

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

LEBANESE SECTARIAN IDENTITY AND THE
SAUDI-IRANIAN COLD WAR

by
MATTHEW C. CRONIN

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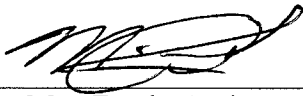
by
MATTHEW C. CRONIN

Approved by:



Dr. Waleed Hazbun, Associate Professor
Political Studies and Public Administration

Advisor



Dr. May Farah, Assistant Professor
Sociology, Anthropology, and Media Studies

Member of Committee



Dr. Roland Riachi, Visiting Assistant Professor
Political Studies and Public Administration

Member of Committee

Date of thesis defense: June 28, 2018

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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The contest between regional powers Saudi Arabia and Iran for greater influence in the Middle East exacerbates structural sectarianism by arraying sect-affiliated entities against one another. This study questions whether this structural sectarianization is matched at the level of identity construction. Its results suggest that the sectarianizing impacts of regional politics are concentrated within politically affiliated subsets of sects, rather than simply pitting sect against sect. This hypothesis is developed through two phases of research. The first is a discourse analysis of how politically affiliated media frame regional and domestic politics. This analysis suggests that explicitly non-sectarian discourses may nonetheless still induce a sectarianizing effect because of consistent biases in “othering.” In the second phase, interviews were conducted with members of the Shi’a and Sunni Lebanese communities to suggest how their identity constructing discourses are impacted by media framings. Politically affiliated Shi’a and Sunni were more likely to display the same bias against their opposite sect as was found in the media framings.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Middle East regional politics since the Arab uprisings of 2011 have been shaped by the continuation of a contest between Saudi Arabia and Iran to carve out influence. This so-called regional “Cold War” has the two Persian Gulf neighbors competing in states engulfed by civil war or intense political strife. The overlapping regional and domestic conflicts are often portrayed in media and scholarly research as sectarian affairs, with good reason. In Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Lebanon, the largest “Sunni” and “Shi’a” regional powers have largely aligned with proxy institutions dominated by their respective sects. These structural conditions are used to conclude that the regional competition between Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shi’a Iran is exacerbating sectarianism at the domestic level.

Saudi Arabia and Iran in this period have worked to influence Lebanon’s sectarian institutions¹ and structures². Largely this has meant supporting institutions, especially political parties, that are linked to communities of these powers’ respective sects. Saudi Arabia acts as patron for Caretaker Prime Minister Sa’ad Hariri’s Future Movement, the most powerful political party amongst Lebanon’s Sunnis. Meanwhile, Iran supports the Shi’a resistance militia and political party Hezbollah with financing, military equipment, and religious and cultural ties.

¹ In the formal, explicit sense: organizations including governments and militaries, rules, and laws. See Craig Parsons, *How to Map Arguments in Political Science* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007), 66–67, <http://lib.myilibrary.com/detail.asp?id=115428>.

² Meaning materiality, often balances of material assets. See Parsons, 49–50.

This political-sectarian bifurcation and all of Lebanon's confessional³ institutions and structures are path dependencies of more than a century's worth of history. Rooted in Ottoman governance and colonial meddling,⁴ Lebanon's sectarianism was embedded in the founding 1943 National Pact and played a substantial role in the country's civil war (1975-1990).⁵ The legal and political development of the country after its civil war locked in the distance (both literal and figurative) between Lebanon's confessional communities.⁶

Within these structures and institutions, the identities of individuals and communities are in flux, subject to continual reproduction and reshaping.⁷ Identities should not be deduced solely from knowledge of the structural and institutional conditions. Sect and sectarianism are matters of identity *as well as* the structure and institutions between which individual identity-holders exist.⁸ Therefore, proving sectarianism to have been exacerbated

³ Meaning all of Lebanon's 18 confessional groups. Sectarianism here refers to the relationship between Sunni and Shi'a.

⁴ Benjamin Thomas White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2011), 21–66.

⁵ Abbas Assi, *Democracy in Lebanon: Political Parties and the Struggle for Power since Syrian Withdrawal*, Library of Modern Middle East Studies 166 (London New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2016), 55–58.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ On the dialectic relationship between social structure and identity and discourse's role in that relationship, see Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge, UK ; Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1992), 65–66.

⁸ Salloukh, et al., concur on this theoretical position, arguing that institutions reproduce "sectarian modes of subjectification." However, their book focuses on institutions. See Bassel F. Salloukh et al., *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2015), 3.

means proving a shift in identity constructs. Sectarian identities are exacerbated when the opposite sect (henceforth referred to as “out-sect” as opposed to the “in-sect”⁹) is placed in the discursive position of the “other.”

This thesis explores how the overlapping domestic and regional politics of the Saudi-Iranian Cold War¹⁰ have impacted the discursive aspect of sectarian identity politics in Lebanon. I will argue that, within Lebanese politics, sect as a religious identity is largely eschewed as a tool for political mobilization in media and discourse. Communal religious identities do not primarily drive the mediated production of political communities or the self-other distinctions that play a role in constituting political communities. Rather, I will hypothesize that external political conflicts and their mediation through politically controlled media are exacerbating sectarian identities only within politically affiliated subsets of sects. In other words, it seems that the “sectarianizing” effects of politics are not creating tensions between sects *per se*, but between political communities.

⁹ Out-sect and in-sect are terms that I will use to refer to the institutionalized sect of Lebanese. In other words, what their identity cards list as their sect. For example, the Sunni in-sect is all individuals who have “Sunni” written on their identity cards, while their out-sect would be all individuals with “Shi’a” listed on their identity cards. This is to avoid confusion when talking about sectarian communities or sectarian individuals, which refers to those whose sect plays an important role in their constructed identity.

¹⁰ By “overlapping domestic and regional politics” I mean the institutions and structures involved in the Saudi-Iranian contestation at both the Lebanese domestic and the regional level, as well as the major events that shift those institutions and structures (and identities, as I will show). The terminology of “overlapping domestic and regional politics” comes from Bassel Salloukh, “Overlapping Contests and Middle East International Relations: The Return of the Weak Arab State” (POMEPS, September 17, 2015).

A. Existing Literature: The need to link structure and identity

Existing explorations of the Saudi-Iranian Cold War's impact on Lebanon's sectarian politics do not sufficiently prove their claims because they focus on the structural and institutional impacts of the conflict. By contrast, my thesis will attempt to move from structural and institutional impacts to the identity constructs of individuals and communities. This step is necessary because sectarianism is ultimately an identity construct held by individuals¹¹ living between those structures and institutions.

F. Gregory Gause III exemplifies how structural explanations alone may be insufficient for understanding the relationship between sectarianism and regional politics. He recognizes that sectarianism plays a role in conflict, but does not offer a clear explanation of how it is impacted by power struggles. Looking at the regional level, Gause argues that Iran and Saudi are driven by political interest rather than sectarian zeal in their quests for regional dominance. Lebanon and other local theaters of this cold war are governed by weak states that are unable to manage conflicts between their various sectarian communities. Exploiting anarchy to overcome their opponents, sectarian actors call upon support from external powers of the same sect.¹² But his recognition that sectarianism is

¹¹ Helle Malmvig has made a similar critique by emphasizing the contingent nature of identity and the role of discourse. See Helle Malmvig, "Coming in from the Cold: How We May Take Sectarian Identity Politics Seriously in the Middle East without Playing to the Tunes of Regional Power Elites" (IR Theory and a New Middle East, The Project on Middle East Political Science, 2015), <https://pomeps.org/2015/08/19/coming-in-from-the-cold-how-we-may-take-sectarian-identity-politics-seriously-in-the-middle-east-without-playing-to-the-tunes-of-regional-power-elites/>.

¹² F. Gregory Gause, "Beyond Sectarianism: The New Middle East Cold War" (Brookings Doha Center, July 2014), 5–11.

contingent on political contestation rather than primordial sectarian identities begs the question of how sect members' identities are impacted by the political contests he explains.

Marie-Joëlle Zahar similarly focuses on structural power shifts and aligns these structural shifts with unproven observations that they coincided with spikes in sectarianism.¹³ Not being her primary focus, Zahar does not provide a causal mechanism for explaining the correlation. She correctly identifies that sectarianism is exacerbated when “perceived feelings of threat and/or political marginalization” are intensified.¹⁴ She does not, however, explore and evidence these “perceived feelings” with appropriate methods, but rather deduces their existence based on logics of structural power balance (e.g., Sunnis are fearful because Shi'a power is rising in the region¹⁵).

Bassel Salloukh, Rabie Barakat, Jinan Al-Habbal, Lara Khattab, and Shoghig Mikaelian go furthest in relating regional political conflict to sectarian identity. They show how Hezbollah, as a political organization concerned with its own perpetuation, responds to regional challenges by creating discursive “others” to be used for political mobilization.¹⁶ However, their exploration of the topic leaves a number of questions open: First, there is a need to expand beyond Hezbollah's actions to understand if its behavior is a unique response to regional changes or generalizable to other political parties in Lebanon. Second,

¹³ She discusses confessionism rather than just Sunni-Shi'a sectarianism.

¹⁴ Marie-Joëlle Zahar, “Foreign Interventions, Power Sharing and the Dynamics of Conflict and Coexistence in Lebanon,” in *Lebanon: After the Cedar Revolution*, ed. Are J. Knudsen and Michael Kerr (London: Hurst, 2012), 78.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁶ Salloukh et al., *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon*.

the authors focus on Hezbollah's behavior as a party, leaving us to assume how its audiences relate to this behavior.

Examining the Saudi-Iranian Cold War after the 2011 Arab uprisings,¹⁷ my thesis addresses these existing limitations with an approach that targets *how* regional politics interact with sectarian identity at both the communal and individual level. Extant literature has sufficiently explained structural conditions and the overlapping domestic and regional events that have impacted these conditions. I will show how politically controlled media link the material events of Saudi-Iranian regional competition and the formation of communal and individual identities through discourse. I will then suggest how Lebanese Shi'a and Sunni individuals are processing these politically motivated communal discourses with interview data exploring the discourses and pre-discursive beliefs of these individuals themselves.

B. Building the thesis' argument: Sectarianism and self-other dichotomies

Discourse analyses of Hezbollah's *al-Manar* TV station and *al-Intiqad* newspaper and the Future Movement's *al-Mustaqbal* newspaper will show how politicized media selectively frame the material events of the regional Saudi-Iranian competition in a manner that creates "others." These "others" give reason for the "self" to exist. I will show that sectarianism as an identity construct relates to overlapping regional and domestic politics through the "membrane" of politicized discourse. In an environment where media outlets

¹⁷ For an exploration of the regional structural context after the Arab uprisings and the permeability that makes it exceptional, see Salloukh, "Overlapping Contests and Middle East International Relations: The Return of the Weak Arab State."

are bound to political parties,¹⁸ the information about the Saudi-Iranian competition flowing to consumers is framed in a manner that will give each party a *raison d'être* around which to mobilize support and perpetuate its existence.

This process of creating a politically exploitable communal “self” acts analogously to what David Campbell argued of the state (and Stuart Hall explained of identity in general¹⁹) and its continual need to reproduce exogenous threats: Political and sectarian communities, as social constructs linked to material institutions, lack “ontological stability” and need continual reproduction by those who wish to capitalize politically.²⁰ A self, communal or individual, needs to repeatedly recognize what it is not in order to persist.²¹ Such is the basis for my assumption that sectarianism is exacerbated every time the out-group sect is placed in the position of the “other”.

¹⁸ Katharina Nötzold, *Defining the Nation? Lebanese Television and Political Elites, 1990 - 2005*, Medien Und Politische Kommunikation - Naher Osten Und Islamische Welt = Media and Political Communication - Middle East and Islam 19 (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2009); Sarah El-Richani, *The Lebanese Media: Anatomy of a System in Perpetual Crisis* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

¹⁹ Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 1996), 10.

²⁰ David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, Rev. ed (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), chap. Introduction.

²¹ A long tradition (often attributed back to Hegel) of scholarly theorizing in cultural, linguistic, and discourse theory supports this fundamental point that identity is constructed through difference. See, for example, Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time: Ernesto Laclau*, Phronesis (London ; New York: Verso, 1990), 26–27; Bethan Benwell and Elizabeth Stokoe, *Discourse and Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 24–46.

