TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING THE EMBEDDED SIGNS IN THE MILITARY OPERATIONS' FILMS: A CASE OF TWO VIDEOS OF CAPTURING ISRAELI SOLDIERS BY "*THE ISLAMIC RESISTANCE*"

Hatem El Zein
Central Queensland University, Australia

ABSTRACT

Filming of their own military activities by the spawning militant organisations in the Middle East seems to be a major propaganda tool used to win their media battles. Historically and in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation has been aware of the significance of filming their military activities since the 1970s. However, *Hezbollah's* military arm, "*The Islamic Resistance*", established a military media unit in the mid-1980s and one of its missions is to film its military operations against the Israeli troops in south Lebanon. Although there are studies about a number of military operations' videos, it seems their basic aims are to explore the notion of propaganda. Furthermore, the studies have focused only on the military operations' videos before the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon in May 2000. However, this paper investigates the contexts and the visual contents of the two military operations' videos of capturing Israeli soldiers by "*The Islamic Resistance*", the military arm of Lebanese *Hezbollah*, in October 2000 and July 2006. Each of these videos aired for the first time six years after the respective event.

The paucity of study means that no research has incorporated analysing the military operations' videos of capturing Israeli soldiers, in order to interpret the denotations of their visual signs. By employing critical discourse analysis and utilising semiotic techniques within this approach, this paper analyses the macro- and the microstructure of these two videos. In analysing their microstructure, this paper identifies and interprets the embedded signs, paying attention in this regard to the symbolic signs, which may have legal implications in the light of international humanitarian law.

Keywords: *Al-Manar*, *Hezbollah*, *Israeli Army*, Military Operations' Videos, Signs, *The Islamic Resistance*
Author's Email Address: hatem.elzein@cqumail.com

INTRODUCTION

Militant organisations in the Middle East acknowledge the importance of utilising communication technologies, particularly the use of video cameras, to document their military operations and try to air the videos to reach wider audiences. The *Palestinian Liberation Organisation* is considered one of early militant organisations in the Middle East, which produced "'resistance' propaganda films in the 1970s—films that were in turn inspired by the idea of Third Cinema and the camera as a weapon that emerged from Latin American revolutionary contexts" (Khatib, 2012, p. 40). In the same context relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict, *Hezbollah's* military arm, which is called "*The Islamic Resistance*", established a "*Military Media Unit*" (called also *War Information Unit*) in 1984 and one of its missions is to film military operations against the Israeli army in south Lebanon (Lamloum, 2009; Osipova, 2011). Utilising up-to-date video cameras and airing the operations' videos via *Al-Manar* television, which is operated by *Hezbollah*, has enabled "*The Islamic Resistance*" to achieve some success in the propaganda war against Israel and its army (El Houri, 2012; Harb, 2011).

In an attempt to study the embedded signs in a sample of military operations' videos of *Hezbollah's* military arm, this paper analyses the only two videos of capturing Israeli soldiers filmed by "*The Military Media Unit*" of "*The Islamic Resistance*"- the military arm of *Hezbollah*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The military operations' videos of "*The Islamic Resistance*", which were filmed by its "*Military Media Unit*", as noted earlier, were aired via *Al-Manar* television (Harb, 2011). However, the two investigated military operations' videos about capturing Israeli soldiers in October 2000 and July 2006 were aired primarily by other satellites after several years. The Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (*LBC*) aired the first operation video in a documentary named '*The Great Swap Deal*' in 2006 (Eljek, 2006). However, the video of the second operation was aired by *Al-Mayadeen* satellite in 2012 during a political talk show hosted by the channel's chairman Ghassan ben Jiddo and the guests were a prisoner released from Israeli jails in 2008, Samir Al-Quntar, and the member of "*Faithfulness to the Resistance Bloc*" in the Lebanese parliament, Nawaf Al-Mosawi (Fahs, 2012).

The two videos investigated have a military context, because they are operations initiated by "*The*

Islamic Resistance" to capture Israeli soldiers, in order to swap them with Lebanese prisoners in Israeli jails. Thus, the first military operation video, which was screened on *LBC* shortly after the end of the July War in 2006 and later by *Al-Manar*, was contextualised by the producer to argue that capturing three Israel soldiers in October 2000 aimed to liberate the Lebanese prisoners from Israeli jails (Al-Manar, 2011). Similarly, the second video of capturing two Israeli soldiers in July 2006 was contextualised in the same way to argue that the operation led to the release of the rest of the Lebanese prisoners in 2008, particularly Samir Al-Quntar, after Israel refused to release him in the swap deal in 2004 (Al-Mayadeen, 2012; Eljek, 2006).

Al-Manar, which screened the two videos after they were aired on *LBC* and *Al-Mayadeen* channels, presented these videos with further military details to maintain its media scoop (Al-Manar, 2011, 2013). Indeed, no channel has access to "*The Military Media Unit's*" videos like *Al-Manar,* where both media unit and television channel have cooperated to ignite the propaganda war against Israel and the Israeli army since the 1990s (Harb, 2011).

