

Original Paper

Binarism within Polarity Dimensions in Lebanon: A Qualitative Interpretive Analysis of Competing Lebanese Perceptions toward the Resistance Movement in its Conflict with Israel

Hussin J. Hejase^{1*}, Ghada M. Chehimi², & Georges Masse³

¹ Senior Researcher, Basic and Applied Sciences Research Center, Al Maaref University, Beirut, Lebanon; IEEE Senior Member

² Director, English Department, College of Arts and Sciences, Phoenicia University, Daoudiye, Zahrani, Southern Lebanon

³ Dean, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of International Affairs, American University of Science and Technology, Beirut, Lebanon

* Hussin J. Hejase, Senior Researcher, Basic and Applied Sciences Research Center, Al Maaref University, Beirut, Lebanon; IEEE Senior Member

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Abstract

Lebanon has historically experienced political, sectarian, ideological, and international divisions that shape public debates and national identity. Among the most prominent issues is the role of the resistance movement, particularly Hezbollah, in its conflict with Israel. This study employs a qualitative interpretive methodology to analyze binary divisions within Lebanese society concerning support for or opposition to the resistance movement. The analysis synthesizes academic literature, public discourse, political narratives, media coverage, and recent research to illustrate how societal factors shape divergent viewpoints. The findings identify several key factors influencing Lebanese perspectives, including resistance versus sovereignty, security versus instability, nationalism versus transnationalism, protection versus provocation, and communal survival versus authority. Supporters of the resistance movement frequently regard it as a legitimate means of defending the nation against Israeli aggression, whereas critics perceive it as a threat to state sovereignty and a source of persistent conflict. The study demonstrates that both perspectives are informed by distinct historical experiences, collective traumas, identity formation processes, and security concerns. Overall, the research indicates that binarism functions as a social and political mechanism in Lebanon, shaping public opinion and

reinforcing divisions.

Keywords

Lebanon, binarism, polarity dimensions, Hezbollah, resistance movement

1. Introduction

Lebanon is a politically diverse but deeply divided country in the Middle East. Since gaining independence in 1943, its development has been shaped by colonial history, sectarian power-sharing, regional involvement, civil wars, and geopolitical rivalries (Harkous, 2025). Lebanon has faced ongoing challenges in balancing different sectarian identities, regional ties, and national goals within a fragile power-sharing system (Traboulsi, 2012). Its political structure, based on confessional representation, has allowed different groups to coexist but has also reinforced social divisions (Salloukh et al., 2015).

Among the most contentious issues in Lebanese public discourse is the role of armed resistance movements, particularly Hezbollah, in confronting Israel. Since its emergence during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, Hezbollah has transformed from a relatively localized resistance movement into one of the country's most influential political and military actors (Norton, 2014). Supporters regard the movement as a legitimate force of national defense that successfully resisted Israeli occupation and continues to deter external aggression. Opponents, however, argue that its autonomous military capabilities undermine state sovereignty, weaken democratic institutions, and contribute to recurring political crises (Harb & Leenders, 2005).

These different views show what scholars call binarism, which is the tendency to see social reality in terms of opposing categories (Derrida, 1976). Binarism simplifies complex issues into pairs like security versus insecurity, legitimacy versus illegitimacy, nationalism versus regionalism, and sovereignty versus resistance. These binaries often shape political debates, influence how group identities form, and increase social divisions. For example, structuralist and post-structuralist scholars have argued that societies frequently organize meaning through binary oppositions such as self versus other, security versus threat, and legitimacy versus illegitimacy (Saussure, 1983; Chandler, 2007; Oad, Shaikh, & Khan, 2025).

Lebanon is a strong example for studying binarism because political identities often form through opposition and difference. People's views on the resistance movement are rarely neutral and are usually tied to broader stories about historical injustice, national pride, state power, community survival, and regional politics. These binaries are especially clear in debates about armed resistance, national sovereignty, and Lebanon's relationship with Israel (Harkous, 2025; Toti and Saleh, 2026). For instance, in 1958, "President Camille Chamoun attempted to prolong his term as Arab nationalism led by the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser surged throughout the area. Lebanon divided into two factions: Supporters for Western intervention, U.S.-aligned initiative and those who favor the Nasserist and

Soviet-backed side” (para 10). Another example where Lebanese were divided as well into two camps is “the 1969 declaration of Cairo Agreement transferring authority over the 16 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon from the Lebanese Armed Forces to the Palestinian Armed Struggle Command (PLO)” (UNRWA, 2026, para 1), along with other events in the recent Lebanon’s history.

The resistance movement occupies a central position within Lebanese political discourse (Batruni & Hallinan, 2018; Toti and Saleh, 2026). Supporters emphasize its important role in resisting Israeli occupation and defending Lebanese territory (ICRC, 2006). Critics, however, argue that its military autonomy undermines state institutions and contributes to recurring instability (Rahal, 2026). Consequently, public perceptions often polarize, producing contrasting narratives about legitimacy, nationalism, security, and governance.

Recent scholarship demonstrates that public support for the Lebanese resistance movement, Hezbollah, cannot be reduced to simplistic sectarian explanations (Salloukh, Barakat, Al-Habbal et al., 2019). Instead, attitudes are determined by identity-based legitimacy, governance considerations, historical experiences, and contextual political developments (Saouli, 2019a, b; Karakoç et al., 2022; Rahal, 2026; Suechika, 2026). Research further suggests that support and opposition fluctuate according to perceptions of security threats and political circumstances (The Arab Weekly, 2025). Consequently, understanding Lebanese polarization necessitates examining how competing narratives construct meaning and legitimacy around the resistance movement.

This study explores how binarism shapes Lebanese discussions about the resistance movement and its conflict with Israel. Using a qualitative interpretive approach, it identifies and examines the main areas of division that influence support and opposition. The findings contribute to broader conversations about political polarization, identity, and state-building in Lebanon. The central question addressed is how Lebanese citizens develop competing interpretations of the resistance movement and how these interpretations contribute to wider societal polarization.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study intends to:

- 1) Examine the concept of binarism within Lebanese political discourse.
- 2) Identify the major polarity dimensions that shape perceptions of the resistance movement.
- 3) Analyze arguments advanced by supporters and opponents.
- 4) Explore the sociological and historical foundations of these perceptions.
- 5) Assess the consequences of such polarization for Lebanese national cohesion.

1.3 Research Questions

- 1) How does binarism manifest in Lebanese perceptions of the resistance movement?
- 2) What polarity dimensions structure support for and opposition to the resistance movement?
- 3) How do historical memory, identity, and security concerns shape these perceptions?
- 4) What are the wider implications of such polarization for Lebanon?

The subsequent sections address these research questions by identifying and analyzing relevant themes within the findings and discussion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Fundamental Theories

2.1.1 Social Identity Theory

Henri Tajfel and John Turner's Social Identity Theory (SIT) provides a core framework to understand how individuals derive a sense of self from their membership in social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The theory proposes that individuals categorize themselves and others into various social groups, such as political parties, religious communities, ethnic affiliations, or ideological movements (Khadka, 2024). These categorizations contribute markedly to personal identity and modify perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors toward both in-group and out-group members, generating loyalty and sometimes hostility (Hitlin, Kwon, & Firat, 2021; Franco, 2024).

According to SIT, three interrelated processes shape social behavior: Social categorization, social identification, and social comparison (Abrams, 2001; Khadka, 2024). Social categorization involves classifying individuals into groups based on perceived similarities or shared characteristics (Al-Habbal, 2011). In Lebanon, sectarian, political, and ideological affiliations frequently influence interpretations of national events (Assi, 2022). Moreover, in Lebanon, where political affiliations often intersect with sectarian, regional, and ideological identities, individuals frequently categorize themselves as supporters or opponents of the resistance movement. Such categorizations ease complex social realities and facilitate the formation of collective identities (Halawi, 2024).

