

The Utilised Frames by Militant Organisations in the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Case of *Hezbollah's* Military Arm

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Abstract: The new communication technologies provide militant organisations in the Middle East a medium to transmit their messages. Generally, the purpose of broadcasting is informing and/or manipulating propaganda. In the context of Arab-Israeli conflict, organisations, such as *Hezbollah's* military arm, "*The Islamic Resistance*", embed their media discourses with frames. Although the current studies have uncovered the ideology of *Hezbollah*, it seems there is a dearth in research about the utilised linguistic frames in the media discourse of its military arm. However, this paper aims to bridge this gap. It identifies the frames, classifies them and interprets their denotations.

Keywords: conflict, framing, *Hezbollah*, Israel, Middle East, "*The Islamic Resistance*".

1. Introduction

Militant organisations in the Middle East in the context of conflict with Israel utilise linguistic terminologies in their media statements to frame 'the self' and 'the other.' Suleiman (2004) argues that, "one of the most important aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict is the manipulation of terminology to create a *linguistic map* that conditions people's perceptions of the facts on the ground" (138).

In this context, *Hezbollah's* military arm, "*The Islamic Resistance*", in Lebanon has established a military media unit in the mid-1980s and one of its missions is to issue statements about the war with Israel. The messages of this unit contain frames to represent the identity of *Hezbollah's* military arm and to reframe other identities.

Understanding the frames is significant, because they "represent interpretative schemata that combine cognitive tools and language that allow people to make sense of everyday experiences and events, and are more likely to resonate

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with the intended recipients when they draw on shared cultural themes and cultural memory in specific historical contexts" (Matar 2010: 150).

To identify the embedded frames in the media discourse of *Hezbollah's* military arm and provide an insight about their meaning, this paper review the existing literature and analysing the relevant data.

2. Literature Review

Hezbollah formed unofficially in Lebanon after the Israeli invasion to Beirut in 1982 (Hamzeh 2004). This religious party faced the Israeli army through its military wing "*The Islamic Resistance*" (Harb 2011). In its war, this military arm established in 1984 a "*Military Media Unit*", translated also into "*War Information Unit*", to broadcast various outputs, such as to document the attacks against the Israeli army, issue media statements, archive the fighters' testaments and film the military operations against Israel (Osipova 2011).

In an attempt to identify the media discourse of *Hezbollah's* military arm, El Zein (2014) points out that "*The Islamic Resistance's*" media discourse constitutes of the outputs of "*The Military Media Unit*" and the resistant speeches of its leader the Secretary-General of *Hezbollah* who is now Sayyed Hassan Nasrullah.

There are studies about *Hezbollah's* history, policy and ideology (Alagha 2006). Also, there studies about some outputs of "*The Military Media Unit*", particularly the military operations' videos (Harb 2011; El Hourri 2012). However, Karagiannis (2009) endeavoured to identify and classify the frames in *Hezbollah's* ideology, policy and excerpts from Nasrullah's speeches. However, he did not identify the frames in "*The Military Media Unit*" of "*The Islamic Resistance.*" Furthermore, the author did not delve in the meanings of the sketched frames.

In this regard, it seems there is a dearth in studies about the embedded frames in the media discourse of *Hezbollah's* military arm. However, the question is: what are the embedded frames in "*The Islamic Resistance's*" media discourse and their meaning? Thus, this paper sheds light on the basic utilised frames and their meanings.

3. Methodology

Under the umbrella of critical discourse analysis discipline, framing can be utilised as a theory to interpret the meaning (Darwish 2009). However, the discourse refers to a language in an identified domain, such as media discourse (Fairclough 1995). Generally, discourse can be considered a mass noun, or a count noun (El-daly 2010). However, the powerful discourse is based "on a socio-historical grounding embedded in the wider terrain of a culture of communication, what Foucault calls episteme, rather than remaining as restricted, isolated and disordered political signs" (Matar 2010: 143).

This paper considers the identified discourse as a mass noun, because it includes the outputs' genres that constitute "*The Islamic Resistance's*" media discourse.

Framing, as a media theory, means how media presents an issue or name presented to the public from a certain perspective or perspectives (Chong & Druckman 2007).

