>375</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-iran/ahmadinejad-near-israel-border-says-zionists-mortal-idUSTRE69D2LW20101014>

<sup>376</sup> Kristina Kausch, "State and Non-State Alliances in the Middle East," *The International Spectator* 52, no. 3 (2017).

<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

economically poor and deprived Lebanese Shi'a through a unified political identity was transformed to become one of the most radical military and political non-state actors in the 1980s, which confronted Israel and the United State as one of the firmest transnational non-state actors in a format of an opponents in the Middle East.

Following the arguments made on the important role that Iran had taken in initiating and mobilizing Hezbollah's revolutionary identity, the withdrawal Israeli and its failure in 2006 war demonstrated as a victory for the Hezbollah's guerrilla forces and receive financial and logistical supports by the Islamic Republic during Ahmadinejad era. As an indicator shortly after the Israeli pullout, Kamal Kharazi, the former Iranian foreign minister, was the first foreign diplomatic figure who paid a visit to Lebanon where he described achievement of Hezbollah as a "victory for all Muslims around the world".<sup>378</sup> Iranian officials from Ahmadinejad's administration constantly highlighted that Israeli withdrawal from South of Lebanon in 2006 certified their long-standing argument that "military resistance and martyrdom, not negotiations, were the only way to liberate Arab and Muslim lands".<sup>379</sup>

### 3.5. CONCLUSION

As it has been discussed throughout this study the sociopolitical identities are generally constructed through a complicated procedure that contains differentiation of classification categorize individuals into a wide range of collection of "identifying categories".<sup>380</sup> These socially constructed identities are developed by implications and associations which contains the subjective approaches of political leaders who constantly work on formulating, manipulating and transforming the constructed identities of individuals. Following the arguments made earlier these leaderships determine a

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<sup>378</sup> Hussein Kalout, "The Struggle for the Islamic Supremacy," *Global Discourse* 7, no. 2-3 (2017).

<sup>379</sup> Kalout.

<sup>380</sup> Mark K. Tomass, "Religious Identity, Informal Institutions, and the Nation-States of the near East," *Journal of Economic Issues* 46, no. 3 (2012).



“comprehensive pattern of action that seemingly captures the behavior of an individual, and then project that pattern onto the individual as a social identity”.<sup>381</sup> Broadly speaking the socially constructed identities only represents a widespread understanding of the sociopolitical roles of individuals is built on value system. This empathetic may effortlessly encounter the real presentations and principles that shapes one’s self-identity. Therefore, social sympathy could not just be analyzed as an inner course of self-reflection certified by normal individuals, but also outer development imposed by a group of elites upon individual members of society to take certain actions.<sup>382</sup>

To be more precise in social constructivism terms, public identity is made of various characteristics that stakeholders consider as essential or fundamental to exclusively describe the unique feature of an organization and that tend to endure its identity within a long period.<sup>383</sup> Therefore, it is very important for an organization to possess a socially accepted public identity which ultimately speaks to its existence and personality to convince the individual members for a better collaborators with the entire system. This process is closely connected to the exterior reputation of a group, which could advocate an image formed through the “use of communication and symbols” including religious ideologies and narratives.<sup>384</sup>

In Hezbollah’s case and its enduring conflicts with Israel, the Iranian clergies have been playing a significant role in developing and transforming its Islamic Shi’a identity within the framework of resistance from the 1980s onwards. When their elites after the 1979 revolution constantly advocate that a Shi’a armed organization that adopted Islamic revolutionary teachings as the crucial answer to all the problems faced by Muslims could be a good option to stand in front of the American hegemony in the Middle East.<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> Tomass.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Jonathan Matusitz, "Brand Management in Terrorism: The Case of Hezbollah," *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* 13, no. 1 (2018).

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

<sup>385</sup> Zafer Kizilkaya, "Identity, War, and Just Cause for War: Hezbollah and Its Use of Force," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (2017).