The second process, social identification, occurs when individuals internalize group membership into their self-concept. For example, the new Lebanese "Change Oriented Bloc" (Halawi, 2024) and Hezbollah (Daher, 2017). Group values, norms, and narratives become essential elements of personal identity (Turner et al., 1987). Supporters of the resistance movement may view resistance against Israel as a moral obligation, a source of national pride, and a symbol of sovereignty (Daher, 2017; Mokdad, 2022; Alexander, 2025). Conversely, opponents may identify with alternative visions of statehood, governance, and international relations that emphasize political neutrality, institutional authority, or economic stability. In both cases, political positions become closely intertwined with personal and collective identities (Mokdad, 2022).

The third process, social comparison, entails assessing one's group relative to other groups. Individuals generally seek positive distinctiveness, meaning they desire their group to be viewed favorably compared to others (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Daher, 2017; Mokdad, 2022). Consequently, in-group favoritism and out-group stereotyping regularly occur. As Brewer (1999) notes, social identity often triggers psychological mechanisms that reinforce solidarity within groups while heightening suspicion toward competing groups. Within the Lebanese context, supporters of the resistance movement may

portray their group as patriotic defenders of national sovereignty, while skeptics may characterize the movement as a source of domestic instability or geopolitical entanglement. Similarly, opponents may perceive themselves as advocates of state legitimacy and reform, whereas supporters may view them as detached from the realities of regional threats. Abou Ismail (2024) describes the situation as a “Nation with competing visions and outside pressures” (para 1).

Social Identity Theory is particularly relevant to understanding binarism because it explains how political disagreements evolve into identity-based divisions. Once political positions become embedded within social identities, opposing viewpoints are no longer perceived merely as alternative perspectives but as challenges to the group’s legitimacy and values. This phenomenon contributes to the emergence of binary narratives characterized by “us versus them” distinctions. Psychodynamic theory also helps us understand how early bonds shape our tendency to form “ingroups” and “outgroups”. Perez (2026) argues that “Individuals tend to have favorable feelings toward those they consider members of their ingroup (such as those with similar political views) and unfavorable feelings toward those in the outgroup. This pattern strengthens polarization, as individuals grow more protective of their ingroup and contemptuous towards the outgroup” (para 14).

Brewer (1999) asserts that research demonstrates that identity-based conflicts are often resistant to compromise because people perceive threats to their group as threats to themselves. In Lebanon, historical experiences, collective memories of conflict, and regional political tensions reinforce group identities and sustain divergent interpretations of the resistance movement’s role as asserted by Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe (2004). Thus, Social Identity Theory gives a valuable structure for understanding how competing perceptions are maintained and reproduced across social and political contexts.

2.1.2 Constructivist Interpretivism

SIT explains how group membership shapes perceptions; however, ‘Constructivist Interpretivism’ focuses on how people actively construct meanings and interpretations of social reality. Berger and Luckmann (1966) posit that, “Constructivist perspectives argue that reality is not objectively experienced uniformly but is instead comprehended through socially constructed meanings, cultural narratives, historical experiences, and personal interpretations”. Moreover, ‘Constructivist Interpretivism’ emerged from the broader interpretive tradition in social science, emphasizing that people assign meanings to events based on their personal worldviews rather than merely responding to objective facts. Pulla and Carter (2018) and Tanlaka and Aryal (2025) contend that the ability to derive meaning from these worldviews is influenced by socio-cultural factors, including religion, language, laws, customs, traditions, beliefs, moral values, wealth, family status, and living environments.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) argued that social reality is continuously created and maintained through human interaction. Individuals interpret events through culturally embedded frameworks which shape their understanding of what is true, legitimate, and meaningful. In Lebanon, perceptions of the

resistance movement are not exclusively determined by observable events but are processed by multiple historical and ideological narratives (Mokdad, 2022). The same event may be interpreted differently depending on an individual's social experiences, political affiliations, media exposure, and collective memory (Abou Ismail, 2024). For some Lebanese citizens, military resistance against Israel symbolizes national defense and liberation. For others, it may represent a challenge to state sovereignty or a source of political and economic instability (Abu-Rish, 2026).

Constructivist Interpretivism recognizes that meanings are socially negotiated rather than fixed. Political actors, media organizations, religious institutions, and community leaders shape narratives that influence public understanding. Competing interpretations emerge because different groups emphasize different historical experiences, values, and priorities. Consequently, multiple realities coexist within the same society. Moreover, it is worth noting that interpretivism and social constructionism are often labeled 'interpretive', yet they differ. According to Unisa Edge (2026), "Interpretivism and social constructionism focus on the idea that humans have perceptions of society and actively influence culture and society through these perceptions. Interpretivism and social constructionism focus on how individuals create meaning, bringing attention to a distinct focus on empathetic comprehension of cultural context in interpretivism, and on the role of language and social exchanges in social constructionism". Therefore, the interpretive paradigm is particularly appropriate for qualitative research because it tries to understand how individuals make sense of their experiences rather than imposing predefined categories upon them (Schwandt, 2014). Through qualitative content analysis, researchers can examine how language, discourse, and symbolism shape the construction of political meanings.

Within the Lebanese context, constructivist analysis shows that support for or opposition to the resistance movement cannot be reduced solely to objective calculations of military effectiveness or political results. Rather, such positions are embedded within wider narratives concerning national identity, security, sovereignty, justice, and historical memory (Abo-Rish, 2026). Supporting the aforementioned, Halawi (2024) posits, "Hezbollah, characterized by a strong structure and a coherent expression of its public persona, has a unique and appealing identity tied to religious, ideological, and intrinsic actions, alongside vast and active social networks based on the recognition of numerous members of the Shi'a community sharing a common interest in this group" (p. 131). The same concepts may be interpreted distinctly across groups, leading to contrasting perceptions despite shared exposure to national events (Abou Ismail, 2024).

Moreover, Constructivist Interpretivism draws attention to the role of collective memory in forming contemporary political attitudes. Historical experiences such as occupation, conflict, liberation, and regional interventions are embedded in communal accounts, shaping present-day interpretations (Daher, 2017; Mokdad, 2022). These narratives support the persistence of divergent viewpoints and reinforce the binary frameworks via which political issues are understood. Thus, Constructivist Interpretivism

provides an essential conceptual framework for examining how Lebanese citizens construct competing meanings of the resistance movement and its conflict with Israel. It enables researchers to explore the subjective dimensions of political perception and to understand why different groups may interpret the same reality in fundamentally different ways.

2.1.3 Collective Memory Theory (CMT)

Collective Memory Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the continuing, divergent perceptions of the resistance movement in Lebanon, and the binary divisions that define current political discourse. Initially developed by the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, the theory holds that memory is not simply a personal psychological phenomenon but a social construct shaped by groups, institutions, and shared experiences (Halbwachs, 1992). Halbwachs suggests that “people recall the past through social structures that give their experiences significance and context”. As a result, memories are constantly reshaped by current social circumstances rather than being retained as accurate depictions of past events.

Central to CMT, is the idea that social groups create common understandings of historical events, which aid in the formation of collective identity (Olick, 1999; Halawi, 2024). These collective memories are conveyed via family stories, educational frameworks, religious organizations, political discussions, media portrayals, public celebrations, and cultural icons (Zerubavel, 2003; Assmann, 2011; Mokdad, 2022). Through these mechanisms, collective memory links the past to the present, allowing communities to define their identities and the values they share. According to Halbwachs (1992), memories persist because they are rooted in social groups that consistently reinforce their importance. In the Lebanese context, collective memory is of significant importance due to the nation’s intricate history, marked by civil war, foreign intervention, occupation, resistance, and regional conflict. Various Lebanese communities frequently uphold distinct interpretations of significant historical events, leading to multiple, at times conflicting, narratives of national identity (Makdisi, 2000). These contrasting recollections shape how individuals perceive current political events, such as the resistance movement’s role in its conflict with Israel.

For advocates of the resistance movement, shared memory might highlight experiences linked to occupation, armed conflict, land liberation, and national perseverance (ProPeace, 2024; Karam, 2026). These recollections strengthen the belief that resistance is a valid and essential response to external threats and national vulnerability (Norton, 2007). Historical events are woven into a narrative of sacrifice, defense, and autonomy, bolstering support for resistance-oriented political stances. In this context, “collective memory serves as a foundation for political legitimacy by connecting present actions to historically significant experiences” (Assmann, 2011).