There are studies about the denotations of the visual signs in a number of "*The Islamic Resistance's*" military operations' videos (El Houri, 2012; Harb, 2011; Maznar, 2001). However, these studies shed light on the military operations' videos initiated by *Hezbollah's* military arm before 2000 and it seems there is no study about the limited videos of capturing Israeli soldiers. Furthermore, the studies have never investigated the symbolic signs, particularly the signs which have legal implications, according to the rules of international humanitarian law.

Thus, this paper aims to bridge the gap in the existing literature about the embedded signs of military operations' videos of capturing Israeli soldiers by *Hezbollah's* military arm.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

This paper intends to answer the question: what are the signs in the military operations' videos of capturing Israeli soldiers by "*The Islamic Resistance*"- the military arm of *Hezbollah*? It is concerned with analysing two military operations' videos of capturing Israeli soldiers filmed by "*The Military Media Unit*" of "*The Islamic Resistance*" in 2000 and 2006. Thus, the primary data are the two military operations' videos. These archival videos, each of which aired six years after their respective events, can be found on YouTube.

This paper utilises the critical discourse analysis approach. In identifying its denotation, this paper considers the analysed discourse as a count noun, because the military operations' videos constitute a part of the overall discourse of *Hezbollah's* military arm. El-daly (2010) identifies discourse as a count noun, "[which] means a relatively discrete subset of a whole language, used for specific social or institutional purposes" (p. 248).

There are many approaches within critical discourse analysis (Bell & Garrett, 1998). However, this paper considers the study of media discourse developed by Dijk. In his approach, Dijk (cited in Fairclough, 1995) focuses on the analysis of macro- and microstructure of the discourse where the first is concerned with the overall text and content and the second is concerned with the semantic relations and the units in the sentence. Although this approach pays attention to texts, it can be employed for the visual discourse. In this vein, the paper considers the contexts to show what happened before, during, and after the two military operations, in order to provide fuller understanding of these events. Thus, this paper contextualises the analysis of the two investigated military operations' videos and shows their macrostructure, which is "a sequence of events, or a sequence of images" (Dijk, 1980, p. 8). In addition, this paper considers at the microstructure level the analysis of the identified signs in the two investigated military operations' videos.

Under the umbrella of critical discourse analysis discipline, the researcher can utilise a number of techniques to extract the meaning of the analysed discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In this vein, the paper utilises semiotic techniques developed by Peirce (1974) and Barthes (1964; 1972; 1977), to identify and interpret every sign, which is a combination of the signifier and the signified (Saussure, 2011).

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of the two military operations' videos is primarily visual. However, the author pays attention to the fighters' voices in these videos, in order to interpret their meanings.

In addition, the analysis of these videos is contextualised through providing information about the circumstances of each military operation. After showing the overall contents of the investigated operations' videos, or in other words their macrostructure, the paper investigates the contents to identify the embedded signs and explore their meanings.

The First Operation: '*Sufa*'

Following the Israeli army withdrawal from south Lebanon in May 2000, there were two protracted issues:

Shebaa Farms, which Lebanon claimed as national territory, demanding that the Israeli army withdraw from this land, and the Lebanese prisoners in Israel, including the remains of the killed combatants. These two protracted problems provided "*The Islamic Resistance*" of *Hezbollah* an excuse to continue fighting in order to liberate the Lebanese occupied territories and to free the prisoners from the Israeli jails (Alagha, 2006).

The first successful military operation by "*The Islamic Resistance*" to capture Israeli soldiers was on 07 October 2000, less than four months after the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon in May 2000, and shortly after the outbreak of the Second Palestinian Intifada (Hezbollah Joins the War in Palestine, 2000).

As revealed in *Al-Manar's* documentary '*Sufa*' the military organisation started preparing to capture Israeli soldiers after May 2000 (Al-Manar, 2011). Hence, "*The Islamic Resistance*" started monitoring the movement of Israeli soldiers close to the new demarcation, the Blue Line, drawn by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) on the border promptly after the Israeli withdrawal.

"*The Unit of Monitoring and Assembling Information*" in "*The Islamic Resistance*" discovered that the appropriate aperture for capturing Israeli soldiers faced *Shebaa Gate*. This border point is numbered 590 by the Israeli army.

Based on the information provided by the same documentary, the Israeli army was aware that "*The Islamic Resistance*" aimed to capture soldiers. Thus, the army intensified the military exercises for its troops and the deployed '*Hermon Territorial Brigade*' on the border with Lebanon which performed military manoeuvres named '*Hannibal Directive*' at point 590 to face any endeavour to capture soldiers.

In a complementary duty, the relevant units in "*The Islamic Resistance*" started performing military manoeuvres on how to capture Israeli soldiers and transfer them to a safe place inside the Lebanese territories.

The thirty-minute documentary shows scenes of the manoeuvres and interviews one of "*The Islamic Resistance's*" officers called *Jihad* who pointed out the then preparation for capturing Israeli soldiers. *Jihad*, whose face was concealed and voice obfuscated to conceal his identity, appeared wearing a camouflage uniform with a walkie-talkie and carrying a rifle. He revealed that the organisation created a similar geographic area to the point 590 with all the stipulated logistics for performing high-level manoeuvres and military exercises on how to capture Israeli soldiers alive.