I will argue that Lebanese political discourses operate at multiple layers, such that discourses framed as non-sectarian can nonetheless *incidentally* exacerbate the distance between sectarian communal identities. Explicit framings will be referred to as “explicit constructions.” Lebanese political parties denote “others” using dichotomies²² *other than* sectarian identity in their efforts to form politically mobilizable communities through their mediated framings of news events. My study will show that *al-Manar* and *al-Mustaqbal* explicitly frame events in terms that consistently avoid constructions of the sectarian out-group²³ as the “other.” Nonetheless, the selectivity of *what* and *who* is repeatedly positioned as the “other” *could* incidentally and unintentionally drive the reproduction of existent sectarianism. In what I will refer to as “discursive bias,” the discursive “other” is most often either the main political party or external patron of the out-sect.

My exploration of how individual Lebanese relate to these party discourses in interviews with eight Shi’a and Sunni Lebanese suggests that selective media representations may contribute to reproducing sectarian differentiation within politically affiliated subsets of sects. I employ qualitative analysis techniques on the interview results to suggest how these individuals will be impacted by the potentially sectarianizing discursive bias of political media. Whether or not media discourses’ potentials for exacerbating sectarian identity²⁴ are realized seems to depend on the political affiliation of individual discourse receivers. It also seems to relate to the affective, cognitive, and

²² E.g., “good” vs. “evil.”

²³ E.g., for Sunnis this would be Shi’a.

²⁴ In other words, “sectarianization.”

behavioral predispositions of the discourses' consumers. Together these constitute what I will call the "receiver-trait contingencies" (or "receiver traits") of a discourse because they ultimately determine the effect of a discourse on an individual's identity.

I will suggest that media's discursive bias is more likely to exacerbate a receiver's sectarian identity if that receiver makes cognitive links between the main political party/main patron of the out-sect and the out-sect community as a whole. My data also suggests that these receiver traits favorable to sectarianization are most common among politically affiliated subsets of sects. Therefore, I can posit that the political-othering constructions in media may be acting as drivers of sectarian communal differentiation among party-affiliated subsets of sects.

Ultimately, these interviews will demonstrate the necessity of researching human subjects when attempting to link regional politics like the Saudi-Iranian Cold War with individual and communal sectarian identities. Until we prove that members of a community have actually experienced shifts in their individual identities, we can speak only about identity *potentials* that political parties are attempting to create. I will demonstrate that exploring the discursive constructs of individuals can help explain *how* regional politics impact the identities of *humans*. However, my eight interviews are insufficient to prove my argument and therefore act as a suggestion for further research.

C. Methods

1. Discourse Analysis

My explorations of *al-Manar's*, *al-Intiqad's*, and *al-Mustaqbal's* othering constructions and the discursive mechanisms used to represent the events of the Saudi-Iranian Cold War

employ a combination of techniques²⁵ drawn from both Content and Critical Discourse Analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) suits the epistemological basis of my thesis because it treats discourse as social practice, both constitutive of and constituted by “the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s)” that frame it.²⁶ This position underpins my argument that the discourses being analyzed are constituting communal and individual identities by linking them to the institutional and structural environment.

The discourse-historical approach (DHA) of CDA²⁷ is most suitable for studying politics at the intersection of structure, institutions, and identities because its methodology demands that both sides of the structure-discourse dialect be studied with fieldwork.²⁸ The pedigree of DHA also lends it favorability: its first book-length study, done by its main theorists Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl, studied Austrian national identity with a combination of (1) discourse analysis applied to a corpus of political-elite speeches, (2)

²⁵ I am using a combination of techniques from both because I lacked sufficient time to fully exhaust the methodological requirements of either DHA or content analysis.

²⁶ Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 258.

²⁷ CDA is an umbrella which includes various methodological approaches, each associated with a particular epistemological position. For an overview of Discourse Analysis and its various methodologies, see Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, eds., *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 2nd ed, Introducing Qualitative Methods (London ; Thousand Oaks [Calif.]: SAGE, 2009).

²⁸ Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, “The Discourse-Historical Approach,” in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2009).

focus group interviews with a variety of non-elite social groups, and (3) individual interviews.²⁹

My approximately 350 texts³⁰ for analysis (the corpus) are primarily drawn from *al-Manar*³¹ and *al-Mustaqbal*.³² *Al-Manar* is a Lebanese broadcast television station that effectively acts as Hezbollah's media arm and has its greatest following among Lebanese Shi'a.³³ *Al-Mustaqbal* is the Future Movement's newspaper and has its greatest following among Lebanese Sunni supporters of the group.³⁴

Because it was not possible to efficiently collect data from the Future Movement's television station, *Future TV*, I have used a mixture of media and made a simplifying assumption that both media sources can be compared as equals. In the case of *al-Manar*, it was necessary to extend beyond its broadcasts (especially for events before 2012, where the station's online archives became spottier). Here, both Hezbollah's weekly print journal, *al-Intiqad*, and the speeches of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah were analyzed.

²⁹ Ruth Wodak et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

³⁰ Meaning the individual news articles,³⁰ broadcasts, and speeches being analyzed.

³¹ Collected from *al-Manar*'s online archives at www.almanar.com.lb. *Al-Intiqad* texts were collected from *al-Ahed*'s online archives at <https://alahednews.com.lb/category/96/>.

³² Collected from AUB's Jafet Memorial Library's microfilm and print archives of the newspaper.

³³ See Nötzold, *Defining the Nation?*, 192–211.

³⁴ For an overview of the sectarian and political affiliations of Lebanon's print media, see El-Richani, *The Lebanese Media*, 101–11.

Nasrallah's speeches were frequently analyzed even where *al-Manar* broadcast archives were available because *al-Manar* broadcasts all of his speeches several times.

I selected corpus texts³⁵ that are reactions to major domestic or regional events of the Saudi-Iranian Cold War, with a focus on texts highlighting the role of the out-sect's main political party or patron. In *al-Manar*, for example, this meant looking for news or talk-show pieces at the 2013 start of Saudi Arabia's \$3 billion grant program for the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF)³⁶ and then the withdrawal of that aid in January 2016 after Lebanon's foreign minister failed to condemn an attack on Saudi Arabia's embassy in Tehran.³⁷

Lacking the time to construct an exhaustive timeline of all the major events of the Saudi-Iranian conflict, I used a theoretical sampling approach to identify events around which to collect data: The collection of data around one event led me to other events referenced in texts of the initial event.³⁸ Forty three primary texts were selected for a detailed discourse-analytical reading (See Appendix II). Taking advantage of the large number of texts I collected, I also incorporated a selection of content analysis techniques to

³⁵ Which include a variety of story genres from both print and audiovisual media, including news reports, news features, opinion articles, and interviews.

³⁶ Nicholas Blanford, "Saudi Arabia Promises Record \$3 Billion in Military Aid to Lebanon," *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 30, 2013, <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2013/1230/Saudi-Arabia-promises-record-3-billion-in-military-aid-to-Lebanon>.

³⁷ "Saudi Arabia Halts \$3 Billion Package to Lebanese Army, Security Aid," *Reuters*, Summer 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-lebanon/saudi-arabia-halts-3-billion-package-to-lebanese-army-security-aid-idUSKCN0VS1KK>.

³⁸ This alternative method actually carried an advantage to my preference, in that the collection was based around events identified by the subject source as important, rather than the imposition of import by myself as researcher.

explain how certain discursive trends shifted according to changes in the regional or local political environment.

2. Interviews

Eight interviews were conducted with Sunni and Shi'a Lebanese of various backgrounds to sample how potential discourse receivers reproduce or challenge the in-sect party's communal identity discourses constructed in party-linked media. The interview questions, which can be found in Appendix I, had five primary goals:

1. To determine whether or not the interviewee considered the out-sect, the out-sect's main party, and that party's external patron to be threatening or dangerous to Lebanon. This is a means of gauging "othering" constructs.
2. To determine how the interviewee understood the links between a sectarian group's political leaders and that group as a whole, so as to determine whether the two were conflated. Conflating the two indicates a more sectarian predisposition.
3. To determine the same of links between the out-sect's main party and that party's external patron and how that external patron is related to the other sect as a whole. Conflating these indicates a more sectarian predisposition.
4. To determine how closely the interviewee's discursive constructs matched those of in-sect party media, both indirectly through answers to interview questions and directly by showing participants in-sect media excerpts and asking them how accurately they thought the media source represented an issue involving the out-sect as a whole, its main party, and its main patron.

5. To test for bias in framings that explicitly disavowed sectarian-political affiliations.

This was done by only asking interviewees about the party and patron of the out-sect to see if participants would condemn not only out-sect but also in-sect institutions and leaders when they voiced the typical refrain that “all parties are tied to external powers.” Breaking the built-in basis indicates a less sectarian predisposition.

Based on the experience of Melani Cammett working in Lebanon, proxy interviewers were used to reach participants so as to avoid potential hurdles presented by my own identity as a white-American male in Lebanon.^{39 40} Three interviewer identities (a “neutral” Druze, a Sunni, and a Shi’a)⁴¹ were tested to check whether results would change depending on whether the interviewer was in-sect or out-sect. Interviews were conducted in both Beirut and Saida. Interview results were then coded to suggest relationships between the characteristics (sect, location, gender, political activity) of the interviewer and the discourses they employed in their interview responses.

³⁹ These include limited access to deep social networks that often revolve around familial ties, difficulty attracting participants due to suspicions of spying, and difficulties in collecting “in-group” answers as a very blatant out-grouper.

⁴⁰ Melani Cammett, “Using Proxy Interviewing to Address Sensitive Topics,” in *Interview Research in Political Science*, ed. Layna Mosley (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

⁴¹ Using three different interviewers.

D. Chapter outlines

In Chapter 2, I show how *al-Manar*, *al-Intiqad*, and Hezbollah's event framings construct for its audience the notion that they are not participating in a regional sectarian project, but a moral effort based on Lebanese nationalism and solidarity of the oppressed. Nonetheless, the selectivity of *which* Arab brothers matter is important, with Saudi Arabia, the United States, and the Future Movement being most often constructed as the cause for regional and Lebanese malaise. Furthermore, I will highlight how Hezbollah's constructions have shifted with the events of the Saudi-Iranian Cold War. In Chapter 3, I show how the Future Movement via *al-Mustaqbal* constructs itself as defender of a Lebanese "civil state," constructing its "others" as those who oppose this civil state. Hezbollah, the Syrian regime, and Iran are the main threats to the civil state. I will highlight how Future frames its discourse to maximize political gain, especially when in opposition. Chapter 4 presents data from interviews with Sunni and Shi'a Lebanese to show how the sectarianizing potential of the media framings explored in Chapters 3 and 4 is being realized or not in the identity discourses of individuals from the sect linked to each media outlet. Chapter 5 will review this thesis' limitations and propose a plan for further research.

CHAPTER II HEZBOLLAH, *AL-MANAR*, AND *AL-INTIQAD*

This chapter will show first that Hezbollah's mediated framings, via *al-Manar* and *al-Intiqad*, of the Saudi-Iranian Cold War are constructed to create "others" of Saudi Arabia and the Future Movement with attention to characteristics *other than* these others' sect identity. This finding is used to argue that political appeals based purely on a religious Shi'a identity are eschewed, so Hezbollah turns to non-religious othering constructs. This chapter will explore those explicit discourse constructs, showing them to be based on dichotomies built around Lebanese nationalism and solidarity of the oppressed.

I will then show how this discursive framing may be widening the distance between sectarian communities in spite of its explicitly non-sectarian character. Using the concept of discursive bias, I will show that the repetition of Saudi Arabia and the Future Movement in the role of the "other" against which the self is constructed creates the *potential* to exacerbate sectarianism. Whether or not this potential is realized depends on individual receiver traits, which are the subject of Chapter 4.

My observation that Hezbollah's mediated explicit constructions of overlapping regional and domestic politics is de-sectarianized is consistent with the group's historical trajectory. Starting in 2009, it forewent the goal of establishing a religious state that had ostensibly guided it since its 1985⁴² founding to lift Lebanon's Shi'a from

⁴² For Hezbollah's found document, see Joseph Elie Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto* (Amsterdam: Pallas Publications, 2011), 39–55.

marginalization.⁴³ The group's 2009 political manifesto⁴⁴ superseded its founding document and replaced the religious language with political issues.

