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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Discursive Diplomacy of the 2022 Iran Protests and Global Media (A Case Study of Israel's Jerusalem Post)

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Interdiction:

The victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran significantly altered global political equations, particularly at the regional level. This event did not merely signify a regime change within a single country; rather, it represented a fundamental shift in regional and international power dynamics across political, social, and economic domains.

This transformation not only elicited opposition from regional governments, wary of the revolutionary government's potential to serve as a model for social change within their societies, but also provoked diverse reactions from global powers, particularly the United States, which had extensive ties with the former regime.

The disruption of major powers' interests, including those of the United States, led to a range of pressures on Iran's nascent revolutionary government. The eight-year-long Iran-Iraq War is a prominent example, along with widespread sanctions, economic pressures, global propaganda

campaigns, support for domestic and international opposition groups, and the orchestration of social unrest and disturbances. These measures exemplify the adversarial policies pursued by global powers to undermine the Islamic Republic.

Over the past decade, Iran's social and political developments have been more characterized by unrest and protests than by stability and public order. These developments have been of significant interest to global media, which, beyond mere reportage, have actively engaged in narrative construction and the shaping of regional and international perceptions regarding these events.

This study focuses on exploring the discursive diplomacy surrounding the 2022 unrest in Iran by analyzing the news and reports published in the Israeli newspaper The Jerusalem Post. Understanding this discourse is essential for examining the strategic narratives employed by these media outlets, which often reflect the overarching policies of the states in which they operate. Moreover, it is crucial for identifying the propaganda techniques and psychological operations designed to counteract and neutralize domestic and international narratives unfavorable to these powers.

Methods

The study employs the operational discourse analysis method (PADAM) to analyze the news reports published in The Jerusalem Post. This methodology, chosen for its systematic and process-oriented approach, evaluates the discourse at five levels: surface-surface, depth-surface, surface-depth, deep level, and deeper level. This multi-layered analysis reveals the type of discursive diplomacy deployed by the newspaper in its coverage of the 2022 unrest in Iran

Discourse analysis, as a process-oriented examination of meaning, is defined by several key principles:

1. **Processual Meaning Construction:** Meaning emerges through the interaction of three semantic domains: surface meaning + implicit meaning; synchronic meaning + diachronic meaning; intra-textual meaning (resulting from the articulation of similar and divergent meanings within the text) + intertextual and meta-textual meaning (arising from external textual and contextual linkages).
2. **Semantic Transformation:** The evolution of meaning depends more on identity construction than on raw power dynamics.
3. **Objective:** The analysis aims to identify core extra-textual signifiers by linking intra-textual and extra-textual elements.
4. **Gradual Signifier Expansion:** Through iterative semantic construction, signifiers acquire increasingly nuanced and broader meanings, creating hierarchical levels of signification (e.g., primary, secondary, tertiary)
5. **Semantic Mapping:** This involves (a) identifying key meta-discursive signifiers and (b) analyzing the relationships between meta-discursive, intertextual, and intra-textual signifiers.
6. **Reverse Discourse Analysis:** Moving backward from meta-discursive signifiers to core intra-textual elements ensures validation of findings. This step is applied when narrative coherence requires further substantiation. The study purposively selected reports from The Jerusalem Post to align with the primary research question: How did The Jerusalem Post discursively represent the 2022 unrest in Iran? The selected reports provide insights into the newspaper's narrative construction and discursive strategies regarding the unrest. The study purposively selected reports from The Jerusalem Post to align with the primary

research question: How did The Jerusalem Post discursively represent the 2022 unrest in Iran? The selected reports provide insights into the newspaper's narrative construction and discursive strategies regarding the unrest.

Results:

One of the primary strategies employed by hostile foreign media in covering unrest in Iran is the internationalization of these events to provoke global opposition against the country. These media outlets use various techniques, including constructing a dichotomy between the government and the populace and framing the regime as violent against its citizens. This tactic, evident since the Islamic Revolution, was particularly prominent during the 2022 unrest.

The theme of violence is amplified through methods such as fabricating rumors about deaths, casualties, and police brutality. The Jerusalem Post sought to internationalize the protests and construct a dichotomy between the people and the government, emphasizing alleged state violence against citizens. This approach aims to position the public in opposition to the regime, thereby facilitating broader calls for systemic change in Iran.

By disseminating rumors, false information, and exaggerated claims of violence, The Jerusalem Post leveraged its news discourse as part of psychological operations targeting Iran. The analysis of 23 reports from this newspaper revealed a consistent effort to employ narrative techniques such as rumor-mongering, polarization, and the international framing of Iran's domestic unrest to advance its discursive objectives.

Conclusion:

The 2022 unrest in Iran, apart from inducing structural social changes, attracted extensive attention from global media. These outlets not only provided real-time coverage but also prioritized narrative construction to influence the perceptions of Iranian society in line with their strategic objectives. Additionally, these media sought to shape global perceptions of Iran's developments to craft a future interactive framework for engagement with the Iranian government and its populace.

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Data Availability Statement

Data available on request from the authors.

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Ethical considerations

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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