After weeks of exercises, "*The Islamic Resistance's*" fighters successfully practiced the final manoeuvre to capture Israeli soldiers: three minutes from bombing until transfer of the captives to the cars, and twenty minutes to reach a safe place.

Close to the military theatre, there are three garrisons. The Indian Regiment in UNIFIL which supervises *Shebaa Gate*; *Roisat Alaalam* which allows the Israeli army to monitor the operation field and *Al-Radar* which also allows the Israeli army to monitor the line of "*The Islamic Resistance's*" withdrawal. To solve these obstacles and run a successful operation, the organisation aimed to deploy its attacking units secretly and prepared other units to storm the Israeli garrisons, particularly *Roisat Alaalam* and *Al-Radar*, with heavy fire during the operation.

On the day of the operation, the unit faced another obstacle represented by stones spread on the road to *Shebaa Gate*, which may have inhibited the movement of the vehicles from advancing to transfer the captives. The solution was to organise an amateur soccer match on the road by the fighters themselves who changed out of their camouflage uniforms and started moving the stones using their feet while they were playing with the ball.

Table 1 summarises chronologically the related accompanying details on the day the three Israeli soldiers were captured.

TABLE 1- DETAILS OF WHAT HAPPENED ON THE OPERATION'S DAY AS SHOWN IN THE DOCUMENTARY '*SUFA*'

07 October 2000	Events	Results
6:20 am	Israeli patrol inspected the border fence at the point 590	The soldiers in the patrol noticed the existence of the fighters in the area and wrote this in their report, commenting it is okay, it is a routine scene.
7:00 am	The intelligence unit in '*Hermon Territorial Brigade*' received information that enemy intends to do something.	The leaders of the brigade disregarded the information, because there was no ability to verify it.

8:00 am	The sergeant Binyamin Avraham and the soldiers Omar Souad arrived at the office of the commandant in the detachment.	The commandant reminded them of the procedure they should follow if they face abduction. Also, he provided Avraham with a written order to transfer it to the sergeant Adi Avitan, who will join the patrol.
9:05 am	The three Israeli soldiers Adi Avitan, Binyamin Avraham and Omar Souad drove the *Sufa* jeep to inspect the border.	They drove the patrol in front of a jeep which is specialised in eliminating any traces on the unpaved road alongside the border. "*The Military Media Unit*", as shown in the documentary, filmed them at the point 590.
11:00 am	The Palestinian refugees organised a rally on the southern Lebanese border to express their support for the Palestinian Intifada.	The Israeli army monitored the rally, enhanced its forces with more soldiers and closed the area.
12:37 pm	The communication officer in '*Hermon Territorial Brigade*' called the patrols.	The officer phoned the patrol 47 and spoke with the sergeant Binyamin Avraham who told her they had entered point 590.
12:43 pm	The fighters of "*The Islamic Resistance*" bombed the patrol 47.	The three Israeli soldiers were killed, because *Sufa* was unarmoured. The operation ended after three minutes by transferring bodies to the Lebanese territories.

After bombing the unarmoured jeep, the fighters transferred the three dead Israeli soldiers in a black Range Rover to the Lebanese territories. With regard to this, *Al-Manar's* documentary revealed that "*The Islamic Resistance*" prepared, as a back up plan for withdrawal, a white Nissan Pathfinder similar to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon's (UNIFIL) cars, overlaid with the same sign and which contained camouflage uniforms the same as those worn by this international force. However, the fighters did not use this car, which was discovered hours after operation by UNIFIL in the area alongside with the used Range Rover after it broke down during the transfer of the captives.

As time went by, Israel tried to find out the fate of the captured soldiers. The then chairman of a media service company located in north Israel called '*Top Line*' volunteered to gather information about the soldiers from Lebanese friends. He provided the Israeli media outlets and the security agencies with unclear images of the *Sufa* and Israeli soldiers who were apparently alive. A security commentator on Israeli television concluded that the image was of the jeep. In this context, the documentary revealed that the image of the jeep was taken from a report prepared by *Al-Manar's* reporter in south Lebanon. As a result of this manipulated propaganda, the Israeli government and the army were under pressure from the families of the three captives to bring them back. This misleading information shows the level of cooperation between *Al-Manar* and "*The Islamic Resistance*" in waging a psychological war against Israel.

After 47 rounds of negotiations in Beirut and similar rounds in Tel Aviv and Berlin where the mediator was located, a swap deal took place on 29 January 2004. Germany, the broker of the deal, transferred the remains of the three captured Israeli soldiers from Beirut to Tel Aviv and the Lebanese prisoners from Tel Aviv to Beirut through Berlin airport. Remarkably, this deal did not include the release of some Lebanese prisoners, particularly Samir Al-Quntar who had been captive since 1979. This issue was an excuse for "*The Islamic Resistance*" to capture another two Israeli soldiers on 12 July 2006.

The Second Operation: *Khallat al-Warda*

After the swap deal in 2004, "*The Islamic Resistance*" attempted to capture Israeli soldiers alive. It initiated a failed operation in 2005 before it succeeded in capturing Israeli soldiers at a location called *Khallat al-Warda* in the outskirts of the southern Lebanese village *Ayta ash-Shab* on 12 July 2006 (Harel & Issacharoff, 2008).