Having risen greatly in power relative to other Lebanese institutions,⁴⁵ by the 2000's Hezbollah would find itself needing to adopt a stance palatable in a climate where Lebanese seem averse to projects bound for sectarian conflict. Hezbollah's media framing of regional events therefore does not use shared notions of Shi'ism as a means to reproduce a political community. Its formation of shared notions of Shi'ism instead are left to other institutions – such as religious rituals⁴⁶ – that are not focused (as is a media outlet) on relations with others outside the Shi'a community.

A. Hezbollah, or a nation called Lebanon

Hezbollah's discourses – through *al-Manar*, *al-Intiqad*, and Nasrallah's speeches – work to sell support for the party as support for the Lebanese nation. This is manifest at the

⁴³ Augustus R. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 14–18.

⁴⁴ “Al-Wathiqah Al-Siyyasiyya l-Hizb Alluh 2009” (mawqi'a al-muqawama al-islamiyya, n.d.), <https://www.moqawama.org/essaydetailsf.php?eid=16245&fid=47>.

⁴⁵ Relative not only to other political parties, but to Lebanon's security institutions including the Internal Security Forces and Lebanese Armed Forces. See Daniel Byman, “Hezbollah: Most Powerful Political Movement in Lebanon,” *Concil on Foreign Relations* (blog), May 29, 2008, <https://www.cfr.org/interview/hezbollah-most-powerful-political-movement-lebanon>.

⁴⁶ Norton, *Hezbollah*, 51–68.

lexical level, for example, in Nasrallah's repeated use of the vague pronouns "we" and "us" when distinguishing self and other. Implicitly, he equates "we" with the Lebanese nation, often by attacking the claims of Hezbollah's opponents with phrases like "all Lebanese know that this is not the case."⁴⁷ He is setting up dichotomies, with the nebulous "all Lebanese" siding against the group's opponents and with Hezbollah. In other words, "Hezbollah" equals "Lebanon."

Hezbollah's mobilization, legitimization, and communal construction around its intervention in Syria did not begin with nor is it fully based in Shi'a symbolism (which includes, for example, the duty to protect the Sayyida Zaynab Shrine⁴⁸). Rather, the central focus is a national duty to protect Lebanon. Before the Islamic State (ISIS) became most Lebanese' primary fear from the Syrian civil war, Hezbollah argued that its intervention in Syria served to protect some 30 thousand Lebanese⁴⁹ living in the Qusayr region of western Syria. Treatment of these Lebanese on *al-Manar* gave no mention of their sect identity. The threats they faced and the "national" (Hezbollah) effort to protect them would be repeated continuously throughout the civil war on *al-Manar*⁵⁰ and by Nasrallah in his speeches.

⁴⁷ See, for example, "Al-Kalima Al-Mutalfiza Lilsayyid Hasan Nassralluh 01-03-2016" (al-Manar, March 1, 2016), pt. 38:40.

⁴⁸ Mariam Karouny, "Shi'ite Fighters Rally to Defend Damascus Shrine," *Reuters*, March 3, 2013, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-shiites/shiite-fighters-rally-to-defend-damascus-shrine-idUSBRE92202X20130303>.

⁴⁹ The number would often change: Sometimes 20 thousand, sometimes 30, and occasionally 40.

⁵⁰ See, for example, "Hadith Al-Sā'a," *Hadith Al-Sā'a* (al-Manar, January 3, 2014), pt. 1:10:00.

Qusayr's Lebanese highlight the power political organizations have when they can establish in-group trust of their media. According to information provided by a 2012 political discussion program on *al-Manar* itself⁵¹ alerting viewers to the threats faced by the Qusayr Lebanese, the claim that Hezbollah was ever protecting "Lebanese" in Syria is false. These 30 thousand "Lebanese" are not Lebanese citizens, but are related – several generations back – to families of the Bekaa Valley. Some of these family networks, engaged in trade between the Beqaa Valley and Homs, took up residence in Qusayr prior to the establishment of a national boundary between Syria and Lebanon.

Fashioning itself a nationalist organization rather than a Shi'a-centric entity suits Hezbollah's current structural position as it seeks to penetrate Lebanon's state institutions. A purely Shi'a religious claim might be politically ineffective. Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr concluded that the two strands of a rising Shi'a consciousness and Lebanese national identity are not mutually exclusive. Rather than sectarianism being a matter of religious coexistence, she argues that "ethnic entrepreneurs are concerned with who will eventually define the terms of [citizenship] and coexistence, and which side will be assigned a marginalized position in the newly constructed national narrative."⁵² Hezbollah's attempts to position itself as central to the nation (by being at the core of its

⁵¹ On the *Hadith al-Sā'aatio* program. The script can be found at: <http://program.almanar.com.lb/edinfo.php?edid=49051>

⁵² Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and the Making of National Identities*, History and Society of the Modern Middle East (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 9.

security⁵³) can be viewed as the present culmination of what Norton identified as its long-desired objective: correcting the historical marginalization of Lebanon's Shi'a south, which dates to the days of French Mandatory Maronite favoritism and the Shi'a's sidelined position in the 1943 National Pact.^{54 55}

B. “Good” versus “evil” rather than “Shi’a” versus “Sunni”

In a manner analogous to the dichotomy of the “national” versus “national threat,” Hezbollah's framing of both regional and domestic political events creates others with a de-sectarianized *moral* dichotomy that often draws on notions of solidarity among the oppressed. Shortly after the March 2015 start of Saudi Arabia's offensive in northern Yemen, Nasrallah delivered a charged speech for “solidarity” with the Yemeni people. He decried Operation Decisive Storm⁵⁶ as “Saudi-US aggression” against the Yemeni people. He declared Hezbollah's stance to be a “humanistic, moral, Jihadi, and religious stance.”⁵⁷

⁵³ To maximize political gain, the assertion that Hezbollah acts as the bulwark against ISIS was often made in contrast to See, for example, “Hadith Al-Sā'a,” pt. 55:00.

⁵⁴ Norton, *Hezbollah*, 14–18.

⁵⁵ A balance of 60% Christian parliamentary seats, 40% Muslim, which would later be set at 50-50 in the Ta'if Accord. For more on this history, see White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East*.

⁵⁶ This was the name of the March 2015 offensive. Saudi's operations in Yemen would later get renamed Operation Restoring Hope.

⁵⁷ “Kalimat Al-Sayyid Hasan Nassrallah Fi Mahrajān Al-Tadāmin m'a Al-Yemin 17-4-2015” (al-'alaqāt al-'alāmiyya fi hizb alluh, April 17, 2015), <https://www.mediarelations-lb.org/article.php?id=13948&cid=94#.WuBj4KNh3sk>.

The remainder of the speech serves to render the latter two points as postscripts on the primary, moral obligation. He focuses on the destruction and suffering wrought by Saudi on the Yemeni people. Nowhere in his many speeches on Yemen does the religious identity of the sufferers or the attacker play a role⁵⁸: “[No one] accepts that this is a Sunni-Shi’a War,” he assures his audience.⁵⁹

De-sectarianizing its othering constructions of Saudi Arabia insulates Hezbollah from accusations of being sectarian. For Nasrallah to claim that Saudi was acting for a *Sunni* cause could suggest to Hezbollah’s audience that he is opposed to the former because his organization acts for a *Shi’a* sectarian cause. Rather, Nasrallah asserts on Decisive Storm: “this is Saudi aggression for political reasons.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Contrast this to the possible claim that the Shi’a of Lebanon need to help the Houthis, a group of Shi’a in northern Yemen that had been historically marginalized within the Yemeni state (see Noel Brehony, *Yemen Divided: The Story of a Failed State in South Arabia*, New paperback edition (London ; New York: New York : I.B. Tauris ; Distributed in the U.S. and Canada exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).) in a manner analogous to the Lebanese southern Shi’a.

⁵⁹ “Kalimat Al-Sayyid Hasan Nassrallah Fi Mahrajān Al-Tadāmin m’a Al-Yemin 17-4-2015.”

⁶⁰ “Kalimat Al-Sayyid Hasan Nassrallah Fi Mahrajān Al-Tadāmin m’a Al-Yemin 17-4-2015.” This construction is not an isolated occurrence, but repeats and is elaborated upon in subsequent speeches about Yemen. See, for example, “Al-Kalima Al-Mutalfiza Lilsayyid Hasan Nassrallah 27-3-2014,” *Al-’alaqāt Al-’alāmiyya Fi Hizb Alluh*, March 27, 2014, <https://www.mediarelations-lb.org/article.php?id=13910&cid=94#.WuBjOKNh3sk>; “Kalimat Al-Sayyid Hasan Nassrallah Fi Mahrajān Al-Tadāmin m’a Al-Yemin 17-4-2015”; “Al-Kalima Al-Mutalfiza Lilsayyid Hasan Nassrallah 5-5-2015” (*al-’alaqāt al-’alāmiyya fi hizb alluh*, May 5, 2015), <https://www.mediarelations-lb.org/article.php?id=13969&cid=94#.WuBkjaNh3sk>; “Al-Kalima Al-Mutalfiza Lilsayyid Hasan Nassrallah 16-5-2015” (*al-’alaqāt al-’alāmiyya fi hizb alluh*, May

Assuming that Hezbollah is supplying discourse based on an accurate reading of the audience “market,” this explicit de-sectarianization supports my claim that the Lebanese seem averse to sectarian political projects. A good deal of political discourse in Lebanon is designed to persuade potential supporters that a party is fighting the sectarianism of “others.” For example, most of the electoral campaign rhetoric⁶¹ in the race for Lebanon’s May 6, 2018, parliamentary elections was designed to make parties appear as non-sectarian as possible.⁶²

Hezbollah appears to have recognized this trend and frames domestic and regional politics accordingly. On the domestic level, *al-Manar*, *al-Intiqad*, and Nasrallah consistently identify the Saudi-backed Future Movement as a political party on the leash of corrupt Gulf money⁶³ interested solely in material empowerment and enrichment.⁶⁴ Rather than a *Sunni* institution, Future is at best depicted as a leech on that community, at worst a danger to Sunnis.

16, 2015), <https://www.mediarelations-lb.org/article.php?id=13977&cid=94#.WuBk9aNh3sk>.

⁶¹ The Future Movement standing out as an exception.

⁶² Especially in Beirut, parties and lists sought to tout their “civil” credentials. And when rhetoric did get sectarian, it was to accuse opponents of being sectarian, a common trend of political discourse that began well before this electoral cycle or the Syrian civil war.

⁶³ See, for example, “Jadal Al-‘Arabi,” *Jadal Al-‘Arabi* (al-Manar, February 20, 2016).

⁶⁴ See, for example, Tuh Hussein, “Trablus..Rahinat Tayyar Al-Mustaqbal,” *Al-Intiqad*, March 15, 2013.

For example, in a March 2013 article on ongoing violence in Tripoli between the residents of Bab al-Tabaneh (Sunni) and Jebel Muhsen (Shi'a), *Al-Intiqad* argued that the violence was not Sunni-Shi'a. Rather, Future was paying drug-addicted⁶⁵ militants to throw grenades and fire upon the Sunnis of Bab al-Tabaneh. The article then bemoans that Bab al-Tabaneh residents suffer for the sake of Future's political and electoral interests (claiming that Future politicians exploit the neighborhood's residents as "ballot-box papers"). With "Tripoli" a synonym for Lebanon's Sunni community, the article's headline "Tripoli...hostage of the Future Movement" constructs opposition between Future and Sunnis.⁶⁶

C. Cleansed of the sectarian, but perhaps still sectarian

Throughout the 2011-18 period, *al-Manar* would frequently link Saudi Arabia and Future with ISIS and *takfiris*, exploiting the intense threat constructions of the latter to rally opposition to political opponents Saudi Arabia and Future. Despite being vitriol of the highest caliber, these constructions stayed true to Hezbollah's tack of downplaying the *Sunni*-ness of Future and Saudi Arabia. Therefore, these discursive analogisms do not *explicitly* set up other-self dichotomies between Sunnis and Shi'a.

⁶⁵ A manner of suggesting their non-religiosity.