In contrast, those opposed to the resistance movement might rely on alternative historical accounts. These might encompass memories of political unrest, military conflicts, organizational disarray, and the social and economic effects of ongoing regional disputes (Karam, 2026). These memories frequently

bolster stories that highlight state sovereignty, democratic leadership, economic revival, and the concentration of military power within state entities (Salamey, 2014). Consequently, the identical political event can be viewed through entirely distinct historical perspectives, leading to differing assessments of the resistance movement's significance and validity.

CMT also explains why political conflicts often endure even when people experience similar current events. Halbwachs (1992) argued that collective memories are reshaped by current needs and the group's interests. In a similar vein, Olick et al. (2011) contend that memory is not merely a passive recall of history, but a dynamic social process through which communities analyze past experiences to understand present circumstances. As a result, groups often prioritize memories that support their current beliefs while downplaying or reinterpreting encounters that contradict their shared stories (Wertsch, 2002; Abou Ismail, 2024; Karam, 2026).

As for the Lebanese political discussions, CMT plays a crucial role in comprehending the observed binarism. Collective memories often create symbolic differences between liberation and oppression, security and vulnerability, patriotism and betrayal, legitimacy and illegitimacy (Zerubavel, 2003). These symbolic contrasts establish interpretive structures that individuals use to assess current political matters. Consequently, as contended by Olick (1999), "Political stances are ingrained in broader historical narratives that strengthen group identities and intensify social divisions". Additionally, collective memory frequently engages with social identity processes. Collective memories enhance group unity by offering members a shared historical narrative and a sense of joint purpose (Ashmore et al., 2004). In Lebanon, various political factions might rely on unique memory traditions that strengthen in-group unity while also setting themselves apart from rival groups. This process facilitates the continuation of binary views and the perpetuation of polarized political identities through generations (Rahal, 2026).

From a qualitative interpretive perspective, Collective Memory Theory is notably significant because it highlights the role of narratives, discourse, symbolism, and meaning-making in shaping political perceptions (Erll, 2011). The theory allows researchers to investigate how historical memories are activated in current political discussions and how these memories shape opinions on the resistance movement. In Lebanon, collective memory serves as an essential link between historical experiences and current political stances, helping explain the ongoing existence of conflicting and divided views on the resistance movement and its struggle with Israel.

2.1.4 Polarization Theory

Political polarization theory explains how societies become divided into competing camps characterized by divergent values and limited mutual understanding (McCoy et al., 2018). Polarization intensifies when political issues become linked to identity and morality. The Lebanese debate concerning resistance exemplifies such dynamics. Competing narratives frequently portray alternative perspectives not merely as different but as fundamentally misguided or threatening, thereby reinforcing

social division (Abou Ismail, 2024). This theory provides a broader sociopolitical framework for understanding how societies become increasingly divided into opposing camps characterized by ideological distance, mutual distrust, and reduced willingness to engage with alternative viewpoints (Makdisi, 2000). Polarization refers to the process by which attitudes, beliefs, and identities cluster around competing positions, often resulting in heightened social and political divisions (DiMaggio et al., 1996).

Political polarization extends beyond mere disagreement. It involves the consolidation of contrasting worldviews that increasingly define social and political identities (McCoy, Rahman, & Somer, 2018; Abu-Rish, 2026). As polarization intensifies, individuals tend to perceive political issues through binary frameworks that distinguish allies from adversaries and supporters from opponents. Such dynamics are particularly relevant in societies characterized by historical conflicts, fragmented political systems, and competing narratives of legitimacy (Makdisi, 2000). In addition, contemporary scholarship distinguishes between ideological polarization and affective polarization (Abramowitz and Saunders, 2008; Iyengar et al., 2019). Ideological polarization refers to substantive differences in policy preferences and political beliefs (Mahmood, 2024). Affective polarization, however, concerns emotional attachments to one's own group and negative attitudes toward opposing groups. The latter is especially significant because it transforms political disagreement into social hostility. For example, in the United States of America, "Americans are affectively divided: They harbor greater dislike and distrust for individuals from opposing political parties than in the past, leading to harmful effects on their democracy" (Levendusky & Stecula, 2023). The authors believe that alleviating such hostility is possible by bringing regular Democrats and Republicans together for bipartisan political dialogues. On the other hand, Saoud (2026) describes the current situation in Lebanon as "Divisions within Lebanon regarding Iran, Hezbollah, and government power have deepened due to Israel's devastating war in the nation, increasing distrust, suspicion, animosity, and allegations of betrayal, while escalating concerns over sectarian conflict, or even the possibility of another civil war" (para 1).

Within Lebanon, polarization surrounding the resistance movement reflects both ideological and affective dimensions (Mokdad, 2022; Saoud, 2026; Center for Preventive Action, 2026). Supporters and opponents often differ regarding the movement's legitimacy, strategic role, relationship with state institutions, and implications for national security (Rahal, 2026). Beyond these substantive disagreements, emotional investments in group identities may contribute to mutual suspicion and reduced trust between opposing camps. One strong example is the rivalry built between the Lebanese opposing political fronts, namely the March 8 Alliance and the March 14 Coalition (Ilias, 2011).

Polarization Theory also emphasizes the role of communication environments in reinforcing divisions. Media outlets frequently present political events through selective frames that resonate with particular audiences. One example that applies to the Lebanese broadcasting media is the opposing TV channels representing Al Manar (The Resistance Movement, Hezbollah) and MTV (The Party of the Lebanese

Forces. Farag, Neuberger, Kretzschmar et al. (2025) and El-Richani (2016) assert that “the Lebanese media system is heavily polarized and prone to intra-state conflict and clientelism”. As individuals consume information that aligns with their existing beliefs, confirmation bias may strengthen, and alternative perspectives may be dismissed. Over time, this process contributes to the formation of echo chambers that reinforce binary thinking and reduce opportunities for constructive dialogue.

Another important aspect of Polarization Theory concerns group polarization, in which discussions among like-minded individuals lead to increasingly extreme positions (Sunstein, 2002). In politically divided environments, group members may amplify shared narratives while marginalizing dissenting voices. Such dynamics can intensify perceptions of moral certainty and deepen divisions between competing groups. This could become worse on social media. Ni, Xiong, and Wu (2026) warn that “The swift advancement and use of new media platforms can quickly provoke negative public opinion online regarding sensitive issues and conflicts in real life”. Along the same stance, Bu (2020) contends that “In comparison to others, certain negative viewpoints, attitudes, and feelings are more prone to fester and propagate on social media channels, impacting social stability and necessitating the attention of both the government and educational institutions”. In addition, Koehler (2024) notes that “Campaigns and political ads often highlight distinctions between parties, strengthening group identities and deepening divisions. This strategy not only energizes core supporters but also intensifies the feeling of “us against them”, resulting in greater polarization and lowered readiness to participate in meaningful discussions” (para 3).

In Lebanon, polarization is further influenced by historical, sectarian, regional, and geopolitical factors (Al-Amine, Saab, Harb, & Majed, 2025). Political identities often intersect with broader social identities, creating multilayered divisions that reinforce binary perceptions (Mason, 2018). Consequently, attitudes toward the resistance movement frequently serve as markers of broader ideological and political orientations.

The relevance of Polarization Theory in this research stems from its ability to clarify how clashing viewpoints become solidified within rival groups. It emphasizes the structural and communication systems that support binary thought and demonstrates how political conflicts can develop into wider social divides. By analyzing polarization processes, researchers can gain insights into the durability of opposing narratives and the challenges of promoting dialogue and agreement.

The phenomenon of binarism in Lebanese perceptions of the resistance movement can be comprehensively examined by integrating Social Identity Theory, Constructivist Interpretivism, Collective Memory Theory, and Polarization Theory. Together, these perspectives provide a multidimensional framework for understanding how individuals and groups develop competing narratives about the resistance movement and its role in the conflict with Israel. Rather than emerging solely from objective evaluations of political realities, these perceptions are shaped by social identities, historical experiences, collective interpretations, and increasingly polarized political environments.

