*Al-Akhbar* and *Al-Mayadeen* as an Arena to Develop Al-Muqawamah (Resistance) as an Alternative Hegemonic Project in Lebanon and the Middle East

Over the past few years, my research has focused on the development of Hizballah and its adoption of the Muqawamah (Resistance) concept as an integral part of the organization’s identity and of its supporters. I have argued that the concept of the Muqawamah, according to Hizballah, is one of the main reasons behind the organization’s ability to break the different sieges by its enemies that target it and to reach other groups that differ from Hizballah intellectually, religiously and ethnically. Hizballah’s development of its own concept of Muqawamah could not have been possible without the flexibility that characterized this party, and that was acquired over the years, partly due to its Shi’ite ideological roots, as the “Doors of Ijtihad” (independent reasoning) in the Shi’ite jurisprudence were not closed, unlike the Sunni jurisprudence. Moreover, Hizballah has grown within the Lebanese framework, which is the most democratic and pluralistic framework in the Arab world, despite its many imperfections. Therefore, these primary conditions affected the party’s development and activism.

My previous research has provided a new explanation for Hizballah's developmental process, from a purely military-religious organization into the main representative of a social group standing in the center of a unique counter-hegemonic project which I named "the Muqawamah project".

This research builds on research projects that I have developed over the past few years, both in my master’s thesis and my PhD dissertation, in which I researched the development of the Muqawamah (Resistance) concept, in the Middle East generally and by Hizballah particularly.

The term "Muqawamah" in this suggested research, is a signifier allowing the establishment of a historical bloc composed of various forces. It is worth indicating that this historical bloc did not only comprise political parties and forces; it also included different social organizations and forces, like civil society organizations that serve large sectors, beyond their "natural" target groups (The Shi'a Sect in Lebanon).

The proposed research concentrates on two significant media channels which play a main role in creating the hegemonic project called Muqawamah, led by Hizballah, although these two media channels are not directly controlled by Hizballah. I will argue that this "relative freedom from Hizballah's control" is the reason why these two media channels contribute greatly to understanding the new phase (The lebanonization/openness phase) in which Hizballah has entered to build and re-instill the Muqawamah project into the Lebanese, Arab, Islamic and global collective awareness. Moreover, this research contributes to understanding how the party’s roots and its new interpretations make change possible within the party and allow to develop its ideology in a way that enables openness and cooperation with the other, towards a liberation theology that exceed the Iranian model. A challenge that was raised by the American-Iranian researcher Hamid Dabashi in his significant book *Islamic Liberation Theology: Resisting the Empire,* and I had tried to approach and to develop in my dissertation and will take it a step forward in my postdoctoral project.

 Although different studies have addressed Hizbullah’s media channels for example: (Lina Khatib and others: 2014)[[1]](#footnote-1), (Harb: 2011)[[2]](#footnote-2).

None of these studies has addressed *Al-Akhbar* newspaper, which was first published in Lebanon in August 2006, and *Al-Mayadeen* TV, which was launched in 2012. Therefore, an in-depth research on the roots, impact and role of these two media channels in building the new and remodeled Muqawamah project is of utmost importance for understanding the new open and pluralistic project of Hizballah in his new 21st century phase and especially since the Arab Spring.

In analyzing Hizballah, I develop a theoretical framework that builds on the theoretical basis formulated by the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci, and later on developed by a group of researchers, mainly Erensto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in their major book *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics.* I show how thesecouldthrow light on different aspects of the historical and political research on Lebanon and generally in the Middle East. These aspects have not been highlighted in previous researches, and they constitute an introduction to new research concepts and that contribute to the understanding of the politics dynamics in the contemporary Middle East politics.

My training from my undergraduate until my Ph.D. has thoroughly prepared me in the fields of journalism and media, political science and Middle Eastern politics. I’m also fluent in the three languages required for this research: Arabic, Hebrew, and English. Therefore, I believe that I am qualified to conduct the proposed research that would open new research horizons in this field.

**Methodology**

In my research, I will examine a broad sample of *Al-Akhbar* editions, including the history of the newspaper, the writers and their background and the journalistic articles and reports issued since the newspaper’s first beginning. This will help reveal the nature of the different and concurrently common streams and forces inside the newspaper that came together to build up the project of Muqawamah as an alternative hegemonic project in Lebanon and in the regionwide. The suggested research will also demonstrate how *Al-Akhbar* has become a platform for intellectual and ideological interaction between the different movements that constitute the Muqawamah project in Lebanon. In analyzing the data, this research follows qualitative methods, alongside some quantitative methods that help examining the types of texts published in the newspapers and those broadcasted on *Al-Mayadeen* TV.

I will use a similar methodology to research *Al-Mayadeen* channel, but on a broader scale. That is due to the unique nature of this electronic means of communication and its large audience in the Arab world. I will examine the channel’s broadcasts and history, and the backgrounds of the channel’s leading staff and main journalists to research the type of relationship between *Al-Mayadeen* and the Muqawamah project.

 The theoretical framework that I will focus on in my research is Hizballah’s transition from "War of Manoeuvre "(in the Gramscian sense) to “War of Positions.” In other words, the long-term activism and the establishment of a ‘historical bloc,” where Hizballah occupies a central position, alongside other allies (Leftists, Arab Nationalists and Others) that lead together the Muqawamah project. However, this Muqawamah project is neither final nor completed. It is rather a changeable project that is influenced by the encounter between the different groups and the political, social, economic and intellectual interaction between them. Therefore, the different groups that build the Muqawamah project are influenced both separately and collectively by this interaction, and the impact is reflected in each group’s culture and political program. Moreover, the Muqawamah project is constantly remolded through these interactions, and among the most important interaction platforms in this particular project are *Al-Akhbar* newspaper and *Al-Mayadeen* TV (though not the only ones) that play a major role in its formulation.

 In addition to the analysis of written journalistic texts and of broadcasts, this research will also include interviews with staff members working for *Al-Akhbar* and *Al-Mayadeen* to shed light on their interpretation of some articles and broadcasts and their contexts.

My research will contribute greatly to understanding Hizballah and its differentiation from the other Islamic political movements in the Middle East, as it approaches a subject which has not been addressed. It has been recently demonstrated that the Middle Eastern Studies should address new research domains to keep pace with the rapid changes that take place in the region. My proposed research will also contribute to deeper understanding of the allied and the conflicting forces in politics and in the contemporary history of the Middle East especially after the so called the Arab Spring and the Syrian civil war.

1. Khatib, Lina. Dina Matar & Atef Alshaer. *The Hizbullah Phenomenon: Politics and Communication*, London: Hurst & Company, 2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Harb, Zahera. *Channels of Resistance in Lebanon: Liberation Propaganda, Hezbollah and The Media,* London: I.B. Tauris, 2011 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)