

IDENTIFYING AND UNDERSTANDING THE MEDIA DISCOURSE OF HEZBOLLAH

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Abstract

This paper aims to identify media discourse of “The Islamic Resistance”, the military arm of Lebanese *Hezbollah*. On contrary to many researches, this paper is significant, because it distinguishes between media discourse of “*The Islamic Resistance*” and media discourse of *Hezbollah*. With the existence of many military media units linked directly to military wings of organisations in the Middle East, this paper provides an example on how to identify media discourse of a military arm.

Keywords: *Hezbollah; The Islamic resistance; media discourse; military wings; military media units*

MENGENALPASTI DAN MEMAHAMI WACANA MEDIA HEZBOLLAH

Abstrak

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti wacana media “*The Islamic Resistance*”, sayap tentera Lebanese *Hezbollah*. Berbeza dengan penyelidik lain, kajian ini signifikan kerana ia membedakan wacana media antara “*The Islamic Resistance*” dan *Hezbollah*. Dengan wujudnya banyak unit militari media yang mempunyai hubungan terus dengan sayap organisasi militari di Timur Tengah, kertas kerja ini menyediakan satu contoh untuk mengenalpasti wacana media sayap militari.

Kata kunci: *Hezbollah*; “*The Islamic Resistance*”; *wacana media*; *sayap militari*; *unit militari media*

INTRODUCTION

Many militant organisations in the Middle East, including *Hezbollah* (written also *Hizbullah* and *Hizballah*), which has a military wing, have utilised the communication developments to establish, or to promote, their own media outlets.

The main argument in this paper is that “*The Islamic Resistance*” is linked only to the leadership apparatus of *Hezbollah* and it is separated from all other *Hezbollah*’s bodies. As the result of *Hezbollah*’s organisational structure (Hamzeh, 2004), “*The Islamic Resistance*” has its own “*Military Media Unit*” to broadcast its messages and military operations’ videos, mainly via *Al-Manar* television and its satellite (Harb, 2011).

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

The used data in this paper are archival and what has been written in the official website of “*The Islamic Resistance*” (www.moqawama.org). Some of the data was originally in Arabic. However, the paper will refer to the Arabic references in the bibliography.

This paper is based on critical discourse analysis discipline, particularly Wodak (2001). Thus, this paper utilises a historical approach to identify media discourse of “*The Islamic Resistance*.” By identifying the discourse, it would be simple for any researcher to ensue and interpret media discourse to uncover its implications.

HISTORY OF HEZBOLLAH

Many researchers and academics investigated the emergence of *Hezbollah*, its structure, its military arm, its policy, its ideology and its media outlets, especially *Al-Manar* television. Thus, shedding light on the establishment of *Hezbollah* in this research helps to identify “*The Islamic Resistance*” of *Hezbollah* and its media discourse.

Understanding the emergence of *Hezbollah* stipulates reading the contemporary history of Lebanese Shiites (Alagha, 2006; Jaber, 1997; Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002). However, some researchers delved in the Islamic history to know how the Muslim Shiites emerged in the seventh century to understand their religious identity in order to contextualise the emergence of *Hezbollah* (Kramer, 1994). Nevertheless, this quick snapshot about Shiites’ identity serves only in understanding the ideology and policy of *Hezbollah*, as many researchers

did (e.g. El Houri, 2012; Harik, 2004; Saad- Ghorayeb, 2002), rather than the emergence of Shiites, because this course requires an independent research in itself within the field of Islamic history.

Historically, the Lebanese Shiites suffered from social humiliation, economic deprivation and political dismissal (Alagha, 2006; Jaber, 1997; Saad- Ghorayeb, 2002). Furthermore, they cannot organise their religious ceremonies, such as Ashura, the commemoration of killing Imam Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, until 1926 when the then authorities represented by the French mandate recognised in the newly written constitution the religious rights of Shiites alongside with other Lebanese sects (Alagha, 2006; Jaber, 1997).

Apart from procuring their religious rights, the undue suffer of Lebanese Shiites has never changed or improved to make them feel that they are really Lebanese citizens (Alagha, 2006). Shortly after the independence of Lebanon in 1943 and the withdrawal of French troops by the end of 1946, the Palestinian crisis *Al-Nakba* (great misfortune) after the declaration of Israel in 1948 and the Israeli occupation of seven villages in south Lebanon spurred the political awareness of Lebanese Shiites who stood with the Palestinian cause (Alagha, 2006; Saad- Ghorayeb, 2002). As a result of this attitude, they supported the Egyptian leader Jamal Abdul-Nasser and the *Palestinian Liberation Organisation* (PLO) to liberate the occupied land from Israel (Saad- Ghorayeb, 2002). However, the Arab defeat in 1967 war which called *Al-Naksa* (small misfortune) turned many Lebanese Shiites to join the leftist parties to face Israel (Saad- Ghorayeb, 2002).

In that era and by the end of 1950s, Lebanese Shiites invited the Iranian cleric Imam Musa Al-Sadr to settle in Lebanon. Al-Sadr, who became a Lebanese citizen in 1963, followed up the policy of openness towards other Lebanese sects and worked to improve the life of Shiites through organising their religious matters by establishing “*The Lebanese Shiite Islamic Higher Council*” in 1967 and demanding the government to establish “*The Council of the South*” to develop the humiliated towns in south Lebanon. In 1974, Al-Sadr formed “*The Movement of the Deprived*” followed after one year by “*The Brigades of the Lebanese Resistance*” which called by its acronym “*Amal*” or “*Amal Movement*” (Alagha, 2006; Blanford, 2011; Jaber, 1997). Unlike “*The Movement of the Deprived*” which was not a Shiite framework, *Amal* since its inception was a Shiite organisation enticed Shiites in the leftist parties and its military wing trained initially by the *Palestinian Liberation Organisation*. Thus, *Amal* and *PLO* faced together the first Israeli invasion in south Lebanon in 1978 which called “*Litani Operation*” and aimed to create a security zone south Litani River to prevent the Palestinian guerrillas from launching rockets against Israel (Saad- Ghorayeb, 2002). Notably, the Palestinian operations against Israel through Lebanese border was approved by the Lebanese government through what so called *Cairo Agreement* in 1969 between the *Lebanese Army* and the *Palestinian Liberation Organisation* brokered by the Arab League (Alagha, 2006; Blanford, 2011).