In a similar method to that used in the previous successful operation, "*The Unit of Monitoring and Assembling Information*" in "*The Islamic Resistance*" found out that the *Khallat al-Warda* location also known as Israeli military point 105 was the appropriate place for capturing Israeli soldiers. According to a report screened by *Al-Manar* (2013), "*The Islamic Resistance*" noticed six issues at point 105:

- It has the lowest geographical level in the area and thus it is invisible to the Israeli army barracks.

- The road towards this point is relatively rugged and the distance between the Israeli army patrols is nearly 110 metres.
- The Israeli soldiers do not communicate with their leadership at this point.
- The Israeli surveillance cameras do not cover this point, and thus it is considered a blind spot.
- The location of Israeli barracks inhibits reciprocal fire against their enemy at this point.
- The heavy bush coverage at this point provides "*The Islamic Resistance's*" fighters a cover to initiate their military operation and retreat safely.

As a result of these characteristics, point 105 was considered a 'Dead Zone.' Based on *Al-Mayadeen's* talk show, "*The Islamic Resistance*" had prepared and planned for three months for *Khallat al-Warda's* operation (Al-Mayadeen, 2012). The number of "*The Islamic Resistance's*" fighters who shared in this operation was between 35 and 40. They met in a village on the outskirts of *Tyre* city five days before the operation. Only the next day were they informed about the nature of their coming operation when four of "*The Islamic Resistance's*" leaders visited them. The leaders provided the group with images and videos of *Khallat al-Warda* where the operation would take place. As in the *Sufa* operation, the organisation created a field similar to point 105 in topographic relief for manoeuvres. After two days of manoeuvres with live ammunition, the sudden attack group succeeded in completing its practice exercise within six minutes, the duration required for the expected military operation.

The sudden attack group, which is a part of other groups which participated in the operation, had camped under the trees close to point 105 and set up a telephone wire to communicate with the leadership. With regard to this,, *Al-Manar's* report showed a scene of the operation group's commander Khalid Bazzi (Hajj Kassem) providing instructions to the fighters. Furthermore, according to *Al-Mayadeen's* talk show, "*The Islamic Resistance's*" then commander, or chief of staff Imad Mughniyeh (Hajj Radwan) supervised and directly witnessed this operation in detail from *Ayta ash-Shab* village. One day before the operation, Mughniyeh met with the fighters concerned, who did not know his real identity, to provide them with instructions for achieving their coming mission, asking of them seriousness, tranquillity and trust in Allah.

The fighters camped in the bush waited for zero hour to initiate the operation. On 12 July 2006, two Israeli army Hummers approached point 105. In the first patrol, the four soldiers were: the driver Rizk Maadi, Ehud Goldwasser on his right, and in the back Eldad Regev and Tomer Weinberg. In the second patrol, the three soldiers were: the driver Wassem Nazzal, Shani Turgeman on his right and Eyal Banin in the back. After the second Hummer was hit, the fighters were ordered to initiate the operation. They crossed the border fence, and the sudden attack group advanced towards the first Hummer, which was damaged by rockets, to capture Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser. Table 2 shows chronologically the related accompanied details on the day these two Israeli soldiers were captured.

TABLE 2- DETAILS OF WHAT HAPPENED ON THE OPERATION'S DAY OF *KHALLAT AL-WARDA*

12 July 2006	Events	Results
2:20 am	A group of "*The Islamic Resistance's*" fighters crossed the border fence at point 105	The Israeli army did not discover this group which established itself in the area to attack patrols in the morning
8:45 am	Two Israeli Hummers advanced towards point 105	Sergeant Ehud Goldwasser intended to examine if there had been an infiltration
8:57 am	The first patrol, which has a code 4, communicated with the second patrol 4A	It was the last conversation between the two Hummers which were nearly 110 metres apart
9:05 am	"*The Islamic Resistance*" initiated its operation to capture Israeli soldiers	The sudden attack group crossed the border fence and headed towards the first damaged Hummer at point 105 to capture two soldiers
9:50 am	The Israeli army knew that there were two missing soldiers and issued *'Hannibal Directive'*	The Israeli army attempts failed to locate two captives
10:00 am	The then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert knew about the operation through his military secretary	Olmert was meeting with the father of soldier Gilad Shalit who was captured by *Hamas* in Gaza Strip a few weeks before. Thus, the new operation weakened the effectiveness of Israeli deterrence

| 5:00 pm | The leader of "*The Islamic Resistance*" Hassan Nasrullah held a press conference | Nasrullah declared that the captives are i safe place and asked Israel to negot indirectly for a swap deal with Leban prisoners |
| Before midnight | The Israeli cabinet met to discuss the procedures which should be taken to restore the Israeli deterrence | The cabinet declared the Second Lebanon W which ended after 33 days |

Source: Al-Manar, 2013; Harel & Issacharoff, 2008

The three soldiers in the second Hummer were all killed. However, Rizk Maadi and Tomer Weinberg in the first Hummer were wounded after a group of "*The Islamic Resistance's*" fighters hit it with rocket-propelled grenades. The two soldiers escaped from the impaired vehicle towards a nearby area of bush shortly before "*The Islamic Resistance's*" fighters arrived to capture their comrades Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser. The captives were transferred to *Ayta ash-Shab* by two cars and given to a group to take them by another car to a safe place. Notably, the organisation prepared an equipped room for medical procedures to deal with injuries, because it intended to keep the soldiers alive. However, there is no information if the two captives, or one of them, were alive at that time.