In this process Iran is constantly focused on financing, training and providing modern weaponries and safe havens to “non-state militant actors” such as Hamas and Hezbollah through the established ideological links with Shi’a paramilitary groups in the region.<sup>386</sup> Although Iran tries to justify its complicated network of supports to such groups within a self-defense doctrine of unified Shi’a Resistance identity in face of Israeli occupation of holy lands, but they have been mostly by the West as terrorist organizations affiliated to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Consequently, Iran the godfather of Shi’a revolutionary identity is labeled as a “state sponsor of terrorism” by the United States leadership.<sup>387</sup>

In fact, Iranian religious leaders have been facilitating Hezbollah to gain a territorial and social foundations in Lebanon’s within Shi’a regions. In practical terms IRGC forces support the struggles of the organization to build and empower its distinct religious and political identity and promote it among its members and Lebanese constituents.<sup>388</sup> These sympathizers of Hezbollah predominantly involve thousands of low or middle-income classes of the Shi’a community in Lebanon, who adhere to Hezbollah’s collective identity and subscribed themselves faithfully to its values, norms and ideology of the organization’s leadership and the role of Iran as well.<sup>389</sup>

On the other hand the invasion of Lebanon by Israel have been always used by Iran’s clerical centers to portray Israel as an ruthlessly destructive and imperialist state.<sup>390</sup>

During revision of different phases of Hezbollah’s contemporary history and its relation with Iran one can argues that there are some indicators to demonstrate a possible relationship between the dominant political structures in Iran and behaviors of Hezbollah’s leadership in determining the transforming their identity form a guerrilla force to a civilized political party.

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<sup>386</sup> Zeynab Malakoutikhah, "Iran: Sponsoring or Combating Terrorism?," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2018).

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Mona Harb and Reinoud Leenders, "Know Thy Enemy: Hizbullah, 'Terrorism' and the Politics of Perception," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2005).

<sup>389</sup> Eric Lob, "Construction Jihad: State-Building and Development in Iran and Lebanon’s Shi’i Territories," *Third World Quarterly* 39, no. 11 (2018).

<sup>390</sup> Thomas Buonomo, "Iran’s Supreme Leader: An Analysis of His Hostility toward the U.S. And Israel," *Middle East Policy* 25, no. 1 (2018).

Despite the fact that traditionally, IRGC has maintained remarkably close relations with the Iranian supreme leader in implementing policies in Lebanon, the Quds Force, as its transnational branch in operations outside of Iran, is still responsible for a military presence in the region and using Hezbollah as a non-state ally within the framework of the Islamic Republic's regional foreign policy. However, the political changes in the governmental structure of Iran could also be a determiner in transformation of Hezbollah's identity.

## CONCLUSION

In the IR discipline identity formation and its construction process includes the locating of self and other actors into political situations which can make their identity available within different discourses. These discourses relate to various social classifications and categorized drawings that shape the foundation of “uniformity and variety and make possible the distinction between self/other, insider/outsider, included/excluded”.<sup>391</sup>

Identities in this definition are thus comprehended as the special effects or consequences of specific positioning acts, implemented within dialogues and cultural conversations. Social Constructivism as an IR theoretical approach, tries to elaborate “identity formation process” and at the same time proposes that we just recognize what we already construct about ourselves, and that has a diversity of human limits to force our constructions of identity.

In fact, social constructivists instead of seeing elements of understanding as revealed or discovered by certain analysis, suggests that we conceive or create knowledge as “interpretations of experience”<sup>392</sup>, and that kind of analytical understanding arises from historical circumstances and has some sort of dependence on human activity. Accordingly, constructivists see knowledge as progressive, revisable and practical rather than as fixed or permanent social phenomena. From its foundation political sociology has focused on the association of political phenomenon with a social structure. In this picture political sociologists in their analytical reviews of social movements, were concentrated on clarifying their directions on how social movements mobilize populations to become an active member of political groups.

In case of the political games in the Middle East, analyzing impacts of Islamic ideology is important to find explanation for many political developments in the region. In this situation the Islamic revolutionary identity that has been socially

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<sup>391</sup> Löwstedt and Räisänen.

<sup>392</sup> "Structure, Reception, and Identity on Arab-Western Dialogism," in *Hybridity*, ed. Marwan M. Kraidy, Or the Cultural Logic of Globalization (Temple University Press, 2005).

constructed throughout the history of the Middle East plays a decisive role in the formation and transformation of the political identity of non-state actors such as Hezbollah.