By the end of 1960s and during the 1970s, the Islamic ideology, or what so called or described “*The Islamic Milieu*”, started to crystalize in Lebanon within the Shiite community when the Baath’s takeover of power in Iraq in 1968 obliged dozens of Lebanese graduates, or by other words the new clerics, to flee back to their homeland (Alagha, 2006). In the same era, many families of disfranchised Lebanese Shiites in south Lebanon and Bekaa districts moved to eastern and southern suburbs of Beirut, particularly the southern suburb which turned later into *Hezbollah’s* enclave, in order to improve their lives (Alagha, 2006; Hamzeh, 2004). These families taught by the Shiite clerics in Beirut their religious duties and political matters (Alagha, 2006).

Following their opposite migration from Iraq, the clerics “including several potential Hizbu’llah officials, set about recreating the Iraqi-based Da’wa Party in Lebanon, while others established the Lebanese Muslim student’s Union [translated also into the Lebanese Union of Muslim Students] in the early 1970s” (Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002, p. 13). Notably, the late Sayyed Mohammad Hussein Fadlullah served “*The Islamic Milieu*” in Lebanon through his Islamic lectures enticing numbers of Amal’s members after Imam Musa Al-Sadr’s disappearance in 1978 (Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002). Shortly prior to the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, members of “*The Islamic Milieu*” in Lebanon established with former members of *Amal Movement* what so called “*The Committee Supportive of the Islamic Revolution*” which considered *Hezbollah’s* prospective nucleus (Alagha, 2006; Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002).

The Israeli invasion to Lebanon and the occupation of Beirut in 1982 to expel the *Palestinian Liberation Organisation* were a milestone of *Hezbollah’s* establishment (Qassem, 2005). In this year, *Islamic Amal Movement* emerged from *Amal Movement* when *Amal’s* Leader Nabih Berri joined “*The National Salvation Committee*” which established by the then Lebanese President Elias Sarkis in 1982 to replace the *Palestinian Liberation Organisation* in western Beirut (Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002). As the result of these events, primarily the Israeli invasion, nine persons (*The Committee of the Nine*) representing different Islamic committees: three members from the *Islamic Scholars of Bekaa* district, three members from the *Islamic Amal Movement* and three members of *Da’wa Party* have met and agreed on a final document sent to the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the late Imam Khomeini, for blessing and approval (Kasser, 2011). The emerged document, which represents *Hezbollah’s* identity, included the united vision of the Islamic committee about Islam, Islamic ruling and faith in resistance against the Israeli occupation (Qassem, 2005). In this regard, the members of the *Islamic Scholars of Bekaa* district belong to the Lebanese Islamic scholars who fled from Iraq after Baath coup (Alagha, 2006). One of these scholars was Sayyed Abbas Al-Musawi who chose the name of *Hezbollah* and became later the second Secretary-General of *Hezbollah* (Alagha, 2006). The chosen name was an outcome of a debate about the suitable name “*Ummat Hezbollah*” (The Nation of *Hezbollah*) or *Hezbollah* (Kasser, 2011). The name

of the *Hezbollah* is combination of two Arabic words “Hezb” which means “Party” and “Allah” which means “God.” Therefore, *Hezbollah* means “The party of Allah” or “The Party of God.” Notably, the name *Hezbollah* derived from the verse 56 of Surah Al-Maidah in the holy Quran, “Whoever takes Allah, His Apostle and those who believe as friends [must know] that Allah’s party [*Hezbollah*] is indeed the triumphant” (Alagha, 2006; Qassem, 2005).

However, *Hezbollah*, which held initially the motto “*The Islamic Revolution in Lebanon*”, appeared officially on February 22, 1985, when it published its manifesto or what so called “*The Open Letter to the Oppressed*” which included *Hezbollah’s* identity, objectives and the establishment of “*The Islamic Resistance*” (Alagha, 2006).

In contrast to other researchers, Alagha (2006) argues that *Hezbollah* was established in 1978 not in 1982 as a result of “*The Islamic Milieu*” in Lebanon. Nevertheless, the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 are the two critical political and military junctures led to the emergence of *Hezbollah* (Jaber, 1997; Norton, 2009; Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002). In this regard, Norton (2009) did not ignore that the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and occupying some territories was a direct cause in *Hezbollah’s* establishment, quoting this argument from two former Israeli Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin and Ehud Barak. However, he considers that this invasion only accelerated the emergence of *Hezbollah*. Based on his reading to the Shiite’s social, political and economic history in Lebanon since 1960s, Norton (2009) concludes that the revolutionary ideas of young Shiites in Lebanon, who inspired by the triumph of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, will lead to the establishment of *Hezbollah*. Figure 1 shows the factors led to the establishment of *Hezbollah*.

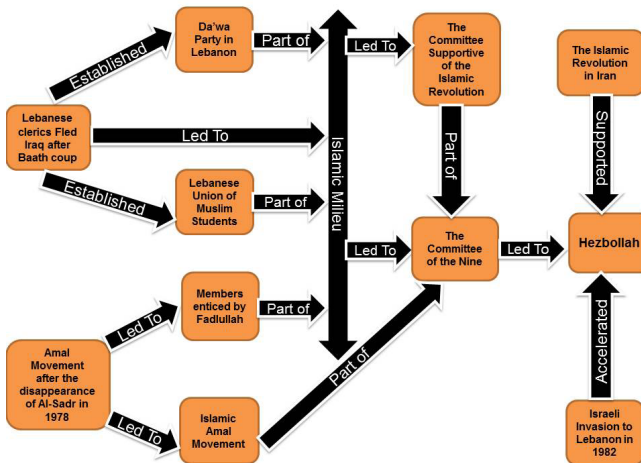


Figure 1- This model shows how Hezbollah emerged

The next section aims to show the structure of *Hezbollah* to determine the position of its military wing, because this is crucial for the later sections to identify the media discourse of “*The Islamic Resistance*.”

STRUCTURE OF HEZBOLLAH

Before it appeared into scene in Lebanon and the Middle East, *Hezbollah* launched through its combat organ several military operations and suicide attacks against Israel between 1982 and 1985 (Alagha, 2006). However, at that time *Hezbollah* did not state clearly its involvement in these operations, because the body of the organisation was still under construction. When *Hezbollah* emerged officially in 1985, it named itself - as appeared in its flag and statements – “*Hezbollah - the Islamic Revolution in Lebanon*.” The main body of *Hezbollah* is the *Shura Council* (The Consultative Council) which “passed through different stages from nine members to five and was finalized to seven as of 1984” (Alagha, 2006, p. 35). Gradually, the structure of *Hezbollah* started to crystalize through establishing several councils.