The Contents of the Investigated Military Operations' videos

After providing the context and the macrostructure of the investigated military operations' videos, this section aims to show their microstructure by showing their contents in details in order to identify in a later section their signs and codes.

Following each military operation by *Hezbollah's* military arm, "*The Military Media Unit*" issued a statement (Harb, 2011). However, the videos contain further visual details and hold semantic language. Notably, both military operations' videos of capturing Israeli soldiers are not complete, particularly the second one. In contrast to the first one, the second video does not uncover the status of the two soldiers when they were captured. Furthermore, the video seems to have undergone editing for military purposes. With regard to this, *Al-Mayadeen's* chairman Ghassan ben Jiddo promised to air further footage to reveal if the two Israeli soldiers, or one of them, was injured or dead when the fighters opened the Hummer to extract them (Al-Mayadeen, 2012).

In this context, the next two sections aim to show chronologically the contents of these two military operations' videos, paying attention to the details.

Smashing the *Sufa* and Snatching the Dead

As shown previously, "*The Military Media Unit*" filmed capturing Israeli soldiers for the first time in October 2000. The film, which aired through the two documentaries '*The Great Swap Deal*' and '*Sufa*' respectively, is about three minutes. However, the second documentary screened items related to the captured Israel soldiers after the operation.

The military operation film started by screening the Israeli army jeep (*Sufa*) advancing towards point 590 at *Shebaa* Gate. Colloquial words were heard later with great difficulty after uploading the sound and repeating the scene several times, "*Allahoma Salleh ala Mohammad Wali Mohammad… Ejet… Ejet*" which means "*O' Allah, bless Mohammad and His Households (or Family)… It has come… It has come.*" However, the film did not indicate if the speaker was the cameraman or a fighter.

When the jeep arrived at point 590 and turned back it was smashed by a bomb planted in the ground. A fighter shouted "*Ya Saheb Azzaman*" which means "*O' the Master of the Age.*" This phrase was repeated seven times during the film. After the explosion, which occurred at 12:43 pm, a black Range Rover advanced towards *Shebaa Gate*. Two fighters who did not wear camouflage uniforms disembarked from the car. One of them ran quickly towards the gate and planted a small bomb in its lock. Then, he ordered his comrade to turn back and sheltered behind a huge cement block. When the lock of the gate was exploded, a third fighter opened a barricade fence located before *Shebaa Gate*.

The fighter who bombed the lock of the gate went to the smashed jeep followed by two other fighters. Then, the Range Rover crossed through the gate and turned back towards Lebanese territories before it stopped. The camera showed two fighters, one behind the destroyed jeep and another threw a pinch, possibly of soil, using his left hand, towards the jeep. However, the rising smoke from the jeep prevents the viewer from recognising what else is going on. The Ranger Rover's driver opened the trunk where two fighters disembarked and advanced towards the smashed vehicle. However, the movement of the camera between the jeep and the Range Rover inhibits counting the precise number of the fighters who crossed *Shebaa Gate* or how they held the stretchers. It seems there were about seven fighters and the two fighters who disembarked from the trunk of the Range Rover held the stretchers. After 20 seconds, the fighters secured the dead soldiers on two stretchers and

put them in the trunk of the Range Rover. Based on using long shots in filming and editing process, the image of the Israeli soldiers does not allow clear identification. .

Then, the Range Rover headed back quickly towards the Lebanese territories surrounded by four fighters before it disappeared from camera shot at 12:46 pm.

Crossing the Border Fence to Open Pandora's Box

Similar to the first military operation video of capturing Israeli soldiers, the second operation was not aired primarily via *Al-Manar*. As stated previously, it was aired, in the first instance, on *Al-Mayadeen* during a political talk show. However, this military operation video, which is two minutes and 12 seconds in length, is not complete, because it does not reveal the fate of the two captured Israeli soldiers.

The film started by showing seven fighters moving under trees in the bush. Under the whiz of bullets and a voice difficult to hear saying "*Allah Akbar*" (Allah is the Greater), the fighters advanced in a queue towards the border fence and the fighter in the lead started cutting the barbed wire to open a gap. A long shot inserted in the film showed a road and the bush on its banks. It seemed that this was the road the Israeli army vehicles travel along. The scene turned back to the fighters, where the fighter who opened the gap in the barbed wire threw the cutter on the ground before crossing the border followed by five of his comrades. The second and the fourth fighters carried, in addition to their rifles, two fire extinguishers. However, the fifth fighter carried a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG). Again, a long shot was inserted showing the road before the scene turned back to the border fence where a group of six fighters followed the first group. The leader of this group carried a rocket-propelled grenade. Shortly, an explosion seemed to occur on the right hand side of the fighters who crossed the border fence. The film did not show what had exploded. In reviewing the scene several times, it can be concluded that it was a missed shot or the fighters bombed a suspected point used for observation, or other military purposes.