In this respect, the discourse is shaped by the ideas of the author or group that formed it (Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007; Weaver 2007).

David Snow (cited in McAdam et al. 1996) defines framing, "The conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action" (6).

The language is crucial in identifying the frames (Vreese 2005). Thus, the frame can be traced through language, because it is "a marker of identity. In this function, language assumes greater importance than usual in situations of conflict. Language bonds its speakers internally and bounds them externally. In this respect, it acts as a boundary-setter between the in-group and out-group" (Suleiman 2004: 13).

In this vein, this paper classifies the frames and pays attention in analysing them to their origins to understand how "*The Islamic Resistance's*" media discourse is shaped.

4. Data Collection

To collect the relevant data, this paper traces "*The Islamic Resistance's*" media discourse to choose the issued statements of its military media unit, particularly during July War in 2006 with Israel. However, the data obtained from *Al-Ahed* newspaper archives and the official website of "*The Islamic Resistance*" (www.moqawama.org).

5. Limitations

There are limitations in this paper. Firstly, the data does not represent all the outputs that constitute "*The Islamic Resistance's*" media discourse and it focuses on the frames that require analysis to know their roots and meanings. Thus, this paper provides an insight about the used frames. Secondly, the original language of the data is Arabic. Thus, some translation may not be matched exactly with the aim of the organisation. Thirdly, this paper does not include the religious frames, because they require an independent research about the ideological context of "*The Islamic Resistance's*" media discourse.

6. Data Analysis

To analyse the used frames in "*The Islamic Resistance's*" media discourse from the collected data sample, this paper classifies the frames into the terminologies that present "the self" and the terminologies that label "the other." Under each section, there are identifying and analysing the relevant extracted frames.

6.1 The Frames of 'The Self'

As shown from its name, the military arm of *Hezbollah* called "*The Islamic Resistance*." The name includes two words identify the identity of this military wing: 'Islamic' and 'Resistance.' The first term reflects its ideology. However, the second term underlines the aim of this military arm as a resistance movement to liberate the occupied Lebanese territories from Israeli occupation. In tracing its Arabic lexical meaning, the term '*moqawama*' (resistance) is derived from the verb '*qawam*' (resist) and it may signify an igniting war from a group against another one (Manzur 2003).

Except the religious frames, the extracted frames, which reflect 'the self', can be classified into two categories: the frames that identify the fighters and their actions.

6.1.1 The Fighters

The fighters of "*The Islamic Resistance*" are described in its media statements with labels, such as heroes, mujahedeen, defenders and liberators of Lebanese occupied territories. In addition to these frames, they are called '*Allah's Men*' or '*the Men of Allah*.' This frame, which signifies masculinity in Arabic culture, requires deep interpretation, because it emerged during July War in 2006, as shown in the collected data for analysis.

During July War in 2006, the popular Syrian poet Omar Al-Farra praised the military actions of "*The Islamic Resistance*" and its fighters, composing a poem '*Haolā Hom Rijalo-llah*' (Those are the Men of Allah) (Daabol 2006). Notably, this poem aired via *Al-Manar* by Al-Farra's voice during and after the war.

Al-Farra's term 'the Men of Allah' invaded the media discourse of "*The Islamic Resistance*", because it was utilised by its leader and "*The Military Media Unit*." However, the same term used also by the Lebanese poet, Ghassan Matar, who was inspired by Nasrullah's reply to the fighters during the war. Matar's poem '*Ahibaii*' (My Beloved Ones), which was sung by Julia Boutros (Juliaboutros 2006), included this term '*the Men of Allah*' to show how "*The Islamic Resistance's*" leader addresses his fighters.

The meaning of this frame can be traced from two sources. Based on the notion of intertextuality, '*the Men of Allah*' has its root in a number of verses in Quran to indicate to the true believers, such as in the verse, "Among the believers are men who are true to the covenant they made with Allah" (33: 23). However, the second interpretation of this frame is based on Arabic semantic or grammar. As "*The Islamic Resistance's*" fighters belong to *Hezbollah*, this implies that they are the men of *Hezbollah* or *Hezbollah's men* (*Rijalo Hezb-llah*). In Arabic language, it is permissible to omit an adjunct or an annexed (*Modaf*) if it is as well a governed noun of a genitive construction (*Modaf Ilaih*), because the following governed noun of a genitive construction may refer to the omitted word without affecting the meaning. As a result of this semantic process, the omitted Arabic word from the men of *Hezbollah* or *Hezbollah's men* (*Rijalo Hezb-llah*) is the adjunct and the genitive *Hezb*

(which means the party). Thus, the new term is 'Rijalo-llah' (the men of Allah or Allah's men) can signify the men of *Hezbollah* or *Hezbollah's men (Rijalo Hezb-llah)*.