As shown in Figure 2, which illustrates the structure of *Hezbollah* and is taken from Hamzeh (2004, p. 46), the leadership apparatus or the *Shura Council* is the basic body in *Hezbollah*. However, the Executive Council directs all *Hezbollah’s* civilian units and *Hezbollah’s* members in the districts of Bekaa (or Beq’a), South Lebanon and Beirut. These districts are called regions. The smaller cell of *Hezbollah’s* hierarchy is a group directed by a branch. “Each region is divided into twenty to twenty-five sectors, each of which includes tens of branches. Members are organised into hundreds of groups that constitute the main entry to the party” (Hamzeh, 2004, p. 75).

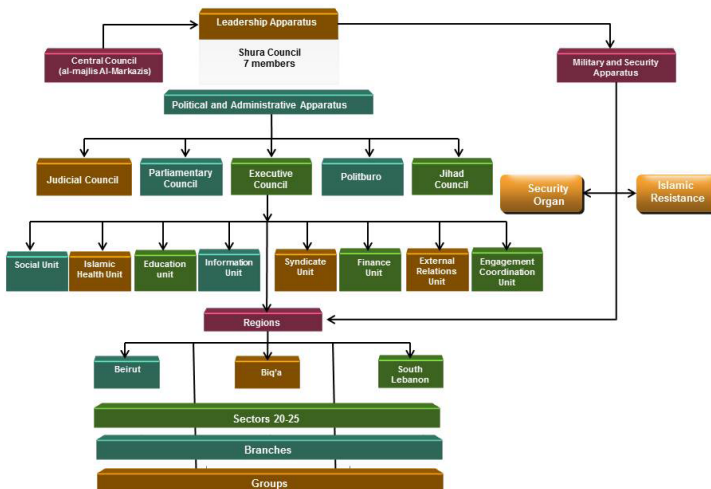


Figure 2- Hezbollah’s organisational structure (Hamzeh, 2004, p. 46)

The councils of *Hezbollah*, as shown in Figure 2, can be described briefly as following:

- The Central Council which elects the members of the *Shura Council* (Hamzeh, 2004). It is “an assembly of almost 200 party founder and cadres” (Hamzeh, 2004, p. 45).
- *The Shura Council* (the Consultative Council), known as well the leadership apparatus, and it is the highest body of *Hezbollah* (Hamzeh, 2004). In this council the majority of its elected members since May 1991 are clergy (Alagha, 2006). According to Hamzeh (1993) this council “is charged with legislative, executive, judicial, political and military affairs and with the overall administration of the party. Decisions made by the Council are reached either unanimously or by majority vote” (p. 325).
- The Jihadi (or Jihad) Council. It was established in 1995 and headed in 2004 by the Secretary-General of *Hezbollah* (Alagha, 2006). Its mission is to identify the enemy and the ways to face it (Hamzeh, 2004).
- The Executive Council. This council replaced in 1995 of what so called “the Executive Shura” (Alagha, 2006).
- The Religious-Judicial Council. This council is “responsible for the dossier of the shar’i matters and Islamic scholars’ affairs” (Alagha, 2006, p. 57).
- The Political Council (or Politburo). It has been established as a result of *Hezbollah’s* engagement in the Lebanese political life and parliamentary election since 1992 (Alagha, 2006).

These councils headed by a Secretary-General, who is assisted by a deputy, a political assistant and a media advisor (Alagha, 2006). The Secretary-General of *Hezbollah* is the leader of “*The Islamic Resistance*” (Hamzeh, 2004). The current Secretary-General of *Hezbollah*, Sayyed Hassan Nasrullah (or Nasrallah) is the third in the row Secretary-General. He holds this position since February 1992, after the assassination by the Israelis of Sayyed Abbas Al-Mussawy, then Secretary-General of *Hezbollah* (Alagha, 2006).

This section has shown the general organisational structure of *Hezbollah*. However, the next section, which is based on this structure, will discuss the position of “*The Islamic Resistance*” in *Hezbollah’s* structure to determine in a later section its media discourse.

“THE ISLAMIC RESISTANCE”

Hezbollah’s first political document in 1985, “*The open letter to the Oppressed*”, stated that there is no military organ separates from the rest of its bodies, and

thus every member may turn into a fighter when the concerned leader recall for Jihad (Kasser, 2011). Furthermore, the letter points out that the resistance against Israel emerged by people in the occupied territories (Kasser, 2011). In this regard, many researchers point out that *Hezbollah* faced Israel through its military arm “*The Islamic Resistance*” after the Israeli invasion to Lebanon in 1982 (Alagha, 2006; Hamzeh, 2004; Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002).

The missed point in the researches is that the lack of evidence about the emergence of “*The Islamic Resistance*.” In contrast to other researches, this thesis argues that “*The Islamic Resistance*” emerged before *Hezbollah*. According to its website (www.moqawama.org), there is an indication that “*The Islamic Resistance*” existed before 1982. In an obituary of one of its fighters called Nazeah Fadl Harb, “*The Islamic Resistance*” uncovered in a statement that its “martyr” was from the first combatants who joined “*The Islamic Resistance*” in 1979 before he was killed in 1981 during a jihadist duty (“The Martyr Nazeah Fadl Harb”, 2013). This statement provides overt evidence that “*The Islamic Resistance*” existed before 1982. The year 1978 concurs with the first Israeli invasion (in June) to Lebanon and the disappearance of Imam Musa Assadr (in August) and the year 1979 (in February) concurs with the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran (Alagha, 2006). As result, these events show that the end of 1978 and the beginning of 1979 may indicate that “*The Islamic Resistance*” emerged in that period of time. Thus, Alagha (2006) mixed-up between “*The Islamic Resistance*” and *Hezbollah*, arguing that the latter existed in 1978, as shown previously, without providing apart from analysis a clear evidence or reference to support his claims.