As it has argued widely in this study the literature on revolutionary movements against domination of influential rulers suggests that the natural format of “the relationship between religion and militancy depends on which aspect is considered and which operationalization is used”<sup>393</sup>. Additional to this narrative, the analysis of political scholars proposes an argument on a meaningful relationship at the group-level (in this study deprived Shi’a people of Lebanon), as critical aspects of understating the relationship between constructing a religious identity and violence. In this regard, a close analyze of existing theories within IR discipline especially social constructivism and its affiliated literature suggests that “while the group-level institutional and communal aspects of religion may be the most important in thinking about its relationship with behaviors such as violence, there is evidence and theoretical reason to question whether this effect always increases support for violence and militancy”<sup>394</sup>.

In fact, to address the first question of this study it has become clear that the base of ideological orientation of Hezbollah has deep roots in the key role of its leadership in the form of Ulama (religious scholars) within the concept of the concept of “Marja’iyya” (leadership in Shi’a community by a qualified clergy) in transnational Shi’a community. The main responsibility of mentioned ideology is to construct the notion that Shi’as must accept instructions by those who are rulings them politically as religious leaders. According to the pillars of this historically constructed identity for Shi’as, there is a well-known “hadith” as a referable saying by Prophet Muhammad that highlights the role of Ulamas who are the heirs of the prophets. The interpretation is widely used by the ideologists and supporters of Hezbollah to manipulate public in justifying the leadership of Ulama which plays a significant role in indoctrination of masses for scarifying their lives in fight against infidels. As a tangible example on the critical role of

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<sup>393</sup> Hoffman and Nugent.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

clergies in leading Hezbollah, one can refer to the uppermost ruling body of the party that is called Majlis ash-Shura (Board of Councils). In this leadership structure there is only one non-clerical individual member. Therefore, it is important to note that Iranian Shi'a leaders through constant emphasis on the roles of the Ulama in society constructed a fundamental feature of the political ideology of Hezbollah as one of the most influential non-state actors in the Middle East.

On the other hand, within the mentioned Shi'a ideological framework, Islamic authoritarianism and anti-imperialism, shapes the cornerstone of Iran's politics, economy and diplomatic moves in the world which to some extent tries to manipulate Shi'a Muslim transnational community on its resistance both at regional and international levels. As it has been found in this study the efforts of Iranian political system to influence the political games of the region is mainly concentrate on two institutions: the military and logistical support of Shi'a communities led by Islamic Revolution Guardian Corps (IRGC) and the complex transnational clergy network of Ulama under the flagship of Marj'ayya. Throughout the historical reviews of Shi'a movements in Lebanon it has become clear that the maintenance or breakdown of the existing political influence of Iran in Lebanon is fundamentally depends on the consistency, weaknesses and strengths of these two important institutions.

As it has been comprehensively discussed thought this study, Hezbollah has successfully transformed itself to an important non-state political player that holds its distinct identity to perform in the Lebanese domestic political games. Some analyzers believe that as soon as this consensus discontinues, the system despite all the costs that posed to its founders stops working and my cause a catastrophic governmental results in managing the country, which could be resolved only through a national dialogue or even an international mediation by the global community. Therefore, it should be noted that despite enjoying a position of strength, Hezbollah has the potential to act in different manner and would not hesitate to create a breakdown in the system as it has been practiced earlier in 2006 war with Israel and its aftermaths.

As it has been argued in this study, Hezbollah as a recognized non-state actor with a revolutionary constructed political identity - through direct influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran -within the political structure of the Middle East has been analyzed by IR thinkers both in negative and positive ways. In fact, in the early 1980s the party gained the attention of the international community, following a number of deadly attacks against American troops, and Israeli military targets in Lebanon in that period. In addition to several disagreements among the IR scholars who are studying Islamic based terrorism, most of them believe that during the 1980s the number of death toll caused by terrorist activities has been an increase as a result of risen volume of terrorist incidents in the world. In a nutshell, throughout the contemporary history of developing revolutionary identity of Hezbollah a growing intention was created within the party to stand against the established social classes in Lebanon that marginalized Shi'as in many aspects within the political structure of Lebanon and not necessary conduct violent actions.