Whatever the implication of 'Allah's Men' or 'the Men of Allah', this term has turned into a frame and has become a brand, or an indicator to "*The Islamic Resistance's*" fighters, because it has emerged during July War 2006 and maintained since then as a marker to their identity.

6.1.2 "*The Islamic Resistance's*" Actions

"*The Islamic Resistance*" presents its military actions in the context of defending Lebanon from Israeli army assaults, liberating the occupied Lebanese territories and Lebanese prisoners from Israeli jails. Thus, "*The Islamic Resistance*" frames the actions of its fighters as responding or replying to Israel attacks and violation.

The utilisation of this label in the media discourse of "*The Islamic Resistance*" to frame the actions of 'the self' implies that this military arm has a nuance understanding to the importance of choosing self-defensive words in addressing the public, particularly foreign audience, to change their perception about the nature of the conflict and entice a sort of legitimacy.

In his comments on the description of the Israeli military actions in some Western press, Suleiman (2004) points out that the "military actions by the Israelis are always a 'response' to something, even when they strike first. If they haven't actually been attacked, it's a 'response' to a security threat. 'Response' is a very useful word. It provides a ready-made reason for the Israelis' actions and neatly brushes off demands for further explanation. It says: 'Don't ask why we did it, ask the other side'" (138).

Similarly to Israel and its sympathisers or allies, the utilisation of this frame about its actions seems to have significance in "*The Islamic Resistance's*" media war, because it legalises 'the self' actions.

6.2 The Frames of 'the Other'

In the context of Arab-Israeli conflict, framing is characterised by the process of naming, particularly to the actions and the places. It entails cultural and political denotation by the both parties in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In this regard, the Palestinian scholar "[Rashid] Khalidi comments on the oppositional sets of names for the city and some of its most important landmarks between the Palestinians and the Israeli Jews: *Bayt al- Maqdis* (house of sanctity) and *al-Quds al-Sharif* (noble/holy sanctuary) versus *Yerushalaim* (city of peace); *al-Haram al-Sharif* (noble sanctuary) versus *Temple Mount*; *al-Buraq Wall* versus the *Wailing* or *Western Wall*. This conflict extends to names *Filastin* (Palestine) versus *Israel* as designations for the country which each group sees as its homeland" (Suleiman 2004: 176).

The Palestinian cause shaped the perception of *Hezbollah* and consequently its military arm, since their inceptions, towards the conflict with Israel (Matar & Dakhllallah 2006). As observed in its media statements, "*The Islamic Resistance*"

employs certain frames to describe Israel, its places, its army and its actions. It denies the right of Israel to exist and describe its army as an occupation army. Thus, there is no Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) or Israel ministry (and minister) of defence in its discourse. Instead, the organisation replaces the term 'defence' by 'war' and IDF by 'occupation army.'

This section provides an insight on how "*The Islamic Resistance*" reframes Israel, its actions and places in its discourse. It shows the origin of the utilised frames by "*The Islamic Resistance*" in language and culture. These frames can be another form of war ignited by the organisation against Israel.

6.2.1 Reframing Israel's Name

In its media statements, "*The Islamic Resistance*" refers generally to Israel and its army as Zionists who occupy Palestine.

In obtaining the meaning of "*The Zionist Entity*", which is utilised by "*The Islamic Resistance*" to name Israel, it is crucial to illuminate on the denotations of Zionism and entity. Massad (2006) points out that Zionism in its early days was non-Jewish, because the main idea of European colonialists in the nineteenth century, particularly British and French colonialists, was establishing a Jewish state in Palestine to allow the European Jews to migrate to this new state. In this context, the establishment of Israel reflects the intersection of interests between European colonialists and European Jews, who suffered from anti-Semitism and accepted the idea to settle in Palestine and have their own state. Thus, Massad (2006) argues that "Zionism and anti-Semitism had a unified goal-the removal of Jews from Europe-which became the basis for their shared imperial vision" (15).