⁶⁶ Hussein, "Trablus..Rahinat Tayyar Al-Mustaqbal."

Al-Intiqad's July 4, 2014, edition⁶⁷ links Saudi Arabia to the then-imminent⁶⁸ threat of takfirism while delinking "Sunnis" from those two primary others. A first article's author claims that Wahhabism spawned takfirism in the Najd (the Saudi heartland, captured before the Hijaz) and was a founding pillar of the Saudi monarchy. While *al-Intiqad* harps on Wahhabism's anti-Shi'a credentials, it and takfirism are identified as a *mathab* (sect) in their own right, and thus something separate from *al-mathahib al-sunniyya*, or the Sunni schools of thought.⁶⁹ The next article drills home the point that takfirism and Sunnis are antonymous, explaining to readers that Sunnis are *takfiris*' primary victims. Rather than an organically Sunni project for regional dominance, *al-Intiqad* constructs takfirism as a political project of the Americans, the Zionists, and their (anonymous) Arab puppets to divide the Middle East into weak sectarian mini-states,⁷⁰ conquering *à la* Sykes-Picot.

In spite of these individual instances of de-sectarianized constructions, many years of repeating Saudi Arabia and Future in the position of "other" creates the potential of exacerbating sectarianism. *Al-Manar*'s reporting on a December 29, 2013,⁷¹ protest at the Khashkji Mosque against the *Sunni* then-Grand Mufti of Lebanon, Rashid Qabbani,

⁶⁷ This example comes after the 2013 Qabbani incident (see below), but the trend can be observed beforehand as well.

⁶⁸ Imminence indicated by the cover, which depicts vehicles burning apparently after a car bombing.

⁶⁹ Muhamad Murtada, "Al-Wahābiyya w Al-Dā'ishiyya: Tutābiq Fi Al-Fikr w Al-'Amal," *Al-Intiqad*, July 4, 2014.

⁷⁰ al-Sheikh Hussein 'Aqil, "Al-Ta'ifiyya w Inqilab Al-Sahr 'ala Al-Sahir," *Al-Intiqad*, July 4, 2014.

⁷¹ "Nashrat Al-Akhbar Al-Ra'isi" (*al-Manar*, December 29, 2013).

exemplifies the likely contradictory effects of explicit constructions and discursive bias. The Future Movement is constructed as a potential threat to the Shi'a community by drawing analogies between the former and ISIS. The construction does not draw "Sunnis" into that category of threatening other. But the fact that the report's threatening others are from a group popularly known to be "Sunni," in a neighborhood of Beirut known to be associated with Sunnis, may nonetheless produce a sectarianizing effect.

The Khashkji Mosque sits in the heart of Future's Beirut stronghold, *Tariq al-Jdideh*. The occasion was the funeral of a Sunni boy killed in a car bomb two days prior that also killed Future-stalwart and former Finance Minister Mohhamed Shatah.⁷² Qabbani, opposed by Future for his close relations to Hezbollah,⁷³ provoked an outcry from detractors when he visited the mosque to pay his respects. After he entered, about 100 of what *al-Manar* identified as "Future partisans" gathered outside the mosque in fiery protest, some waving the black and white "*la allah illa allah w Muhammed al-rusul*" flag oft-wielded by Islamists and the likes of ISIS. Others waved Future's light blue flag as they shouted "*allahu akbar*" and called Qabbani '*adu allah*, the enemy of god. He was trapped inside the mosque as more protestors gathered, and would only exit after several LAF armored personnel carriers delivered a cordon of soldiers to escort him through the mob.⁷⁴

⁷² "Istishhad Al-Wazir Al-Sābiq Muhammad Shatah Fi Tafjir Irhābi Qarb Wasat Beirut," *Al-Nahar*, December 27, 2013, <https://www.annahar.com/article/94797-انفجار-يهز-وسط-بيروت>.

⁷³ Salawa Fadil, "Qadiyya Al-Mufti Qabāni Ta'oud Ila Al-Wājiha..Fahal Sayahāl Ila Al-Qadā'," *Janoubia*, June 2, 2017, <http://janoubia.com/2017/06/02/-قضية-المفتي-القباني-تعود-الى-الواجهة-فهل>.

⁷⁴ "Nashrat Al-Akhbar Al-Ra'isi."

Al-Manar's news report did not beat around the bush linking Future with ISIS. But the group is implicitly constructed as threatening to the Sunni community (embodied in Sheikh Qabbani) just as it is to the Shi'a community. "It's political takfirism with a necktie," the primetime newscast begins, "they're the new *Daeshis*, with trimmed mustaches and trimmed beards, searching for a *future* in power however they can get it."⁷⁵ But the modifier "political" is operative: The news intro goes on to construct the neo-*takfiris* of Future as anti-religious, "violently tearing into the holy ground of mosques and the holy places and the imam" for political gain.⁷⁶

D. Switching to Saudi: Public enemy, and *raison d'être*, #2

Zooming back out to the mediated framings of the regional plane, we find an analogous contradiction between explicit constructions and discursive bias. Nasrallah rejects the idea that the Yemeni conflict has anything to do with Saudi-Iranian contestation or sectarian conflict.^{77 78} And explicit constructions of Saudi Arabia are de-sectarianized. Nonetheless,

⁷⁵ Emphasis added. "Nashrat Al-Akhbar Al-Ra'isi."

⁷⁶ "Nashrat Al-Akhbar Al-Ra'isi."

⁷⁷ "Al-Kalima Al-Mutalfiza Lilsayyid Hasan Nassralluh 27-3-2014"; "Kalimat Al-Sayyid Hasan Nassrallah Fi Mahrajān Al-Tadāmin m'a Al-Yemin 17-4-2015."

⁷⁸ Again highlighting what can be achieved with substantial control over information flows to a particular community, neither he nor *al-Manar* mention to their audience that Iran supports a group of *Shi'a* whose story of marginalization in a Sunni-dominated political system is much akin to the *Shi'a* in Iraq under Saddam Hussein (this topic is well-treated in Charles Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 3. ed., 3. print (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010).) or even the *Shi'a's* historical marginalization vis-a-vis Lebanon's more powerful Sunnis and Christians.

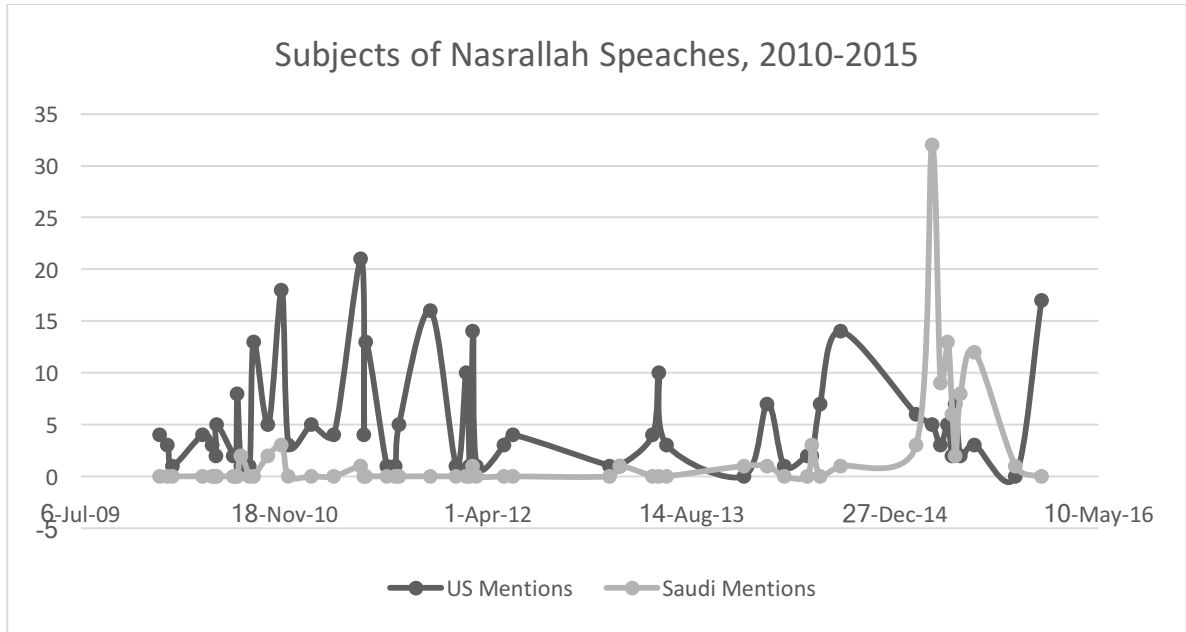
Saudi Arabia became a key other against which Hezbollah was carving its identity after the Arab uprisings. This turn toward Saudi Arabia could exacerbate sectarianism through discursive bias.

Saudi Arabia did not join the crowd of Hezbollah's primary others until it launched Operation Decisive Storm in March 2015. Before that Nasrallah largely did not mention Saudi Arabia in his speeches, focusing instead on the US and Israel as the threats which Hezbollah's existence served to counter. In fact, in my sample of 63 speeches from 2010 to 2015,⁷⁹ eight of the 19 pre-Decisive Storm mentions were positive. These favorable constructions were clustered in 2010 and 2011 as Riyadh was negotiating with Syria in search of rapprochement between the two longtime antagonists and a solution to governmental paralysis in Lebanon.⁸⁰ Mentions began to turn negative starting with the Arab uprisings, the first in my sample being sharp criticism of Saudi for its hand in suppressing protests in Bahrain.⁸¹ Graph 1 below shows how the war in Yemen marked Nasrallah's decisive turn from the US to Saudi.

⁷⁹ A catalogue of these speech dates can be found in Appendix III. Speeches were drawn from *al-'Ahd*'s online collection, which can be found at "Mouq'a Al-'ahd Al-Akhbari: Hizbullah," mouq'a al-'ahd al-akhbari: hizbullah, n.d., <https://alahednews.com.lb/category/196/حزب-الله>.

⁸⁰ Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah would make an official visit to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in October 2009, and then the two would visit Beirut together for talks in July 2010. "Saudi King, Syrian President to Visit Lebanon Together," *Reuters*, July 28, 2010, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-visits/saudi-king-syrian-president-to-visit-lebanon-together-idUSTRE66R39B20100728>.

⁸¹ *Al-Manar* and *al-Intiqad* would give more attention than Nasrallah to Saudi Arabia before Operation Decisive Storm, but they too gave a substantially greater amount of attention to Saudi from that point on.



The discursive bias that puts both Saudi Arabia and the Future Movement in the positions of primary others after the beginning of Operation Decisive Storm has the potential to exacerbate sectarianism. This potential is most likely to be realized if the receiver of a discourse is predisposed to conflate Saudi Arabia and the Future Movement with the Sunni community as a whole, such that each instance of othering the Future Movement or Saudi Arabia is also *incidentally* an instance of othering the Sunni community.

This chapter showed how Hezbollah’s media construct the party’s political “others” using dichotomies based around Lebanese nationalism (in the cases of Qusayr and ISIS)

and solidarity of the oppressed (in the case of Saudi's war in Yemen and Tripoli's Sunnis). I used the case of the Khashkji mosque to illustrate how these de-sectarianized discourses may nonetheless exacerbate sectarianism. To argue that this is a more general phenomenon rather than something specific to Hezbollah and its audience, in the next chapter I will apply a similar analysis to Future's media to show that an analogous dynamic is at work on the opposite side of the sectarian divide.

CHAPTER III

FUTURE AND *AL-MUSTAQBAL*

This chapter will show that the Future Movement's mediated framings via *al-Mustaqbal* of the Saudi-Iranian overlapping regional and domestic contest mirror those of Hezbollah, *al-Manar*, and *al-Intiqad*. The newspaper creates "others" of Hezbollah, Iran, and the Syrian regime using characteristics *other than* these others' sect identity. Again, this indicates that religious identity is eschewed by the Future Movement as a tool for forming a politically mobilizable community. But as with Hezbollah and *al-Manar*, the biased selectivity of these non-sectarian constructs nonetheless renders a potential to create distance between sectarian communities.

I will explore the de-sectarianized explicit constructions of Iran, the Syrian regime, and Hezbollah and then explain how the discursive bias could still exacerbate sectarianism. I will give particular attention to how the party frames its othering constructions in order to score political support and suggest that parties intensify threat constructions of the other when in political opposition.