In this picture, Islamic political regime of Iran by taking an active role from its inception as a Shi'a revolutionary movement tried to construct the identity of Hezbollah. Iran has mobilized its multilayered relationship with the Party after the 1979 revolution in search for achieving several strategic goals. In this study following issues have been found. First, Shi'a community of Lebanon could be seen as one of successfully targeted populations which Iranian religious leaders could claim the achievements in exporting their revolutionary agenda against the United States and Israel. Although it could be argued that the complicated geopolitical goals of Iranian regime had a superior significance in the 1980s in compare with their today's agenda. In fact, in reviewing the role of external powers in constructing revolutionary identity of Hezbollah it should not be underestimated the critical role of Iranian hardliners, particularly the Islamic Revolutionary Guardian Corps (IRGC) as one the most important determining factors. Second, Iran's constant support for safeguarding Hezbollah forces on the ground provides an important opportunity for strengthening their political influence within the Lebanese borders close to Israel at the most important ally of the United States in the region. Correspondingly, Iran has been trying to

secure its position within the public opinion of Shi'as by carrying a critical role in supporting Hezbollah as seriously armed anti-Israeli force with missile launching capabilities in the Middle East. Third, Hezbollah has been considered as a security asset and deterrence factor for safeguarding Iran regime by mobilizing local forces in region whenever is needed to pose a serious threat to American military bases in the region.

In conclusion the Shi'a political identity that had been craftily constructed by Iranian religious leaders in exporting their revolutionary ideology against the West in Lebanon are manifested by Hezbollah in the beginning of 1980's and its various intentions for its transformation towards establishing itself as a legitimate political party within the Lebanese political games. The Hezbollah's dominance as a non-state actor that affects the US calculations in the region is intended to continue as long as the Islamic regime of Ayatollahs in Iran as one of the most important external influencers in political structure of Lebanon. Presumably considerable portion of the Shi'a communities in Lebanon are not attracted by the political agenda of the leadership of Amal or Hezbollah, but they have no other choice to take a part in the struggle with Israel. Therefore, the revolutionary political identity that was constructed by Shia traditional leaders could not be easily disappeared, but it is highly unlikely that they would ever recapture their domination that has been practiced in 1980's after many transformation processes.

Today, Hezbollah that carries borderless Shi'a revolutionary identity against Western imperialism led by the United States plays a significant role in the East Mediterranean part of the Middle East to act the most noticeable "proxy force" of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Lebanon. As it has been argued comprehensively in the second chapter, the birth of Hezbollah was resulted in marriage of IRGC and Shi'a militias in southern part of Lebanon. Both strongly obey the Shi'a Islamist ideology advocated by the Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, the mastermind Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979.

In present-time Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic who is proclaimed by the Iranian Mullas as the "Leader of Islamic



(Shi'a) population in the world” and as the Marja (a title presented to the highest religious leadership position within Shia authority) is the Commander-in-chief of all the armed forces of Iran. In addition to this, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei also is considered by Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the Secretary General of Hezbollah as the instructor and leader of the Shia community in Lebanon as well.

Finally, to answer the third question of the study during revision of different phases of Hezbollah's contemporary history and its relation with Iran, one can argue that there are some indicators to demonstrate a possible relationship between the dominant political forces in Iran (both reformists and conservatives) and behaviors of Hezbollah's leadership in determining the transforming their identity from a guerrilla force to a civilized political party or in some cases adhere to violence against Israel as well.

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## APPENDIX 1. ETHICS COMMISSION FORM

 <p><b>HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ</b> <b>SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ</b> <b>TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ETİK KOMİSYON MUAFİYETİ FORMU</b></p>
<p><b>HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ</b> <b>SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ</b> <b>ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Tarih: 16/07/2019</p> <p>Tez Başlığı: 1979 İslam Devrimi Sonrasında Hizbullah'ın Ortadoğu'da Devlet Dışı Bir Aktör Kimliğiyle Yapılanmasında İran'ın Rolü</p> <p>Yukarıda başlığı gösterilen tez çalışmam:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. İnsan ve hayvan üzerinde deney niteliği taşımamaktadır,</li> <li>2. Biyolojik materyal (kan, idrar vb. biyolojik sıvılar ve numuneler) kullanılmasını gerektirmemektedir.</li> <li>3. Beden bütünlüğüne müdahale içermemektedir.</li> <li>4. Gözlemsel ve betimsel araştırma (anket, mülakat, ölçek/skala çalışmaları, dosya taramaları, veri kaynakları taraması, sistem-model geliştirme çalışmaları) niteliğinde değildir.</li> </ol> <p>Hacettepe Üniversitesi Etik Kurulları ve Komisyonlarının Yönergelerini inceledim ve bunlara göre tez çalışmamın yürütülebilmesi için herhangi bir Etik Kurul/Komisyon'dan izin alınmasına gerek olmadığını; aksi durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.</p> <p>Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.</p> <div style="text-align: right;">  Tarih ve İmza         </div> <p><b>Adı Soyadı:</b> Mehdi ANSARI JOVINI</p> <p><b>Öğrenci No:</b> N12123395</p> <p><b>Anabilim Dalı:</b> Uluslararası İlişkiler</p> <p><b>Programı:</b> Uluslararası İlişkiler</p> <p><b>Statüsü:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yüksek Lisans <input type="checkbox"/> Doktora <input type="checkbox"/> Bütünleşik Doktora</p>
<p><b><u>DANIŞMAN GÖRÜŞÜ VE ONAYI</u></b></p> <div style="text-align: center;">  Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Aysel Ayşe Ömür ATMACA         </div> <p><b>Detaylı Bilgi:</b> <a href="http://www.sosyalbilimler.hacettepe.edu.tr">http://www.sosyalbilimler.hacettepe.edu.tr</a></p> <p><b>Telefon:</b> 0-312-2976860 <b>Faks:</b> 0-3122992147 <b>E-posta:</b> <a href="mailto:sosyalbilimler@hacettepe.edu.tr">sosyalbilimler@hacettepe.edu.tr</a></p>