The development of *Hezbollah's* military wing can be attributed to the role of the *Iranian Revolutionary Guard* (Pasdaran) who crossed the Syrian border towards Lebanon, in order to train “*The Islamic Resistance's*” fighters in Bekaa valley (Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002). Thus, the Iranian support and the Syrian facilities, where the Syrian army was in Lebanon, played a crucial role in creating *Hezbollah's* military wing (Addis & Blanchard, 2011; Alagha, 2006). In this regard, Saad-Ghorayeb (2002) argues that without the Iranian extreme support on all sectors “*The Islamic Resistance*” needs “an additional 50 years for the movement to score the same achievements in the absence of Iranian backing” (p. 14). As the result of this support, it can be concluded that *Hezbollah* is the protégé of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Remarkably, it might be worth to indicate in this vein the noticeable similarity of *Hezbollah* and the *Iranian Revolutionary guards' flags* (Erlich & Kahati, 2007).

Unlike many researchers who focused on *Hezbollah's* history, policy and ideology, Hamzeh (1993; 2004) has paid more attention to the organisational structure of this party. In his both charts about *Hezbollah's* organisational structure, as shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3, Hamzeh (1993; 2004) argues that “*The Islamic Resistance*” is linked directly to *Shura Council* or the leadership apparatus, which is headed by the Secretary-General of *Hezbollah*.

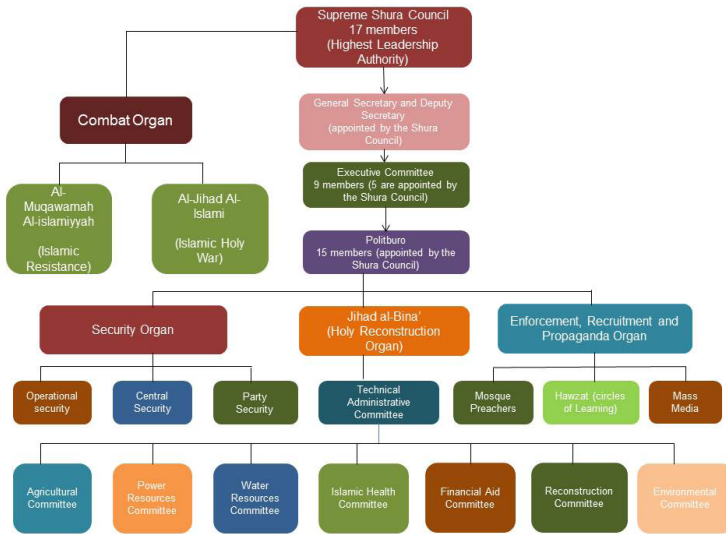


Figure 3- Hezbollah’s old organisational structure (Hamzeh, 1993, p.326)

In his latest organisational structure of *Hezbollah*, as shown in Figure 2, Hamzeh (2004) points out that “The Islamic Resistance consists at least of two main sections: the enforcement and recruitment section and the combat section” (p.70). To understand the role of the enforcement and recruitment section it is crucial to shed light on membership procedures in *Hezbollah*, according to Hamzeh (2004). Generally, the individual who wants to be a member in *Hezbollah* should join a group (Majmu’ah) in a region for two years and should be primarily approved by the party’s security section. The enforcement and recruitment section in every region ensures that the new individual passes two periods of education and training. In the first period and first year, which called enforcement (Ta’abia), the individual receives religious and cultural studies about *Hezbollah* and its ideology. Passing this stage successfully is crucial for the individual to engage in the second year period which called ordered discipline (Intizam) and includes physical training. The end of this year determines “the role and the position of the new member within the majmu’ah [group] at the branch level. Those who excel in military abilities will be fighters. Others will serve in the political and social units of the party” (Hamzeh, 2004, p.76).

However, the combat section is divided into four units: Istishhadiyyon (Self-Martyrs) which means those fighters who are willing to do “Martyrdom Operations”, Special Forces, Rocket Launchers and Regular Fighters (Hamzeh, 2004). In this regard, “*The Military Operational Headquarters*”, which

supervised by *Shura Council* and headed by the Secretary-General of *Hezbollah*, organises the military operations of “*The Islamic Resistance*” to ensure the secrecy of its activities (Hamzeh, 2004).

According to Hamzeh (2004) “*The Islamic Resistance*” consists of groups and “each group is self-contained and semiautonomous. Thus, if one is plucked from the main branch, the others cannot be discovered easily. In structural terms, groups communicate through military sector commanders who in turn communicate through a military regional commander who is usually a member of *Hizbullah’s* military operational headquarters” (p.71).

Once every member of a group (*majmu’ah*) recalled by “*The Military Operational Headquarters*”, a military sector commander provides the collected group instructions about the required operation (Hamzeh, 2004).

However, the security organ is linked directly to the *Shura Council* and consists of two bodies. Firstly, the Party Security. Its main mission is to protect *Hezbollah’s* organisation and its members from penetration. Thus, its approval is crucial in recruiting *Hezbollah’s* members and prospected fighters. Secondly, the External Security or Encounter Security. It aims to protect *Hezbollah* and “*The Islamic Resistance*” from spies and external intelligence attacks (Hamzeh, 2004). Based on these illustrations, Figure 4 shows the organisational structure of *Hezbollah’s* military and security apparatus.

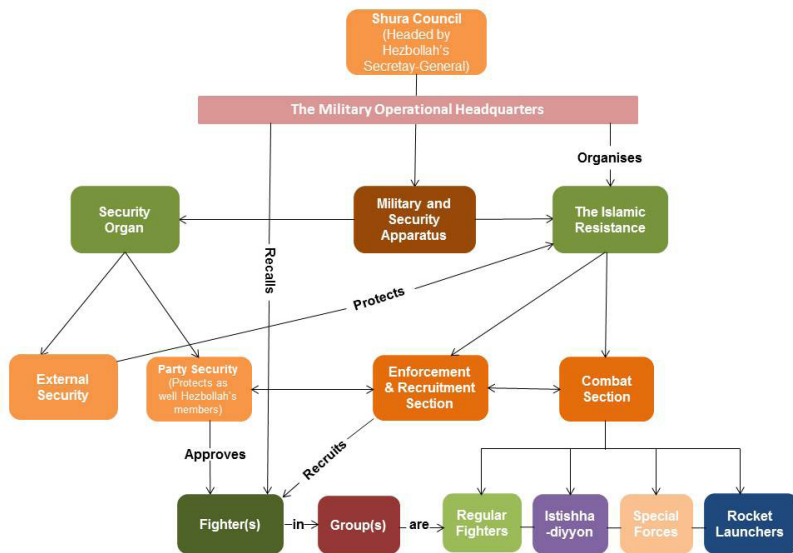


Figure 4- The organisational structure of Hezbollah’s military and security apparatus based on Hamzeh’s literature (Hamzeh, 2004)

In his earliest study about *Hezbollah’s* structure between 1988 and 1992,

as shown in Figure 3, Hamzeh (1993) argues that the military apparatus of *Hezbollah* includes two bodies: “*The Islamic Resistance*” and “*Al-Jihad Al-Islami*.” However, the later body does not exist in Hamzeh’s second chart about organisational structure as shown in Figure 2.