All the fighters wore camouflage uniforms, shields and helmets. They crossed the border and headed towards a gate leading to a Hummer stopped on the road. The fighters exploded the left side of the gate while a fighter close to the barbed wire was shooting at the Hummer. In observing the film further, the two fighters who carried the fire extinguishers headed back, shortly after bombing the gate, towards a group of fighters under the trees. A long shot was inserted to show the road and a village. Then, the scene turned back to the military theatre where the rising smoke was everywhere and seven fighters crossed the gate advancing towards the stopped Hummer which seemed to be shot in its left side. One of the seven fighters carried a metallic bar maybe to be used for opening the Hummer's doors if they were locked. The film ended when a fighter opened the Hummer's door, while an eighth fighter ran towards the gate.

FINDINGS

As shown in their contents, the two military operations' videos of capturing Israeli soldiers include basically images. However, the words heard in these two operations are considered in the analysis, because they denote religious meanings.

Under the umbrella of critical discourse analysis, as noted previously, semiotics has been employed to uncover the denotations of the microstructure of the analysed discourse. In this regard, every military operation's video has a sequence of images or scenes. These images show the two sides of the conflict: the Israeli army and "*The Islamic Resistance*." Thus, the analysis of scenes, or images in the two military operations' videos intends to show the embedded signs.

Due to fact that the majority of signs in the investigated videos are visual, this section considers Barthes who paid attention to analysing the sign which does not have a linguistic form (Barthes, 1964; 1972; 1977). In addition, this section considers Peirce's classification of the sign as iconic, symbolic and indexical (Peirce, 1974).

In both military operations' videos, there are iconic, symbolic and indexical signs. In this vein, Table 3 shows the embedded signs and their types in the two military operations' videos.

TABLE 3- THE VISUAL SIGNS IN THE TWO MILITARY OPERATIONS' VIDEOS OF CAPTURING ISRAELI SOLDIERS

Images (signs)	Types	Significations	Comments
Wearing Camouflage Uniforms by "*The Islamic Resistance's*" fighters	Symbolic	"*The Islamic Resistance*" portrayed itself as a liberation movement.	As shown previously, the figh in the first operation did not w camouflage uniforms (for secre

Bombing or hitting an Israeli army vehicle	Iconic	"*The Islamic Resistance's*" superiority, power and control in the battlefield	Based on signification conce... The image of Israeli soldiers... linked to vehicles which were... or smashed by "*The Isla... Resistance's*" fighters
"*The Islamic Resistance's*" fighters advance and cross the border towards the Israeli vehicles	Iconic	"*The Islamic Resistance's*" confidence, courage, tranquil, power and continuity to achieve the mission	It seems that "*The Isla... Resistance*" defies the Israeli ar... by crossing the border fence to... and capture its soldiers. Thus,... second military operation sho... the persistence of the organisat... in repeating its action
Bombing the lock of the border gates	Iconic	"*The Islamic Resistance*" contends the Israeli army	"*The Islamic Resistance*" sh... its power and there is no secu... for the Israeli army even in... territories
Smoke rises from the vehicles and the area	Iconic and Indexical	"*The Islamic Resistance's*" strength, accuracy and power	In the first operation the sm... emerged after bombing... vehicle. However, in the sec... operation the smoke emerged... the area which is an index... heavy fire by "*The Isla... Resistance's*" fighters
Carrying two fire extinguishers	Iconic and Indexical	"*The Islamic Resistance's*" planning and control	As shown in the second milit... operation, two fighters carried... extinguishers because the aim v... capturing Israeli soldiers a... from the Hummer
Transferring the bodies of the killed Israeli soldiers to a jeep without showing them	Iconic and Symbolic	"*The Islamic Resistance's*" success and control of what can be aired	As shown in the first milit... operation video, "*The Isla... Resistance*" did not show... bodies of the soldiers for... purpose (maybe to show resp... for death, audience or both)
Transferring the captive quickly by a car	Iconic	"*The Islamic Resistance's*" seriousness and achievement of the mission within a short timeframe	As shown in the first milit... video and as some repo... revealed, the concerned fighter... "*The Islamic Resistance*" trai... in manoeuvres to achieve t... mission within a construc... timeframe

As shown in Table 3, the dominant images are iconic. However, the other two forms of images require further analysis, particularly the symbolic ones. Remarkably, some iconic images may be indexical in the same time. For example, the images of the border fence and gates are indexical in the sense that they signify the Israeli army's isolation of 'the self' for security purposes. Similarly, the image of the Israeli army vehicle on the road is indexical, because it signifies the existence of Israeli soldiers inside it.

However, the images of "*The Islamic Resistance's*" fighters crossing the Blue Line or the border fence may be indexical in terms of breaching or not international humanitarian law. This notion can be observed in the second military operation. However, the first military operation was conducted in an occupied Lebanese territory *Shebaa Farms*. Article 4 of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 protects militias and resistance movements when they operate "in or outside their own territory, even if this territory is occupied" (Pictet, 1960, p. 44).

In his commentary on this flexible statement in article 4, Pictet (1960) concludes that such organisations "can thus operate over the whole of the enemy territory including the corresponding air space and the territorial waters and, of course, on the high seas; some authors even consider that their activity may extend over the whole territory under enemy control" (p. 58).