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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
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**HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT**

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Thesis Title: The Role of Iran in Construction of Hezbollah's Identity as a Non-State Actor in the Middle East After the 1979 Islamic Revolution

My thesis work related to the title above:

1. Does not perform experimentation on animals or people.
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I declare, I have carefully read Hacettepe University's Ethics Regulations and the Commission's Guidelines, and in order to proceed with my thesis according to these regulations I do not have to get permission from the Ethics Board/Commission for anything; in any infringement of the regulations I accept all legal responsibility and I declare that all the information I have provided is true.

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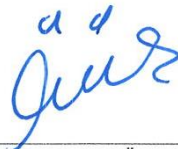
**Student No:** N12123395

**Department:** International Relations

**Program:** International Relations

**Status:**  MA  Ph.D.  Combined MA/ Ph.D.

**ADVISER COMMENTS AND APPROVAL**



Asst. Prof. Dr. Ayşe Ömür ATMACA

## APPENDIX 2. ORIGINALITY REPORT

 <p><b>HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ</b> <b>SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ</b> <b>YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORJİNALLİK RAPORU</b></p>
<p><b>HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ</b> <b>SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ</b> <b>ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Tarih: 16/07/2019</p> <p>Tez Başlığı : 1979 İslam Devrimi Sonrasında Hizbullah'ın Ortadoğu'da Devlet Dışı Bir Aktör Kimliğiyle Yapılanmasında İran'ın Rolü</p> <p>Yukarıda başlığı gösterilen tez çalışmamın a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana bölümler ve d) Sonuç kısımlarından oluşan toplam 129 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 15/07/2019 tarihinde şahsım/tez danışmanım tarafından Turnitin adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda işaretlenmiş filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı % 9 'tür.</p> <p>Uygulanan filtrelemeler:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kabul/Onay ve Bildirim sayfaları hariç</li> <li>2- <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kaynakça hariç</li> <li>3- <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alıntılar hariç</li> <li>4- <input type="checkbox"/> Alıntılar dâhil</li> <li>5- <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5 kelimededen daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç</li> </ol> <p>Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Çalışması Orijinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılması Uygulama Esasları'nı inceledim ve bu Uygulama Esasları'nda belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal içermediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.</p> <p>Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.</p> <div style="text-align: right;">       16.07.2019      Tarih ve İmza   </div> <p><b>Adı Soyadı:</b> Mehdi ANSARI JOVINI</p> <p><b>Öğrenci No:</b> N12123395</p> <p><b>Anabilim Dalı:</b> Uluslararası İlişkiler</p> <p><b>Programı:</b> Uluslararası İlişkiler</p>
<p><b><u>DANIŞMAN ONAYI</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">UYGUNDUR.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">   <hr/>       Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ayşe Ömür ATMACA     </div>





**HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY  
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MASTER'S THESIS ORIGINALITY REPORT**

**HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY  
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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT**

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**Name Surname:** Mehdi ANSARI JOVINI

**Student No:** N12123395

**Department:** International Relations

**Program:** International Relations

**ADVISOR APPROVAL**

APPROVED.



Asst. Prof. Dr. Ayşe Ömür ATMACA