Hamzeh (1993) points out that “*Al-Jihad Al-Islami*” named also “*Islamic Jihad Organisation*” “was in charge of suicidal attacks against Western and Israeli targets” (p. 328). It committed in 1983 two suicidal attacks against the Multi-National forces in Beirut “which resulted in the death of 241 American and 58 French soldiers respectively” (Alagha, 2006, p. 281). Repeatedly, *Hezbollah* denies the existence of this military organ in its organisational body without condemning its attacks in 1983 (Hamzeh, 2004). This body, which has several names such as “*Hezbollah’s External Security Organisation*” and “*Foreign Action Unit*”, considered terrorist by the Australian Government (Australian National Security, 2012).

However, what’s common between Hamzeh’s two charts about *Hezbollah*’s organisational structure (Figure 2 and Figure 3) is the direct linkage between “*The Islamic Resistance*” and the *Shura Council* or the leadership apparatus, which is headed by the Secretary-General of *Hezbollah*. Furthermore, the two Figures 4 and 5 show that the military wing of *Hezbollah* is separated from other *Hezbollah*’s organs and bodies.

In contrast to Rabil (2008) who linked the military apparatus to the Jihadi Council and separated it from other *Hezbollah*’s bodies as it is linked only to the Shura Council, Hamzeh (2004) asserts on the notion that “*The Islamic Resistance*” is linked directly to the Shura Council. Although Rabil’s argument hinges at the point that the military apparatus is under the direct control of the Shura Council through the Jihadi Council, Hamzeh (2004) provides proofs that the Jihadi Council has no direct control over *Hezbollah*’s military apparatus and its recommendations raised only to the Shura Council.

Towards this end, Hamzeh (2004) argues that the position of “*The Islamic Resistance*” in the party provides *Hezbollah* pliability to face the political and military challenges. As result of this position, some countries consider only the military wing of *Hezbollah* as a terrorist organisation (Australian National Security, 2012). Table 1 lists the countries other than Israel which consider *Hezbollah* and/or its military wing a terrorist organisation. Notably, Israel considers whole *Hezbollah* as a terrorist organisation, because it represents a perpetuate threat to its security (Baranovich & Moorthy, 2011). Remarkably, as Harik (2004) argues, *Hezbollah* endeavours to undermine globally the label terrorism against its organisation through two strategies. Firstly, *Hezbollah*’s military wing “*The Islamic Resistance*” aims to be as other liberation movements in the world targeting only the Israeli occupation. Secondly, *Hezbollah* engages in the Lebanese political life as a party and has its own representatives in the parliament.

Table 1: Countries which Consider Hezbollah and/or its Military Wing a Terrorist Organisation

Country	Organisation	Comment
Australia	Hezbollah's External Security Organisation (ESO)	Known as well by Al-Jihad Al-Islami; Islamic Jihad Organisation; Revolutionary Justice Organisation...
Bahrain	Whole Hezbollah	Since April 2013
Canada	Whole Hezbollah	
European Union	Hezbollah's Military Wing	Since July 2013
New Zealand	Hezbollah's Military Wing	
Netherland	Whole Hezbollah	It is the only European country classified Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation
United Kingdom	Hezbollah's Military Wing	It took this standpoint before EU's decision.
United States of America	Whole Hezbollah	

Source: Australian National Security, 2012; Bahrain First Arab Country to Blacklist Hezbollah as Terrorist Organisation, 2013; Pawlak & Croft, 2013.

Due to its religious and ideological framework, *Hezbollah* established “*The Lebanese Multi-Confessional Brigades*” (LMCB) on November 3, 1997 as a military wing separated from its organisational body and “*The Islamic Resistance*” to allow Lebanese seculars and nationalists to join the military efforts to liberate the occupied Lebanese land from Israel (Alagha, 2006). In this vein, *Hezbollah's* engagement in the Lebanese political life and its assertion in its discourse on the resistance to face the Israeli occupation led this party in 1998 to change its motto from “*Hezbollah-the Islamic Revolution in Lebanon*”, which fears the Lebanese Christians, into “*Hezbollah-the Islamic Resistance in Lebanon*” (Alagha, 2006). This policy aimed also to emphasize on the culture of resistance in Lebanon to create a virtual society called the “*Resisting Society*” (Minzili, 2011; Qassem, 2008). However, *Hezbollah* refused to dissolve its military wing “*The Islamic Resistance*” after the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon in May 2000 (Alagha, 2006). Instead, the party asserts in its discourse that “*The Islamic Resistance*” will continue in order to liberate Shebaa Farms, which are close to Golan Heights, from Israeli occupation and to protect the Lebanese territories from Israeli aggressions (Baylouny, 2006; Qassem, 2008).

In a nutshell, the military wing of *Hezbollah* – “*The Islamic Resistance*” is separated from other *Hezbollah's* bodies and it is linked directly to *Shura Council* or what so called the leadership apparatus. Consequently, the leader of “*The Islamic Resistance*” is the Secretary-General of *Hezbollah*. However, Hamzeh, particularly in his latest study about *Hezbollah's* structure, did not

provide information about other sections constitute “*The Islamic Resistance*.”

The next section will discuss *Hezbollah's* media outlets, because this is crucial to distinguish between these outlets and “*The Islamic Resistance's*” media and hence to identify the media discourse of “*The Islamic Resistance*.”

HEZBOLLAH'S MEDIA OUTLETS

In its early stages of emergence, *Hezbollah* acknowledged the importance of media to transmit its messages and to support the mission of its military arm (El Hourri, 2012; Hollander, 2006). To win the media war, *Hezbollah* is working on shaping the local and international perceptions about the conflict with Israel, and gaining various types of support to complete its activities (Lyons, 2008).

In this regard, the party uses various types of media outlets and utilises the communication developments (Lyme, 2009). In both *Hezbollah's* structures provided by Hamzeh (1993; 2004), there is a section or a unit, such as Information Unit in Figure 2 and Mass Media section in Figure 3, to supervise its own media outlets and to communicate with external media outlets and journalists (Lyme, 2009; Osipova, 2011). Yet, all *Hezbollah's* media outlets are under the Secretary-General control since July 30, 2001 (Alagha, 2001).