Regarding the symbolic signs, the camouflage uniform, if it is considered as a distinctive sign, is crucial in the actions of "*The Islamic Resistance.*" Article 4 of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 states four conditions for the militias and resistance movements to be protected and one of these conditions that they have "a fixed distinctive sign recognisable at a distance" (Pictet, 1960, p. 44). However, this provision about the fixed sign, which may include camouflage uniform, was amended by the additional Protocol I of the article 44 of 8 June 1977 to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 to conclude that the distinctive sign is any sign which distinguishes the fighter from the civilians to protect them and to provide the combatants prisoners of war status if they are captured by their enemy (Sandoz, Swinarski, & Zimmermann, 1987).

In contrast to the second military operation, the fighters in the first operation, as shown in the first video, did not wear camouflage uniforms. As illustrated previously in the documentary '*Sufa*', the fighters tried to deceive the Indian Regiment in UNIFIL, which was supervising *Shebaa Gate*. Thus, they did not wear their camouflage uniforms, which can be considered their distinctive sign, in this operation to capture Israeli soldiers. Although the fighters in the video carried their arms openly, as a fulfilment to the condition c of article 4 (Pictet, 1960), and initiated their military operation in an area where there are no civilians, it is difficult to observe a distinctive sign in that military operation. The repercussions of an absence of a distinctive sign could be that this can be seen as a war crime, and the penalty, which may be applied to the fighters who shared in the operation and did not wear a distinctive sign, is depriving them of prisoners of war status if they were captured during that operation (Sandoz, Swinarski, & Zimmermann, 1987; Pfanner, 2004).

On the other hand, the image of the Israeli soldiers in the two military operations' videos is inside vehicles whether unarmoured or armoured. "*The Islamic Resistance*" did not screen any Israeli soldier fighting or walking. Instead, it portrayed the Israeli soldiers in the vehicles unable to respond, defeated, killed and captured. These images of the Israeli soldiers seem to have double-sided significations. As Barthes (1972) argues about the impact of repetition of visual signs to saturate the minds of intended audiences, which is expected to change their behaviours, "*The Islamic Resistance*" aims to create a new stereotype of the Israeli army and cultivate it in the minds of Lebanese, Arabs and Israelis. Based on the concept of proximity, the organisation intends to show Lebanese, Arabs and Muslims how a small group of fighters can defeat the strongest army in the Middle East. When *Al-Mayadeen* aired the second military operation of "*The Islamic Resistance*" in a talk show, the guest Nawaf Al-Mosawi, who is the member of "*Faithfulness to the Resistance Bloc*" in the Lebanese parliament, induced the Arab youth to see how a group of people like them defeated the Israeli army (Al-Mayadeen, 2012). However, the organisation intends to show the Israeli army and Israelis a shocking image where the vehicles are easily hit or smashed and where the Israeli soldiers are easy to kill and capture by a number of fighters. Furthermore, the footage of the Israeli soldiers' items, particularly clothes which were covered with blood, as shown in the documentary '*Sufa*', seems to reiterate the shocking images in the aftermath of the operation in order to wage psychological warfare and demoralise the Israelis and the Israeli army spirit.

Barthes (1972) points out that the mythical sign has a double function, because it plays a role in providing a certain version of meaning and stresses this meaning as it expresses a form of reality. In its two investigated military operations' videos, "*The Islamic Resistance*" unveiled its intention by enhancing the mythical representation of its 'able' fighters vs. 'unable' Israeli soldiers through the concepts of isolation and repetition. Thus, the meaning of 'heroism' is isolated by the 'victorious' footages of "*The Islamic Resistance's*" fighters to emphasise certain images that connote 'good' meaning. Likewise, the 'defeat' of the Israeli soldiers is isolated and repeated in the two videos to stress certain images that connote 'bad' meaning to the viewers.

In addition to the denotation of scenes, there are verbal signs heard in the military operations' videos. Unlike the second operation video, which includes an iconic sign "*Allah Akbar*", there are two heard symbolic signs in the first military operation of capturing three Israeli soldiers: "*O' Allah, bless Mohammad and His Households… It has come… It has come*" and "*O' the Master of the Age.*" These signs hold religious meaning and reflect the identity of the fighters. Regarding the first sign, one of the fighters or an accompanying media operative said when he saw the Israeli jeep approached *Shebaa Gate* "*O' Allah, bless Mohammad and His Households…*" This energetic expression is Islamic and used by Muslims as a good sign and a remembrance of the Prophet Mohammad and His Households to grasp holy blessings and achieve a successful mission. Thus, the other heard words after this honorific blessing "*… It has come… It has come*" emphasises this meaning.

However, "*O' the Master of the Age*", which is heard seven times during the military operation, is a Muslim Shiite's term and can be considered a code, because it has deep meaning. It signifies the twelfth Shiite's Imam who is called Imam Mohammad ben Al-Hassan Al-Mahdi (or Al-Mehdi). According to what is called in Islam *Twelvers*, or the Muslim Shiites who believe in twelve Imams, Imam Mehdi disappeared in 941 and will return one day from his occultation to prevail in justice and peace in the world after years of tyranny and

oppression (Al-Qarashi, 2006). As this twelfth Imam needs an army in his mission, according to the Muslim Shiite's creed (Tabasi, 2003), it seems that "*The Islamic Resistance's*" fighters, who are Muslim Shiites, believe in the existence of this Imam, consider themselves the soldiers of Imam Al-Mahdi and call on him to appear from his occultation to lead them.