Combined with analogous findings on Hezbollah's discursive framings, this chapter will strengthen the argument that the Saudi-Iranian Cold War's impact on Lebanon shows that religious-sectarian symbolism is little used in Lebanon's discourses of political mobilization. But when the two poles of *al-Manar's* and *al-Mustaqbal's* discursive biases are viewed together, we can see how the two political communities are simultaneously repelling one another. Depending on how audiences receive these discourses, the relationship could mean greater distance between the sectarian groups.

Nonetheless, the Future Movement was born with the purpose of facing Syria, Iran, and Hezbollah to remedy political grievances regardless of these others' Shi'a religious identity. The February 14, 2005, assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri was blamed on Syria by those who would form the Future Movement and March 14 Coalition.⁸² A month after his assassination, supporters of the political magnate and opponents of the Syrian occupation⁸³ gathered in downtown Beirut for a seminal rally that would lead to Syrian withdrawal. The March 14 coalition and Future would champion a civil Lebanese state⁸⁴ from its inception as a means to band together that coalitions' disparate confessional components. Othering constructions of Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah have since centered on their despotism rather than Shi'ism.

This chapter will show how this discourse has remained consistent in framings of the domestic and regional politics of the Saudi-Iranian Cold War since the 2011 Arab uprisings. I will then show how the bias of these othering constructions can nonetheless exacerbate sectarianism.

⁸² See March 14's statement of objectives, which focus on expelling Syrian influence and prosecuting those who assassinated Rafiq Hariri: "Ahdāf 14 Āthār" (14 March, n.d.), <http://www.14march.org/pages.php?cat=MTMwODkx>.

⁸³ Apart from the Sunni supporters of the Hariri political dynasty, the other major opponents of Syrian occupation include Samir Gaegae and his Christian Lebanese Forces.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Hariri's speech and the role of the "civil" project, "Khitāb Al-Hariri...Mashrou' Madani Wasat Al-Sirakh Al-Tā'ifi," *Al-Mustaqbal*, February 21, 2013.

A. Hezbollah, diagnosis: parasitic party

On February 14, 2013, the Biel convention center in Beirut was packed full of blue-tied Future stalwarts. Marking the anniversary of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri's assassination is the Future Movement's track day at Churchill Downs, where the party puts on its finest dress and tries to remind its followers why the organization exists. Party-leader Saad Hariri delivered his speech via broadcast from Riyadh,⁸⁵ where he had spent most of a self-imposed exile after his government was replaced by an alliance of Najib Miqati and Hezbollah in 2011.⁸⁶

In its headline story the following day, *al-Mustaqbal* would highlight Hariri's construction of Hezbollah as an entity not organic to Lebanese Shi'a but rather imported from Iran. The front-page headline read: "Hezbollah is not equal to the Shi'a and its weapons are the mother of all problems."⁸⁷ Such is typical of the party's discourse during the Saudi-Iranian Cold War, with *al-Mustaqbal* harping on constructions of Hezbollah and its weapons as parasitic⁸⁸ to Lebanese Shi'a.

Future, like Hezbollah, explicitly de-sectarianizes. "We do not see Hezbollah as Shi'a," Hariri told his political community. "The Shi'a have been in Lebanon for more than

⁸⁵ *Political Specials 14 Feb 2013 - Rafik Al Hariri 8th Memorial*, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BM9eI0TyPOQ>.

⁸⁶ "Sa'ad Al-Hariri y'aoud Ila Labnan b'ad Ghiyāb Limidat Thalāth Sanawāt," *BBC Arabic*, August 8, 2014, http://www.bbc.com/arabic/worldnews/2014/08/140808_hariri_back_lebanon.

⁸⁷ "Al-Hariri: Hezbollah Laysa Al-Shi'a w Al-Slah Um Al-Mashakil," *Al-Mustaqbal*, February 15, 2013.

⁸⁸ This word is my own choice for amalgamating *al-Mustaqbal*'s constructions.

a thousand years, while Hezbollah came along with Iran thirty years ago.”⁸⁹ Insisting the fate of the Shi’a to be the fate of all Lebanon, Hariri appealed to his audience’s Shi’a brethren to resist Hezbollah’s pursuit of dominance, which had ravaged a culture of plurality that once thrived among the Shi’a. But that culture of yesteryear is not all lost, Hariri suggested: “A not insubstantial portion [of Lebanese Shi’a] realize that [Hezbollah is a threat to Islamic unity and Lebanese unity], and they condone that, under the burden of fear about the sect’s fate that Hezbollah plants.”⁹⁰

Occasionally, the Hezbollah parasite is shown to injure its hosts by impelling them to threaten other Lebanese. In July 2017, when most of Lebanon’s 18- and 19-year olds were receiving their Baccalaureate diplomas, *al-Mustaqbal* exploited the opportunity to contrast the images of childhood innocence and hope with Hezbollah’s child martyrs in Syria receiving death certificates instead of graduation diplomas.⁹¹ The article exemplifies how subtle linguistic oppositions are used by the newspaper to construct Hezbollah and the Shi’a community as distinct entities.⁹² *Al-Mustaqbal* explains the problem to be politicians sending young children to their deaths for political interests:⁹³ The children are not inspired

⁸⁹ “Al-Hariri: Hezbollah Laysa Al-Shi’a w Al-Slah Um Al-Mashakil.”

⁹⁰ “Al-Hariri: Hezbollah Laysa Al-Shi’a w Al-Slah Um Al-Mashakil.”

⁹¹ “Hizb Alluh Yu’adal Shahādāt Al-Hayāt..Bishahādat Wafāt,” *Al-Manar*, July 10, 2017.

⁹² These are known as structural oppositions. See Lesley Jeffries, *Opposition in Discourse: The Construction of Oppositional Meaning*, Advances in Stylistics (London ; New York: Continuum, 2010).

⁹³ By creating a cult of martyrdom. It should be noted that throughout Hezbollah strongholds like Baalbeck, campaign for 2018 parliamentary elections were

by an organic ideology, but are imbued by Hezbollah with a “mentality of killing,” a “hatred of the other,” and an “unquestioning loyalty to *Wilayit al-Faqih*” that are not endemic to Hezbollah’s “ill-fated environment.”⁹⁴

As Hariri claimed from his Biel big-screen, *al-Mustaqbal* has been constructing Hezbollah as an Iranian import. By positioning the “other” in the category of *not* national, Future is constructing itself as national (just as Hezbollah does). *Al-Mustaqbal* has exploited opportunities throughout the Saudi-Iranian cold war to show Hezbollah’s extra-Lebanese ties to a threatening Tehran-Damascus project for regional dominance.

Such was the case in late October, 2012, when Hezbollah (allegedly) managed to fly a drone from the Lebanese-Israeli border to Israel’s Dimona nuclear reactor in the Negev Desert.⁹⁵ *Al-Mustaqbal* honed in on the drone’s Iranian make.⁹⁶ An op-ed argued that “our fears ... [about this drone] are that it was Iranian produced and deployed for Iranian ends and goal...for Hezbollah is working on the implementing the Iranian

adorned with headshots of martyrs and appeals to justify their sacrifice by voting Hezbollah.

⁹⁴ “Hizb Alluh Yu’adal Shahādāt Al-Hayāt..Bishahādat Wafāt.”

⁹⁵ “Iran Says Hezbollah Drone Sent into Israel Proves Its Capabilities,” *Reuters*, October 14, 2012, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-israel-drone-iran/iran-says-hezbollah-drone-sent-into-israel-proves-its-capabilities-idUSBRE89D09N20121014>.

⁹⁶ Nicola Zaydan, “Ta’ira Irāniyya Al-Sina’a..w Al-Ahdaf,” *Al-Mustaqbal*, October 18, 2012.

agenda.”⁹⁷ It is Iran who “holds the cards of war or peace.”⁹⁸ The author then concludes by bemoaning Hezbollah’s status as an “Iranian armed forward position,” leaving its Lebanese devotees at a loss for proper leaders to fulfill their needs:

For those Lebanese are like us. They suffer as we suffer from the evils of electricity cuts, the grip of the generator mafias, and they too are aggravated by crazy-high prices, and they are all afraid of sliding backward and afraid of those who promote armaments, as arms are the worst way to secure the needs of the hungry. The inflow of Iranian money neither solves the problem nor does the money reach the poor.⁹⁹

But a subtle potential for exacerbating sectarianism lies between the explicit constructions of Sunni-Shi’a solidarity. The process of noting a similarity between those other suffering Lebanese and “us” depends on an assumed distinction between the two groups, which, when repeated *ad nauseum*, helps keep sectarianism “sticky.”

B. Mobilizing through fear: linking politics and constructions

The Future Movement and *al-Mustaqbal* seem to intensify their threat constructions of Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran when Future finds itself in opposition. During Future’s time in opposition from 2011 to 2013, the newspaper’s othering constructions were accompanied by implicit political appeals in an attempt to convert perceptions of threat into political

⁹⁷ Zaydan.

⁹⁸ Zaydan.

⁹⁹ Zaydan.

gain. This intensified sense of threat from the other could intensify feelings of threat from the out-sect as a whole given certain receiver traits.

After taking the majority in Lebanon's 2009 parliamentary elections, the Future Movement's government collapsed in 2011 when Hezbollah and its March 8 allies resigned. Najib Mikati allied with the March 8 coalition to form a government which lasted until March 2013.¹⁰⁰ The Future Movement would highlight its identity as the flagbearer of a civil state as opposed to Hezbollah and Iran's despotic identity, rallying opposition to what *al-Mustaqbal* would call "the government of guns."¹⁰¹

Hariri's Biel speech exemplifies how these constructs were linked to more or less subtle appeals for political support. He condemned the Mikati government for bowing to Hezbollah's weapons and – as the crowd cheered "Saad...Saad...Saad!" – he confirmed that he would stand by his supporters with a run in the next election cycle.¹⁰²

Likewise, Future would leverage the banner of a civil state project – as opposed to its sectarianizing and despotic others – as a means to rally support for its position in a long-running debate over Lebanon's electoral law. At a 2012 conference of Future ministers, fear-mongering around Hezbollah's military support for the Syrian regime was used to stir up support for Future's position. The ministers disingenuously lamented that the proportionality law they claimed to endorse in principle (but actually opposed) was made

¹⁰⁰ "Sa'ad Al-Hariri y'aoud Ila Labnan b'ad Ghiyāb Limidat Thalāth Sanawāt."

¹⁰¹ See, for example, "Al-Hariri: Hezbollah Yatamasak Bimuqawla Kil Al-Siyyāsāt Fi Khidmat Al-Slāh," *Al-Mustaqbal*, February 15, 2013.

¹⁰² "Al-Hariri: Hezbollah Yatamasak Bimuqawla Kil Al-Siyyāsāt Fi Khidmat Al-Slāh."

practically impossible in the southern and Beqa'a Valley districts where Hezbollah's guns lay in wait.¹⁰³ The following year, the Mikati government would support the "Orthodox," or Farzli, electoral law, which Future opposed.¹⁰⁴ *Al-Mustaqbal*'s front pages on the days following the Farzli law's endorsement would celebrate Hariri's "civil project" amidst the "sectarian screaming," and then paint the party into the ranks of civil society activists with a prominent front-page photograph of non-Future activists decrying the Farzli law in downtown Beirut.¹⁰⁵

C. A civil party, but still sectarian?

Because Hezbollah's weapons were low-hanging political fruit, easily grabbed for the sake of mobilizing a community, Future never needed to construct a threat from the sectarian other. Nonetheless, the selective othering of Hezbollah, Iran, and Syria in Future and *al-Mustaqbal*'s politicized discourse may leave a sectarianizing mark despite the explicit separation of these actors from the Shi'a community as a whole. If receivers of these discourses conflate Hezbollah, Iran, and Syria with the Shi'a, each instance of Future's othering will exacerbate sectarianism.

¹⁰³ "Nuwāb Al-Mustaqbal: Hal Asbah Al-Wājib Al-Jihādi Musānida Shabihat Assad Fi Homs?," *Al-Mustaqbal*, October 12, 2012.