Since its inception, *Hezbollah* established several media outlets. Based on reading the literature about *Hezbollah's* media in Conway (2003; 2007), Erlich & Kahati (2007), Hamzeh (2004), Lamoum (2009) and Lyme (2009), it can be concluded that *Hezbollah's* media is divided into three genres. Firstly, the internal media such as bulletins directed to *Hezbollah's* members and contain analysis about recent events (Erlich & Kahati, 2007). Secondly, the advertising and cultural media such as posters, exhibitions, tapes, CDs, video games and books which are generally Islamic (Abo Rida, 2012; Lyme, 2009). Thirdly, the traditional and online media outlets (Conway, 2003; 2007; Hamzeh, 2004; Lamoum, 2009; Lyme, 2009).

Abo Rida (2012) argues that *Hezbollah's* internal bulletins aim to educate and cultivate the members of the party and they are divided into four categories:

The Political Circular: This bulletin issued by the consultative council and directed the party's cadres in order to know the contemporary local, regional and global political issues and the *Hezbollah's* standpoint of these issues.

The Cultural Circular: This bulletin issued periodically by *Hezbollah's* concerned cultural department to provide the members with general Islamic concepts, such as Hadith and sermon.

The Supreme Leader Speech: The concerned department in the party issued a periodic pamphlet called Miskat Al-Nour (The Lantern of Light) includes the recent speech of Iranian Supreme Leader Sayyed Ali Khamenei who considered *Hezbollah's* supreme jurist (Al-wali Al-Faqih).

The Hebrew Bulletin: Under the motto “Know Your enemy”, *Hezbollah* issues periodically an internal bulletin contains translated Israeli news from Hebrew to Arabic. This bulletin includes up-to-date news about Israel social and political

status quo.

Regarding the third genre, *Hezbollah's* first media outlet was a radio called “*Sawt Almustadafin - Sawt Alislam*” (The Voice of the Oppressed - The Voice of Islam) which started transmitting from Baalbeck city, in northern Bekaa valley, soon after the Israeli invasion to Lebanon in June 1982 (Darwish, 2002; Lamloom, 2009). This radio, which usually headed by an Iranian, was targeting Lebanon, Jordan and the Occupied Territories. Due to its supporting the Palestinian Intifada and “*The Islamic Resistance's*” military operations, it was known “The Radio of the Resistance.” Thus, the Israeli air force raided nine times on its transmitter. However, *Hezbollah* muzzled this radio in 2002, because it was unlicensed from the Lebanese communication authorities (Darwish, 2002).

However, the second *Hezbollah's* media outlet was *Al-Ahed* (The Pledge) appeared into scene by mid June 1984 (Conway, 2007). This weekly newspaper followed by five periodicals and three radios including *Al-Nour* (The Light) which started transmitting on 9 May 1988 (Hamzeh, 2004; Lamloom, 2009). This radio followed by *Al-Manar* (The Beacon or The Lighthouse) television on June 3, 1991 (Alagha, 2006). Both *Al-Nour* and *Al-Manar*, which they considered *Hezbollah's* mouthpiece, constitutes a company called the Lebanese Communication Group (Conway, 2007; Lamloom, 2009).

In terms of online media, *Hezbollah* acknowledged early the importance of cyberspace launching its official website www.Hizbollah.org in 1996 (Knight & Ubayasiri, 2002; Conway, 2003). This website followed by many affiliated websites, because the media outlets *Al-Ahed*, *Al-Nour*, *Al-Manar* and some *Hezbollah's* units launched their own web pages (Conway, 2003; 2007, Lamloom, 2009; Lyme, 2009).

In his studying *Hezbollah's* websites and its affiliates, Weimann (2008) points out that there are between 40 to 50 websites, grouping them into several categories include: News and Information, Welfare and Social Services, Religious Indoctrination, Personal Websites of *Hezbollah's* key figures, Anti-Israel Websites, Wartime Propaganda Online and Youth-Oriented Features. Regarding the last category, Weimann (2008) sheds light on the electronic game Special Force, which launched by *Hezbollah* in 2003, to allow the zealots to join virtually the resistance.

Due to the importance of cyberspace, *Hezbollah* established Electronic Media Unit (“A Meeting between The Electronic Media Unit and Media Activists on social Network”, 2013). This unit is missed in Hamzeh's study about *Hezbollah's* organisational structure (as shown in Figure 2).

This section has shown basically *Hezbollah's* media history and its outlets. It revealed that the party started establishing media outlets before its official announcement in 1985. Furthermore, *Hezbollah* utilised early the cyberspace to transmit its messages.

The next section is about *Al-Manar* television. It aims to provide a preface about this television in order to state the difference between *Al-Manar* and “*The*

Military Media Unit” and to ensue in identifying the media discourse of “*The Islamic Resistance*” and its elements.

AL-MANAR TELEVISION

As noted in the last section, *Al-Manar* is considered *Hezbollah*’s mouthpiece. In a press interview with the then *Al-Manar* Chairman Abdullah Kasser, he refused to call *Al-Manar* *Hezbollah*’s channel, pointing out that the reason of this description because the channel headed by a *Hezbollah*’s member and supports the line of resistance against Israel. He revealed that *Al-Manar* funded by 20 investors where 55% of them belong to *Hezbollah* and the other 45% are merchants and independent businessmen (Jaballah, 2006).

Before the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon in May 2000, *Al-Manar* was broadcasting extensively and exclusively the statements and activities of “*The Islamic Resistance*”, particularly its military operations’ videos after obtaining them from “*The Military Media Unit*” of “*The Islamic Resistance*”- the military wing of *Hezbollah* (Harb, 2011). In this context, *Al-Manar* described itself as “*The Channel of Resistance*” and after the Israeli withdrawal on May 25, 2000 as “*The Channel of Arabs and Muslims.*” Since then *Al-Manar* started broadcasting through satellites to other countries in the Middle East and later to other parts of the world after obtaining a license from Lebanese Government on April 5, 2000 (Conway, 2007; Harb, 2011; Osipova, 2011).

After the outbreak of the second Palestinian Intifada in September 2000, *Al-Manar* established what so called a “War Room” to support the Intifada and encourage the culture of resistance against Israel (Wahdan, 2009). Thus, *Al-Manar* called then “Indifada Television” (Abo Al-Nasr, 2003).