In contrast to the term Zion, which can be found in the Old Testament and may refer to a hummock in Jerusalem, Zionism appeared in an article published by the Jewish Austrian Journalist Nathan Birnbaum in his newspaper "*Selbst-Emancipation*" in 1886 and utilised later by Herzl in political context (Shoufani 1996).

In reviewing its analysed media statements, "*The Islamic Resistance*" did not choose religious or cultural names to name the State of Israel, such as "The Jewish State" or "The Hebrew State." Instead of these terms, which may not be considered abusive and may align with the description of Israel to its state, "*The Islamic Resistance*" names Israel "*The Zionist Entity*" (*al-Kayān al-suhyūnī*). In Arabic, the term '*Kayān*' (entity) signifies an occurrence, or a new created thing. However, the lexical roots of this Arabic term '*Kayān*' derives from the verb '*Kan*' which generally means a defective verb in Arabic grammar (Manzur 2003). Notably, the term "*The Zionist Entity*" is employed by Arab media to describe Israel "as an artificial state that lacked the geographic, demographic and economic strengths necessary for long-term survival" (Suleiman 2011: 131). Thus, the use of the term 'entity' seems to ossify the notion that the existence of Israel is deficient, and thus Israel cannot be considered a state.

In a similar vein, "*The Islamic Resistance*" utilises in its media discourse the term "The Rapist Entity" to describe Israel. The utilisation of this term, as Suleiman (2011: 131) argues, is:

a continuation of the post-1948 rhetoric, the Arab political discourse represented the occupation of Arab land in 1967 in sexual terms, describing it as an act of rape (*igh̄tisāb*). This rape was all the more devastating to the victim because it was perpetrated by what was regarded as the weaker party in the conflict, against the stronger and numerically most dominant one regionally, which, since then, has suffered chronic political and military impotence. This act of rape penetrated deep into the Arab psyche, because in carrying it out, the perpetrator used the latest Western technology, which the Arabs had so much desired but were constantly denied.

The adoption of this frame by "*The Islamic Resistance*" from Arab media discourse seems reflecting the political landscape of this military arm and the significance of utilising this frame to address Arab audiences, including those who do not hold the same religious belief with the organisation, but they may support the war against Israel.

6.2.2 Reframing The Israeli Places

"*The Islamic Resistance*" calls the Israeli villages and cities colonies and occasionally calls them settlements. For "*The Islamic Resistance*", all Palestine is occupied by Israel. Thus, "*The Islamic Resistance*", which was reviving Al-Quds' day with a military parade, considers Al-Quds an Islamic holy city and should be liberated from Israeli occupation (Attal 2010).

El Hourī (2012) points out that the notions occupation and colonialism prevailed after establishing the State of Israel in 1948 over the Palestinian territories. Thus, occupation "is one of the defining elements of modern Arab identity, notably in Palestine but also elsewhere with the legacy of the colonial and post-colonial experiences. As a category, occupation is coupled with and cannot be dissociated from resistance as the struggle to end occupation" (El Hourī 2012: 174-175). In this vein, and as El Hourī (2012) argues, "The notion of liberation cannot be dissociated from the experience of occupation and the attachment to the land as the physical space on which the conflict is fought. Liberation becomes a re-occupation of land that had been lost – a re-appropriation of the formerly occupied space" (175).

Occupation, which is used to describe the legal status quo of the territories in West Bank, east Jerusalem and previously Gaza Strip, is a term utilised by the Security Council of the United Nations to name the occupied Arab lands by Israel in June 1967 (Suleiman 2004). Thus, the term Occupied Territories "derives from the UN resolution 242, is used once only in spite of the fact that it is the only term that defines the legal status of the so-called 'Administered Territories'. The term 'Occupied' is used once and then only as a *gloss* for term 'Administered', thus favouring the latter term over its former counterpart" (Suleiman 2004: 166). The same author claims that the "academic discourse on the use of names for the settlements in

the Occupied Territories is not immune from this injection of ideology. By censoring the word 'Occupied' in the name Occupied territories, Israel social science takes the occupation out of Occupation. And when this happens in publications in English-medium journals, as it does all too often, the impact is no longer localised" (Suleiman 2011: 205).