¹⁰⁴ Named by March 14 partisans after Elie Farzli, an Orthodox parliamentarian close to Hezbollah, who authored the law. See "Limatha Waif Al-Hariri 'ala Al-Nisbiyya?," *Beirut Observer*, June 16, 2017, <https://www.beirutobserver.com/2017/06/لماذا-وافق-الحريري-على-النسبية/>.

¹⁰⁵ "8 Āthar, Al-Katā'ib, Al-Quwāt 1 - Lbnan Sifr," *Al-Mustaqbal*, February 20, 2013, 4609 edition.

Al-Mustaqbal on several occasions did toe the line of conflating Hezbollah, Iran, and Syria with the Shi'a community as a whole. In November 2016, the paper ran a story on its front-page lower fold on Iran's strategic position "between Trump and the militarization of Shi'a society."¹⁰⁶ The paper argues that the annual march (taking place that week) at the Mosque of Imam Hussein in Karbala comes "not only within the context of Iran confronting Saudi Arabia," but also presents an opportunity for the intermingling of millions of Iranian Shi'a with Shi'a from across the globe to promote the transformation of "isolated Shi'a pockets into a single body under the direction of the *marshad* [Ayatollah Khamenei]."¹⁰⁷ The article continues: "This 'militarization' of the Shi'a in the world and the effort to transform them into a single, unified body, is part of" Iran's strategy to lift these groups from their marginalization as minorities. In this regard,

there is no doubt that the experience of Hezbollah has been successful if only in the name of the resistance in the beginning and its transformation into a cross-border army, which will lead to the replication of this experience by myriad means, as with the Iraqi *hashd* [*as-sha'abi*] and *ansar alluh* [Houthis] in Yemen.¹⁰⁸

The article concludes on a portending note, questioning if the region can be saved from conflict over "fear of the other."¹⁰⁹ By suggesting links between the Shi'a Lebanese

¹⁰⁶ "Irān Baya Trāmb w 'Askarat Al-Mujtam'a Al-Shi'i," *Al-Mustaqbal*, November 25, 2016.

¹⁰⁷ "Irān Baya Trāmb w 'Askarat Al-Mujtam'a Al-Shi'i."

¹⁰⁸ "Irān Baya Trāmb w 'Askarat Al-Mujtam'a Al-Shi'i."

¹⁰⁹ "Irān Baya Trāmb w 'Askarat Al-Mujtam'a Al-Shi'i."

community and Iranian grand strategy, *Al-Mustaqbal* opens the possibility of conflating the threat of Future's political others with the Shi'a community as a whole.

This chapter has shown that Future's media, like Hezbollah's, explicitly de-sectarianize others but employ highly selective framings of regional and domestic political events that may nonetheless work to exacerbate sectarianism. Hariri's February 2013 Biel speech captured many of the constructions that were repeated in Future's media framings throughout the post-Arab uprising period, including the construction of a "civil state" project in contrast to Hezbollah's "government of weapons." I also emphasized how media reports are framed to maximize a discourse's political function. The next chapter will present interview data to suggest how the potentially sectarianizing discursive bias explored in these preceding chapters is impacting Lebanese members of the Shi'a and Sunni communities.

CHAPTER IV

SECTARIANIZATION AND POLITICAL COMMUNITIES

My interviews with Lebanese Sunni and Shi'a suggest that the mediated othering constructions explored in Chapters 2 and 3 do exacerbate sectarian identities, but only for members of sectarian communities that are politically affiliated with the Future Movement or Hezbollah. However, this result is inconclusive based on eight interviews and demands a representative sample. I will use a qualitative analysis of my interview results to *suggest* how individuals may be impacted by media content's potentially sectarianizing selectivity of "others."

My argument is based on the fact that interview participants displayed a more intense discursive bias and/or pre-discursive tendencies to "other" the out-sect (receiver-trait contingencies) if they were politically active with either the Future Movement or Hezbollah. Receiver-trait contingencies were evidenced through the affective and behavioral displays of interviewees.

Among these behaviors, politically affiliated interviewees showed a tendency to speak with more pronounced sectarian othering when they identified their interlocutor as in-sect. This suggests that for these interviewees, *sectarian* rather than *political* identity was most relevant for determining whether the interlocutor was in-group ("self") or out-group ("other"). If supported with a larger sample, this pattern could lend further support to the argument that politically affiliated members of a community are those for which the distance between sectarian identities is exacerbated by mediated constructions of the Saudi-Iranian Cold War.

I will begin this chapter by introducing the source materials used in the interviews. I will then explain how interviewees used multiple levels of discourse in a manner analogous to the media explored in Chapters 2 and 3. In addition, I will explain how interviewees exhibited various modes of explicit discourse. I will then review the coded interview results and how they are used to support this thesis' argument. Finally, I will detail and analyze several key interview segments.

A. Sample Media Texts

Interviewees were shown texts from either *al-Manar* or *al-Mustaqbal* to test whether they would endorse or disavow the discursive framings of the respective media source. To test discursive bias, interviewees were asked only about the behavior of the out-sect's main party and patron. The goal was to see whether or not interviewees would "break" this built-in bias by criticizing both the in-sect and out-sect main party/patron rather than just those of the out-sect.

Shi'a interview candidates were shown two clips from *al-Manar*. The first suggests links between Saudi Arabia, March 14, and Islamist violence in North Lebanon.¹¹⁰ The snippet is from an intro to a political talk show, *Bānorāma al-Yūm*, from March 2016, about a ship loaded with munitions apprehended by the LAF on its way into Tripoli's port. The intro begins with the claim that certain "domestic political actors are attempting to bring the fallout from Syria's war into Lebanon" by attempting to turn Tripoli (now pictured behind the presenter) and "other northern cities into *emirat* [principalities] linked

¹¹⁰ "Bānorāma Al-Yūm," *Bānorāma Al-Yūm* (al-Manar, March 2, 2016).

to Syria.”¹¹¹ But, the presenter continues, the army had successfully secured most of the border, forcing “some regional states and those Lebanese who work with them to search for an alternative to compensate their losses.” Behind the presenter, an image of March 14 politicians backgrounded with the Saudi flag. “The sea has become the only alternative for them.” Now behind him, an image of the gun-running ship at sea.¹¹²

The second *al-Manar* clip¹¹³ for Shi’a participants is more explicit in constructing Future as a threat to Tripoli as a whole, but also implying a particular threat to the Alawi residents of Jabal Mohsen. It comes from mid-May, 2012, at the height of a long-running conflict in Tripoli’s Bab al-Tabaneh and Jebel Mohsen neighborhoods, the former Sunni and the latter Alawi. The day after *al-Manar*’s report, the army would redeploy to Syria Street separating the two neighborhoods.¹¹⁴ Throughout the Syrian war and before, the Bab al-Tabaneh-Jebel Mohsen conflict would be a continuously repeated theme for *al-Manar* (tellingly, not so much for *al-Mustaqbal*). This story came also at the time when Hezbollah had started intensifying its involvement in western Syria. The other news stories of the day on *al-Manar* were about conflicts in the streets throughout Lebanon and terrorist plots within Lebanese territory.

¹¹¹ “Bānorāma Al-Yūm.”

¹¹² “Bānorāma Al-Yūm.”

¹¹³ “Nashrat Al-Akhabār Al-Ra’isiyya,” *Nashrat Al-Akhabār Al-Ra’isiyya* (al-Manar, May 14, 2012).

¹¹⁴ “Lebanese Soldier among 8 Wounded in North Lebanon Clashes,” *The Daily Star*, May 16, 2012, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/May-16/173584-4-wounded-in-clashes-between-army-gunmen.ashx#axzz1uzBSxwRs>.

This second clip begins with a travel-feature-type montage, with clips of Tripoli and light, Salsa-like music. Then a red-lensed shot of the gargantuan “Allah” lettering sitting in the center of Tripoli’s Abdul Hamid Karami Square, as gun shots supersede the Salsa. Several seconds of militants firing around street corners follow, with the announcer portending: “And then there are those who want Tripoli to remain *this* city.”¹¹⁵ But “those” does not only mean the militants in the street-fighting scene: The report then jumps to a clip of a Future rally, a large crowd jubilantly waving light blue Future flags as they cheer for a Future politician yelling: “Tripoli is the capitol of Lebanese Sunnis! Bashar [al-Assad] you don’t rule Lebanon!”¹¹⁶ After more street-fighting scenes and an interview with a fifth-year school boy bearing a Kalashnikov and Balaklava, the voiceover concludes: “The people of Tripoli need not wait for an investigation to uncover who is violating their security. The sun is high.” And then comes Saad Hariri’s voice, a speech excerpt apparently being used ironically: “And the the Lebanese will say ‘no problem’ that the guns are ready to be used against civilians. No, it’s not ‘no problem’.”¹¹⁷

Sunni participants were shown one *al-Mustaqbal* article¹¹⁸ that clearly asserts a (non-imminent) threat from Hezbollah and its counterparts higher up the food chain, Syria and Iran. Titled “Hezbollah ...one ‘scarecrow’ in two countries,” the article is one of the few

¹¹⁵ Emphasis added. “Nashrat Al-Akhabār Al-Ra’isiyya.”

¹¹⁶ “Nashrat Al-Akhabār Al-Ra’isiyya.”

¹¹⁷ “Nashrat Al-Akhabār Al-Ra’isiyya.”

¹¹⁸ Only one article was used for the sake of efficiency, with the assumption that interviewees might need more time to properly read one article than would be necessary to watch the *al-Manar* excerpts.

instances where *al-Mustaqbal* published a photo of Nasrallah (here he appears stern-faced and gesticulating during a speech).¹¹⁹ It is also one of the more explicit constructions of Hezbollah as a danger to Lebanon, including Lebanese Shi'a.

The article comes from October 17, 2012, just after Hezbollah flew an Iranian drone into Israeli airspace and only several days before Wisam al-Hassan's assassination.¹²⁰ Written during Future's time in opposition, it accuses Hezbollah of using its weapons to "instill fear"¹²¹ (the wording implicitly links Hezbollah and that catch-all buzzword of Middle East politics, "terrorism") as a means to impose its will on Lebanon and the Lebanese state. Hezbollah is constructed as not a Lebanese organization but one that operates in both Syria and Lebanon. *Wilyat al-Faqih*, or Iran's Islamic governing philosophy, is a masquerade given from Iran to Hezbollah as a means to cover its anti-democratic intentions. The 2006 July War and the drone incident are interwoven to construct Hezbollah as a danger to Lebanon.¹²²

B. Individuals' levels of discourse

The interviews showed that the discourses of Lebanese individuals operate on multiple levels analogous to those explored in Chapters 2 and 3. This observation supports my claim

¹¹⁹ "Hezbollah..." fiza'a" Wāhida Fi Baladayn," *Al-Mustaqbal*, October 17, 2012.

¹²⁰ On Hassan's assassination, see "Istishhād Al-'amid Wisam Al-Hasan Fi Infjār Al-Ashrafiyya," *LBCI*, October 19, 2012.

¹²¹ "Hezbollah..." fiza'a" Wāhida Fi Baladayn."

¹²² "Limatha Waif Al-Hariri 'ala Al-Nisbiyya?," *Beirut Observer*, June 16, 2017, <https://www.beirutobserver.com/2017/06/لماذا-وافق-الحريري-على-النسبية/>.

that that there are multiple levels on which *al-Mustaqbal*'s and *al-Manar*'s discourses can be internalized by receivers. Interviewees also “code switched”¹²³ between national- and party-centric explicit constructions according to whether their interlocutor was in-sect or out-sect. The party-centric discourse showed greater bias against the out-sect party and patron and was used more often by party-affiliated interviewees. This observation supports my claim that the sectarian-exacerbating effects of political media are concentrated within politically affiliated subsets of sects.

The more “socially desirable” nation-centric discourse seems to be held in common across Lebanon’s confessional groups.¹²⁴ Such are the common refrains of taxi drivers throughout Lebanon: “All politicians are liars!” and “There’s no state!” and “It’s all just politics!” or “It’s all just foreign interests!” Here, politics is something to rail about but imagined as distant and untouchable by the citizen. As such, no discursive bias is evident because the speaker imagines herself/himself in a space that is disjointed from the political sphere.