In this vein, Maznar (2001) outlines *Al-Manar*’s strategy as followings:

- *Seeking to be the first channel in Lebanon and the world concerned in the conflict with Israel by supporting “The Islamic Resistance” and Palestinian Intifada.*
- *Seeking to be the first channel in Lebanon and the Arab World concerned with airing political and Jihadist programs.*
- *Seeking to be a basic channel in Lebanon and the Arab World concerned with scientific, social and educational issues after May 2000.*
- *Seeking to train the channel’s cadre to entice a big audience.*

During the first days of “July War” between Israel and *Hezbollah*, the Israeli air force bombed *Al-Manar* channel headquarters in southern district of Beirut. However, *Al-Manar*, which had put earlier an emergency plan, resumed its broadcasting after two minutes of muzzling (Lamloum, 2009). The channel after this war portrayed *Hezbollah*’s military arm “*The Islamic Resistance*” in the frontline to defend Arabs and Muslims (Ajemian, 2008). Thus, undoubtedly *Al-Manar* considered as the mouthpiece of *Hezbollah* and “*The Islamic resistance.*” As Kalb and Saivetz (2007) argue “*Al-Manar* was to *Hezbollah* what Pravda

[newspaper] was to the Soviet Union” (p. 20). In this regard, *Hezbollah* uses “Al-Manar to strengthen its discourse and its political religious project within the Middle East” (Fontana, 2010, p. 8).

Al-Manar broadcasts several programs including political talk shows, entertainment, sport, news, religious and cultural programs, music videos or songs, series and programs for youth and children (Jorisch, 2004). According to an investigative report about *Al-Manar* issued by the Australian Communication and Media Authority (2010), the themes of *Al-Manar* programs are Anti American and Anti-Israeli; Resistance Narratives of *Hezbollah*; Glorification of *Hezbollah*'s Martyrs; and Anti-Semitism. However, Baylouny (2006) in her comparison between *Al-Manar* and *Alhurra*, the U.S. satellite to compete anti-American outlets in the Arab world, argues that *Al-Manar*'s messages are focused on “Palestine, the continuing threat posed by Israel, American bias in the Arab- Israeli conflict, the power and importance of community solidarity, and pride in Arab culture and the achievements of the Islamic Resistance” (p. 2).

Al-Manar's propaganda in supporting the military actions against Israeli army and its standpoint for Washington's role in the Middle East pushed the United States to ban the channel and classify it a terrorist organisation on December 17, 2004. This coincides with the banning of the channel in France under anti-Semitism charges four days earlier (Alagha, 2006). In the same manner, Netherland and Spain banned this channel respectively in the mid of 2005 and the Asiasat satellite blocked *Al-Manar*'s transmitting to Asia (Lamloum, 2009).

In short, *Al-Manar* is a licensed media institution in Lebanon. It is considered the mouthpiece of *Hezbollah* and its military arm, because it airs exclusively the materials produced by “*The Military Media Unit*” of “*The Islamic Resistance*.” It airs programs support the resistance against Israel. However, the next section will shed light on “*The Military Media Unit*” before identifying and outlining the elements of the media discourse of “*The Islamic Resistance*.”

“THE MILITARY MEDIA UNIT”

“*The Islamic Resistance*” has benefitted from media lessons of other liberation movements, especially the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and as result it started using the camera as a parallel weapon to its military operations against Israeli army (Khatib, 2012). For “*The Islamic Resistance*”, the Arab defeat in 1967 in the war against Israel, Grenada and Vietnam Wars were a precious lesson on how to use media effectively in the conflict with Israel, because it is crucial to provide the journalists an “alternative access to information” (Harb, 2011, p. 179).

In this regard, “*The Islamic Resistance*” created a secret unit “*The Military Media Unit*” (named also *War Information Unit*) which holds military characteristics, because its members undergo military, ideological and artistic trainings to film the military operations and air them professionally (Atrisi, 2000). The cameramen of this unit hold also guns in the battlefield for the

purpose of self-defence merely (Harb, 2011). Remarkably, *Al-Ahed* newspaper unveiled the existence of this unit in 1984 to record fighters' testaments and its first military operation film against an Israeli barrack dated on November 22, 1986 (Lamloum, 2009).

Although Hamzeh (2004) provides a nuanced understanding of “*The Islamic Resistance's*” organisational structure, he missed to sketch “*The Military Media Unit*” in its body. Figure 5 shows the position of “*The Military Media Unit*” as linked to *Hezbollah's* military apparatus structure, or by other words to “*The Islamic Resistance.*”

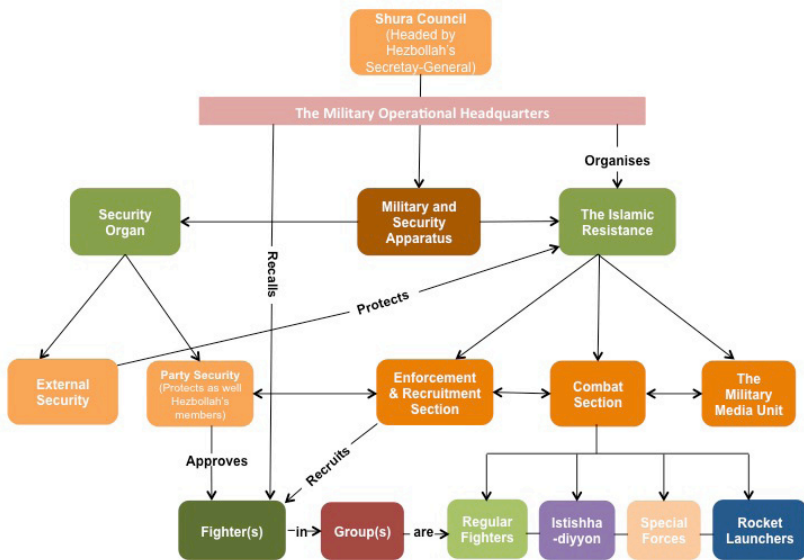


Figure 5- “The Military Media Unit’s” position in Hezbollah’s military apparatus

Harb (2011) points out that “*The Military Media Unit*” is monitoring alongside with *Al-Manar* the Israeli media outlets for propaganda reason. In 2004 there were eight translators working in both *Al-Manar* and “*The Military Media Unit.*” Their mission was to monitor the Israeli media and translate from Hebrew into Arabic all the broadcasted issues related to *Hezbollah* and “*The Islamic Resistance.*” Harb, who interviewed the head of “*The Military Media Unit*”, named himself as Haj Maitham, reveals some information about the unit’s mechanism of work and how it developed in filming. Hence, the unit provides, primarily, *Al-Manar* videotapes and statements about the military operations of “*The Islamic Resistance.*”