Such an integrated framework is particularly relevant in Lebanon, where political discourse is deeply intertwined with sectarian affiliations, national identity, historical memory, and competing visions of statehood and sovereignty.

Social Identity Theory (SIT) provides the foundation for understanding how group affiliations shape political perceptions. Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue that individuals derive part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups, leading them to favor narratives that reinforce positive group distinctiveness. Contemporary research continues to affirm the significance of identity in motivating political engagement and collective action. For example, Wang and Eldemerdash (2023) found that national identity and perceptions of collective action significantly influence individuals' willingness to support and participate in political and military struggles. Similarly, recent studies demonstrate that collective identity remains a powerful predictor of political participation and mobilization, particularly in contexts characterized by conflict and perceived external threats (Kann et al., 2023; Haidar, 2025; Rahal, 2026). Within Lebanon, support for or opposition to the resistance movement often reflects broader identity affiliations, resulting in divergent interpretations of the same political events and reinforcing binary political positions.

Constructivist Interpretivism complements SIT by emphasizing that social and political realities are not fixed but are continuously constructed through discourse, interaction, and shared meanings (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Schwandt, 1994). From this perspective, concepts such as resistance, liberation, security, patriotism, and sovereignty acquire different meanings depending on the social contexts in which they are interpreted. Lebanese citizens do not merely react to objective events; rather, they actively construct meanings through media narratives, political rhetoric, community experiences, and social interactions (Haidar, 2025; Abu-Rish, 2026). Consequently, competing perceptions of the resistance movement reflect distinct interpretive frameworks rather than simple disagreements over facts (Abou Ismail, 2024). This perspective helps explain why opposing groups may draw fundamentally different conclusions from identical political developments.

Collective Memory Theory further illuminates the historical foundations of these competing perceptions. Halbwachs (1992) argues that collective memories are socially constructed representations of the past that influence present identities and attitudes. In conflict-prone societies, collective memory often serves as a mechanism for communities to preserve narratives of victimhood, heroism, resistance, or injustice (Haidar, 2025). Within Lebanon, "Memories of Israeli occupation, military confrontations, liberation efforts, civil war experiences, and debates over state authority continue to shape contemporary attitudes toward the resistance movement" (Rahal, 2026). These historical narratives become embedded within collective identities and influence how individuals interpret current political realities. As a result, support for or opposition to the resistance movement is frequently rooted in differing historical memories and inherited interpretations of past events.

Polarization Theory explains how these identity-based and memory-driven differences become increasingly entrenched over time. Classical studies describe polarization as a process through which individuals adopt more extreme positions after interacting with like-minded groups (Sunstein, 2002). More recent scholarship expands this understanding by emphasizing the interaction between group identities, collective narratives, and emotional attachments. Smith et al. (2024) argue that polarization functions as a psychological foundation for collective engagement, while DellaPosta et al. (2024) describe polarization as a process of societal fragmentation characterized by the emergence of opposing collective narratives and increasingly rigid group boundaries. Research on affective polarization similarly demonstrates that emotional attachments to in-groups and hostility toward out-groups contribute to intensified political divisions (Scherer, 2024). In Lebanon's fragmented political landscape, media ecosystems, partisan discourse, and social networks frequently reinforce these dynamics, reducing opportunities for dialogue and strengthening binary perceptions of the resistance movement.

Taken together, these four theoretical perspectives offer a robust framework for understanding binarism within Lebanese perceptions of the resistance movement. Social Identity Theory explains how group affiliations shape political attitudes; Constructivist Interpretivism reveals how meanings are socially constructed; Collective Memory Theory highlights the enduring influence of historical narratives; and Polarization Theory explains the intensification of opposing viewpoints. Their integration enables a nuanced analysis of how identity, memory, discourse, and polarization interact to produce competing Lebanese perceptions regarding the resistance movement and its conflict with Israel.

2.2 Empirical Research

2.2.1 Understanding Binarism

The concept of binarism originates from structuralist thought, particularly the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Lévi-Strauss, who argued that meaning is often constructed through oppositional categories (Lévi-Strauss, 1963). Human beings frequently understand reality through binary distinctions such as self and other, good and evil, security and threat, or legitimacy and illegitimacy. On the other hand, post-structuralist scholars challenged the neutrality of such binaries. Derrida (1976) argued that binary oppositions are rarely equal; rather, one element is typically privileged over the other. Consequently, binaries often serve political and ideological functions by legitimizing certain perspectives while marginalizing others. According to Frisli (2025), researching the binarism of misinformation in Norway, "The influence of misinformation narratives stems from their capacity to create different social realities that appeal to particular audiences, for example, by portraying mainstream health narratives as authoritarian or unreliable. Thus, misinformation is not merely incorrect information but a component of a continuous ideological battle over significance and power" (p. 4).

In political discourse, binary thinking can simplify complex realities and facilitate collective mobilization. Political actors frequently frame issues in terms of clear oppositions that encourage identification with one side while distancing individuals from competing perspectives. For example, Hrbková Macek, & Macková (2024) contend that “Current trends suggest an increase in politically driven polarization in multiple nations. This division frequently goes beyond simple ideological differences, promoting an identity-focused “Us” versus “Them” political viewpoint. As a result, this changes the conventional competitive political landscape into a fundamentally hostile, antagonistic dynamic, in which political opponents are regarded as foes” (p. 100). Such dynamics are particularly visible in polarized societies where political identities become closely linked to moral judgments and collective narratives.

Lebanon’s political discourse demonstrates many of these characteristics. Debates surrounding resistance, sovereignty, sectarianism, and national identity frequently rely upon binary constructions that shape public perceptions and reinforce ideological divisions. For example, the 1958 conflict whereby “the country split between two poles: Supporters of the pro-Western, U.S.-aligned project and advocates of the Nasserist and Soviet-backed camp” (Harkous, 2025); the 1969 declaration of the Cairo Agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), allowing Palestinian resistance factions to conduct military operations from southern Lebanon and within refugee camps, free from state oversight (UNRWA, 2026).

2.2.2 Political Polarization and Lebanese Society

Political polarization refers to the process through which social groups increasingly adopt opposing positions and become less willing to engage constructively with one another (McCoy et al., 2018). Polarization extends beyond policy disagreements and often involves competing understandings of identity, legitimacy, and national belonging. Lebanon’s political history provides numerous examples of polarization. The civil war (1975-1990), post-war reconstruction, Syrian influence, the 2005 Cedar Revolution, and subsequent political crises have contributed to the formation of competing political camps (Picard, 2002; Ilias, 2011; Salloukh et al., 2015). The most recent political polarization is apparent with the harsh division among the Lebanese concerning the current war between Hezbollah and Israel (Ezzeddine, 2024).

Majed (2021) argues that sectarian identities in Lebanon remain highly dynamic and frequently intersect with ideological, economic, and geopolitical factors. Consequently, polarization cannot be understood solely in terms of religious affiliations. Instead, as Rahal (2026) contends, “it reflects broader struggles concerning political authority, representation, and national identity”. Research on polarization further suggests that collective narratives play a central role in shaping political attitudes. Individuals tend to interpret events through narratives that reinforce preexisting beliefs while discounting contradictory information (Interian et al., 2022). Such processes contribute to the persistence of binary thinking and ideological division.

2.2.3 The Lebanese Resistance Movement (Hezbollah) and the Resistance Narrative

The emergence of Hezbollah is closely connected to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the subsequent occupation of southern Lebanese territories. Initially established as a resistance movement, Hezbollah gradually expanded its activities to include political participation, social welfare provision, and regional engagement (Norton, 2014). Supporters frequently emphasize Hezbollah's role in resisting Israeli occupation and facilitating Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 (Aljazeera, 2006; Blanford, 2020). For many communities directly affected by occupation, resistance came to be associated with liberation, dignity, and collective survival (Deeb, 2006). Moreover, Badawi (2024) argues that "Anti-occupation struggles significantly contributed to the development of Lebanese national identity". Resistance narratives often frame military confrontation as a necessary response to external aggression and emphasize themes of sacrifice, resilience, and sovereignty. At the same time, critics question the continued necessity of armed resistance following the Israeli withdrawal from most Lebanese territory (Abu-Rish, 2026). They argue that Hezbollah's military autonomy complicates state-building efforts and undermines the state's monopoly over legitimate force (Harb & Leenders, 2005; Rahal, 2026). The resulting debate reflects broader tensions concerning governance, legitimacy, and national authority.