The party-centric discourse does away with dissociation, placing the participant more clearly within a “we” by more clearly identifying a “they.” As with the media of Chapters 3 and 4, the “they” was most often out-sect. However, it still explicitly disavows sectarian constructions. For some, speaking more in line with the nation-centric discourse, this bias

¹²³ Formally, code switching means to switch between manners of speaking within a single conversation. Here it is being adapted slightly to mean switching between manners of speaking depending on with whom a Lebanese is speaking and other contextual factors.

¹²⁴ Based on my own casual observations and work on other research projects in Lebanon.

means claiming that all politicians are a threat but then giving examples of specific politicians that come only from the out-sect party. For others, operating further from the nation-centric discourse, this bias means directly expressing concerns about either the out-sect main party and patron or even the out-sect sect as a whole. In either case, the discourse contains a bias against entities linked to the out-sect.

Receiver traits seem to be most important for determining how the potentially sectarianizing effects of politicalized media impact individuals' identities. These traits are what I hypothesize to be the pre-discursive attitudes and cognitions of the discourse receiver. They were evidenced in interviews through behaviors or affective displays. Collectively, these predispositions likely determine whether the discursive biases of political discourse exacerbate sectarianism or not. If the receiver is predisposed to linking the main party and patron with the out-sect as a whole, I argue that that individual's sectarian identity will be exacerbated. I will suggest that those more likely to carry this predisposition are the politically affiliated.

C. Breaking down relationships and hypotheses

Whether interviewees deployed more elements of the nation-centric or party-centric, more biased discourse related to two factors: (1) the participant's degree of political affiliation – in terms of expressed affiliation or active participation in rallies, party meetings, and party institutions – and (2) the sect identity of the interviewer.¹²⁵ How these

¹²⁵ In Chapter 1 I raised the question of why both the Future Movement and Hezbollah tend to an explicitly de-sectarianized discourse. One of these possibilities was that they temper language to avoid conflict. This argument is lent

two variables relate causatively to the discursive positions adopted by the individual is a subject that we can only hypothesize on with this data.

I suggest that Factor 2 is a matter of receiver traits indicating a greater likelihood of having sectarian identity exacerbated by the selective “othering” of politicized media’s discursive bias. That the sect identity of the interviewer mattered suggests that the interviewee, on the precognitive level, considered *sect* identity as relevant for determining who is in-group (the “self”) and who is out-group (the “other”). As a general principle, humans are more comfortable sharing unrefined thoughts with in-group individuals because they assume that in-group members will hold similar positions. I will suggest that those individuals who are predisposed to distinguish between in-group and out-group based on sect identity are more likely to conflate the othering constructs of a political party and patron with the out-sect as a whole. In other words, they are more likely to be impacted by the sectarianizing effect of media’s discursive bias.

Factor 1 could be related to the discursive positions and the sectarianizing effects of political media in several ways. Further research should work to clarify these relationships. I will posit that the concurrence of Factor 1 and Factor 2 suggests that politically affiliated subsets of sects are those for whom the precognitive, sect-based differentiation of in-group and out-group is stronger.¹²⁶ This would mean that the most likely to be impacted by the

credence by the tendency of interviewees to avoiding othering discourses when speaking with out-group individuals.

¹²⁶ It is not possible with my interview data to suggest the direction of causality between Factor 1 and Factor 2 (or the possibility of other variables).

sectarianizing impacts of politicized media are politically affiliated subsets of sects that already have predispositions to differentiate based on sect.

The following table summarizes my interview results. Variables 1-6 indicate characteristics of the interviewee, as well as the interviewer's sect identity. Variables 7-13 encapsulate the interviewee's responses to key questions. These variables are coded on a basic numerical scale. Lower values indicate responses more in line with a nation-centric discourse. Higher values indicate responses more in line with the party-centric discourse that contains greater bias against the out-sect. Based on my hypothesis discussed above, I suggest that those interview subjects with higher average values for variables 7 to 13 are more likely to have their sectarian identities impacted by the politicized media framings of the Saudi-Iranian Cold War.

Table 4.1: Coded Interview Results¹²⁷

Table guide:

- 1. Sec – Sect of Interviewee**
- 2. IntSec – Sect of Interviewer**
- 3. Loc – Location interview and interviewee place of residence**
- 4. G – Gender**
- 5. P-part - Level of participation in organized party activity**
Scale: “0” = None; “1” = Casual support, not active; “2” = Active, participates in events
- 6. A – Age**
Scale: “0” = 20-30; “1” = 30-40; “2” = 40-50; “3” = 50-60; “4” = 60-65
- 7. Bias - Did the interviewee actively step beyond in-group bias built into questions?**
Scale: “0” = yes; “1” = ostensibly, but answers skewed; “2” = no
- 8. Com T – Did interviewee identify his/her self-identified community as being threatened?**
Scale: “0” = no; “1” = indirect/partial; “2” = yes
- 9. T Sec – Did the interviewee identify the Lebanese sectarian other as a threat?**
Scale: “0” = no; “1” = low-level (i.e., "negative impact"); “2” = indirectly identified; “3” = yes, direct identification, but not imminent; “4” = imminent
- 10. T Part – Did the interviewee identify the party linked to the sectarian other as a threat?**
Scale: “0” = no; “1” = low-level (i.e., "negative impact"); “2” = indirectly identified; “3” = yes, direct identification, but not imminent; “4” = imminent
- 11. T Ext – Did the interviewee identify the external patron linked to the sectarian other/party as a threat?**
Scale: “0” = no; “1” = low-level (i.e., "negative impact"); “2” = indirectly identified; “3” = yes, direct identification, but not imminent; “4” = imminent
- 12. Disjoint politics? – Interviewee defers to answering that Lebanese politicians work only for their own interests?**
Scale: “0” = majority answer; “1” = occasional answers; “2” = never says
- 13. Media agree? – Interviewee’s reaction to the media sample and subsequent answering indicates affirmation in accuracy of media construction.**
“0” = no, clear disavowal; “1” = indirect/partial disavowal; “2” = indirect/partial avowal; “3” = yes, clear avowal

Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1. Sec	Shi’a	Sunni	Sunni	Sunni	Sunni	Shi’a	Shi’a	Shi’a
2. IntSec	Druze	Druze	Sunni	Sunni	Sunni	Sunni	Shi’a	Sunni
3. Loc	Beirut	Beirut	Haret Saida	Haret Saida	Saida	Saida	Haret Saida	Saida
4. G	M	M	M	M	F	F	M	M
5. P-part	1	0	1	1	2	0	2	2
6. A	1	?	4	4	0	?	3	0
7. Bias	0	2	1.5	2	1	1.5	1	0
8. Com T	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
9. T Sec	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

¹²⁷ Interviews by Ms. Hase-Ibrahim; Interviews by Mr. al-Aridi.

10. T Part	1	0	1	1	3	0	3	3
11. T Ext	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
12. Disjoint politics?	0	1	2	2	1	3	1	1
13. Media agree?	2	0	3	3	2	0	3	3
7-13 Avg.	0.6	0.6	1.1	1.1	1.4	0.8	1.4	1.1

D. Qualitative exploration of interviews

Behaviors suggesting a predisposition for sect “othering” were best evidenced during an interview with two Sunni males (Participants C and D) in their mid-60’s who were found playing backgammon outside a furniture shop belonging to one of them. Being in Haret Saida, the city’s Shi’a neighborhood and a Hezbollah stronghold, the two participants had assumed their interviewer was Shi’a. In response to a question about Hezbollah, one addressed the interviewer to hedge: “Sorry, because you’re Shi’a, but we do not support Hezbollah’s intervention in Syria.” When she clarified that she is actually Sunni, the interviewees’ demeanors quickly shifted. They began to elaborate more fluidly in their answers, they offered to carry on the conversation beyond the interview questions to assist with the research, and even offered life advice.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Interview by Ms. Hase-Ibrahim.

That the interviewee had to apologize because he thought the interviewer was Shi'a indicates a predisposition to conflate out-sect party with the out-sect as a whole. Because she was Shi'a, he would need to apologize for criticizing Hezbollah.

To further test these receiver traits, the interviewer was switched out. A Shi'a from the south¹²⁹ was sent back into Haret Saida to interview a Shi'a (Participant G). We cannot conclusively prove that the interviewee's discursive choices were impacted by the alignment of interviewer and interviewee sect because we do not know what his answers might have been if the interviewer was of a different sect. However, his insistence on knowing the identity of the interviewer, together with his high average coded score (1.4), indicates that the interviewer's identity likely facilitated him to speak with a party-centric discourse.

In this case, the interviewer approached a group of boisterously gesticulating men in their mid-50's on a smoke break in their shop. The shop's walls were adorned with pictures of Ayatollah Khomeini and Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, the latter being Hezbollah's spiritual guide.¹³⁰ Before even reaching names, the full-bellied shop owner (Participant G) pierced: "Where are you from?" Khiam, the interviewer replied, naming her quiet Shi'a

¹²⁹ Note that she could not perform the interview herself because she lacked CITI certification, so she has been cited under Ms. Hase-Ibrahim's name. Ms. Hase-Ibrahim accompanied and supervised the interviewer, but did not identify her (ambiguous) sectarian identity to the subject. We can assume that the subject thought her Shi'a as well.

¹³⁰ Despite having passed away in 2010, many Lebanese Shi'a still listen to audio recordings of his sermons.

ancestral home that sits just south of Marjayoun and just north of the Israeli-occupied Sheba'a farms.¹³¹

Her hometown's sleepy demeanor belies its violent place in the story of Shi'a political consciousness and the rise of Hezbollah. During Lebanon's civil war and after, it was the site of the infamous Israeli-Southern Lebanese Army Khiam detention center, known for the brutal torture of Lebanese interned there.¹³² In 2000, Hezbollah fighters stormed the SLA-controlled facility to free their comrades imprisoned within.¹³³

The shop owner replied exuberantly, with a brimming smiling on his face: "You're from among us!" and moved onto the second-most-important question: "From which family?" The answer pushed his voice even louder, his smile even wider: "From a family descendent of the prophet!" he belted.¹³⁴

When asked about groups that threaten Lebanon's future, Future was first on the list and first for scorn: "They don't even know where god put them." Then it was Future-aligned Lebanese Forces, collaborators of the Zionists, and *takfiri-salafi* groups. When asked about whether or not politicians represented the will of their respective sects, he began with nation-centric discourse. The politicians work for their own interests and to

¹³¹ Interview by Ms. Hase-Ibrahim.

¹³² "Israel's Forgotten Hostages: Lebanese Detainees in Israel and Khiam Detention Centre" (Amnesty International, July 1997), <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/164000/mde150181997en.pdf>.

¹³³ "Waqā'a Tahrir Mu'ataqali Sijn Al-Khiām 'ām 2000" (mawq'a al-muqāwama al-islāmiyya fi labnan, October 19, 2007), <https://www.moqawama.org/essaydetailsf.php?eid=1941&fid=46>.

¹³⁴ Interview by Ms. Hase-Ibrahim.

placate their foreign supporters, he said. The rub came in the two “foreign powers” he listed: Saudi Arabia and Israel.¹³⁵

Responding – without a lick of criticism or disavowal – to the the first Shia-participant video, about the Lutfalluh II and suggestions of Saudi-Future involvement, the interviewee said what was being shown was Saudi’s attempt to realize its interests through (armed) organizations in Tripoli. This comes “at the expense of [Lebanon’s] unity,” he said. His response to the second video went further in clarifying Saudi’s relationship to local actors: “Saudi Arabia is interested in igniting *fitna* in Lebanon, and works at that aim through these parties and people in the Lebanese streets.”¹³⁶

This animated shop owner’s discursive constructions of Saudi Arabia, Future, and Hezbollah match the discourse that the latter party is constructing through its media. When asked what Saudi’s actions mean for his community, he responded: “It threatens my community when it stands in the face of Hezbollah, which seeks to protect *me* and preserve Lebanon and its independence.”¹³⁷ On Hezbollah’s intervention in Syria, a similarly party-perfect line: Hezbollah’s intervention in Syria is for the sake of protecting Lebanon from ISIS. He emphasized that this meant protecting *all* of Lebanon’s sects from ISIS.¹³⁸

These three interviewees in Haret Saida ranked among the highest in their average coded scores, with either 1.1 or 1.4. They also were among the more politically affiliated,

¹³⁵ Interview by Ms. Hase-Ibrahim.