To provide an example and verify his argument, Suleiman (2011) points out that David Aberbach "instead of referring to Palestine under the British mandate by that name, the author describes it as 'pre-State Israel' [...]. In this case, Palestine is written out of history in the same way that the Israeli occupation is written out of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza" (205).

In retrospect, the term 'colonies' and its derivative, such as 'colonists', may not be abusive, because they signify "how some leading Zionists, particularly those working in the culture domain, conceptualised themselves and their activity" (Suleiman 2004: 188). Thus, this term was "used by the Zionist movement to designate the new Jewish 'settlement' in Palestine" (Suleiman 2011: 208).

On the other hand, the term settlements, in Arabic, "*mustawtanāt*, from *istawtana*, implies the act of an outsider to settle down in a location that does not originally belong to him or to which he is a stranger" (ibid).

Poole (Quoted in Suleiman 2011) "explains that the term *settlement* in English 'conjures an idea of a virgin, unpopulated territory: an image of building log cabins in the wilderness,' as well as carrying the 'secondary sense of agreement,' neither of which is true. Israeli settlements were built 'in heavily populated Palestinian areas' and have been declared illegal by UN Security Council and the international court of Justice. The Hebrew term for settlements is *hitnakhlut*, 'a word of biblical origin which means roughly settling on one's patrimony'" (208).

Suleiman (2004) points out that "Sharjah TV in the United Arab Emirates calls the Israeli settlement[s] in the Occupied Territories *mughtasabāt*, not *mustawtanāt*, which is the prevalent term in the Arab media. The former term is derived from the root *ghasaba*, the meaning of which incorporates the ideas of taking away by force, extortion, coercion, abduction and rape. This range of meanings is closer to how the Arabs conceptualise the Israeli settlements, and is closer to the status of the settlements in international law than the normal Arabic term" (188). As shown earlier, the use of this term aligns with how "*The Islamic Resistance's*" media describes Israel by "*The Rapist Entity*."

7. Findings

Apart from 'the self' religious frames, *Hezbollah's* military arm utilises the same linguistic terminologies set by Arab media in the context of their war with Israel. In this regard, the organisation asserts on the notion that its actions are self-defensive and aim to liberate the occupied Lebanese territories by Israel. Thus, the culture behind this discourse represented by utilising certain frames is connected to Arab societies to present 'the self' and 'the other', or by other words Israel. As noted

earlier, the frame can be considered as a tool of representation, because it works in the production of knowledge (Watson 2007). Hence, "representation connects meaning and language to culture" (Hall 2013: 1).

In its discourse, which aims to contend the western hegemony about its narration of the Arab-Israeli conflict (Khoury & Da'na 2009), "*The Islamic Resistance*" is aware of the significance of providing the audiences its version of the story about the war with Israel (Harb 2011).

Similarly to addressing non-Arabs, *Hezbollah's* military arm aims to entrench the perception of the Arab audiences of positive label of the Resistance and negative of Israel. In this regard, the organisation has utilised all the frames that present 'the self' as liberator and defender and present Israel, its places and army as an occupier and illegal.

By and large, the process of naming may entail with the notion of power (Massad 2006). In this vein, it seems that *Hezbollah's* military arm intertwines between the military and media powers to ensure the continuity of igniting the war against Israel by weapons and discourse.

8. Conclusion

This paper has identified frames of "*The Islamic Resistance's*" media discourse and interpreted their meanings. In this regard, the paper has shown that the Arab-Israeli conflict has an impact on "*The Islamic Resistance's*" media discourse, because it was emerged in its context. Except the religious frames, which are not identified and analysed in this paper, "*The Islamic Resistance*" reflects the vision of many Arabs, including Palestinians, towards the conflict with Israel. Thus, it utilised a number of the same frames to name Israel and its actions.

Through showing their origins, this paper has provided an insight on the utilised frames in "*The Islamic Resistance's*" media discourse. This insight is crucial, because it glimpses on the objectives of *Hezbollah's* military arm.

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