2.2.4 Collective Memory and Political Perceptions

Collective memory refers to shared understandings of the past that influence contemporary identities and political attitudes (Halbwachs, 1992). Historical experiences frequently shape how communities interpret present events and future possibilities. Haidar (2025) posits, "The resistance represents a shared awareness, a story developed over many years, a remembrance of conflict, and a national concept that holds significant public endorsement. This equation allowed Lebanon to regain its land, reestablish sovereignty, and permit the state to reaffirm control over its territory" (para 4).

In Lebanon, memories of occupation, displacement, civil conflict, and foreign intervention continue to influence political perceptions. Al-Khabbaze (2025) contends that "The difficulty is heightened as each political party and faction in Lebanon has its own narrative of the conflict, tales that frequently exalt themselves while vilifying or belittling others. The narrative of the Lebanese Forces, for example, depicts the war as a fight for survival and an endangered Christian identity. Amal and Hezbollah reflect on their history as a rightful opposition to marginalization and occupation. The National Movement advocates for a narrative that protects social and economic rights" (para 3). More specifically, communities that experienced direct confrontation with Israeli military operations often maintain strong attachments to resistance narratives (Haidar, 2025). Conversely, communities emphasizing state-building and institutional development may prioritize sovereignty and governance concerns (Karam, 2025).

Collective memory therefore serves as an important mechanism through which binary perceptions are reproduced and transmitted across generations. Halbwachs (1992) argues that collective memory

influences contemporary interpretations of political events. Historical experiences become embedded within social consciousness and contribute to the formation of collective identities. In Lebanon, memories of occupation, war, and resistance continue to shape perceptions of national security and legitimacy. Consequently, differing historical experiences contribute to contrasting evaluations of the resistance movement. On the other hand, political polarization theory explains how societies become divided into competing camps characterized by divergent values and limited mutual understanding (McCoy et al., 2018). Polarization intensifies when political issues become linked to identity and morality. Here, the Lebanese debate concerning resistance exemplifies such dynamics. Competing narratives frequently portray alternative perspectives not merely as different but as fundamentally misguided or threatening, thereby reinforcing social division.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research design (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012; Goñi, 2026) grounded in an extensive review of peer-reviewed literature, policy reports, and empirical studies on political polarization and binarism. Interpretivism seeks to understand the meanings individuals assign to social phenomena rather than identifying universal causal laws (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The approach is particularly appropriate for examining contested political issues characterized by multiple realities and subjective interpretations. The methodology is informed by principles of narrative literature review, enabling the synthesis of diverse bodies of scholarship across Western and MENA contexts. Moreover, a qualitative interpretive research design was employed to explore competing narratives regarding the resistance movement. The study focuses on understanding how perceptions are constructed and maintained rather than measuring their prevalence statistically.

3.2 Data Sources

Sources were identified through academic databases such as Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar, focusing on publications from the past two decades. Priority was given to studies addressing political polarization, binarism, conflicts, collective memory, Hezbollah, Israel, resistance, governance, and Lebanon. Lebanese-specific studies were examined alongside broader regional and global trends. Furthermore, data were collected through qualitative content analysis of peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, policy reports, historical analyses, public discourse studies, and Grey literature relevant to Lebanese political perceptions. The selected sources span multiple disciplinary perspectives, including political science, sociology, history, media studies, and conflict studies.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The analysis was guided by four theories: Social identity, constructivism, collective memory, and polarization. This framework enables a move away from deficit models that attribute systemic issues exclusively to political parties and nation-states and oversimplify intricate realities. More specifically,

thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns within the literature. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, data were coded, categorized, and organized into broader themes representing polarity dimensions. The analysis focused on identifying recurring binary constructions used to explain support for and opposition to the resistance movement.

3.4 Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria guided efforts to enhance trustworthiness. Credibility was strengthened through triangulation across multiple sources. Dependability was supported through transparent coding procedures, while confirmability was enhanced by maintaining analytical consistency throughout the study.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Given the reliance on publicly available secondary sources, no direct human participation was involved. Nevertheless, efforts were made to fairly represent competing perspectives and avoid normative judgments about political positions.

4. Findings and Discussion

The thematic analysis revealed eight major polarity dimensions that characterize Lebanese perceptions regarding the resistance movement and its conflict with Israel. These dimensions demonstrate that support and opposition are rooted in competing constructions of legitimacy, security, identity, governance, and national interest. Rather than representing simple political preferences, these perceptions reflect deeper historical experiences and collective understandings of Lebanon's past, present, and future.

4.1 Theme 1: Resistance versus Sovereignty

The most prominent binary identified in the literature concerns the relationship between resistance and state sovereignty (Badawi, 2024; Abou Ismail, 2024; Alexander, 2025; Abu-Rish, 2026).

Supporters of the resistance movement frequently argue that armed resistance emerged as a necessary response to Israeli occupation and repeated military incursions into Lebanese territory (Haidar, 2025). From this perspective, resistance was not created in opposition to the state but rather because the state lacked sufficient military capabilities to defend its citizens and territory effectively (Norton, 2014). Consequently, supporters view resistance as a complementary mechanism that fills security gaps left by weak state institutions.

Historical experiences strongly influence this perspective. Communities in southern Lebanon experienced occupation, displacement, shelling, and insecurity for decades (Kassem, 2024). For many individuals, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon in 2000 validated the effectiveness of armed resistance and strengthened perceptions of its legitimacy (Badawi, 2024; Haidar, 2025). Within this narrative, sovereignty is not viewed solely as institutional authority but also as the practical capacity to protect territory and citizens.

Opponents construct sovereignty differently. They argue that genuine sovereignty requires exclusive state authority over military decision-making and the legitimate use of force (Harb & Leenders, 2005; Karam, 2025). According to this perspective, parallel military structures weaken national institutions and create ambiguity regarding who determines matters of war and peace.

Critics further contend that sovereignty cannot be selectively applied. Yoon (2024) posits that “Sovereignty understood as the right to be free from external influence, and sovereignty understood as states’ right to regulate” (p. 211). If state institutions are recognized as legitimate, then all military functions should ultimately fall under their authority. Consequently, resistance becomes viewed not as a protector of sovereignty but as a challenge to its consolidation.

The tension between these perspectives illustrates how the concept of sovereignty itself becomes contested. While supporters emphasize defensive capability, opponents prioritize institutional authority. Both groups claim to support Lebanese sovereignty but define it through different interpretive frameworks.

Worthwhile mentioning the research about sovereignty in the context of fragility by Bellina, Darbon, Sundstøl, and Sending (2009). In this case, fragility is illustrated by the resistance position in Lebanon versus the failing state concerning doing its duty to protect the southern population from Israeli aggression throughout time. These researchers present a specific view about sovereignty in the context of fragility: “In situations of fragility, significant segments of society do not recognize the state as the ultimate authority. When the state’s power is not solidly established, negotiations, compromises, and conflicts involve more than just disputes over policy choices. They concentrate on the essence of the control that the state asserts over a territory and its people, along with tactics to undermine it or establish a monopoly over it. In these instances, governments lack established authority. In clear terms, they do not organize social norms; they struggle to influence social connections and to be recognized as the supreme political power, to which all other bodies must defer. Consequently, it does not hold importance for the structuring of daily life” (p. 9).

4.2 Theme 2: Protection versus Provocation

A second major polarity concerns whether the resistance movement protects Lebanon or exposes it to recurring danger.