However, “*The Military Media Unit*” provided military operations’ videos to outlets and companies other than *Al-Manar* in four occasions. Firstly, it provided *Assafir* newspaper in October 2000 with photos about the operation of capturing three Israeli soldiers. Thus, the newspaper published exceptionally an issue on Sunday (*Hezbollah Joins the War in Palestine, 2000*). Secondly, it

sold the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) a military operation video for a documentary purpose in 2006. This video contains footages of capturing three Israeli soldiers by “*The Islamic Resistance*” in October 2000 (Eljek, 2006). Thirdly, it provided *Al-Mayadeen* satellite chairman Ghassan ben Jiddo the military operation video of capturing two Israeli soldiers in 2006 to air it through its channel in July 2012 (Fahs, 2012). Fourthly, it provided videos to a company produced the drama “*The Victorious*” about “*The Islamic Resistance*” (Meree, 2011).

Towards this end, this section spotted “*The Military Media Unit*” in *Hezbollah’s* military apparatus. It showed its history and its cooperation with *Al-Manar*. However, the next section will outline the outputs of this unit, because they constitute a major element of media discourse of “*The Islamic Resistance*.”

MEDIA DISCOURSE OF “THE ISLAMIC RESISTANCE”

The aim of this research is to identify and interpret the media discourse of “*The Islamic Resistance*” in order to identify its signs and codes and consequently to explore its frames and objectives. Thus, it is crucial to identify the elements of this discourse.

As discussed previously the military wing of *Hezbollah* is linked directly to the highest body in the party the Shura Council, headed by the Secretary-General and separated from other *Hezbollah’s* bodies to ensure the secrecy of military operations. Furthermore, “*The Military Media Unit*” is linked directly to “*The Islamic Resistance*.” These features depict the basis of media discourse of “*The Islamic Resistance*.” Yet, this discourse, as shown in Figure 6, is constituted by military speeches of the leader of “*The Islamic Resistance*”, who is *Hezbollah’s* Secretary-General, and the outputs of “*The Military Media Unit*.”

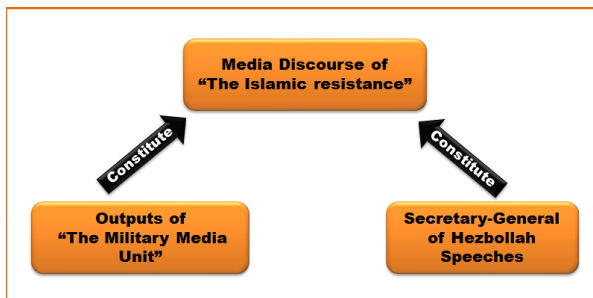


Figure 6- The elements of media discourse of “*The Islamic Resistance*”

However, the identification of “*The Military Media Unit*” outputs can be traced in several studies (e.g. Harb, 2011; Osipova, 2011) and the website (www.moqawama.org). Remarkably, the literature reveals that there is no study outlines all the outputs of this unit. In this vein, Harb (2011) identified only one element the military operations’ videos. Osipova (2011) added two elements documenting the military activities (written statements) and filming fighters’

testaments. In addition to these elements, there are video songs and propaganda flashes. The latest outputs can be noticed through observing the video songs and flashes screened on *Al-Manar* as there are captions on some of them indicate their producer “*The Military Media Unit*” (e.g. *Al-Manar*, 2010). Thus, the outputs, as shown in Figure 7, are: Statements, Fighters’ Testaments, Military Operations’ Videos and Video songs including propaganda flashes.

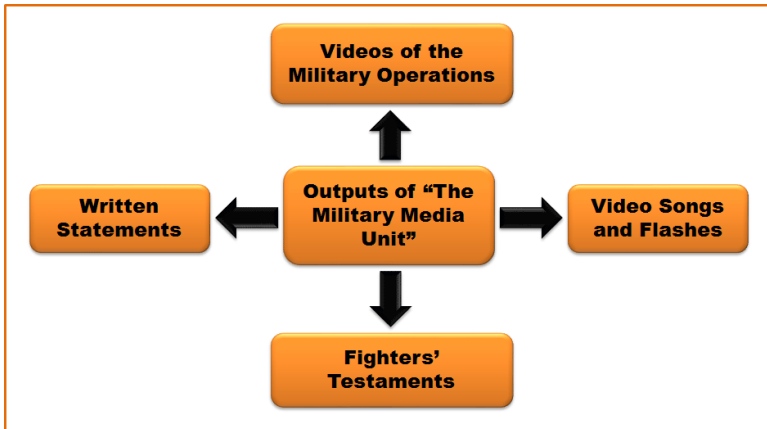


Figure 7- The outputs of “The Military Media Unit” which constitute a major part of “The Islamic Resistance’s” media discourse

This section outlines and identifies the elements of media discourse of “*The Islamic Resistance*.”

CONCLUSION

This paper traced the history of the Lebanese party *Hezbollah*, its organisational structure, its military arm, its media outlets and “*The Military Media Unit*.” It aimed to sketch only on media discourse of “*The Islamic Resistance*” to identify its elements. In summary, the paper revealed:

- *The socio-political context of Hezbollah’s establishment, and consequently the context of its military wing “The Islamic Resistance” and its discourse.*
- *The organisational structure of Hezbollah’s military apparatus and the position of “The Islamic Resistance.”*
- *“The Islamic Resistance” emerged before Hezbollah and by the end 1978 and the beginning of 1979.*
- *“The Islamic Resistance” is linked only to the leadership apparatus of Hezbollah.*
- *The leader of “The Islamic Resistance” is Hezbollah’s Secretary-General.*

- “*The Military Media Unit*” uses *Al-Manar*’s satellite television to transmit its messages and air its videos.
- The media discourse of “*The Islamic Resistance*” constituted by the outputs of “*The Military Media Unit*” and speeches of its leader the Secretary-General of Hezbollah.
- The outputs of “*The Military Media Unit*” are written statements, fighters’ testaments, military operations’ videos, and video songs and propaganda flashes.

In a nutshell, this paper, as intended, bridged a gap through identifying the media discourse of “*The Islamic Resistance*.”

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