CONCLUSION

This paper has analysed a sample of military operations' videos of "*The Islamic Resistance*", the military arm of *Hezbollah*. The sample included the two military operations' videos of capturing Israeli soldiers. Before showing the embedded signs and their meanings, the paper has shown the context, macrostructure and microstructure of the two military operations.

In identifying the signs and interpreting their meanings under the umbrella of critical discourse analysis, the paper has paid further attention to the images, which denote meanings. Thus, it has pointed out to the iconic, indexical and symbolic signs and their denotations. In this regard, the paper sheds light on the symbolic signs, which have legal implications in the light of international humanitarian law to show if the military arm of *Hezbollah* followed the international humanitarian law in its war against Israel.

The paper also considers in the analysis the voices of the fighters in these two military operations' videos, because they include religious signs representing the fighters' identity.

REFERENCES

Alagha, J. E. (2006). *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Program*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Al-Manar. (2013, July 21). Al-Manar Unveils Details about the True Promise Operation (in Arabic) [Video File]. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxGA7kQ2qH0

Al-Manar. (2011, May 26). Sufa Operation (in Arabic) [Video File]. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DiZDwr4AXEw

Al-Mayadeen. (2012, August 06). The Operation of Capturing the two Israeli Soldiers (in Arabic) [Video File]. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtH06pkUaog

Al-Qarashi, B. S. (2001). *Lady Zainab: The Hero of History and Pioneer of Jihad in Islam (in Arabic)*. Beirut: Dar Al-Mahaja Al-Baida'.

Al-Qarashi, B. S. (2006). *The Life of Imam Al-Mahdi* (trans. S. A. H. S. H. Rizvi). Iran: Ansariyan Publications.

Barthes, R. (1964). *Elements of Semiology* (A. Lavers & C. Smith, Trans.). New York,NY: Hill and Wang.

Barthes, R. (1972). *Mythologies* (A. Lavers, Trans.). New York,NY: The Noonday Press.

Barthes, R. (1977). *Image Music Text* (S. Heath, Trans.). London, UK: Fontana Press.

Bell, A., & Garrett, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Approaches to Media Discourse*. Oxford, OX: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

El-daly, H. M. (2010). On the Philosophy of Language: Searching for Common Grounds for Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis. *International Journal of Academic Research, 2*(6), 244-262.

El Houri, W. (2012). *The Meaning of Resistance: Hezbollah's Media Strategies and the Articulation of a People*. Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers.

Eljek, S. (2006, September 03). The Other Face of LBC (in Arabic), *Asharq Al-Awsat*, Issue 10141. Retrieved from http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=37&article=380951&issueno=10141#.Uilsmj-NwV4

Fahs, J. (2012, July 30). Al-Mayadeen Finally Enters the Competition (in Arabic), *Al-Akhbar*, Issue 1770. Retrieved from https://al-akhbar.com/node/98937

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media Discourse*. London, UK: Edward Arnold.

Harb, Z. (2011). *Channels of Resistance in Lebanon: Liberation Propaganda, Hezbollah and the Media*. London, UK: I.B.Tauris

Harel, A. & and Issacharoff, A. (2008). *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hezbollah Joins the War in Palestine (in Arabic) (2000, October 8). *Assafir Newspaper*, Issue 8725. P. A1.

Khatib, L. (2012). *Image Politics in the Middle East: The Role of the Visual in Political Struggle*. New York, NY: I.B.Tauris.

Lamloum, O. (2009). Hezbollah's Media Political History in outline. *Global Media and Communication, 5*(3), 353–367.

Maznar, A. (2001). The Image in the Resistance's Media (in Arabic). In M. Mohsen & A. Maznar (Eds.), *The Image of Resistance in Media: Hezbollah and the Liberation of South Lebanon* (pp. 71-103). Beirut: The Consultative Centre for Studies and Documentation.

Osipova, Y. (2011, Fall). Hizballah's Media Strategy: Creating a "Theater of Terror". *Journal of International Service*, 83-101.

Peirce, C. S. (1974). *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Vol. 1.). C. Hartshorne & P. Weiss (Eds.). Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Pfanner, T. (2004). Military Uniforms and the Law of War. *International Review of the Red Cross, 86*(853), 93-124.

Pictet, J. S. (Ed.). (1960). *The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, Commentary, III Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*. Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross.

Sandoz, Y., Swinarski, C., & Zimmermann, B. (Eds.). (1987). *Commentary on the Additional Protocols: of 8 June 1977 to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949*. Geneva: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Saussure, F. D. (2011). *Course in General Linguistics* (W. Baskin, Trans., P. Meisel & H. Saussy, Eds.). New York, NY: Colombia University Press.

Tabasi, N. (2003). *An Overview of The Mahdi's (atfs') Government* (M. L. Limba, Trans.). Iran: Ahl al-Bayt ('a) World Assembly.

Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (2009). Critical Discourse Analysis: History, Agenda, Theory, and Methodology. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (2nd ed., pp. 1-33). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.