Supporters emphasize deterrence (Haidar, 2025). They argue that military strength deters aggression by increasing the costs of attacking Lebanon. According to this perspective, deterrence contributes to security because potential adversaries must consider the consequences of military escalation (Norton, 2014). Many supporters reference historical events as evidence that military preparedness has prevented future occupations. Resistance is therefore understood as a protective shield that contributes to national security and communal survival (Haidar, 2025; Rahal, 2026). Moreover, deterrence has been described by Jones, Byman, Palmer, & McCabe (2024) as follows, besides the heavy training their personnel received: “Hezbollah is likely the most heavily armed non-state organization globally, and its

inventories of rockets, missiles, and Unmanned Aerial Systems (UASs) constitute a significant aspect of its armament. Hezbollah's firepower presents two separate dangers to Israel. The initial aspect is their coercive impact: Ongoing assaults with heavy weapons can injure or kill enemy military personnel, or damage critical political or economic infrastructure in Israel. Hezbollah's rockets and missiles were mainly utilized in 2006 in this manner and are frequently referenced in conflict with Israel". Currently, their arsenal includes more advanced weapons.

Opponents acknowledge the reality of external threats by Israeli aggression but question whether military confrontation produces sustainable security outcomes. They argue that military engagements often result in significant human, economic, and infrastructural losses that affect the entire country regardless of political affiliation (Salloukh et al., 2015). Moreover, Abu-Rish (2026) asserts that "Since taking office in January 2025, the Lebanese Prime Minister Salam's position on Hezbollah mirrors the influence of two factors in Lebanon. Within the country, groups and individuals historically against Hezbollah, some connected to Washington and, indirectly, to Israeli strategic goals, are trying to capitalize on what they describe as the organization's vulnerability following the 2023-2024 conflict. They intend to politically separate and militarily dismantle the group. Externally, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's administration has utilized ongoing ruthless strikes on civilian targets, the occupation of Lebanese land, and civilian displacement to coerce the Lebanese government into disarming Hezbollah" (para 5).

Critics further maintain that deterrence may simultaneously create vulnerability by increasing the likelihood of escalation during periods of regional tension. From this perspective, military capability can function both as protection and provocation. This polarity reveals divergent understandings of security. Supporters conceptualize security primarily in military terms, whereas opponents adopt broader definitions that include economic stability, institutional resilience, and diplomatic engagement (Karam, 2026).

4.3 Theme 3: Nationalism versus Regionalism

Another recurring binary concerns competing understandings of nationalism and regional affiliation. Supporters often describe resistance as an expression of Lebanese patriotism. They emphasize the defense of Lebanese territory, the liberation of occupied land, and the protection of national dignity. Within this framework, resistance represents a distinctly Lebanese response to foreign aggression (Badawi, 2024; Haidar, 2025). The resistance narrative frequently invokes themes of sacrifice, resilience, and national pride. Supporters argue that defending the nation requires more than symbolic sovereignty and that active resistance constitutes a legitimate expression of patriotism. Sundberg and Gustavsson (2026), in their literature review, support the resistance narrative in the context of Lebanon, arguing for the willingness to defend the nation.

For an interpretive analysis of resistance movements, the literature on social identity, collective action, and national attachment provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding why members of

such groups may embrace sacrifice to protect their homeland. Social Identity Theory posits that individuals derive part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups, creating a psychological bond that encourages loyalty, solidarity, and collective responsibility (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When a resistance movement, like Hezbollah, is perceived as defending the nation, community, or collective identity, supporters often view participation not merely as a political choice but as a moral obligation toward the in-group. Wang and Eldemerdash (2023) argue that strong group identification is a powerful motivator of political action, while Bērziņa and Zupa (2021) contend that national pride can inspire selfless behavior on behalf of the state. From this perspective, the willingness of resistance members to endure hardship, risk, or even death is understood as a consequence of their deep attachment to the collective they perceive themselves as defending.

This commitment becomes even more pronounced through the concept of identity fusion, whereby personal and collective identities become deeply intertwined (Paredes et al., 2018). Hezbollah community members and supporters who experience a visceral sense of oneness with their group often perceive threats against the nation or community as threats against themselves, thereby increasing their readiness for extraordinary acts of sacrifice (Gómez et al., 2011). Wu (2023) describes this phenomenon as a “sacrificial disposition”, wherein national identity and national pride reinforce a willingness to incur personal costs for collective survival and protection. Such behavior is further explained by the tendency of highly identified group members to demonstrate compassion, loyalty, and responsibility toward fellow in-group members (Hornstein, 1978; Mullen et al., 1992; Ellemers et al., 2002). Consequently, Hezbollah narratives frequently frame sacrifice not as a loss but as a meaningful contribution to the preservation of national dignity, territorial integrity, and collective security. Within this framework, country protection is perceived as both an expression of shared identity and a fulfillment of one’s responsibility toward the broader community, making sacrifice a socially and psychologically legitimate response to perceived external threats.

Opponents, however, question the extent to which resistance remains exclusively national in orientation. They express concerns regarding regional alliances, transnational ideological commitments, and the influence of external actors on Lebanese decision-making processes (Salloukh et al., 2015). In addition, opponents build their stance against Hezbollah, accusing it and holding it responsible for the economic and financial crisis (Houssari, 2025). Along these lines, and according to U.S. envoy Tom Barrack, the concept of an economic buffer zone at the Lebanese-Israeli border envisions that trade, investment, and development funded from abroad, especially by Gulf States, could substitute for armed deterrence and diminish Hezbollah’s influence (Asharq Aawsat, 2025). “This approach moves the focus away from tackling the underlying causes of insecurity, namely ongoing Israeli military pressure, the lack of a national defense strategy, and the Lebanese Armed Forces’ (LAF’s) insufficient deterrent capability, by transferring security management to external entities and redefining sovereignty based on U.S. and Israeli perspectives” (Rahal, 2026, p. 38).

For critics, nationalism requires that all major strategic decisions be determined exclusively through Lebanese institutions and consensus-building mechanisms (International Crisis Group, 2025). They therefore view strong regional alignments as potentially complicating national priorities. The resulting tension reflects broader debates concerning Lebanon's geopolitical identity and strategic orientation within a highly volatile regional environment.

4.4 Theme 4: State Legitimacy versus Resistance Legitimacy

A fourth polarity concerns competing sources of political legitimacy.

Supporters frequently derive legitimacy from performance and historical achievement. They argue that legitimacy emerges when institutions successfully fulfill societal needs and protect citizens. Because the resistance movement contributed to ending the occupation and continues to provide social services in some communities, supporters perceive it as possessing substantial practical legitimacy (Deeb, 2006; Haidar, 2025; Rahal, 2026). This perspective aligns with sociological approaches that emphasize output legitimacy, the idea that institutions gain support by producing desired outcomes.

Opponents prioritize procedural legitimacy. They argue that legitimate authority derives from constitutional frameworks, democratic institutions, and legal accountability mechanisms (Harb & Leenders, 2005; International Crisis Group, 2025). According to this perspective, legitimacy should not depend solely upon effectiveness but also upon adherence to institutional norms (Antoun, 2026).

Furthermore, according to L'Orient Today (2026), "In an extensive statement, Hezbollah asserted that resisting occupation and aggression is not a breach of the Constitution but instead a rightful national entitlement, safeguarded by the principles of the Lebanese Constitution and by Lebanon's Arab and international obligations" (para 2). However, according to opponents cited by Antoun (2026), "Instances of regional tension necessitate greater loyalty to the state rather than concurrent military decision-making beyond its structures. However, a legal expert and former head of the State Council, Choukri Sader, claimed that with increased internal and regional tensions, all Lebanese factions must unite in support of the Constitution and state institutions" (para 8). Consequently, supporters and opponents evaluate legitimacy according to different criteria (International Crisis Group, 2025). While one side emphasizes performance and historical contribution, the other emphasizes constitutional authority and institutional accountability.

4.5 Theme 5: Community Security versus National Integration

The literature also highlights tensions between communal security and broader national integration. Lebanon's history of civil conflict, foreign intervention, and institutional weakness has encouraged many communities to develop strong self-protective mechanisms (Picard, 2002; Deeb, 2006; Haidar, 2025; Rahal, 2026). Supporters often interpret resistance through this lens of communal security.