¹³⁶ Interview by Ms. Hase-Ibrahim.

¹³⁷ Emphasis added. Interview by Ms. Hase-Ibrahim.

¹³⁸ Interview by Ms. Hase-Ibrahim.

scoring either 1 or 2 for political participation. Those that scored 0 for political participation were on the lower end of the average coded scores, with 0.6 and 0.8. These interviewees exhibited the nation-centric discourse which disconnects the speaker from the political sphere and does not build in biases.

A young Sunni from Beirut (Participant B) exemplified the non-selective discourse of a non-partisan. He rejected any link between political leaders and sects and insisted that Hezbollah and Iran's relationship is nothing exceptional in Lebanon. He rejected *al-Mustaqbal's* representation of the drone incident as dipping into conspiracy theories and an exaggeration.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Interview by Mr. al-Aridi.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

My thesis suggests a partial confirmation of the claim that the Saudi-Iranian regional cold war is exacerbating sectarianism in Lebanon. Partial in the sense that *some* members of a sect appear to have their sectarian identities exacerbated by mediated framings of the conflict. I *hypothesize* that the sectarian identities of the politically affiliated are more likely to be exacerbated. Therefore, a more accurate formulation of the claim will recognize that overlapping domestic and regional political competition does not exacerbate the distance between sects in their entirety, but only between political communities that are subsets of these sects. As an alternative formulation, I suggest that the Saudi-Iranian Cold War is exacerbating *political sectarianism* in Lebanon.

This reformulation is an attempt to redress a broader problem in Lebanon, which is that the sectarian behavior of headline-making Lebanese political actors usually sets the tone for defining Lebanon as “sectarian.” In January 2018, for example, the Christian Free Patriotic Movement leader Gibran Bassil called Shi’a Amal leader Nabih Berri a “thug.” The violent reaction of Berri’s partisans in Beirut’s streets led to comments on Lebanon’s inherent confessionalism.¹⁴⁰ But it seemed that the majority of Lebanon’s Shi’a and Christians were more concerned about the traffic caused by tire-burning protestors than who called whom a what.

¹⁴⁰ Tom Perry and Bassam Laila, “Old Enmity Tips Lebanon into New Crisis,” *Reuters*, January 29, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-politics/old-enmity-tips-lebanon-into-new-crisis-idUSKBN1FI29Q>.

Further exploration of my hypothesis that the sectarianizing effects of the Saudi-Iranian Cold War are limited to politically affiliated subsets of sects will require addressing several key limitations of this thesis. First, it is important to note that I have only *hypothesized* that a few interview subjects have had their sectarian identities exacerbated. This hypothesis is based on assumptions that led me to posit that their identities were *more likely* to have been impacted by mediated discourses of the Saudi-Iranian Cold War.

Proving this causal relationship will be very difficult, though using a time-series approach to interviews could evince patterns. A large-N interview set will be necessary to capture a representative sample and make statistically relevant observations. These interviews could be done in sets after major events of the Saudi-Iranian Cold War to see if major events are followed by shifts in discursive constructs.

Next, I have made an argument about the reproduction of sectarian identities on the communal and individual levels by looking narrowly at mediated discourses. Media certainly is not the only institution relevant to identity production. In fact, it works in dialectic with other institutions and processes. Strengthening my argument, therefore, will mean bringing in more data from previous studies and original research to untangle sectarian identity and political identity. This will mean, for example, understanding how this politicized notion of the sect interacts with religious identity, practice, and institutions.

Finally, I will want to further explore what I have hypothesized to be the “pre-discursive” predispositions of those politically affiliated Lebanese who I suggest are more likely impacted by incidentally sectarian discourse. Most importantly, I do not have sufficient data to support my suggestion that these predispositions correlate to political affiliation. The proposed large-N study will help clarify this possible correlation. A method

should be developed to determine whether political participation is breeding these dispositions or if these predispositions encourage political participation.

If proven more conclusively, my hypothesis that regional political contestation only exacerbates sectarianism among politically affiliated subsets of sects can support existing claims¹⁴¹ that Lebanon's political process is a barrier to deconstructing sectarianism. In order to survive, parties need to create "others." Even when they attempt to de-sectarianize these others in order to make their rhetoric more palatable, I have attempted to show that parties are still incidentally putting up barriers between subsets of sects. Therefore, it is perhaps heartening that the majority of Lebanese¹⁴² are apathetic or averse to Lebanon's political class.

¹⁴¹ See, for example, Salloukh et al., *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon*, chap. Introduction.

¹⁴² Only 49.2% of Lebanese voted in the May 2018 parliamentary polls. "Final Breakdown of Voter Turnout for 2018 Elections," *The Daily Star*, May 7, 2018, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-Elections/2018/May-07/448314-final-breakdown-of-voter-turnout-for-2018-elections.ashx>.

APPENDIX I INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Segment 1

Q: How are Lebanese Sunnis and Shi'a different?

Q: What do you think the political actions of Sunni/Shi'a political organizations mean for Lebanon's future?

Q: What do you think the political actions of Sunni/Shi'a political organizations mean for Shi'a/Sunni's future?

Q: Do the decisions of Sunni/Shi'a political actors represent the will of Sunni/Shi'a as a whole?

Segment 2

I show real article/image from local newspaper or news broadcast representing a political patron (i.e., Saudi/Iran) in regional setting (e.g., in Syria).

Q: Does this article accurately reflect what Saudi Arabia/Iran wants in the region?

If not addressed following previous question: What does Saudi Arabia/Iran want in the region?

Q: How do the actions of Saudi Arabia/Iran impact Lebanon?

Q: What do the actions of Saudi/Iran mean for Lebanese Sunnis/Shi'a?

Segment 3

I show a second article/image from newspaper/news broadcast, again representing a regional political patron, but this time treating that patron's politics in Lebanon.

Q: How is (Iran/Saudi) being depicted in this article?

Q: Do you think that this depiction is accurate?

Q: Does Iran's/Saudi's involvement in Lebanon make you feel negatively or positively about Shi'a/Sunni political actors' aspirations?

APPENDIX II
CATALOGUE OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS TEXTS

Title	Publication	Date	Source
"حزب الله".. "فزاغة" واحدة في بلدين	المستقبل	10/17/12	AUB Jafet Library
طائرة ايرانية الصنع.. والاهداف	المستقبل	10/18/12	AUB Jafet Library
نواب "المستقبل": هل اصبح الواجب الجهادي مساندة شبيحة الأسد في حمص	المستقبل	10/5/12	AUB Jafet Library
لبنان مجدداً منضمة للرسائل الايرانية	المستقبل	11/24/12	AUB Jafet Library
سطوة "حزب السلاح" طريق العبور الى دولة اللأمن	المستقبل	2/3/13	AUB Jafet Library
ركوب "انتصار" موصل.. لا يوصل	المستقبل	7/13/17	AUB Jafet Library
"حزب الله" الممسك بقرار.. الصواريخ	المستقبل	11/24/12	AUB Jafet Library
ايران بين ترامب و"عسكرة" المجتمع الشيعي"	المستقبل	11/22/16	AUB Jafet Library
وهاب.. و"السرائيا" الايرانية المقنعة.. المكشوفة	المستقبل	11/22/16	AUB Jafet Library
"حزب الله" يعادل "شهادات الحياة".."ب"شهادة وفاة"	المستقبل	7/10/17	AUB Jafet Library
طائرة من دون طيار.. وحسابات ايرانية	المستقبل	10/17/12	AUB Jafet Library
السنيرة: الوطنية ليست حكرا على حزب صنعته ايران	المستقبل	10/18/12	AUB Jafet Library
"المستقبل": الطائرة الايرانية قمة التوريط للبنان	المستقبل	10/17/12	AUB Jafet Library
"أيوب" اللبناي و"أيوب" الايراني	المستقبل	10/21/12	AUB Jafet Library
كلام فنيش والتساؤلات الشيعية المستقلة	المستقبل	10/10/12	AUB Jafet Library
ايران: نحو "انتفاضة التومان"	المستقبل	10/5/12	AUB Jafet Library
انفجار.. مخزن "روايات" لا تتطفي نارها	المستقبل	10/5/12	AUB Jafet Library
ديموقراطيون "شيعية" في مواجهة الاقتراء والتهديد	المستقبل	10/2/12	AUB Jafet Library

السفير "الشبيح" تحت عباءة "حزب الله"	المستقبل	2/19/13	AUB Jafet Library
العجوز: النظام الفارسي يحاول تصدير ارهابه الى المنطقة من البوابة اللبنانية	المستقبل	2/18/13	AUB Jafet Library
حارس "الموريدور" الفارسي	المستقبل	7/10/17	AUB Jafet Library
نواب "المستقبل": "حزب اللع ينفخ في نار الحرب ويقامر بمستقبل البلد	المستقبل	10/9/12	AUB Jafet Library
نظام الإرهاب الكلي الاسدي ولحظته التدشينية المكثفة	المستقبل	2/14/13	AUB Jafet Library
الحريري: "حزب الله" ليس الشيعة والسلاح ام المشاكل	المستقبل	2/15/13	AUB Jafet Library
١٤ اذار: اغتيال الحسن دليل على قرار النظام السوري الاستباحة لبنان	المستقبل	10/25/12	AUB Jafet Library
بانورامة اليوم	المنار	2/22/16	almanar.com.lb
حديث الساعة	المنار	2/26/16	almanar.com.lb
كلمة السيد حسن نصرالله	المنار	3/1/16	almanar.com.lb
بانورامة اليوم	المنار	3/2/16	almanar.com.lb
كلمة السيد حسن نصرالله	المنار	3/6/16	almanar.com.lb
بانورامة اليوم	المنار	3/8/16	almanar.com.lb
بانورامة اليوم	المنار	14/3/16	almanar.com.lb
كلمة السيد حسن نصرالله	المنار	13/11/16	almanar.com.lb
كلمة السيد حسن نصرالله	المنار	12/3/13	almanar.com.lb
نشرة الاخبار الرئيسية	المنار	12/29/13	almanar.com.lb
نشرة الاخبار الرئيسية	المنار	12/30/13	almanar.com.lb
نشرة الاخبار الرئيسية	المنار	5/1/14	almanar.com.lb
حديث الساعة	المنار	1/3/14	almanar.com.lb
نشرة الاخبار الرئيسية	المنار	5/14/12	almanar.com.lb
لبنان من "حلقة الانتظار"... الى "حافة الفوضى"	الانتقاد	5/18/12	alahednews.com.lb
الطائفية وانتقال السحر على الساحر	الانتقاد	7/4/12	alahednews.com.lb
الوهابية والداعشية: تطابق في الفكر والعمل	الانتقاد	7/4/12	alahednews.com.lb
طرابلس.. رهينة تيار المستقبل	الانتقاد	3/15/13	alahednews.com.lb

APPENDIX III
CATALOGUE OF NASRALLAH SPEECH DATES

15-Jan-10	26-Jan-10	4-Feb-10	16-Feb-10	1-May-10
21-May-10	25-May-10	3-Jun-10	4-Jun-10	16-Jul-10
22-Jul-10	25-Jul-10	3-Aug-10	9-Aug-10	24-Aug-10
3-Sep-10	9-Oct-10	11-Nov-10	28-Nov-10	25-Jan-11
19-Mar-11	25-May-11	1-Jun-11	6-Jun-11	27-Jul-11
17-Aug-11	26-Aug-11	11-Nov-11	14-Jan-12	7-Feb-12
16-Feb-12	24-Feb-12	4-Mar-12	18-Apr-12	11-May-12
25-May-12	1-Jun-12	25-Jan-13	18-Feb-13	27-Feb-13
10-May-13	25-May-13	14-Jun-13	20-Dec-13	16-Feb-14
29-Mar-14	25-May-14	6-Jun-14	25-Jun-14	15-Aug-14
3-Nov-14	9-Jan-15	30-Jan-15	16-Feb-15	27-Mar-15
17-Apr-15	5-May-15	16-May-15	24-May-15	5-Jun-15
10-Jul-15	18-Oct-15	21-Dec-15		

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