For communities that experienced occupation and insecurity, resistance represents more than a political organization. This applies to all current strong political parties that resorted to military operations throughout the Lebanese historical timeline, including the political alliances under the Phalanges

right-wing groups and the Lebanese left-wing resistance front (Deeb, Mikdashi, Nalbantian, & Sbaiti, 2025). It symbolizes collective protection, resilience, and survival. These experiences contribute to enduring emotional attachments that transcend conventional political calculations (Paredes et al., 2018; Wu, 2023; Haidar, 2025; Rahal, 2026).

Opponents acknowledge these historical experiences but argue that sustainable stability requires strengthening national institutions rather than maintaining parallel structures (Karam, 2026). According to this perspective, national integration depends upon creating a shared civic identity that supersedes sectarian and communal affiliations (Salloukh et al., 2015).

The challenge lies in reconciling legitimate security concerns with long-term state-building objectives. Both sides express a desire for security, yet they differ regarding the mechanisms through which it should be achieved.

4.6 Theme 6: Stability versus Instability

One of the most contentious debates concerns whether the resistance movement contributes to or undermines stability.

Supporters argue that deterrence generates stability by reducing vulnerability to external aggression. They maintain that military capability discourages hostile actions and therefore contributes to national resilience. Jones, Byman, Palmer, & McCabe (2024) posit that “Hezbollah is likely the most heavily armed non-state organization globally, and its inventories of rockets, missiles, and Unmanned Aerial Systems (UASs) constitute a significant aspect of its armament”. Hence, deterrence is supported by the appropriate tools. Supported by a national agreement on one side and, on the other, by the absence of external interventions (i.e., authentic commitment from the United States of America and its ally, Israel), stability is achieved. Nevertheless, the current conditions to achieve stability are out of control. Rahal (2026) contends that “Hezbollah’s arms were accepted not due to ideological alignment, but because there was no feasible alternative available. This structural vulnerability has persisted and been bolstered by external pressure, especially from the United States. Demands for Hezbollah’s disarmament frequently overlook that Lebanon’s military capabilities are intentionally limited. U.S. military assistance to the LAF is contingent upon maintaining Israel’s military edge, restricting access to sophisticated weaponry like air defense systems, missiles, and heavy armor. The Homeland Shield Plan, implemented under U.S. pressure, underscores this contradiction. A primary requirement is the elimination of Hezbollah’s weapons instead of their incorporation into a national defense plan” (pp. 37-38). Furthermore, supporters often point to periods during which resistance prevented perceived threats from escalating into broader occupations or territorial losses (Haidar, 2025). Within this framework, stability emerges through strength and preparedness.

Opponents present a contrasting interpretation. They argue that autonomous military capabilities contribute to political uncertainty, complicate foreign relations, and increase the risk of military escalation (Majed, 2021). In addition, according to Drewek (2025), opponents contend that

“Hezbollah’s function as a Lebanese political party and its role as a regional partner of Iranian interests generates conflicts. Within the country, the organization aims to present itself as a nationalist entity safeguarding Lebanon from outside dangers; however, its blatant dependence on Iranian assistance, in terms of finances, military aid, and ideology, weakens that story” (p. 382). Moreover, critics frequently emphasize the economic consequences of instability, including reduced investment, declining tourism, and diminished international confidence (Karam, 2026). From this perspective, sustainable stability requires institutional predictability and centralized decision-making.

The coexistence of these narratives illustrates how stability itself becomes a contested concept. Supporters focus on military deterrence, whereas opponents emphasize governance and economic development.

4.7 Theme 7: Collective Memory versus Future-Oriented Governance

Collective memory emerged as another significant polarity dimension.

Supporters frequently invoke historical experiences of occupation, conflict, and resistance. These memories provide powerful symbolic resources that shape contemporary perceptions of legitimacy and necessity (Halbwachs, 1992; Haidar, 2025; Rahal, 2026). Historical narratives often emphasize sacrifice, liberation, and resilience. Such memories contribute to the perception that resistance remains an essential safeguard against future threats (Badawi, 2024).

Opponents do not necessarily reject these historical experiences; rather, they argue that public policy should increasingly focus on future governance challenges (Karam, 2026). These challenges include economic reform, institutional development, anti-corruption measures, and state modernization (Traboulsi, 2012). In addition, Dagher and Nassar (2025) posit that “Rebuilding both local and global trust in the Lebanese government will ultimately rely on implementing concrete actions for economic recovery. An autonomous judicial system, open governance, and implementable regulations are essential actions for demonstrating Lebanon’s dedication to trustworthy economic management” (para 3).

From this perspective, excessive reliance on historical narratives may inhibit adaptation to changing political realities. Critics argue that Lebanon’s future requires shifting attention from past conflicts toward institutional reconstruction (Karam, 2026).

The tension between memory and future orientation reflects broader debates concerning how societies balance historical experience with contemporary governance priorities (Alexander, 2025).

4.8 Theme 8: Resistance Identity versus Sectarian Identity

The final polarity concerns the relationship between resistance identity and sectarian identity.

Supporters generally reject the characterization of resistance as purely sectarian. They emphasize that resistance against occupation has historically attracted support from multiple communities and should therefore be understood as a national rather than sectarian project (Karakoç et al., 2022; Rahal, 2026). Research indicates that favorable attitudes toward Hezbollah among some non-Shiite Lebanese often

stem from perceptions of resistance effectiveness rather than sectarian affiliation alone (Karakoç et al., 2022). Nevertheless, opponents argue that resistance has become increasingly embedded within Lebanon's sectarian political landscape. They contend that organizational structures, electoral alliances, and political mobilization strategies often reinforce sectarian boundaries rather than transcend them (Majed, 2021).

This debate highlights the complexity of identity formation in Lebanon, where national, communal, ideological, and sectarian identities frequently overlap and interact (Daher, 2017).

4.9 Overall Discussion

The results of this research indicate that Lebanese views on the resistance movement are shaped by a web of linked binary frameworks that go beyond traditional political conflicts. The eight identified polarity dimensions- resistance versus sovereignty, protection versus provocation, nationalism versus regionalism, state legitimacy versus resistance legitimacy, community security versus national integration, stability versus instability, collective memory versus future-oriented governance, and resistance identity versus sectarian identity- show that public sentiments are situated within wider social, historical, and ideological frameworks (McCoy et al., 2018; Rahal, 2026). These results bolster the claim that political polarization in Lebanon reflects deeper conflicts over legitimacy, identity, and national belonging rather than merely differing policy preferences (Salloukh et al., 2015; Majed, 2021). The examination validates the explanatory significance of the combined theoretical framework that includes Social Identity Theory, Constructivist Interpretivism, Collective Memory Theory, and Polarization Theory. Social Identity Theory clarifies how backing or opposing the resistance movement is linked to group identities, turning political stances into reflections of group affiliation (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Ashmore et al., 2004; Wang & Eldemerdash, 2023). Consequently, conflicts over security, governance, and national strategy are often viewed as threats to the legitimacy of a community or perspective rather than as simple policy disagreements (Brewer, 1999; Mason, 2018).

Constructivist Interpretivism illustrates that views of the resistance movement are shaped socially via discourse, historical accounts, media portrayals, and political messaging (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Schwandt, 2014). The research indicates that both supporters and adversaries frequently perceive the same events through different meaning systems, influenced by varying experiences and symbolic structures (Mokdad, 2022; Abou Ismail, 2024). Thus, public debate is not simply a competition over facts but rather a struggle over interpretations and narratives that shape national identity and shared objectives (Daher, 2017; Abu-Rish, 2026).

The results further emphasize the lasting importance of shared memory in influencing political views. Past experiences of occupation, liberation, internal conflict, foreign interference, and institutional instability continue to shape modern political views (Halbwachs, 1992; Assmann, 2011; Olick et al., 2011). Advocates often recall experiences of resistance and freedom, while adversaries tend to highlight recollections of turmoil, frailty of institutions, and difficulties in governance (Haidar, 2025;

Karam, 2026). These varying historical accounts sustain dual perceptions and strengthen opposing views of Lebanon's future (Zerubavel, 2003).

Polarization Theory offers further understanding of how these differences become more deeply rooted. Political dialogue, biased media landscapes, social platforms, and sectarian frameworks often amplify current divides by promoting selective information consumption and bolstering in-group unity (Sunstein, 2002; Iyengar et al., 2019; Farag et al., 2025). As a result, binary narratives reinforce themselves, restricting chances for meaningful conversation and agreement (Smith et al., 2024; DellaPosta et al., 2024).

The study shows that binarism operates as both a cognitive and sociopolitical tool that Lebanese citizens use to make sense of complex realities. Although binary narratives streamline political comprehension and enhance group solidarity, they also lead to societal division by limiting room for complex viewpoints and collective national contexts (Derrida, 1976; McCoy et al., 2018). The case of Lebanon demonstrates how identity, memory, dialogue, and polarization work together to create lasting divisions that continue to shape discussions of resistance, sovereignty, security, and statehood.

5. Conclusion

This research explored binarism in Lebanese views of the resistance movement and its struggle against Israel through a qualitative interpretive analysis of academic literature, public discussions, historical accounts, and contemporary studies. The results indicate that Lebanese views on the resistance movement are not merely political preferences but are fundamentally shaped by conflicting interpretations of legitimacy, security, identity, sovereignty, and national belonging (Salloukh et al., 2015; Karakoç et al., 2022; Rahal, 2026).

The analysis uncovered eight key polarity dimensions that shape public perceptions. These aspects demonstrate that advocates and adversaries often operate within distinct interpretive frameworks shaped by past experiences, shared memories, identity connections, and political stories (Halbwachs, 1992; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Mokdad, 2022). Supporters often depict the resistance movement as a valid means of national defense and community safety, while critics commonly see it as a threat to state sovereignty, institutional power, and enduring stability (Harb & Leenders, 2005; Haidar, 2025; Abu-Rish, 2026).

The research additionally shows that Social Identity Theory, Constructivist Interpretivism, Collective Memory Theory, and Polarization Theory together offer a strong framework for comprehending these conflicting perceptions. Collectively, these theories elucidate the processes through which identities are created, the societal construction of meanings, the impact of historical memories on current perspectives, and the deepening of political divides as time passes (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Halbwachs, 1992; McCoy et al., 2018; Wang & Eldemerdash, 2023).

The Lebanese situation underscores the intricacy of political divisions in highly fragmented societies. The continuity of binary narratives indicates that discussions on resistance, sovereignty, and governance within nations cannot be entirely grasped through mere objective security assessments. Instead, they are integrated into wider processes of meaning creation, identity formation, and shared memory that consistently influence Lebanon's political context (Assmann, 2011; Smith et al., 2024).

5.1 Implications

The results of this research have significant theoretical, social, and policy ramifications.

From a theoretical standpoint, the research adds to scholarship on political polarization by showcasing the importance of merging Social Identity Theory, Constructivist Interpretivism, Collective Memory Theory, and Polarization Theory into a cohesive analytical framework (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Halbwachs, 1992; McCoy et al., 2018). The study enhances comprehension of binarism's functioning in conflict-affected societies and presents a multifaceted approach relevant to other polarized political environments.

From a societal viewpoint, the results indicate that persistent polarization in Lebanon is maintained not just by political conflicts but also by clashing historical narratives, shared memories, and identity formations (Assmann, 2011; Olick et al., 2011). Initiatives to enhance social cohesion should thus tackle foundational perceptions, memories, and symbolic meanings rather than focusing solely on institutional reforms (Salloukh et al., 2015).

From a policy standpoint, the study emphasizes the need for inclusive national dialogue systems that can accommodate conflicting narratives. Policymakers aiming to enhance stability and national cohesion must acknowledge the validity of various historical experiences while also nurturing common frameworks of citizenship, governance, and a sense of national belonging (Bellina et al., 2009; Rahal, 2026).

The research highlights the importance of media literacy and accountable political communication. Considering the impact of media landscapes in intensifying polarization, efforts that promote critical analysis of information and the inclusion of varied perspectives could mitigate the influence of dichotomous thinking and emotional polarization (Iyengar et al., 2019; Farag et al., 2025).

5.2 Recommendations

According to the results, several suggestions are put forward.

National dialogue initiatives should be bolstered to foster meaningful engagement among communities with differing perspectives on resistance, sovereignty, and national security. These initiatives ought to prioritize shared understanding over prompt political agreement (McCoy et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2024).

Additionally, educational institutions should advance civic education initiatives that emphasize critical thinking, media literacy, conflict resolution, and a sense of inclusive national identity. Educational curricula ought to showcase various historical viewpoints while promoting constructive interaction

with debated narratives (Assmann, 2011; Zerubavel, 2003).

Policymakers should focus on bolstering state institutions and increasing public confidence in governance frameworks. Increased institutional efficiency can potentially diminish the perceived necessity for conflicting sources of legitimacy and authority (Bellina et al., 2009; Karam, 2026).

Fourth, media institutions ought to be motivated to embrace professional guidelines that minimize provocative language and ensure equitable reporting on divisive political matters. Accountable journalism can help lessen polarization and promote knowledgeable public discourse (Farag et al., 2025; El-Richani, 2016).

Fifth, civil society groups ought to support intercommunal dialogue initiatives that provide chances for people from diverse political and sectarian backgrounds to participate in meaningful conversation. These initiatives can help reduce stereotypes, foster trust, and enhance social cohesion (Ashmore et al., 2004; Brewer, 1999).

Ultimately, upcoming national security dialogues ought to involve a wider array of stakeholders and viewpoints. Sustainable solutions require reconciling issues related to external threats, national sovereignty, communal safety, and institutional development (Salloukh et al., 2015; Rahal, 2026).

5.3 Limitations

Some constraints need to be recognized. Initially, the research depends solely on secondary data sources, such as scholarly articles, policy documents, historical evaluations, and public discussions. As a result, the results indicate interpretations derived from the current literature rather than direct interaction with participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Secondly, the qualitative interpretive method emphasizes a deeper comprehension rather than statistical generalizability. As a result, the results offer analytical perspectives on the formation of perceptions rather than being representative indicators of public opinion (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013; Schwandt, 1994, 2014).

Third, the research explores perceptions using thematic analysis and refrains from evaluating the comparative prevalence of particular viewpoints across various demographic, sectarian, or geographic categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Fourth, the rapidly shifting landscape of Lebanese politics suggests that views on the resistance movement could change in reaction to evolving domestic, regional, and international circumstances (Majed, 2021; Rahal, 2026). Thus, the results must be interpreted in light of the time period during which the examined literature was created.

Ultimately, due to the topic's politically sensitive and contentious nature, certain sources might exhibit specific ideological biases. Despite attempts to achieve balance through source triangulation, achieving total neutrality remains challenging in research on highly polarized political matters (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

5.4 Future Research

Future investigations might advance this study in multiple ways. To begin with, qualitative empirical research that includes interviews and focus groups with Lebanese individuals from various political, sectarian, and geographic contexts would offer a deeper understanding of how binary perceptions are lived and expressed in daily life (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Secondly, quantitative research could examine the frequency and distribution of the identified polarity dimensions across various demographic groups. This research would enhance interpretive results by conducting broader analysis at the population level (McCoy et al., 2018).

Third, comparative research might investigate analogous types of binarism in other conflict-impacted societies marked by conflicting narratives, disputed identities, and divided political contexts (DellaPosta et al., 2024; Smith et al., 2024).

Fourth, upcoming studies might explore how social media algorithms, digital communication platforms, and online communities influence the reinforcement or contestation of binary political views in Lebanon (Iyengar et al., 2019; Ni et al., 2026).

Fifth, longitudinal studies might examine how significant political and military changes affect changes in public perceptions of resistance, sovereignty, and national identity over time (Wang, A. & Eldemerdash, 2023; Wu, 2023; Sundberg & Gustavsson, 2026).

Finally, additional research might investigate avenues for depolarization and national harmony by analyzing dialogue initiatives, collective memory projects, civic education efforts, and institutional changes that could help diminish binary divisions and enhance social cohesion in Lebanese society (Assmann, 2011; McCoy et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2024).

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